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Insiders' guide to Arundel on the Bay

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From where the Chesapeake Bay meets Fishing Creek, two Maryland icons are visible: the Bay Bridge and Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse. The peninsula with the view -- on a clear day the Eastern Shore is visible -- is home to Arundel on the Bay, a community of 350 single-family homes that seems a world apart from Annapolis, though it's only several miles away.

"You look up and you can see the stars over the water," said longtime Arundel on the Bay resident Frank Florentine.

The community began more than a century ago as a summer beach spot on the Annapolis Neck peninsula, and evolved into a tiny town that included adjacent Oyster Harbor (now a separate community).

In the years after World War II, the village grew to be a private enclave, mostly of well-heeled African-Americans -- many there only part-time -- and has since grown into a year-round, diverse community.

A special taxing district, Arundel on the Bay benefits from a levy of a few pennies per \$100 of assessed property value. That goes toward maintaining the common areas, among them its beach, pier and playground; holding movie night at the beach; and hiring security patrols.

There are no sidewalks. But "it's the greatest place to walk," said Andrew Grannell, who aims for two strolls a day with his Labradoodle, Amos, as much for the expansive views as the exercise.

Housing stock // Prices vary widely, depending on age, views, proximity to the water and size -- newer ones typically are larger, said John Day, a real estate agent with Long & Foster in Edgewater. "I think that is something of an indication of older waterfront communities that used to be cottages or vacation homes," Day said.

Housing styles range from the modern chalet to standard colonial to older one-story cottage. Most have decks or screened porches. The clamor for waterfront homes and, to a lesser extent, rebuilding after Tropical Storm Isabel have led to tear-downs and new construction, additions, roof-raising and the like, said Harvey Young, president of the property owners association, who grew up in Arundel on the Bay and returned several years ago.

Crime // With one road leading to its location at the end of a peninsula, there's little in the way of unfamiliar traffic, unknown faces or crime.

Kids and schools // At Halloween, costumed children enjoy riding through the community on a flatbed trailer full of pumpkins.

Public schools start with Hillsmere Elementary, which hovered just below state performance rates in most areas. Annapolis Middle School, also below the state performance levels in most areas, recently added a middle-years magnet International Baccalaureate program.

At Annapolis Senior High School, home of an IB program, the percentage of students passing subject exams was below the state average except in government.

Shopping // A few minutes' drive from the community, Bay Ridge Road and Forest Drive are home to strip centers and individual stores. Specialty shops and conveniences include a nursery, florist, movie rental, dentist, dry cleaner and boat supply. For pet-seekers, the SPCA is close. A short drive away are the Westfield Shoppingtown Annapolis and the Annapolis Harbour Center.

Dining // The nearby business strips also have food stores and supermarkets. The restaurant variety includes bagels, Chinese, Greek, Mexican, pizza and Polynesian. The Main Ingredient, Sam's Waterfront Cafe and Grump's Cafe are among local haunts.

Nightlife // In less than 20 minutes, a driver can be parked at Annapolis' Main Street and Historic District, where bars, restaurants and music venues draw crowds. A bit closer are the Eastport Cinemas, and the Eastport area's bars, shops and restaurants. Among the closest spots is the Ebb Tide, with its karaoke night.

Recreation // On a peninsula, many pastimes revolve around water: boating, fishing, crabbing, marina life. The Anne Arundel County park, Quiet Waters, with its dog park, dog beach, boat rentals, art galleries, festivals, pavilions and more, is a short drive.

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