



Photo by John L. Wiggins

Bridge crosses the lower
stream at The Headwaters.

Wild Life or Wildlife?

Mountain Developments Offer Busy Schedules or Peace and Quiet



Photo courtesy of Ginn Resorts

Some homes in Laurelmor feature beautiful touches such as a rear gazebo, fireplace, copper roof and finial.

A second-home destination for generations of Charlotteans, the North Carolina High Country has no shortage of land for staking a mountain home.

A high-end resort development, a more moderately priced community and a decades-old neighborhood off the beaten path are among the many choices for buyers looking for property around Boone, Blowing Rock and Banner Elk.

Not long ago, a rustic mountain cabin was the ticket to escape city life and enjoy cooler weather and outdoor adventure. But along with those quaint cottages equipped with the simple pleasures for a quiet weekend, today's mountain real estate ads pitch spacious estates with gourmet kitchens, media rooms, bathroom retreats and acres of privacy.

Many buyers are creating comfortable getaways where their children and grandchildren can join them for years to come, and where everyone can find something to do.

While some developers promise amenities from spas to sports to please all ages, one still has home sites that suggest the only sign of life outside the front door will be wildlife.

The following gated communities all have lots that offer privacy and pristine mountain views, but each has its own distinct personality.



The pavilion on the upper lake at The Headwaters is ideal for weddings.

'High-End Baby Boomer Market'

A new 6,000-acre private residential club community, billed as the first resort development in the Boone and Blowing Rock area in almost 20 years, started taking reservations this fall for mountain home sites. Called Laurelmor, the 1,500-home community is being developed and operated by Ginn Clubs & Resorts.

Laurelmor will be located on about 800 acres. The land was purchased from the developer who started the Spiritual Center of America at Heavenly Mountain, and Laurelmor is on land adjoining Heavenly Mountain.

Known for warm-weather developments near the ocean, Ginn made the move to the mountains after buyers in Florida asked when property would be offered in North

Carolina, says Doug Miller, Ginn's regional president of the Eastern Mountain Region. About half of prospective buyers are from Florida, but there's also interest from the Northeast and the Carolinas.

"Our market is the high-end baby boomer," Miller says. "They want a place where they can bring their kids and their grandkids."

Amenities will include a lodge with fine dining, a wine cellar, a spa and fitness

center, and full-service locker rooms. Other features will be a golf course designed by Tom Kite; a children's camp with an indoor pool, climbing wall and game room; and an equestrian center. Trout fishing, skeet shooting and archery are among the seasonal activities, along with hiking and biking and overnight camping excursions.

Home sites range from three-quarters of an acre to five acres. Lots in the first phase will average two acres. Nearly 500 lots in the first phase were released for sale in November.

Ginn is working with about a dozen approved builders, and home exteriors and landscaping will require approval of a review committee. The clubhouse and condominiums surrounding the golf course will have a French provincial theme, but Miller says homes will be more eclectic.

He anticipates year-round residents will occupy about a quarter of the homes; half will use them as second homes; and another quarter will buy property as an investment or to build homes for weekend getaways as they plan retirement.

Homeowners will have mandatory master association fees, plus mandatory

Custom mahogany stands out in a gourmet kitchen and breakfast nook.



Photo courtesy of Ginn Resorts



A steam shower and spa tub make this bathroom a sanctuary.

Photo courtesy of Ginn Resorts

membership in the club. That one-time fee, which will be waived during the first five years of sales, will be \$50,000, plus \$10,000 annual dues, Miller said.

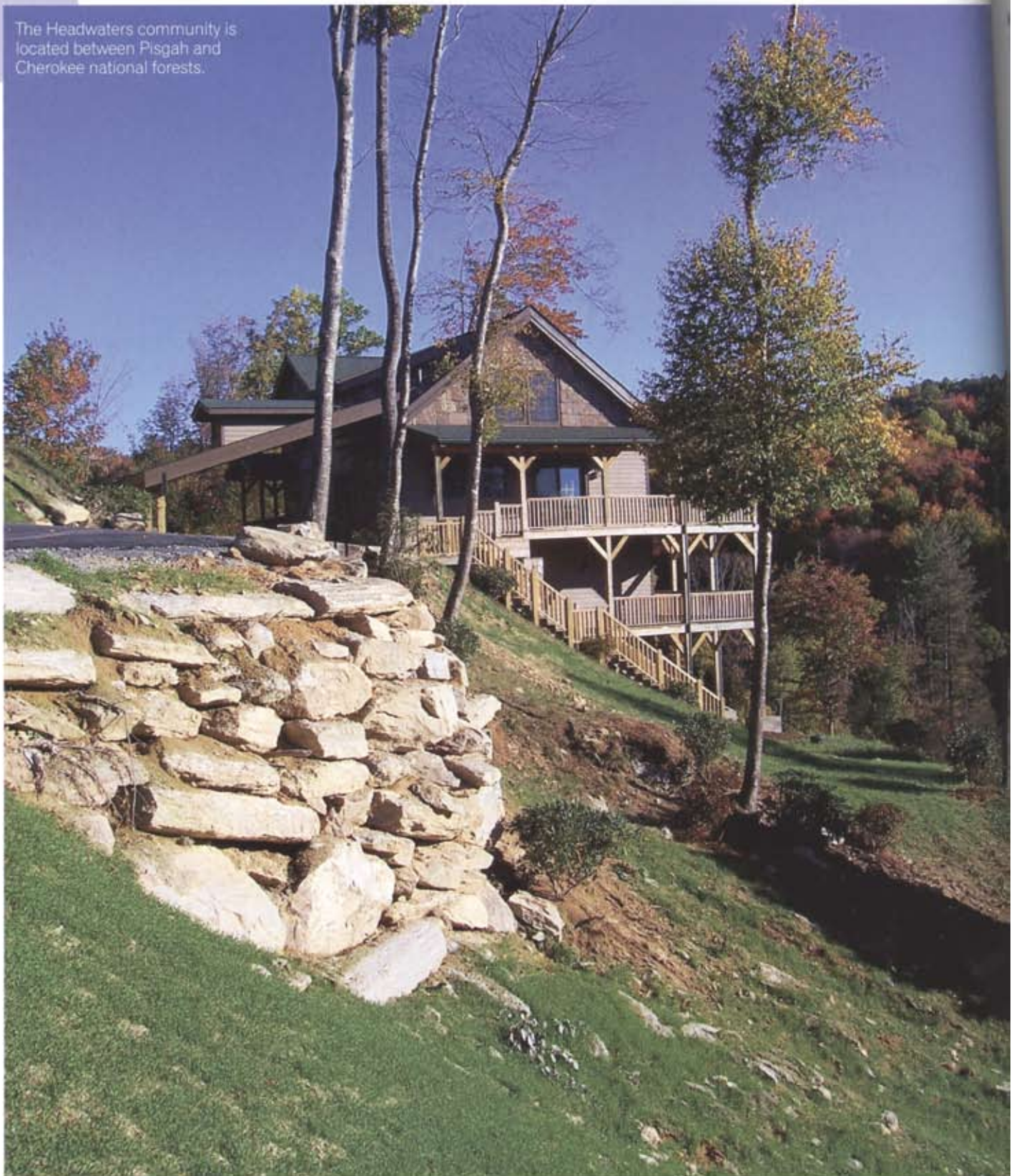
Homes in the first phase are expected to be ready for occupancy in 2008, although the infrastructure won't be completed until 2012. Four hundred condominiums are projected to be completed by 2012, but it could

be 30 years or more before all single-family homes are built.

Answering the Call for Gated Communities

Home construction has started at The Headwaters at Banner Elk, a 340-acre community between Pisgah National Forest and Cherokee National Forest. Located

The Headwaters community is located between Pisgah and Cherokee national forests.



10 minutes outside Banner Elk on Beech Mountain Road, the development's first phase will have 100 homes on one- to three-acre sites. Houses must be a minimum of 2,100 square feet.

Along with single-family homes, The

Headwaters will have a nine-acre site for three- and four-unit condominium buildings featuring two-bedroom, two-bath floor plans.

An additional 540 acres are planned, with 250 single-family homes and 140 condo-

miniums at completion.

Developer John Haynes started creating the mountaintop community in 2002 after a land search in western North Carolina. "Buyers are interested in developed, gated communities," says his brother, David

Haynes, director of sales for the project. Headwaters' planned amenities include a clubhouse with fitness room, kids game room, gourmet kitchen and great room; indoor and outdoor swimming pool pavilion; two spring-fed lakes with picnic areas and fishing piers; and two lighted tennis courts. A garden farm will give property owners their own garden plots.

Haven for Humans and Animals

You may find a flood of fliers about mountain living in your Charlotte mailbox, but don't look for a promotional blitz from one builder, who lives on the same Banner Elk mountain where he builds one luxury home per year.

Brett Schwebke of Tynecastle Builders admits his homes aren't part of a traditional development. Annual dues of \$600 cover the entry gates, roads, flowers and trash pickup. He lists amenities as privacy, great views and unmarked trails, and potential buyers won't be invited to buy a lot. In fact, Schwebke won't even allow prospective owners to see one of his houses until it's completed. Lots range in size from 1½ to 10 acres.

Secluded from view near the Shoppes

at Tynecastle at the intersection of N.C. 105 and N.C. 184, the 700-acre community has only 90 sites. Started in 1963 and owned by members of the Morton family of Grandfather Mountain fame, the Scottish reproduction village was called Invershiel. After Robert Schwebke, Brett's father's, bought the property in 1977, the name was changed to Tynecastle.

Brett, who has been building for 10 years, owns 8 Tynecastle lots and his father owns about 20. Twenty other sites have been sold,

and several builders have houses under construction. New construction mixes with 1960's homes, some resembling Scottish castles.

After studying sites and looking at views in the winter, Schwebke clears the lot for the footprint of a house in the springtime. "Then I design the house based on what the ground gives me," he says. Schwebke also considers other residents of the mountain — namely the animals. "We have panthers, foxes, bears, lynx and owls. We let them live

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Photo by J. Todd Bush

Fall Creek bridge



This home design features rear decks, gazebo, boulder walls and native plantings.

here, too," he adds, without disturbing their habitats or their water sources.

This year's project is a 5,100-square-foot house with views of Grandfather Mountain. The \$2.795 million home has a granite and mahogany kitchen, featuring a cherry tongue-and-groove ceiling and stone fireplaces in the master bedroom, great room and outside gazebo, with mantles made from wood harvested from the home site. Oak flooring also was harvested from Tynecastle, as well as the cherry used in cabinets, ceilings, baseboards and trim.

Weddington residents Terry and Linda Oelschlaeger, who bought their Tynecastle property 11 years ago, say they appreciate the peace and quiet of the development. "In this day and time, it's hard to find relaxation," Terry says. Their son was married on the deck of the house, and the Oelschlaegers plan to keep their mountain retreat in the family. "In 11 years, we haven't found one we wished we'd bought instead," he adds. ☐



Buyers can find a colorful, rocky setting for a mountain home.