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## No. 2 in golf, No. 1 in Retirement?

By Allan D. Spritzer

The secret is now out. *Golf Digest* recently ranked the Tri-Cities metropolitan area as the second best area in the country for golf. The opportunities for the region created by this ranking are significant.

Many retirees are golfers, and some golfing retirees are among the affluent. Combined with the region's other attributes, the availability of good golfing can help to attract a number of retirees from throughout the nation. Golf-loving retirees from other nations with less favorable access to the sport and/or unappealing climates are also likely to be attracted to the region.

With effective marketing, good planning and wise private and public investments, the Tri-Cities region can become a mecca in the mountains for retirees who enjoy golf. We already have many features that are important to retirees — golfers and non-golfers. These include (not necessarily in order of priority):

- Good accessibility to excellent health care in each of our major cities
- Relatively low cost of living
- Low property taxes
- Availability of affordable and attractive real estate and housing
- Natural beauty in our mountains, lakes and streams
- A relatively clean environment
- Potential for development of safe and attractive retirement communities
- An excellent interstate highway transportation system
- An outstanding regional airport that provides good air service
- A moderate climate with four enjoyable seasons
- Excellent investment opportunities for those who seek them
- Several high quality colleges and universities to provide lifelong learning opportunities

• Friendly people, from this region and elsewhere, who welcome newcomers

• Low crime rates

• Little or no fear of urban terrorism, hurricanes or winter blizzards

• Attractive leisure, outdoor, cultural and entertainment opportunities.

There already is evidence that the Tri-Cities region has been discovered by Floridians as an excellent place for retirement and retirement investments.

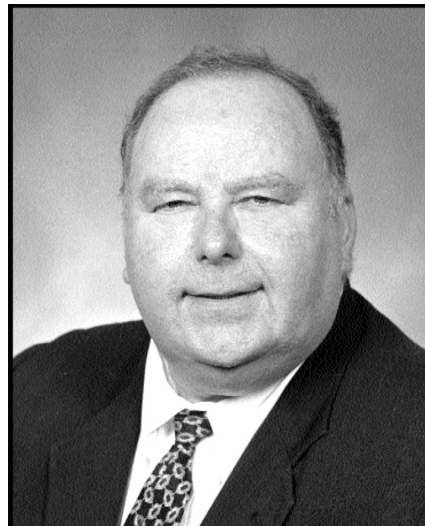
At a recent meeting of executives that I attended, a Kingsport attorney reported that along the highway from Kingsport to Morristown a number of gated communities with upscale homes are emerging. He visited one of these communities and found that about half of the residents are recent retirees from Florida.

In the last few weeks I talked with a 78-year old Boca Raton, Florida, investor, a golfer with a home in Beech Mountain, North Carolina, who is interested in the Tri-Cities. He told me that this region is "a sleeping giant." This individual has retired three times, only to resume his career in order to keep active and to take advantage of promising investment opportunities.

Finally, a businessperson from Johnson City informed me that a nearby neighbor has recently agreed to sell his home, for far more than could be expected, to a wealthy retiree from Florida who wishes to move to the region and who likes that particular home.

It is not surprising that affluent Floridians are seeking new areas to live in comfort, away from the ravages of frequent hurricanes. Moreover, interest in Tri-Cities retirement has increased as property values and living costs have risen significantly in Asheville/Hendersonville, North Carolina retirement locations.

The opportunity to advance the Tri-Cities region as a popular retirement destination is clear. Regional business



leaders and public officials need to examine the value of attracting and retaining retirees, particularly those who can help to satisfy the revenue and volunteer service needs of our cities and counties. Since golfers are frequently affluent and active, this may be as important as efforts to recruit and retain manufacturing and high tech industries.

Promotion of the region as a good one for golfing should be an element in our national and global marketing efforts. The newly formed Tri-Cities Economic Development Alliance may want to add the story of our good golfing to its arsenal of marketing tools.

Recognition of the Tri-Cities as the Number 2 place to golf in the country can help the region to work toward becoming the Number 1 place in the country to retire. **BJ**

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