

AIRPARKS ACROSS AMERICA

Residential Fly-in Communities are
Surging in Popularity. Here's why.

BY STEPHEN LEVY

"We spent three years researching airparks," Bill Patterson said. "All the people we visited who already own or operate one basically told us, 'Just do it!'"

His father and uncle are both pilots, and Patterson is a student pilot. The three of them imagined creating an airpark on the most beautiful piece of land they could find. They wanted not only a runway and houses but a true destination that also sported a swimming pool, tennis courts and all the amenities expected from an upper-tier establishment.

"We want it to be a fun place," Patterson said with a smile. Their dream is now a reality. Patterson and his family have opened the **Apalachee Bluff (67GA) Airpark Airport**, just a hop, skip and jump from Athens, Ga., home of the University of Georgia.



HEAVEN'S LANDING, BURTON WATERFALL

HEAVEN'S LANDING, KING AIR PROPERTY OWNER

Apalachee Bluff sits on 83 acres of some of the most beautiful land in Georgia, with huge old-growth trees surrounding the single-family residential lots. The Apalachee River meanders through the property, and the Pattersons have 220 feet of riverfront divided into 13 river lots. Other lots hug the 2,300-foot grass runway (67GA). Despite a bumpy economy, Patterson is selling home sites.

“There is a huge upswing in the number of people interested in living in residential airparks and in the number of people who are developing them,” said Dave Sclair who’s followed this market phenomenon for the past three decades. “In our data base we have 598 residential airparks, but my guess is that there are actually somewhere between 700 and 800 of them.”

Sclair publishes an on-line newsletter dedicated to airport living at LivingWithYourPlane.com.



MOUNTAIN AIR

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APALACHEE BLUFF END OF RUNWAY 24



DEVELOPER BILL PATTERSON (LEFT) AND HIS COUSIN



APALACHEE BLUFF



SANDY'S FARM



SANDY'S FARM

“Because air parks sell for a premium of about 10-20 percent more than similar properties without a runway,” said Dave Sclair, “the average customer is in what I refer to as the ‘middle phase’ of their lives. Well-established in business, usually empty-nesters, and financially in the middle or upper class.”

Airparks also make sense on paper. For a hangar in a metropolitan area, pilots can pay several thousand dollars a month just for rent. “For that kind of money, they can

own a home and hangar in a fly-in community,” Sclair said.

Residential airparks come in all flavors, from opulent and luxurious to simple and traditional. **Mountain Air Country Club** is atop North Carolina’s Blue Ridge Mountains and is one of America’s most beautiful airparks. At 4,400 feet of elevation, you can fly from the 2,875-foot paved private runway (2NCO) to any destination east of the Rockies without climbing a foot. Residents tend to think of Mountain Air as a community as opposed to just a fly-in airpark. Golf, tennis, swimming, hiking and lots of events and gatherings are offered for all ages.

Also east of the Mississippi is **Heaven’s Landing**, a mountain estate airpark in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Georgia. Surrounded by National Forest, this 635-acre gated community’s centerpiece

Airparks are not for everyone, but they may be a bigger and more significant option as time goes by. With airports closing left and right, airspace being grabbed ad nauseam and non-pilots adopting the attitude that aviation is little more than a nuisance, residential airparks offer tremendous appeal.

is a 5,069-foot paved concrete runway designed to accommodate virtually any private aircraft, but exclusively used by community members only. More than 300 estate-sized lots with “heavenly views” encircle the landing strip.

Heavens Landing is a beautiful fly-in resident airpark community and it already has covenants and architectural guidelines in place to make sure the airpark’s vision remains on track. Heaven’s Landing will also include an architecturally stunning three-story community clubhouse which features a private lounge, dining room, fitness center, racquetball, tennis and recreational areas. A large swimming pool and Jacuzzi overlook the runway and its pristine mountain vistas.

An equestrian stable with bridle and hiking trails will also add to the community. Unlike many residential airparks, Heavens Landing even has 100LL and Jet A.

Residents will tell you a big reason they selected Heaven’s Landing is the climate. Rayburn County has long described itself as ‘the place where spring spends the summer.’ Summer temperatures rarely climb past the mid-eighties, and January highs are often in the 50’s. Add the ubiquitous dogwood



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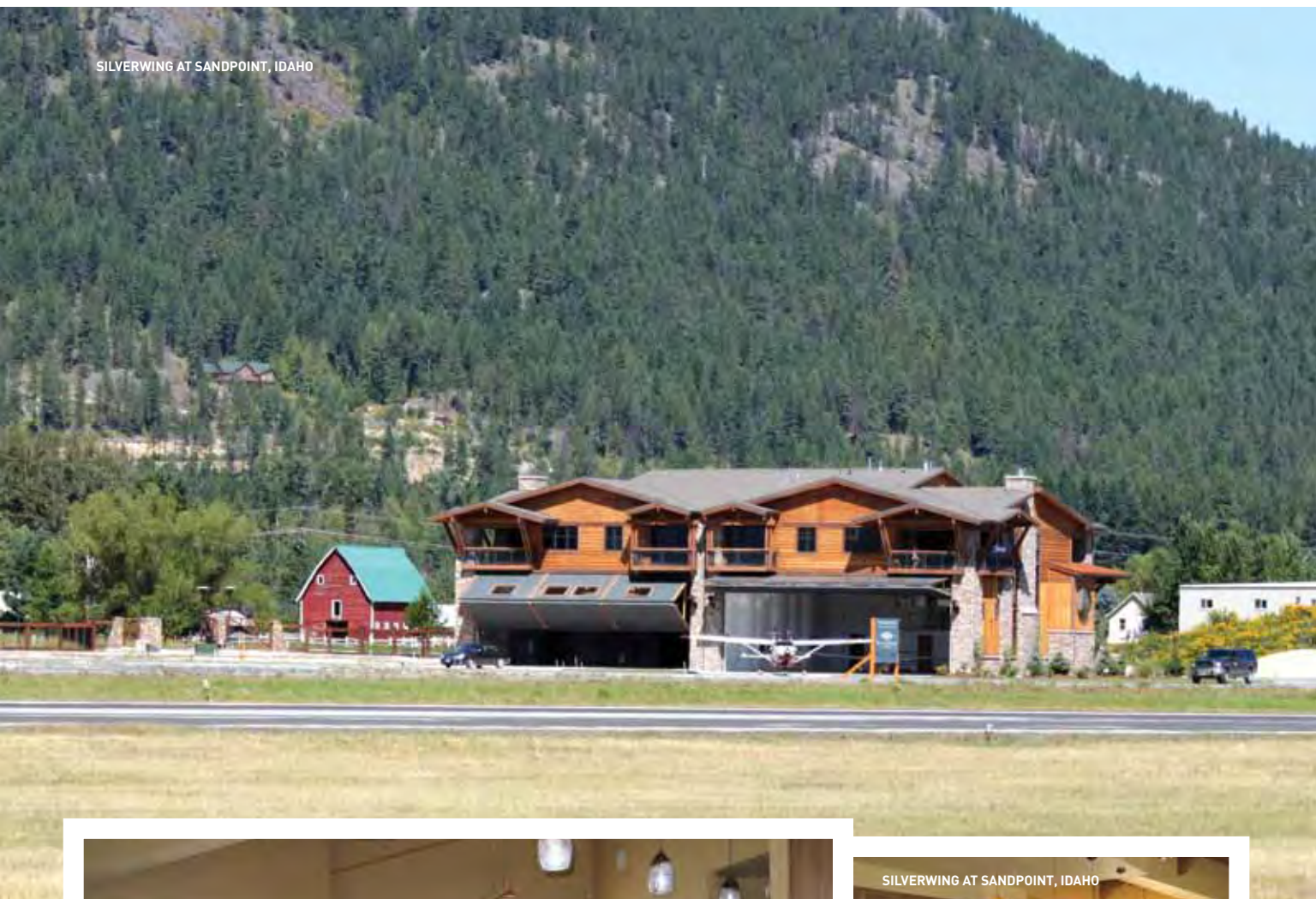
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blossoms in the spring and the fall colors ever autumn, and you begin to see why Heaven's Landing can steal your heart on the very first visit. Batavia, Ohio, home of Sporty's Pilot Shop, now features an airpark as well. **Sandy's Farm** is a gated community with instant access to the GA-friendly, 3700-

foot paved and lighted Clermont County Airport. The location is 25 minutes from downtown Cincinnati, giving residents an easy connection to great restaurants, professional sports, shopping and all the attractions that come with a big city.

Sandy's Farm features 11 home sites, all

with underground utilities and taxiway access. A common green space links the wooded surroundings. The airport is also home to a full-service FBO and a radio shop. How good is this residential airpark? Of all the possibilities across the country to select from, former head of AOPA Phil Boyer and his wife are now Sandy's Farm residents.

SilverWing at Sandpoint, Idaho, (SZT) is literally coming out of the ground as we speak. January of this year saw the 44-lot airpark's completion of its first model home. This northern Idaho community sits

between Schweitzer Ski Mountain and Lake Pend Oreille (pronounced pond-a-RAY). Underground utilities are already in place. Runway elevation is 2,131 feet, and it is 5,500 feet long. There's even a full-time FBO.


The town of Sandpoint is well worth a visit and honestly has something for everyone. There is no end to the outdoor activities, including skiing, snow boarding and sledding in the winter; golfing, tennis, mountain biking, hiking, horseback riding, fishing and sailing in the warmer months. Sandpoint offers countless events for art and entertainment year-round, including the Festival at Sandpoint, Concerts on the Lawn and Art Walk. For the epicures, Sandpoint is home to many unique restaurants, bars, wineries and breweries.

On the other end of the spectrum, **Sunriver Resort** has been a key Oregon destination for more than 40 years. Land on its private runway (S21) and the fun begins. You can rent any number of luxurious homes or townhouses if you want to try before you buy. There is also a great selection

of the more than 4,000 homes surrounding this 3,300-acre privately owned resort.

Sunriver has three 18-hole golf courses, tennis courts, swimming pools, a park, a nature center, the Sunriver Observatory, stables, a marina, restaurants, a business park, the Three Rivers School and a shopping village, all accessible via the 35-plus miles of paved bicycle paths. The Mount Bachelor Ski Area, a frequent destination

for guests, is nearby (20-30 minutes).

Airparks are not for everyone, but they may be a bigger and more significant option as time goes by. With airports closing left and right, airspace being grabbed ad nauseam and non-pilots adopting the attitude that aviation is little more than a nuisance, residential airparks offer tremendous appeal. You have your home, a runway and, best of all, you get to live with your plane! 

AIRPARK CONTACT INFORMATION

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