



STROLLING THE VILLAGE

Maplewood beats with a quaint retro vibe and an undercurrent of edgy entrepreneurial spirit.

"MAPLEWOOD'S A 'GOOD morning' type of town — everyone greets you," says former mayor Ellen Davenport. Now Secretary of the New Jersey Senate, Davenport's world still centers on Maplewood, where she has lived since 1971 and operated a business for 20 years. "It's a place where people look out for one another." Maplewood, 18 miles from New York, is a suburb, yes, but one with a distinctive urban undercurrent. "We have a lot of artists, journalists, and musicians who moved from Manhattan," says Amy Koehler, manager of the Maplewood Village Alliance. "The shops reflect this creativity."

Walk down Maplewood

Avenue and you'll be inevitably smitten by mid-century nostalgia, an atmosphere the retailers cultivate. It's a place where you can feel comfortable allowing your children to explore (there's a beat police officer on patrol) while you banter with shop owners who routinely wander into each other's establishments to catch up on the latest news. And everybody has colorful stories to tell — so take the time to listen.

Begin your day trip on Maplewood Avenue (all addresses are on Maplewood unless noted), the Village's bustling spine.

DECOR Eco-chic **3r Living** (No. 147) champions earth-

friendly products. From jewelry to cleaning items, everything here is natural and organic. **No. 165** (its name is its address) offers an eclectic mix of compelling home accessories and clothing. Mary Vayas (also co-owner of Village Trattoria with husband, Angelo) notes that sales for Fishes Eddy dinnerware are brisk. Look for "sophisticated Halloween" decor this month. You can't get cozier than **Perch home** (9 Highland Pl.). Michele Bessey has carved out a name for herself in this community with her inventory of "sophisticated urban-country" items. Hot sellers include O'Brien Schridde handmade frames, David Aubrey jewelry,

and, Bessey says with a chuckle, "believe it or not — aprons." **Shed — The Eclectic Home** (100 Baker St.), which opened in May, displays "a mix of modern home furnishings and accessories layered with soulful antiques," says owner Cindy Potters. Look for international merchandise, like Moroccan poufs, which sell out quickly. In business since 1973, **Bee & Thistle Antiques** (89 Baker) is a Maplewood institution — and owner Eileen Dillely will regale you with delightful tales of the town. Expect to find traditional antiques as well as some funky decor at this shop that now skews 60 percent toward new items. **Words** bookstore (No.

Clockwise, from left: Clock in Ricalton Square, which was named after James Ricalton, a photographer and explorer who was Maplewood's first permanent teacher. The fresh catch at Freeman's Fish Market. Little One & Co. offers chic, urban clothing options. Annual Halloween parade. Jerry Rose features innovative floral designs and a selection of home decor.

179) opened earlier this year to much fanfare, hosting signings by Mario Cuomo and Steve Forbes. Owners Jonah and Ellen Zimiles have a special additional mission — to cater to families of individuals with special needs.

FINE AND DECORATIVE ARTS

Museum curators laud Mary Ann Spencer's discerning eye for American fine-art craft — and patronize her **Tenth Muse Gallery** (99 Baker), which showcases about 200 artists working in mediums from jewelry (Jamie Kole's vintage-inspired, Swarovski crystal pieces warrant close inspection) to decorative accessories and furniture. Krista Hyer designed **Mona Lisa Gallery & Framing** (No. 168) to be a showcase for serious emerging international talent. The New York art world is taking notice

of Hyer's initiative — and you should as well. Visit often: Exhibitions rotate every seven weeks.

FASHION Noticing that there was a dearth of stores carrying children's clothes with an urban feel, Hanh Truong opened **Little One & Co.** (1 Highland) in 2006. The boutique carries looks from Appaman and Biscotti, she says, "plus small brands that people don't know, but should."

Village Belle (101 Baker) reflects the kicky energy of its clientele — young girls. "Often, the girls come in after school and then return with their moms," says owner Nancy Quinn.

SPECIALTY STORES Floral design hits a high note with award-winning, third-generation florist Jerry Rose. His retail location, **Jerry Rose Floral and Event Design**

EAT LIKE THE LOCALS

Restaurant Lorena's is touted by Zagat as one of the nation's top restaurants. Chef Humberto Campos Jr. recommends the rack of lamb or the Maine skate wing. **Crane's Deli & Cheese Shoppe** offers 60 kinds of imported cheeses. The locals' favorite sandwiches: Maplewood's muffaletta and tahini tuna sandwich. **Village Trattoria** throws some "weird" dough — its unique pizzas have been heralded in *The New York Times*. This writer's favorites: buffalo chicken pizza and sautéed artichokes (wink as you order: the artichokes are not on the menu). **Freeman's Fish Market** gets its fresh catches daily from the Fulton Fish Market and local fishermen. Order the crab cake sandwich. **New World Catering's** headliner is its New World Chicken Salad. Tip back a pint with the locals at **St. James's Gate Publick House**.

(No. 176), displays a variety of fresh-cut local and Holland flowers, indoor plants, seasonal outdoor blooms, and English and Italian garden pottery. At **Lotus Petals Floral Design** (92 Baker), "holistic" florist Peggy Excell-Stone offers flowers grown at farms that use re-circulated water. At **Scrivener's Toys & Collectibles** (No. 178) owner Norman Scrivener is also known

for his expertise in rare coins. And speaking of specialists, set aside an hour to pamper yourself at **Anthony Garubo Salon & Day Spa** (No. 174). Before you leave, stop in at **Truly Yours** (96 Baker) to browse its wide array of "non-Hallmark-y" cards — and find the perfect look for your handwritten notes to accompany the unique gifts you discovered in Maplewood. **NJL**