

Neighborhoods

Places to live, people to see in Colorado Neighborhoods

Story: Jon Goldberg

BOW MAR

THE ESSENTIALS:

WHERE IT IS – IN THE HEART OF THE SOUTHWEST SUBURBS. Set on a hillside on the shores of Bowles Lake and Marston Reservoir – hence the name “Bow Mar” – this small enclave of 300 homes is tucked away in a prime southwest suburban location near the intersection of Santa Fe and west Bowles Avenue. Incorporated as its own town in 1958 and straddling both Jefferson and Arapahoe counties, Bow Mar is situated 12 miles from downtown Denver and is only five minutes from the Downtown Littleton Light Rail Station.

WHAT MAKES IT SPECIAL – A LITTLE LAKESIDE TOWN CLOSE TO EVERYTHING. Since its conception in the late 1940s by Lloyd King – the founder of King Soopers – Bow Mar has been its own little secluded town surrounded by the expanding metropolis, small, quiet and pastoral. The area features a private lake and beach along with sprawling lakeside ranches with spectacular mountain and water views, as Phoebe Smedley, who has lived in the town of Bow Mar for more than 40 years, puts it, “This is probably the tightest neighborhood you can imagine, and it’s been that way since 1947.”

THE HOMES – BIG RANCHES ON BIG LOTS. By master design, all the houses in Bow Mar are one-story ranches on acre-plus lots, you’ll see many fine examples of Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired “Prairie Style” architecture with low rooflines that afford magnificent views. There is a soothing consistency to the open yards and elegant ranches winding on what seems like country lanes.

BOW MAR – A UNIQUE AND ENDURING VISION. When he first started selling lots in the development in 1947, grocery magnate Lloyd King already had created a special vision for Bow Mar. He situated the neighborhood on the banks of two lakes – a scarcity in arid Colorado – and he had the foresight to purchase one of them, Bowles Lake, for exclusive future use of Bow Mar residents. The other defining aspects of the King’s plan were the platting of large individual home parcels (at least an acre or more) and an insistence on ranch architecture to preserve the views and enhance the open feel of the area. The original elements of Lloyd’s dream, solidified by incorporation as a self-governing town in 1958, remain essentially intact. These special qualities remain just as valid and compelling today as they were 50 years ago.

WHY IT’S HOT – IT’S ALL ABOUT THE LAKE. “How many people in Colorado can say they have their own private lake?” laughs Barry Amman, a partner at KPMG who grew up in Bow Mar and recently moved back here with his young family. Indeed, the 100-acre Bowles Lake, privately owned and operated by the homeowners, is the crowning jewel of Bow Mar, a rare and exclusive amenity that defines and binds the community.

During the summer, Bowles Lake is the place to be as Bow Mar’s 900 residents flock to the private beach facility to swim, fish, sail, barbecue and socialize in country-club style. Concerts and parties are frequent attractions, and the Bow Mar Yacht Club (officially sanctioned by U.S. Sailing) holds popular summer sailing regattas. Even in winter, cold weather permitting, the lake is busy with pond hockey and ice fishing – not to mention the New Year’s Eve Beach party (brrr!).

A small municipality that is governed by its own Mayor and Board of Trustees, Bow Mar is a cohesive enclave where residents’ lives are intertwined. “Families really get to know one another well,” explains Barry.

WHO LIVES HERE – GENERATIONS OF BOW MAR FAMILIES. Children who grew up swimming

in Bowles Lake are now raising their own families down the street from their parents' house. Residents here are successful professionals who appreciate – and can afford – the lifestyle Bow Mar offers.

SCHOOLS – PUBLIC AND PRIVATE. Children here might attend Littleton Public Schools or Jefferson County Public Schools depending on their precise block, and private Colorado Academy is practically next door.

PRESERVING BOW MAR'S CHARACTER. In 2008, the town took bold measures to protect Bow Mar's unique historical character from development. To preserve the integrity of the ranch-style home in Bow Mar, the town codified a restriction requiring that all homes be one-story dwellings. Somewhat more controversially, to maintain the open feel, the town passed an ordinance that mandates a large percentage of open space – as high as 88 percent – on every lot. Together, these two provisions effectively cap the size of redeveloped and new homes, which may impact property values.

Resident Frank Stevens, an entrepreneur and Littleton Hockey dad who has lived in the town for seven years, reflects that “Bow Mar is going through a transition right now.” One thing is for certain – as much as things may change in Bow Mar, it will always remain a special place to live.

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-Jon Goldberg, a former attorney, puts his 20 years of experience in real estate and law to work for you.

-A contributing writer to *Colorado Expression* magazine, Jon knows Colorado. You can read his “Neighborhoods” article feature in this issue.

Call Jon today to discuss the details of your real estate needs.

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