

# Virtual reality opens doors for older people to build closer connections in real life

**LOS GATOS, Calif. (AP)** Like many retirement communities, The Terraces serves as a tranquil refuge for a nucleus of older people who no longer can travel to far-away places or engage in bold adventures.

But they can still be thrust back to their days of wanderlust and thrill-seeking whenever caretakers at the community in Los Gatos, California, schedule a date for residents — many of whom are in their 80s and 90s — to take turns donning virtual reality headsets.

Within a matter of minutes, the headsets can transport them to Europe, immerse them in the ocean depths or send them soaring on breathtaking hang-gliding expeditions while they sit by each other.

The selection of VR programming was curated by Rendever, a company that has turned a sometimes isolating form of technology into a catalyst for better cognition and social connections in 800 retirement communities in the United States and Canada.

A group of The Terraces residents who participated in a VR

session earlier this year found themselves paddling their arms alongside their chairs as they swam with a pod of dolphins while watching one of Rendever’s 3D programs. “We got to go underwater and didn’t even have to hold our breath!” exclaimed 81-year-old Ginny Baird following the virtual submersion.

During a session featuring a virtual ride in a hot-air balloon, one resident gasped, “Oh my God!” Another shuddered, “It’s hard to watch!”

The Rendever technology can also be used to virtually take older adults back to the places where they grew up as children. For some, it will be the first time they’ve seen their hometowns in decades.

A virtual trip to her childhood neighborhood in New York City’s Queens borough helped sell Sue Livingstone, 84, on the merits of the VR technology even though she still is able to get out more often than many residents of The Terraces, which is located in Silicon Valley about 55 miles south of San Francisco.



**Bob Rogallo watches video through a Rendever virtual-reality headset at the Forum at Rancho San Antonio retirement community in Cupertino, Calif. on June 11, 2025.**

AP PHOTO

“It isn’t just about being able to see it again, it’s about all the memories that it brings back,” Livingstone said. “There are a few people living here who never really leave their comfort zones. But if you could entice them to come down to try out a headset, they might find that they really enjoy it.”

Adrian Marshall, The Terraces’ community life director, said that once word about a VR experience spreads from one resident to another, more of the uninitiated typically become curious enough to try it out — even if it means missing out on playing Mexican Train, a dominoes-like board game that’s popular in the community.

“It turns into a conversation starter for them. It really does connect people,” Marshall said of Rendever’s VR programming. “It helps create a human bridge that makes them realize they share certain similarities and interests. It turns the artificial world into reality.”

Rendever, a privately owned company based in Somerville, Massa-

chusetts, hopes to build upon its senior living platform with a recent grant from the National Institutes of Health that will provide nearly \$4.5 million to study ways to reduce social isolation among seniors living at home and their caregivers.

Some studies have found VR programming presented in a limited viewing format can help older people maintain and improve cognitive functions, burnish memories and foster social connections with their families and fellow residents of care facilities. Experts say the technology may be useful as an addition to and not a replacement for other activities.

“There is always a risk of too much screen time,” Katherine “Kate” Dupuis, a neuropsychologist and professor who studies aging issues at Sheridan College in Canada, said. “But if you use it cautiously, with meaning and purpose, it can be very helpful. It can be an opportunity for the elderly to engage with someone and share a sense of wonder.”

VR headsets may be

an easier way for older people to interact with technology instead of fumbling around with a smartphone or another device that requires navigating buttons or other mechanisms, said Pallabi Bhowmick, a researcher at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign who is examining the use of VR with older adults.

“The stereotypes that older adults aren’t willing to try new technology needs to change because they are willing and want to adapt to technologies that are meaningful to them,” Bhowmick said. “Besides helping them to relieve stress, be entertained and connect with other people, there is an intergenerational aspect that might help them build their relationships with younger people who find out they use VR and say, ‘Grandpa is cool!’”

Rendever CEO Kyle Rand’s interest in helping his own grandmother deal with the emotional and mental challenges of aging pushed him down a path that led him to cofound the company in 2016

after studying neuroengineering at Duke University.

“What really fascinates me about humans is just how much our brain depends on social connection and how much we learn from others,” Rand said. “A group of elderly residents who don’t really know each other that well can come together, spend 30 minutes in a VR experience together and then find themselves sitting down to have lunch together while continuing a conversation about the experience.”

It’s a large enough market that another VR specialist, Dallas-based Mynd Immersive, competes against Rendever with services tailored for senior living communities.

Besides helping create social connections, the VR programming from both Rendever and Mynd has been employed as a possible tool for potentially slowing down the deleterious effects of dementia. That’s how another Silicon Valley retirement village, the Forum, sometimes uses the technology.

Bob Rogallo, a Forum resident with dementia that has rendered him speechless, seemed to be enjoying taking a virtual hike through Glacier National Park in Montana as he nodded and smiled while celebrating his 83rd birthday with his wife of 61 years.

Sallie Rogallo, who doesn’t have dementia, said the experience brought back fond memories of the couple’s visits to the same park during the more than 30 years they spent cruising around the U.S. in their recreational vehicle.

“It made me wish I was 30 years younger so I could do it again,” she said of the virtual visit to Glacier. “This lets you get out of the same environment and either go to a new place or visit places where you have been.”

In another session at the Forum, 93-year-old Almut Schultz laughed with delight while viewing a virtual classical music performance at the Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Colorado and later seemed to want to play with a puppy frolicking around in her VR headset.

“That was quite a session we had there,” Schultz said with a big grin after she took off her headset and returned to reality.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

### PUBLIC NOTICE ORDINANCE NO. 181, 2025

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ASHLAND, KENTUCKY, AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING CHUCK D. CHARLES, MAYOR, TO EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT WITH HOPE'S PLACE, THE SUB-RECIPIENT OF \$148,792.00 FOR ROOF REPLACEMENT FROM THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT.

### ORDINANCE NO. 182, 2025

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ASHLAND, KENTUCKY, AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING CHUCK D. CHARLES, MAYOR, TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT BETWEEN THE CITY OF ASHLAND AND COSBY CONSTRUCTION, LLC FOR THE FERRY STREET AND POLLARD ROAD SIDEWALK PROJECT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$158,116.00 FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO BE PAID FROM COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) FUNDS.

### ORDINANCE NO. 183, 2025

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ASHLAND, KENTUCKY, AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING CHUCK D. CHARLES, MAYOR, TO EXECUTE AMENDMENT NO. 1 TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION GRANT AGREEMENT UNDER THE FISCAL YEAR 2022 SAFE STREETS AND ROADS FOR ALL (SS4A) GRANT PROGRAM EXTENDING THE CONTRACT DURATION BY EIGHT (8) CONSECUTIVE MONTHS AND NAMING THE MAYOR AS THE OFFICIAL PROJECT REPRESENTATIVE.

### ORDINANCE NO. 184, 2025

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ASHLAND, KENTUCKY, AMENDING PART VI: BENEFITS, A. HOLIDAYS AND C. VACATION LEAVE, OF THE “POLICIES AND PROCEDURES, COMPENSATION PLAN AND CLASSIFICATION PLAN” AS ADOPTED BY ORDINANCE NO. 51, SERIES OF 2017, AS PREVIOUSLY AMENDED.

### ORDINANCE NO. 185, 2025

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ASHLAND, KENTUCKY, AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING CHUCK D. CHARLES, MAYOR, TO EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF ASHLAND, KENTUCKY AND AP3, LLC REGARDING OPERATING CONTROL OF THE PARAMOUNT ARTS CENTER FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE YEARS BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2026 IN THE AMOUNT OF \$10,000 PER MONTH.

/s/CHUCK D. CHARLES  
MAYOR

ATTEST:  
/s/ SUSAN W. MADDIX  
CITY CLERK

ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:  
December 11, 2025  
READOPTED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:  
December 12, 2025

### CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the titles of Ordinance Nos. 181, 182, 183, 184 and 185, 2025 are true and accurate summaries of the contents of the ordinances prepared by the Legal Department of the City of Ashland, Kentucky, consisting of attorneys licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

/s/Andrew K. Wheeler  
Corporation Counsel

Subscribed and sworn to before me by Andrew K. Wheeler this 12th day of December, 2025. My commission as a Notary Public will expire January 2, 2028.

/s/SAMANTHA A. SALYERS  
NOTARY PUBLIC  
STATE OF KENTUCKY AT LARGE  
ID# KYNP508

Published: December 26, 2025

## PUBLIC NOTICE

### Continued from Previous Page

- When, in the judgment of any of the above-named City officials, a violation exists which requires immediate abatement, the City official shall have authority to revoke a Special Event Permit in the absence or unavailability of the City Manager, or his designee.
- The Applicant made or allowed to be made a false or misleading statement or omission of material fact on a Special Event Application that was not discovered until after the Special Event Permit was issued.
- The Applicant fails to timely pay as required any costs or fees due subsequent to the issuance of a Special Event Permit.

### SECTION 10. CONDUCT OF SPECIAL EVENTS REGULATED; NON-TRANSFERABILITY OF PERMIT

Special Event Permits are applicant and place specific. No permit or conditionally approved permit application may be transferred or assigned from person to person, to another entity, or place to place. Rain dates and/or rain locations will be at the discretion of the City Manager.

### SECTION 11. APPEAL

If the City Manager, or his designee, denies the issuance of a Special Event Permit, or if the City revokes an issued Special Event Permit, the Applicant shall promptly be notified in writing. Such written notice shall include the reasons for the decision to deny or revoke the Special Event Permit. The Applicant or Permittee may appeal the denial or revocation to the Board of Commissioners which shall consider any such appeal at its next regularly scheduled meeting at least seven (7) days after the receipt of the notice of an appeal.

### SECTION 12.

Ordinance No. 157, Series of 2020, Ordinance No. 103, Series of 2022, and Ordinance No. 178, Series of 2022 are hereby repealed in their entirety and all other ordinances and parts of ordinances in conflict herewith, to the extent of such conflict only, are hereby repealed.

### SECTION 13.

This ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its adoption, readoption and publication, as required by law.

/s/CHUCK D. CHARLES  
MAYOR

ATTEST:  
/s/ SUSAN W. MADDIX  
CITY CLERK

ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:  
November 20, 2025  
READOPTED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:  
December 11, 2025

Published: December 26, 2025