

'Agrihoods' Offer Suburban Living Built Around Community Farms, Not Golf Courses


Joseph Erbentraut

Chicago Editor, The Huffington Post

ADVERTISEMENT



The phrase “planned community” conjures up a lot of images -- maybe a swimming pool, obsessively manicured lawns, white picket fences -- but a farm is probably not one of them.

AdChoices 

Pushing back against that stereotypical image of suburban living is a growing number of so-called “agrihoods” springing up nationwide. These developments center around a real, functional farm as their crown jewel. According to CivilEats, [there are currently about 200](#) of them nationwide.

The latest, called [The Cannery](#), officially opened this past Saturday on a site that was previously home to a tomato cannery facility located about a mile outside downtown Davis, California. The 100-acre project of the New Home Company development company is considered to be the first agrihood to take root on formerly industrial land. All of its 547 energy-efficient homes will be [solar-powered and electric car-ready](#), KCRA, NBC’s Sacramento affiliate, reports.

The Cannery is unique for other reasons, too. The community’s 7.4-acre farm will be managed by the [Center for Land-Based Learning](#), a nonprofit group that plans to run agricultural education programs for students and aspiring farmers from the site in addition to a commercial operation focusing on organic vegetables once they’ve raised money for farm equipment and improved the soil, CivilEats reports.



There is a cost to all of this, of course. Homes in The Cannery range from [the mid-\\$400,000s to just over \\$1 million](#),

according to the Sacramento Bee. The median sales price for listings in the market is \$524,000, toward the lower end of that range.

While the term “agrihood” may be relatively new, the concept is not. As Modern Farmer pointed out in a 2014 story, the broader concept has roots dating back to the mid-1800s. The nation’s first planned community, in Riverside, Illinois, had a decidedly pastoral feel falling somewhere in the middle of city and country life.

And many established agrihoods have been around for some time, such as the [Agritropia](#) community in Gilbert, Arizona, the [Serenbe](#) development outside Atlanta and [Prairie Crossing](#) in Grayslake, Illinois, all of which were established over a decade ago and appear to be flourishing.

While some have criticized the developments as an attempt at greenwashing in order to find buyers for locations that would otherwise be less popular, the trend is not showing signs of slowing down.

“The foodie generation has come of age,” Ed McMahon of the Urban Land Institute told Bloomberg this year. “The mainstream development community has come to think of these as a pretty good way to build a low-cost amenity that people seem to like and that also adds authenticity.”

Newer agrihood developments include the [Sendero village](#) of Rancho Mission Viejo in Orange County, California, and the [Kukui’ula](#) community in Kauai, Hawaii.

"I yearn, and I think a lot of people yearn, for the Earth to be connected with the source of our food," a Sendero resident told the Los Angeles Times last year. "To get your hands dirty with growth ... I think it's good for the soul."

