

AERO ESTATES LIVING

By Ashley South and Christina Wichmann

While driving in bumper-to-bumper traffic down Route 59 or walking the dog through Springbrook Prairie, you may have wondered about the planes going in and out at Aero Estates—the subdivision located a block east of Route 59 between 79th and 83rd Streets. If you looked closer, you probably noticed that not only do they have garages, but hangars with a landing strip in their backyards and access to their own airport!



Vern Finzer's original Cessna 140 © Katie Braga

Mike Pastore has been the president of the board of Naper Aero Club airport for six years and has been flying out of the airport since 1995. He tells us with a laugh that he cannot stop getting re-elected and feels like the unofficial mayor of the community. We like him instantly. By profession, and prior to his retirement, he was a commercial pilot and flight instructor. He describes the Naper Aero Club as a community of friends. They self-organize social trips to see sites around the country—a passion for travel that has turned into a lifestyle. Aviation can be exclusive, but Mike explains that they want to be inclusive of everyone.

Cessna 182T. The clubs have a mix of both experienced and new pilots who ultimately have at least one thing in common—a joy and appreciation for aviation.

Vern Finzer's son, Mel, poked his head in to chat with Mike while we were there. He had just flown in from a quick trip to Wisconsin. Mel flies his dad's original airplane, a single wing Cessna 140, a 75-year-old aircraft, only ever owned by the Finzers. Mel grew up with the airport and shared he didn't know he was going to follow in his father's footsteps, but that flying became a part of life for him. "The residents of Aero Estates have a passion for flying. They live it."

Built in 1956 by Vern Finzer and Harold White, Aero Estates features 120 single-family homes and two runways.



Mel Finzer and his dad's plane © Katie Braga

Aero Estates is one of only five such subdivisions in the greater Chicago area. Built in 1956 by Vern Finzer and Harold White (the one-time owner of the Naperville Sun), it features 120 single-family homes and two runways, along with one-acre yards and unobstructed views of the sunrises and sunsets.



Aero Estates home with attached hanger and direct runway access © Katie Braga



Instrument Panel © Katie Braga



Coming Home © Katie Braga

The popular Lima Lima Flight Team was founded here in 1975; their name was fashioned from the Federal Aviation Administration name for the Naper Aero Club airport: Lima Lima 10 (LL-10). It is code like ORD is for O'Hare. The aerobatic flight team is no longer based at Naper Aero Club; however, one of its members, Mark Banovetz, an Aero Estates resident, is still spotted flying in the sky in his Beechcraft T-34.

There are two flying clubs based out of Naper Aero Club: Naperville Flying Club and Businessmen's Flying Club. Both are equity ownership clubs. Naperville Flying Club is a 50-member equity ownership club with four aircraft: 1968 Debonair; 1974 Skyhawk; 1979 Archer II; and 1981 Saratoga. BFC Flying Club is a 45-member equity ownership club with three aircraft: 1992 Cessna 172SP; 2007 Cessna 172S; and 2007

About 60% of the homes in Aero Estates are owned by pilots. The airport is truly the center of all the action. However, if you are interested in flying, you can join one of the flying clubs—Naperville Flying Club or BFC Flying Club. Membership buy in, dues, and aircraft hourly rates are very competitive. Both clubs offer a great opportunity for you to get into aviation or as a gift for a loved one.



*Naper Aero Club Airport
9 South 357 Aero Drive
naperaero.net*

*Businessmen's Flying Club
flybfc.org*

*Naperville Flying Club
napervilleflyingclub.com*