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Issue
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Estates in leafy seclusion

At end of gravel roads, sprawling land, mansions

Some residents of Barrington Hills grouse about home construction and rising traffic posing threats to the privileged privacy they've protected with restrictive zoning for much of the past century. But the complaints ring a bit hollow in such a vastly roomy village.

Many captains of suburban industry, both active and retired, live here, at the end of gravel roads on sprawling estates hidden by the leafy rolling landscape. They include Robert Galvin, former CEO of Motorola Inc., who has a house, pool and tennis court on more than 300 acres; A. Robert Abboud, onetime CEO of First National Bank of Chicago, who lives more modestly on 18 acres; Richard L. Duchossois, chairman of Duchossois Industries Inc. in Elmhurst, who maintains a 600-acre horse-breeding farm, and Jasper B. Sanfilippo, chairman and CEO of John B. Sanfilippo & Son Inc. in Elgin, who lives in a 60,000-square-foot house that ranks as one of the largest private residences in the Midwest.

Talk about seclusion. Barrington Hills, which reaches into four counties, doesn't have any stores or even sidewalks. Virtually all its land is zoned for residences on five acres or more. Some 50 miles of local trails are open for horseback riding.

"People who come to live in Barrington Hills like to own land," says Thomas Wamberg, chairman and CEO of Clark Inc., an executive compensation specialist based since 1992 in North Barrington, a short commute from Mr. Wamberg's house on 70 acres. "There may be no other place around Chicago that you can find such big estates unless you're willing to move really far out."



Lots to mow: Software executive Robert G. Abboud, above, is village president; dad A. Robert Abboud, former CEO of First National Bank of Chicago, is also a resident. Photo: John R. Boehm

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Mr. Wamberg, 53, built an eight-bedroom residence for his large family four years ago. It's reputed to be 20,000 square feet; he's not sure himself. "It's a large home but feels small and even quaint," he says.



Such upscale rural living typically requires crews of landscapers and isn't for everyone. Alexander Paris, president of Barrington Research Associates Inc. who moved to town in 1979, has his 7,000-square-foot residence on

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10 acres up for sale, with an asking price of \$2 million. Mr. Paris is 72 and has tired of maintaining the pool and tennis court.

"I moved here originally for the clean air and open spaces," he says. "But the roads have become crowded with traffic, and the town has changed somewhat over the years."

Bigger changes loom. Earlier this year a development partnership headed by the Fritz Duda Co. of Dallas won a five-year battle that raged to the Illinois Supreme Court to take a 368-acre parcel on the northwest corner of the village and build 371 homes on lots as small as one-fourth of an acre.

Village officials vow to block the Duda project. "Barrington Hills will ultimately prevail, period," declares Robert G. Abboud, 49, village president and president and CEO of Barrington-based RGA Labs Inc., a developer of software for utilities. His father is A. Robert Abboud.

Last year 79 houses sold in Barrington Hills, priced between \$400,000 and \$3.6 million, with the average at \$1.07 million. In the first six months of this year 41 properties sold, with the average sale price up 12% to \$1.2 million.

Less than two years ago, Mary Williams, owner/broker of Barrington Realty Co., sold her parents' 3,000-square-foot home in Barrington Hills for \$825,000. A developer tore it down and put a speculative 15,000-square-foot house in its place, still on the market at an asking price of \$5 million.

"If there wasn't so much empty land in Barrington Hills, some of these big new mansions would seem excessive," she says.

Some residents worry that the biggest parcels of open space will eventually be redeveloped as five-acre tracts, boosting a population that has been stable for decades. Mr. Duchossois, who is 84, has owned his Hill 'n' Dale Farm on 600 acres since the 1960s. Once he's gone, he says, his family "has no plans to do anything with this farm. But nothing is forever."

BEST PLACES TO LIVE

Barrington Hills

Population: 4,258
Area: 27.9 square miles
Median household income: \$145,330
Commute: 46 minutes by Metra

Population figure estimates as of July 2005; household income as of 2000. U.S. Census and land area data are from City-Data.com. Commute times are to Chicago's Loop during morning rush hour and are calculated by Metra schedule.

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