

# If You're Thinking of Living in:

By DIANA SHAMAN

**T**HIRTY-EIGHT years ago, when Frank LoCicero and his wife, Marie, picked out a lot on 242d Street in Bellerose, Queens, for their new two-bedroom ranch home, builders were putting up such houses by the hundreds. The homes were intended for young veterans like Mr. LoCicero and their families.

But the land on which the houses, which sold in the \$11,000 range, were being built had been used for vegetable farming and was "scrubby and poorly treed," Mr. LoCicero said in an interview. So the new residents planted their own sidewalk trees, with the approval of city officials.

"Hundreds of trees, mostly maple and sycamore, and now they're huge," said Mr. LoCicero. "That's why people who come through here say, 'You'd never think this was Queens.'"

Other sections of Bellerose were developed late in the 20's. As one of the city's newer communities, it does not have the spacious turn-of-the-century Victorians and colonial-style homes that distinguish some older neighborhoods.

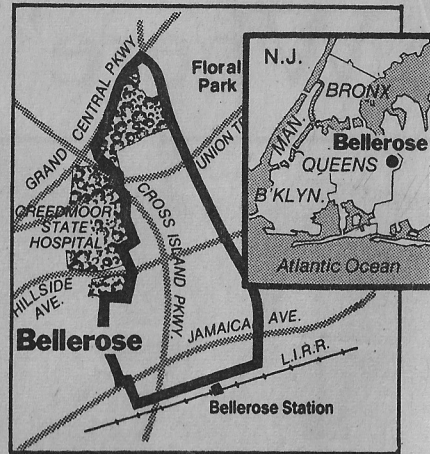
But its modest brick Cape Cods and Tudors, which are mixed with the kind of frame Dutch colonial shown on television's "All in the Family" as the house of Archie Bunker, provide the solid, neat housing that is attracting young families buying their first homes.

Houses that originally sold for \$7,000 to \$12,000 now fetch \$200,000, but that is considered modest compared to prices in other desirable areas of Queens.

Bellerose has only a few garden apartments. It is primarily an area of private homes where neighbors look out for neighbors, and where, insulated by distance from subways, many of New York City's urban problems seem remote.

At a recent meeting between the police and civic leaders of the large area covered by the 105th Precinct, Mr. LoCicero, who is president of the Bellerose-Hillside Civic Association, came with a list of complaints about rubbish dumping and construction delays on Hillside Avenue.

After hearing reports of robberies and drug-related crimes in other parts of the



house was built in 1910 and which was incorporated in 1924, apparently was named after a gladiola farmer named Rose, whose daughter's name was Belle.

Other than that, Bellerose, Queens, and its neighbor in Nassau County have little in common except the center divider along Route 25, which is Jamaica Avenue on its north side and Jericho Turnpike on its south side.

Houses in Bellerose Village are much larger, but sell for \$250,000 to \$425,000, with annual taxes of \$3,000 to \$6,000. Houses in Bellerose, Queens, though small, are still available starting at \$175,000, with taxes of \$850, said Alvin Bruce Roper, who opened his real-estate agency on Hillside Avenue 30 years ago.

At that price, buyers can find a 60-year-old, 3-bedroom, 1½-bath colonial on a 30-foot by 100-foot lot, with an attic and an enclosed front porch. Three-bedroom Tudors dating to the 30's, on 4,000-square-foot lots with annual taxes of \$1,000, go for \$200,000 to \$225,000. Newer postwar brick Cape Cods, with two and three bedrooms, on 4,000-square-foot lots with taxes of about \$900, sell for \$200,000.

**I**N addition to its relatively affordable houses, Bellerose's great attraction is the quality of its schools, which consist

## Bellerose



drug-related crimes in other communities, he said, "I kept quiet because I realized we live in heaven by comparison."

When builders originally came to what is now known as Bellerose, they appropriated the name of neighboring Bellerose Village in Nassau County to distinguish the new community from other neighborhoods. Bellerose Village, where the first

## Gazetteer

**Population:** 22,880 (1980 census).

**Median family income:** \$26,244 (1980 census).

**Distance from midtown Manhattan:** 16 miles.

**Rush-hour commutation:**

L.I.R.R., 30 minutes; one way \$5, monthly ticket \$107. City buses on Hillside, Jamaica and Braddock Avenue and Cross Island Parkway, 20 minutes to IND E and F trains at 179th Street and Hillside Avenue in Jamaica; subway to midtown, 50 minutes. City express bus from Little Neck Parkway and Hillside Avenue, 1 hour; one way \$3.50.

**Councilman:** Sheldon S. Leffler, Democrat-Liberal.

**Median house price:** \$220,000.

**Landmark henhouse:** An early 30's chicken coop is about to be restored at the Queens County Farm Museum in Bellerose. It will house 100 chickens, become New York City's only chicken-hatchery exhibit and produce eggs for sale at the museum's farmstand.

tently rank among the city's best.

Elementary pupils attend either Public School 186, at 252-12 72d Avenue, or P. S. 133, at 248-05 86th Avenue. P. S. 186 has an enrollment of 388 and class sizes are no larger than 25 pupils. Eighty percent of the children read at or above grade level. At P. S. 133, which is attended by 560 children, reading scores are even higher. Eighty-eight percent of the pupils read at or above grade level.

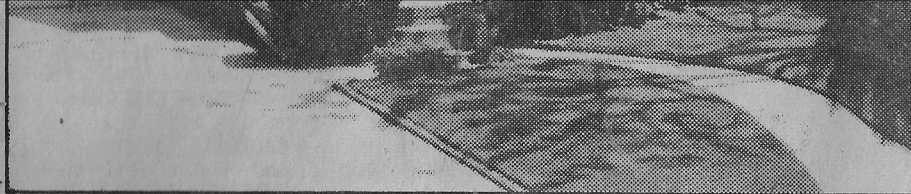
Most of the elementary school students continue at Junior High School 172, at 81-14 257th Street, which ranked seventh among the city's junior high schools in reading last year. A few attend J. H. S. 67, at 51-60 Marathon Parkway, Little Neck, where 92 percent of the pupils read at or above grade level.

The local high school, Martin Van Buren, at 232d Street and Hillside Avenue, is "a strongly academic school," with programs for gifted children that attract outstanding students, said its principal, Burt Zuckerman. About 90 percent of graduates go to college.

In 1965 the neighborhood fought to preserve its ambience after New York State declared as surplus 47 acres of the Creedmoor Psychiatric Center property bordering Little Neck Parkway. Bellerose residents feared that developers would acquire the land and build apartment houses. The Colonial Farmhouse Restoration Society of Bellerose was formed to preserve the mental health center's former farm, at 73-50 Little Neck Parkway, which included an 18th-century farmhouse built in 1772.

The group won landmark status for the house, which with seven acres of land and several outbuildings was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The complex now is run by the city's Depart-

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The New York Times/Jack Manning

## Tudor-style house on 253d Avenue in Bellerose, Queens.

ment of Parks and Recreation.

As the Queens County Farm Museum, it attracts thousands of visitors each year. But for those who live nearby, the farm, with its sheep, goats, ducks and chickens, has become a special amenity.

An inexpensive summer camp program, financed by the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company, is available for children ages 7 to 12 at the farm. It also has become a center for outdoor concerts, an annual Indian powwow, an agricultural fair and other events. Fresh vegetables grown on the museum's property can be purchased three days a week.

Bellerose lacks a main shopping district, but small stores with diverse goods and services are on Union Turnpike, Hillside Avenue and Jamaica Avenue.

On Union Turnpike, near 249th Street, an Italian bakery, kosher butcher, Chinese restaurant and Irish pub reflect the ethnic diversity of the neighborhood. Favored establishments include Arturo's Italian Restaurant, at 246-04 Jericho Turnpike; the Bellerose Delicatessen, at 247-73 Jamaica Avenue, popular for its homemade cold cuts and salads, and the Buttercookery Bakery, at 217 Jericho Turnpike, which uses only butter in baking.

The Bellerose Public Library, with a variety of programs for residents of all ages, is at 250-06 Hillside Avenue.

Recently, the area around 87th Avenue and Commonwealth Boulevard resounded with band music and shrieks of delight from youngsters riding the Loop O Plane, the Sizzler and the Sooper Jet. The eighth-annual summer festival of St. Gregory the Great Roman Catholic Church was in full swing. The 10-day event draws 30,000 to 40,000 people each year.

St. Gregory's, which was established 51 years ago, is a complex of buildings covering several blocks and includes a K-8 school, convent, rectory and the church. Other religious institutions in the community are the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, the House of Hope, which is Presbyterian, and the Bellerose Jewish Center, a conservative synagogue.

Richard Hellenbrecht, an executive assistant at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, said he and his wife, Mary Ann, moved to Bellerose from Brooklyn 15 years ago "because it was affordable and a nice neighborhood with good schools for our children." At the time, they thought of it as a way station to a suburban community. But they stayed.

"We have gardens, we have trees, we have quiet, a low level of crime, and we're not part of the hustling crowds," said Mr. Hellenbrecht. "We feel suburban. The neighborhood has been so great to us that there was no reason at all for us to move on."