

## MAYBERRY CHARM MEETS THE HAMPTONS IN AIKEN, SC



Betty and Michael Burke, new homeowners of the gated Woodside golf course development in Aiken, SC, had no problem quickly leaving California. They represent the perfect purchaser's profile for the dynamic residential real estate market, showing no signs of slowing down in 2021.

After moving to San Diego 35 years ago from his home state of New York, a few years ago Michael Burke (65) started envisioning making one more move in the future. He and Betty (65), a native Nebraskan, began researching various locations, and South Carolina "displayed ideal climate and qualities for transferring our business," Michael Burke says. But there were no plans for them to move in the imminent future by any means.

At least, that was until last March, when the pandemic broke out, and employees of Burke's financial services company began working remotely from home. Family and friends began social distancing, and Burke recalls having the realization that now may be the time to make the move.

Through a series of happenstance events, some very good friends of the Burkes had just moved to Woodside in 2020 and invited them to see their home in Aiken, a small Southern town some describe as a place where the 'charm of Mayberry meets the sophistication of the Hamptons.'

The minute the Burkes stepped inside the gates of Woodside, a thoughtfully planned development with four golf courses, more than 15 miles of nature trails, three on-site medical providers, and so much more, they were sold on Aiken. They purchased the "perfect lot" with expansive views, established trees, natural landscaping, and a two-year timeframe to build.

"We both looked at each other and said, 'Wow, this looks like a National Park,' and felt we were home," the Burkes remember. "There was beauty in the landscape, open spaces, the varied architectural design of homes, and a sense of a friendly community. Also, South Carolina was far less restrictive with COVID-19 regulations, allowing us to have dine-in experiences at many restaurants in and

around the Woodside community and the quaint town of Aiken."

Once the Burkes realized the pandemic had caused a shortage in construction lumber and supplies, meaning costs were only going to escalate as time transpired, they were prompted to move more quickly than originally anticipated on construction.

Homes in the San Diego market were "selling like hotcakes," according to Betty, and within five days of putting their home on the market, a move to Aiken was imminent. Now, the Burkes are busy working with the Carolina Signature Homes design team as they build out their new Ashley model dream home.

According to Woodside's corporate sales and marketing team, quick-thinking moves like this were the norm in 2020 for an established community with approximately 2,150 finished homes through October, with a record-low existing home inventory.

To further describe the heightened demand coming from all parts of the country, Woodside developer Rick Steele notes the length of time a future homeowner is now taking to go from request for information to making a home purchase is less than six months on average versus one-to-two years in the past after making multiple community visits.

The Burkes hope to have their new residence ready in early May. In the meantime, they're living in temporary housing and loving every bit of the new 'home' they discovered in Aiken.

'The Burkes concluded, "We're really enjoying the many facets of Southern charm, hospitality, and the sense of community Aiken has to offer. We can't wait to be residents of the charming community known as Woodside."

In many respects, it's a life they always imagined having one day. It just so happened the pandemic helped them realize this dream sooner rather than later.