

# SYLVAN SETTING

Lake Barrington Shores' attention to detail has made the Chicago-area development an award winner.

In the not-too-distant past, little thought was given to the landscape during construction of a housing or resort community. Often, a perfectly good setting was destroyed to make room for the buildings, then a landscape was designed around them.

However, efforts are being made to correct that. With careful planning and a lot of effort, the natural beauty of a development can remain, and often is enhanced.

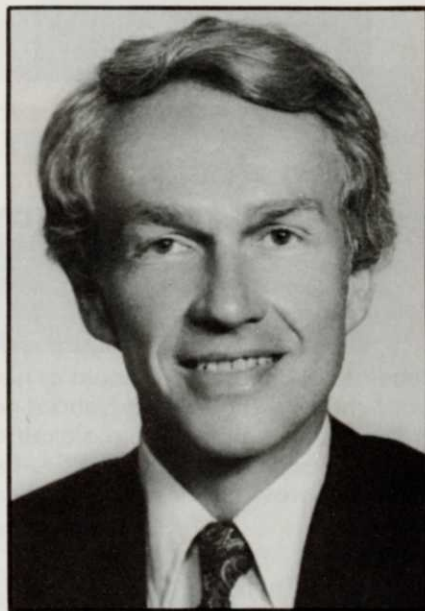
"It was a conscious decision at the outset to use the natural setting at Lake Barrington Shores as a canvas and improve it as much as possible," says John Smolenski, director of sales and marketing at the 520-acre residential/resort community near northwest suburban Barrington, Ill.

Lake Barrington Shores, a \$200 million townhome and condominium development designed around 100-acre Lake Barrington, received a "Best of 1985" award from the Chicago Sun-Times in February, 1986, for the year's finest use of land among home developers. In addition, ILT, the landscape management company working on the community, won a gold award from the Illinois Landscape Contractors Association for environmental improvement in multi-family landscape maintenance.

Bud Wehler of Lipp Wehler Peterson Ltd., a landscape architect com-



Country Club condos overlooking the golf course. First floor is Pinehurst, second floor Cypress.



**John Smolenski says Lake Barrington Shores enhances the natural surroundings.**

pany in Geneva, Ill., had the overall responsibility of designing and maintaining the woody landscape. When construction was ready to begin on the community in 1974, Wehler says, "We walked the site before the first home was built. Lake Barrington is partially situated in an oak forest," Wehler notes. "On one side of the

lake, we had many large specimens and the supporting vegetation to work with."

The other side of the lake was the opposite. That area was a plowed field on the original property—a farm, still bare and furrowed. That field became the site of the 18-hole, 6,405-yard championship golf course. "But, we still had to consider trees and plantings to act as a buffer between the course and the homes that would line it," remembers Wehler.

After determining the site's natural assets, Wehler talked with Edward and Kenneth James, co-developers of the property, and Harry Reid, California-based architect of the homes.

They emphasized the need to preserve the area's natural woodland beauty. Wehler's company worked with the site planner to indicate which trees, or clusters of plant material, should be preserved.

"The result is that, in some instances, a house layout may change a few feet, or the road layout is adjusted to avoid disrupting an area we'd like to preserve," Wehler says. Wood snow fences were put up during construction to mark which areas to preserve.

## **A group effort**

"Usually groups of plant materials, not just one tree, are saved," Wehler

says. Since oaks feed within the top six inches of soil, an area of secondary plant life around the tree is preserved "because plants protect each other," he explains. After certain specimens were selected, other measures had to be taken after construction began.

"In some cases the grading had to be changed to redirect the drainage. Or if a wall or walkway was too close, a retaining wall had to be built around the tree and plant material," Wehler notes. Some specimens from the forested area were transplanted to the area bordering the homes along Lake Barrington Shores' golf course and common areas. Some evergreens that were moved were as tall as 35 feet.

Plant selection varies with each new condo phase built, but the techniques of preservation and relocation are pretty much the same, Wehler says. (Landscape planning has begun for the 11th phase of construction. More than 1,050 of the proposed 1,360 units have been completed.)

"We work with the larger and existing plant materials, and compromise with the construction company to save some specimens, transplant some or lessen the destruction of others," Wehler says.

After the homes are built, smaller flowering plants, low evergreens and ground cover are installed. Various types of trees are planted, including ash, honey locust, lindens, sugar maples and more ornamental varieties, such as river birch, flowering crab apples and alders.

"We also select a range of plants that will provide a landscape 'show' for all seasons," Wehler adds. "For example, Cornelian cherry blooms in early spring before forsythia; then come red bud and lilacs. The flowering crab apple trees bloom in early spring. Potentilla with yellow blossoms, spirea and hydrangeas with white blossoms, bloom in summer.

"Dwarf shrubs add greenery and changing leaf colors in fall and the witch hazel shrub blooms in fall," Wehler explains. "Later, evergreens inject color and a softening effect into the winter landscape."

#### Down to size

Smaller blossoming trees, shrubs and evergreens work to keep buildings in human scale. "The plants bring buildings down to a life-size scale and soften the structural lines," Wehler says. "Homesites literally are part of the landscape.

"What we've done is keep the specimen plants in scale with the building," he adds. "It looks good as soon as (the owners) move in."

This same principle applies to the

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*So much importance is placed on restoration and preservation that the condominium association even has a special assessment to replace dead trees.*

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At Lake Barrington Shores, avid golfers can tee off just a few steps from home.

landscaping done around the common area buildings at Lake Barrington Shores. Near the golf clubhouse, which recently underwent a \$250,000 expansion, Scotch pines were planted to complement an existing group of sugar maples that's being preserved. To add further visual softness, red jade (a type of weeping crab apple tree) was planted nearby.

Wehler estimates a 1:1 ratio between man-made environment and the natural environment. "Keeping a natural-looking community is important," sales director Smolenski stresses. "This 520-acre site was selected because of its natural beauty. The homes have natural cedar siding and shingles. The preservation or restoration of plants and trees is important. This is not 'bulldozer country.'"

"It all blends into the landscape," Wehler adds. "Everything is oriented toward these natural spaces."

Smolenski says that so much importance is placed on restoration and preservation that the condominium association even has a special assessment to replace dead trees in the 35-acre private forest preserve.

Attention to the landscaping around the homes works in harmony with efforts to preserve or restore the naturally-wooded areas to create a lush and lasting forested community. "We plan landscaping for the next 25

years," Wehler notes.

Mature oaks, willows and pines which line Lake Barrington are proof that the years only magnify nature's beauty. Lake Barrington Associates is currently offering homes priced from \$118,200.

The development has won several awards for attention to landscaping and conservation, including citations from the Home Builders Association of Greater Chicago and the National Arborist Association.

Diversions offered by Lake Barrington Shores dwellers are fishing, sailing, canoeing, bathing on a huge sand beach adjacent to the community marinas, golfing and tennis (10 courts). Residents can also enjoy a 35-acre private forest and wildlife preserve, a three-mile jogging and biking path, and a clubhouse complex that includes both outdoor and indoor swimming pools.

Construction is expected to be completed within five years. The project itself will cover nearly 20 years.

"The developers found a terrific place and played up the natural surroundings," Wehler comments. "They've put people in there without disturbing the environment. I think that's quite an accomplishment."

It's an accomplishment worth noting — and one worth copying. **LM**