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Best Healthy Places to Retire: Walnut Creek, California

Magnificent view may be worth the high cost of living

By [Emily Brandon](#)

Posted September 18, 2008

Every Wednesday morning, about three dozen retirees gather at the local rose garden to weed, prune, and socialize. Pouring sweat into the soil at the nonprofit [Gardens at Heather Farm](#) gives these senior volunteers spiritual rewards, as well as tasty ones. "When you plant a fruit tree, you've got to live to see it fruit," says Jules Rosen, 87, a retired podiatrist transplanted from Brooklyn, N.Y. "Gardening is one small area where you plant God. You decide what lives and what dies."

	BEST PLACES TO RETIRE Click here for more video
	PHOTO GALLERY Walnut Creek, Calif.



Dick Dennis takes a rip in Walnut Creek's 50-plus softball league, the Creakers. (Kevin Horan/Aurora for USN&WR)

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Rosen lives in a sprawling gated community called [Rossmoor](#), home to nearly 10,000 seniors. It has its own theater, library, and aquatic center, two [golf](#) courses, and more than 200 clubs and special interest groups. "People move from all over the country to here, so they are outwardly seeking," Rosen says. "It's hard to be lonely in Rossmoor."

But should one weary of this retiree playground, [Walnut Creek](#) is designed to help seniors, approximately one third of the city's population, get around town. A local bus system with senior discounts makes it possible to go [carless](#). A free trolley connects downtown Walnut Creek to the local BART station, where seniors can catch a subway ride to San Francisco and back for about \$9. And locals who pay \$7 annually to join the city's Senior Club become eligible for a city-owned minibus service that will [transport](#) retirees anywhere within the city limits for \$1 each way.

Parkland. Although the bubbling creek the town was named for has been routed underneath the downtown through a series of culverts and only a few symbolic walnut trees remain, opportunities to commune with nature abound. The city boasts 22 parks and 2,704 acres of sprawling yellow hills punctuated by [green](#) shrubs. The summit of 3,849-foot [Mount Diablo](#) is accessible by car. (Hint: Try going at dusk to watch the sun set both above and below the clouds.)

The walkable downtown is speckled with high-end shops like an Apple Store and Tiffany & Co. More than 900 productions and events are presented annually at the Leshner Center for the Arts. And there's a pleasant mix of fine dining, organic eateries, and greasy spoons.

Yes, Walnut Creek is [pricey](#). "We're not a low-cost city," cautions the 75-year-old mayor, Gwen Regalia. "It's not going to be a place where living is cheap, because we are part of the San Francisco Bay area." A 2007 survey of Walnut Creek seniors found that more than a third of those over age 60 spend more than 30 percent of their income on [housing](#).

Ed Montgomery, 74, certainly has no plans to leave. The retired elementary school principal plays third base for a 50-plus softball league three times a week. It's called the Creakers, named after "the snapping and popping sounds our joints make as we play."

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[Rossmoor retirement community in Walnut Creek](#)

I agree that Rossmoor is a wonderful place for anyone over 55 years of age, retired or not! It's for active adults, as there are 2 golf courses, tennis, indoor and outdoor swimming, bocce ball, croquet, and a health club recently renovated. The condos and co-ops range from level-in, without stairs, to multi-story townhomes, to elevator buildings. Some have the best views around--looking to Mt.Diablo or overlooking the golf course--some with sunrise, others with sunsets to savor.

And the prices are still lower than other areas of the Bay Area, even for a gated community with so many activities included in the monthly homeowners' fee.

If anyone wants more information, contact me-I'm a realtor who has helped clients to buy and sell in Rossmoor!

Holly Henkel of CA

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Sounds great.....but do young people live there also! I'm not old enough yet!!!!

Bubba of MA

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