

CENTERED ON LAND

Name: Prairie Crossing

Location: Grayslake, Ill.

Total size: 667 acres

Residential: 132 acres

**Non-residential/commercial/
light industrial:** 132 acres

Open space: 403 acres

Residential units planned:

317 single-family houses

Lot size: 7,700 to 20,000 square feet

Unit size: 1,478 to 3,500 square feet

Price: \$210,000 to \$406,000

Sales began: February 1995

Sales pace: 4 units per month



Paragon planners: The landscape-conservation ideologies of developers Vicky and George Ranney are proving profitable.

Sitting down to their community potluck suppers this summer, Prairie Crossing residents are feasting on fresh vegetables grown on a farm and garden just a few hundred yards from their homes.

The working farm and organic garden are part of 403 acres of preserved land at Prairie Crossing, located in Grayslake, Ill., 40 miles north of Chicago. The farm produces vegetables, fruit, and flowers for residents and others who purchase shares each year. In all, 60 percent of the land at this community will be preserved as open space—lakes, marshes, wetlands, pastures, and of course, prairie.

In contrast to the city-in-the-suburbs feel of TNDs, Prairie Crossing maintains a rural setting in the midst of encroaching suburbia. At the same time it holds a strong identity, unlike so many faceless PUDs. This identity comes from a focus on the land that unites the residents. Even though its town square and community center are nowhere near completion, Prairie Crossing already has strong esprit de corps. "People here are committed to contributing to their community," says Frank Martin, president of Shaw Homes, which is building Prairie Crossing's 317 homes. "The land provides a common interest that unites them. It gets them committed and involved."

The development group, headed by George Ranney and Victoria Post Ranney, studied planned and agricultural communities around the world while creating their plan for this 667-acre site. They imitat-

ed site configurations from farming towns in Yorkshire, England. They used environmentally friendly swales to channel water instead of curbs and gutters, in the same way the planners of Davis, Calif., did. They copied walking trails used in Reston, Va. And like Columbia, Md., they are striving for racial diversity.

More than anything, however, it was the prairie and farm landscape that drove the plan, says Martin. And the community's look and feel reflect the area's agricultural heritage. Prairie wildflowers and a split rail fence greet residents at the community entrance. An 1890 dairy barn provides the framework for the community center at the market square. A salvaged one-room schoolhouse anchors the other end of the market square. Windbreaks of Osage orange trees brought in by the first settlers run through the community. There's even a barn for those residents who want to keep a horse or goat.

The Ranneys live adjacent to the site and developed the property to protect it from higher density development. They want Prairie Crossing to be a model for other developers, not pie-in-the-sky created by the privileged, so they're committed to ensuring the project's economic viability.

They seem to have the right formula: With 65 sales so far, the \$100 million project is on target to make its goal of 6 to 8 percent returns, Martin says.—M.H.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more on Prairie Crossing, see BUILDER Online at <http://www.builderonline.com>



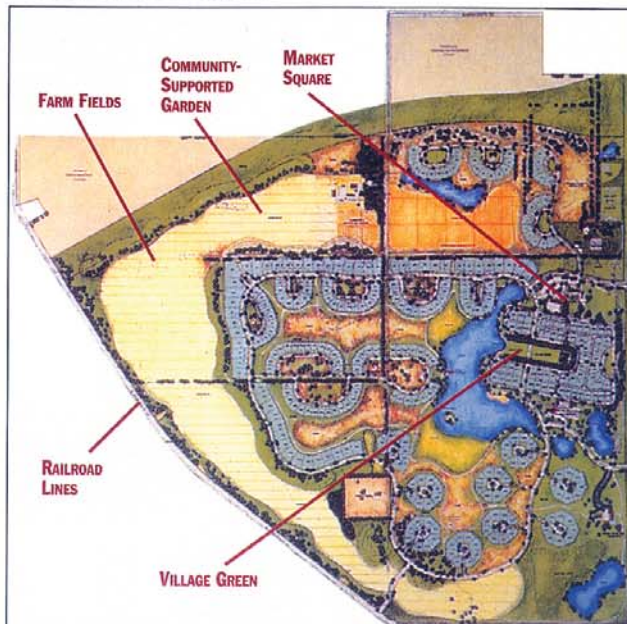
Prairie Crossing's Guiding Principles

1. Environmental protection and enhancement.
2. A healthy lifestyle.
3. A sense of place.
4. A sense of community.
5. Economic and racial diversity.
6. Convenient and efficient transportation.
7. Energy conservation.
8. Lifelong learning and education.
9. Aesthetic design and high-quality construction.
10. Economic viability.

GEORGE CHAPPELL/CHAPPELL LOCKHART & ASSOCIATES



Nostalgic efficiency: Chicago architects Margaret McCurry, Jim Nagle, and Rick Phillips created 17 plans in Prairie Crossing that echo the architecture of 19th-century farmhouses. The plans are the first in the country to adopt the U.S. Department of Energy's Building America program for energy efficiency and environmental sensitivity.



COURTESY: PRAIRIE CROSSING COMMUNITA

Amber waves of grain: Every home site at Prairie Crossing connects to open space. Amenities will include a village green: a market square with 20,000 square feet of commercial space including a community and fitness centers; plus playgrounds, a 22-acre lake, and miles of gravel trails.