The Village of Burns Harbor Case Study

Project Information

Level of Certification: Three Stars NGBS Certified

Location: Burns Harbor, IN

Size of Site: 60-acre infill site

Site Details: 124 single-family lots, 181 multifamily units

Year Site Development Began: 1996

Project Team

Developer: Village Land Company, LLC

Designer: Looney Ricks Kiss and Weaver Sherman Design

Verifier: NAHB Research Center and Enery Diagnostics

Meaningful Partnerships: Save the Dunes

Key Features

Landscape Plan:

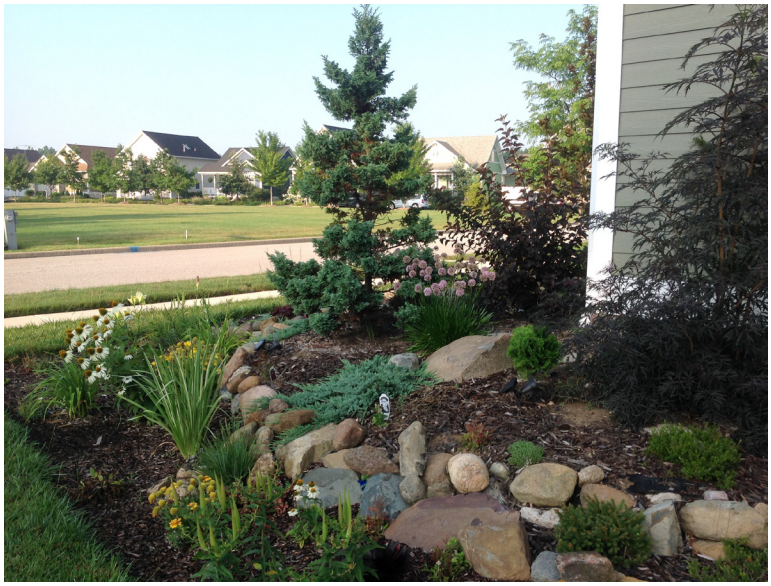
- Used regionally appropriate species for landscaped areas when possible.
- Open space and greenways are placed throughout the neighborhood.

Specifics

In 2009, The Village of Burns Harbor became the first development to receive the NGBS rating for sites and set the standard for future green development. The team behind the project succeeded in building a neighborhood that not only emulates environmentally sensitive design but also fosters community while remaining affordable.

The development team sought NGBS certification to bring national attention to the region and to inspire economic and residential development. The three-star NGBS certified neighborhood, unique in design to northwest Indiana, has set the stage for future sustainable development; established covenants require that all homes built in the Village meet the NGBS.

The original land plan, created by LRK, included open space and landscaping plans. Weaver Sherman Design later updated the plan with a denser design for single-family homes and multi-family dwellings. The design rehabilitated open space with native vegetation, and protected natural sensitive areas and existing hydrology.



Native Vegetation on Site

Unique to the area is the Village's bioswale, which spans multiple private lots and is co-maintained by the homeowners. The bioswale was planted with five native species that treat local stormwater as part of the neighborhood's Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan. The conservation nonprofit, Save the Dunes, partnered with the Village to obtain grants and permeable material for the bioswale project. Educating homeowners on why sustainable features, like the bioswale, are beneficial, and why certain maintenance protocols are necessary is an ongoing process. This promotes greater understanding and support of green development.

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Key Features Cont.

Innovative Practices:

- Challenged over 21 local ordinance requirements to achieve mixed-use development, higher density lots, and reduced street widths.

Stormwater Management:

- Preserved natural hydrology and drainage features to include in stormwater management.
- Incorporated a bioswale over six properties managed by the individual properties.

Sensitive Areas:

- Prioritized onsite forested wildlife habitat and reforested with native vegetation.

Existing and Recycled Materials:

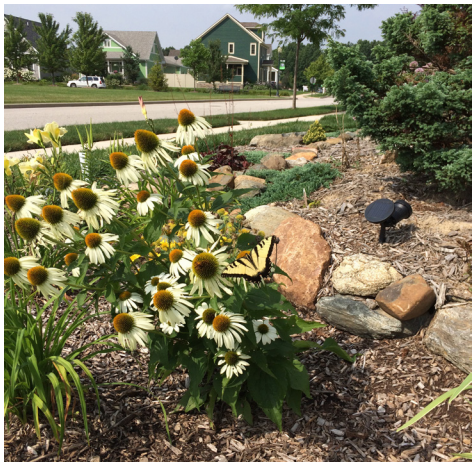
- Used the existing road and utility system from the previous site.

Tree and Vegetation:

- Preserved and planted new native species of trees throughout the site, including oak, ash, maple, sorghum, honey locusts.

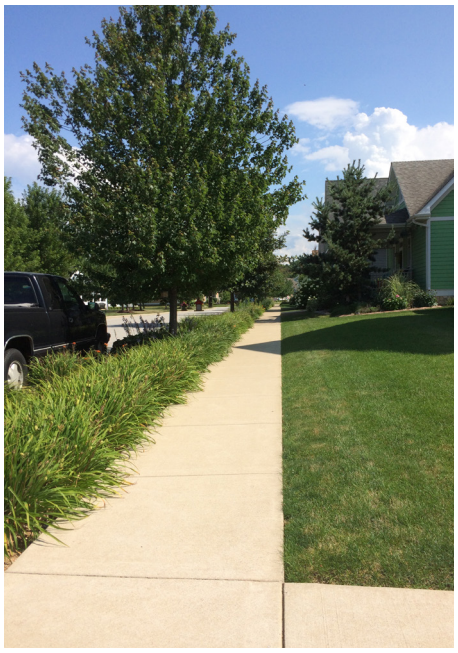
Mass Transit:

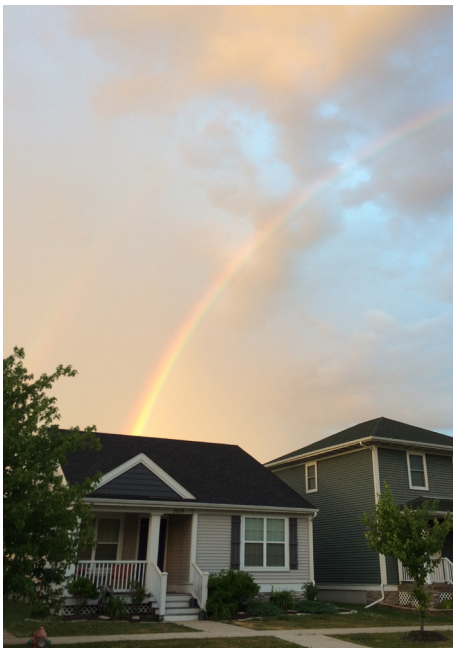
- Connected the Village to the Town Center via accessible walkways and bike paths along the shores of Lake Michigan.



Native Vegetation on Site

Throughout development, the team had to seek 21 variances from the town Burns Harbor to create unique design plans and allow for more open space. The granted variances allowed denser lots and reduced the width of roads and alleys. These changes, in addition to grants from the Northwest Michigan Coastal Program, assisted the city of Burns Harbor in developing a new comprehensive city plan with development ordinances. The new codes create a variety of housing options - including single, duplex, and apartments – with the goal of diversifying the community. The ability of the project team to navigate the variance process and have a successful outcome with a greater variety of affordable housing options, while promoting sustainable practices, makes Burns Harbor a model development.





All information in this case study was provided by one or more members of the project team.
For information on certifying your project to the NGBS, visit homeinnovation.com/green

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