

2008 Annual Guide to The Best Communities & Towns

P I N N A C L E L I V I N G  
**MOUNTAIN HOMES**  
S O U T H E R N • S T Y L E

Author

Sandra Brown's

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# Nature Lover's Paradise

*Just 75 miles from Atlanta, Anderson Creek Retreat welcomes residents to a different world. An environmentalist's dream, it and the philosophy of its owner/developer are a far cry from the average new mountain home development. The big difference: a romance with the land.*

Since the early 1990s, Douglas (Doug) David, a member of one of the original families who settled along North Georgia's Anderson Creek in the 1840s, has purchased land that surrounded his family's holdings. His objective: to create a residential community based on the concept of environmental stewardship.

"People can experience the ecological diversity of the southern Appalachians on this piece of property with its unique topography," he explains. His property, a 1,500-acre tract located between Dahlonega and Ellijay, Ga., lies in the southern reach of the mountains in a highland valley surrounded by old mountain farmland and gentle ridges. It adjoins the Chattahoochee National Forest and is just over the ridge from Amicalola Falls State Park.

Amazingly, while Atlanta is only 75 miles south, Anderson Creek Retreat is a world away.

## TRUE TO THE GREEN LIFE

Today, David's emphasis on maintaining preserves, open space and limited site development for homes – thus ensuring that watersheds, woodlands and wildlife remain undisturbed – has paid off in a unique community where conservation and the natural life come first. That is the hallmark of Anderson Creek Retreat.

"It is Doug and his philosophy," says Derek Dahlgren, a Canton, Ga. engineer and mountain bike rider, "that brought my wife Cassie and me here."

*Clockwise from top left: Anderson Creek Retreat's camp-like setting offers residents all the perks: horse boarding and riding trails, home sites surrounded by nature and open green spaces for outdoor adventures and enjoying the magnificent views.*









Reflecting the region's architectural heritage, homes at Anderson Creek feature such elements as rough-sawn siding, native stone, simple lines and outdoor fireplaces.

In fact, working in conjunction with the planning firm of Reece Hoopes and Fincher, David decided to allow the land's topography to determine the location of the community's home sites.

"The lifestyle concept at Anderson Creek is based – loosely – on that of Adirondack camps," he says. "We have camps – a mountain camp, spring camp, lake camp and creek camp – which are more like small parks."

For people's full enjoyment, the "camps" are all equipped with picnic tables, Adirondack chairs, hammocks and fireplaces.

#### LOCATION IS EVERYTHING

"It is the location – and the elevation – that we love so much," says Marietta, Ga. resident and retreat property owner Denise Wright, as she and husband Bob watch her nieces Madison and McKenzie enjoy a swing carved from locust trees at the Patterson Homestead area of the community.

Here, a meadow slopes under a panorama of Springer Mountain, the "flat top" peak eight miles distant where walkers and hikers begin the Appalachian Trail.

The location has another bonus: The weather tends to be somewhat milder than in the higher elevations to the north and east. As a result of this careful planning, all the area's home sites either adjoin or are near green space areas and preserves, something David calls a "two-by-two concept."

"From any home site, there are at least two natural areas where homeowners can enjoy being outdoors," he explains, "either spending time together or alone."

#### TRUE TO THE LAND

Atlanta landscape architect Ed Daugherty, along with the Smith Dalia architectural firm, selected the location of home sites to minimize their impact on the land. Under Daugherty's guidance, the sites place no homes on the ridges; rather, they are positioned to offer magnifi-



Developer Doug David encourages community bonding with special events, topped off here with a musical performance.

cent views of these mountain features. Similarly, Daugherty's vision, David says, is to incorporate as many of the existing trees and shrubs as possible, thereby "restoring the forest floor."

#### FOR OUTDOOR LOVERS ONLY

"My wife and I have been visiting this area of north Georgia for more than 20 years," recalls Roy Borrego, a Punta Gorda, Fla. investment banker and financial advisor with Merrill Lynch.

"Four or five years ago, we started thinking about having another place – away from Florida," he says. "We thought it would be nice to have a place where we could walk out of our house and have trails to run on and places to ride our bikes."

Without having visited Anderson Creek, the Borregos put a deposit down on a lot there.

"When we turned the corner, and saw the pasture and the barn, I got goose bumps," Borrego reminisces. "It was prettier than the photos we had seen on the website. I literally got tears in my eyes. If someone asked me what kind of development I could have imagined for my family, I would create something like Anderson Creek. We wanted a piece of it; it's the perfect community for us."

#### THE NATURE OF THINGS

Anderson Creek, for which the community is named, is, in many ways, the soul of the property and is one of the last unspoiled trout streams in Georgia.

The Anderson Creek Preserve, a one-mile long, 75-acre creek valley, includes the creek camp, ruins of the original Anderson family pioneer homestead that overlooked Anderson Lake, the lake camp and several primitive camping sites.

Many consider this region of north Georgia to be the heart of the best outdoor recreation country in the Southern Appalachians.



Trails for hiking, biking and horseback riding crisscross the land. Property owners have fishing privileges at bass- and bream-filled Anderson Lake and may also join the Anderson Creek Anglers Club for access to the area's fly fishing. Other nearby trout streams include the Jacks River and the Conasauga River in the Cohutta Wilderness, Coopers Creek and Noontootla Creek, as well as the headwaters of the Etowah River on Jones Creek.

#### BY FOOT AND ON SADDLE

For hikers, there are 1,500 acres at Anderson Creek Retreat, while the neighboring Chattahoochee National Forest offers another 750,000 acres of woods and trails. Membership in the Anderson Creek Saddle Club includes ownership in a barn currently with five stalls and plans to grow, and 10 acres of pasture, as well as access to trails along forested mountain ridges and alongside three creeks.

"I like being able to look out in the mornings," says Jim Biggs, "and see my horses."

The home Atlanta residents Biggs and his wife, Donna, built was completed in fall 2007 and overlooks a gently rolling pasture just inside the property's main entrance.

#### MORE OUTDOOR PLEASURES

Whitewater rivers also flow close by, including the Ocoee, the site of the 1996 Olympic whitewater events.

Canoeing and kayaking are pop-

ular on both the Chestatee and Etowah Rivers, and for mountain bikers, the Anderson Creek property offers trails and old wagon and logging roads.

For days when residents feel the need for less activity, the timber-frame Creek Camp shelter, overlooking a gently flowing Anderson Creek, features a large wood-burning fireplace and is perfect for picnics and al fresco entertaining.

#### CLOSE TO CULTURE

The Southern Appalachians are known for their Scots and Irish heritage. This rich history is reflected in the number of fiddlers, pickers, craftsmen and artists who live here today.

For newcomers, classes at the John C. Campbell Folk School or The Penland School of Crafts are within a short drive or, for those who prefer shopping for one-of-a-kind pieces, the shops of Ellijay, Blue Ridge and Dahlonega are charming places to browse.

For those looking to sample local cuisine, a growing number of locally owned restaurants in these locales serve first-rate food, especially dishes made with fresh, local ingredients. It's a region of pumpkin patches, apple orchards and outdoor festivals, and many people enjoy the Pickin' in the Park series of weekly live acoustic musical performances of Appalachian, bluegrass, blues and jazz along the Toccoa River in McClaysville in the summer.

#### THE BONDING FACTOR

David and his wife, Susan, often host weekend activities at which neighbors get to know each other in fly fishing clinics led by Orvis experts, mountain bike rides, hikes and classes with naturalists, plus evenings of real Appalachian music.

Award-winning banjo player Barry Abernathy recently treated Anderson Creek residents to an evening of melodies, after which neighbors enjoyed a light supper together.

Community traditions at Anderson Creek are already taking shape. Borrego, a triathlete, hosted the first Anderson Creek 5K and Fun Mile on Thanksgiving morning 2007 to benefit the Georgia Land Trust.

*During one of the retreat's community outings, residents – and their furry friend – revel in the fun of biking on trails that crisscross the preserved land.*



*The young and young at heart enjoy this swing carved from locust trees.*





You're just as likely, however, to find homeowners reading on their porches or in one of the many Adirondack chairs, taking a walk through sun-dappled woodlands, or casting for a good catch of rainbow or native brown trout.

#### BUILDING A DREAM

The first lots at Anderson Creek were sold in 2002. Home sites average about three acres in size, though some are a little larger. Ten homes have already been built and several have carefully-tended cottage gardens. The majority of property owners – some 30 in number) are active people, primarily couples in their 40s and 50s. With two exceptions, the homes are presently being used as second or weekend homes, although several homeowners eagerly envision living in them full-time after retirement.

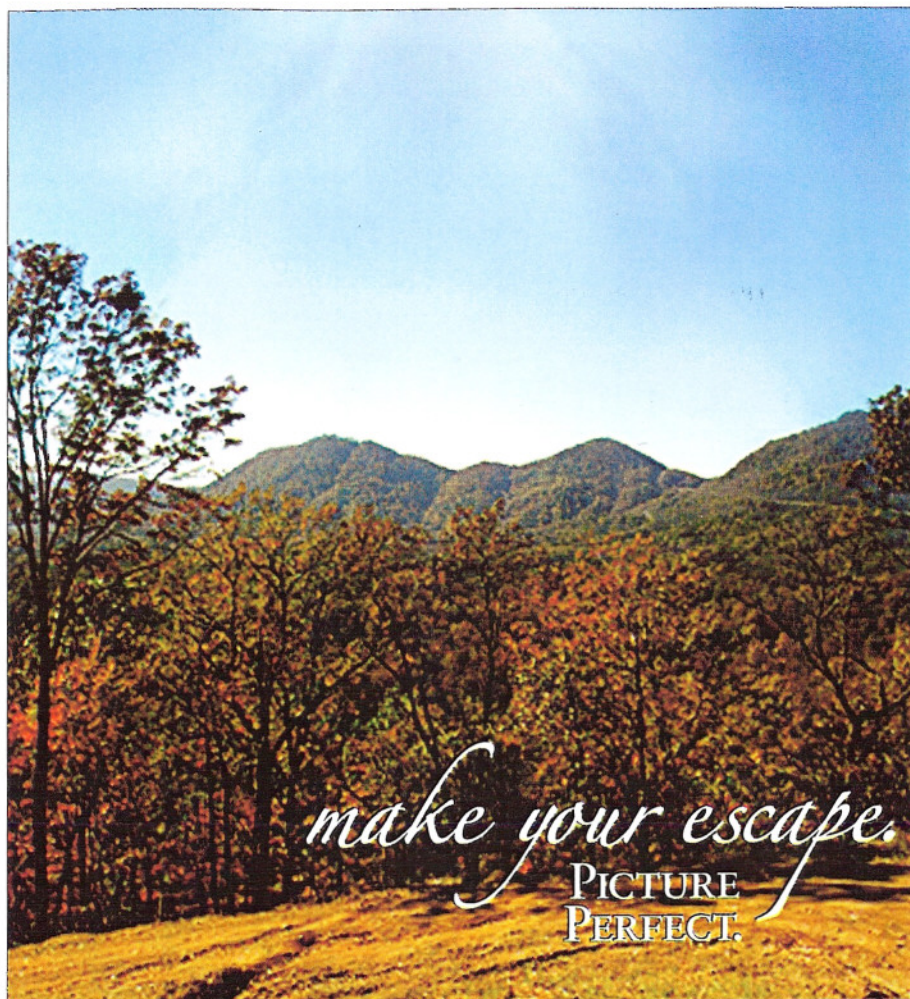
All home plans must be approved by an architectural review board, with plans submitted from both an architect and a landscape architect. The community guidelines call for designs that reflect the region's architectural heritage and encourage the use of native stone foundations and chimneys, rough-sawn siding, mitered corners and standing-seam metal roofs to create simple lines and details.

While every home is unique, three architectural styles predominate: elegant yet unpretentious Southern Appalachian-style log cabins; romantic, traditional L-shape homes with a Thomas Kinkadee warmth and a Ralph Lauren classic style; and sophisticated, contemporary versions of the Southern dogtrot.

Originating in the Southern Appalachians, dogtrotts were designed for cooling homes in the days before air conditioning and are characterized by an open breezeway that extends through the center of the structure. From that point, two sections of the home are separated, usually the living area and "the bunkhouse," or bedrooms.

David sees Anderson Creek, as do all of its homeowners, as a retreat more than a development.

"Doug is not a developer," Borrego says. "He's a keeper of the land; he's a dream-builder. He's allowing me to build something for myself and for my children that will be a legacy for them." ▲



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