

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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Downsizing a Perfect Fit for this Pair

By Cathy Tyson



Marvin and Lois Kay smile in their new home at Merrill Gardens in Lafayette.

Photo Cathy Tyson

Although they looked all over the area for places to relocate, Marvin and Lois Kay couldn't be happier with their decision to move to Merrill Gardens in downtown Lafayette. About three years ago they had an opportunity to look at the building plans before ground was even broken on the project; a friend told them the two-bedroom penthouse with its own rooftop patio was one of the nicest units in the building.

The early birds were one of the first interested parties to put down a deposit to hold one of those units. They moved there in January. The one-and-a-half mile move from their previous home in Olympic Oaks, just across town,

entailed a significant amount of downsizing.

It was a challenge to downsize from their 2,500 square foot home to around 1,000 square feet. They had to part with some furniture and belongings. Many pieces went to their children and some went to consignment.

But their brand new home features two bedrooms and two bathrooms with extra storage on their lovely patio, along with cabinetry for additional storage in the second bedroom that also serves as an office. Although the unit also has a kitchen, they don't use it much because meals are also offered in the Gardens' inviting communal dining area.

Located at the corner of Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Second Street, the newest outpost of the Merrill Gardens retirement home franchise has only been open since late 2014 and is not yet full. But an open house with local dignitaries on Feb. 5 may have already enticed more newcomers. And the Kays, who have lived in the East Bay for almost all of their lives, plan to have lots of friends stop by. Married since 1948, the newlyweds lived in Piedmont for 53 years before becoming two of the first to join the newly constructed Olympic Oaks community, where they spent another dozen years.

While acknowledging the building has had a few growing pains, the happy couple is thrilled with all the staff – from the front desk person to the handyman, and everyone in between – who “are so nice,” said Lois.

It's apparent these two are well suited to the active social climate the facility provides. Exercise class, chess and dominos, bingo, Tai Chi and field trips via their van, most recently to see Beach Blanket Babylon, and movies in their own theater. The Lafayette Library is only a little over a block away, offering even more options.

Having returned just moments before our interview from a trip to Reno where they enjoyed a large Super Bowl party at the Silver Legacy Casino and visited with their son, a retired eye doctor. Marvin, who is not a gambler, said he won one dollar. Lois enjoys video poker. Their other son is a busy neuropsychologist, based on the East Coast.

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