

# The Name Says it All

*The Sanctuary* balances development and environmental protection

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Charlotte, North Carolina, is a bustling university town and center for the arts, upscale shopping, and dining. It is also one of the 10 fastest growing metropolitan areas in the nation, with associated traffic congestion and loss of rural natural areas to show for it. Among 15 cities in the U.S. studied in a growth analysis of preservation of rural land, Charlotte ranked last at limiting the loss of rural land and open space in the 1990s (*Northwest Environment Watch*, 2004). Between 1984 and 2001, Mecklenburg County (which includes Charlotte) saw a 127-percent increase in areas covered by impervious surfaces.

residential development named *The Sanctuary* is one place where developers are striking that balance. *The Sanctuary*, developed by Crescent Resources LLC, recently achieved status as the first Certified Gold Audubon Signature Sanctuary in the state of North Carolina.

*The Sanctuary* is located along seven miles of quiet northern shoreline of Lake Wylie, the largest and oldest of four lakes on the Catawba River, which supplies much of the drinking water to the more than 700,000 residents of Mecklenburg County. Because of the project's proximity to such a large and regionally important water body, maintaining water quality by controlling development impacts was critical to Audubon International's work with Crescent Resources LLC.

## Siting and Design

Fostering more environmentally-sensitive, planned growth begins with a well thought out design. *The Sanctuary's* primary distinction is its low-density approach. Crescent Resources limited homesites to 189 on the 1,348-acre property, while leaving 80% of the land undisturbed. The vast majority of the project site will remain wooded, with 215 acres preserved as common open space and 20 miles of nature trails for residents to enjoy.

The site's topography is typical of the Piedmont area of North Carolina, with obvious ridges and valleys sloping toward Lake Wylie. To protect water quality, Crescent Resources LLC designated a 200-foot-wide conservation corridor, or lakefront setback, along the entire lake front. The setback is four times the distance required by Mecklenburg County. The conservation corridor and 100-foot no-clear buffers along stream channels provide a filtering mechanism for stormwater runoff, while at the same time help-



ing to conserve the habitat value of the land.

Audubon International and Crescent Resources studied and mapped the natural characteristics of the land and customized a "development envelope" for each house lot, designating areas for the main house, as well as any accessory structures, such as a detached guest house, swimming pool, or other smaller buildings. The lots are billed as *private preserves*, with no clearing and minimal pruning allowed outside the development envelope. Rock outcroppings, flowing or ephemeral streams, lake edges, unusual or noteworthy native plants, mature specimen trees, bird nesting sites, wetlands, and views are among the features that give each preserve its own character.

Audubon International also worked with Crescent Resources LLC to create an interconnected network of habitat preserves to maintain the overall biodiversity of the property. Preserves wind throughout *The Sanctuary* and also link with other habitat patches in the surrounding area to facilitate wildlife movement.

## Model home demonstrates green features

Arcadia Homes, Inc. of Charlotte constructed a model home at *The Sanctuary* to demonstrate how "green living" features can be incorporated without sacrificing convenience or luxury. The model is presently used



*The Sanctuary's* 20 miles of nature trails wind through scenic woodlands along Lake Wylie. Natural Resource Manager Sarah Anderson and Crescent Resources' Project Manager James F. Martin work to ensure that the property's unique resources are protected as development proceeds.

The challenge for developers and city planners alike is how to balance Charlotte's growth and demand for new housing with the need to protect the environment and preserve what makes it an attractive community in the first place. Just a few minutes and a short trip east of the city, a new



Protecting Lake Wylie was of central importance in the project's design.

woods. The trees shade the building in summer, keeping it cooler and reducing energy demands for air conditioning. The structure also blends into the surroundings through the use of stone, wood, and trim in earth tone colors.

In the case of *The Sanctuary*, good environmental design and Gold Signature status is an attractive selling point for Crescent Resources LLC. Lower maintenance costs and a beautiful, environmentally progressive setting are drawing homeowners.

"In nearly every respect *The Sanctuary* sets a needed standard for developers in the Charlotte area," says Ron Dodson, President and CEO of Audubon International. "The Crescent Resources team, the home builders, and the various consulting firms involved have all embraced our Principles for Sustainable Resource Management. Now that the private preserves and homes are being purchased, we are confirming what we believed in the beginning—that customers are also looking for environmentally friendly lifestyles. *The Sanctuary* is a real winner on all fronts." ●

as a sales center where potential buyers can check out both interior and exterior environmental features. Energy-efficient kitchen appliances include *Energy Star* products, such as a Viking range, refrigerator, and dishwasher. Water is conserved by dual flush toilets. A hot water circulating system supplies "on demand" hot water. A high-efficiency air handling system allows air to be filtered and returned to the home using less energy and contributing to a cleaner environment.

Outside, the building design and landscaping also promote environmental sensitivity. In place of a manicured lawn, a grove of mature trees complements surrounding



#### Environmentally desirable materials and construction are the hallmark of The Sanctuary's model home:

- Recycled cork used in flooring and recycled material used in sub-flooring
- Truss-joint floor joints consist of recycled materials
- Oriented strand board (OSB) used for exterior and roof sheathing as an alternative to plywood
- Wall insulation made from recycled paper (cellulose), which provides great insulation value compared to fiberglass and comes from recycled material
- Carpets made from recycled soda bottles
- Low VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) paints both inside and out reduce greatly the amount of ozone depleting VOCs released into the atmosphere.
- Limited turf for home landscaping, drought tolerant plants, and plants of similar low maintenance requirements are used to minimize the amount of irrigation needed.
- Pervious pavement used in driveway construction allows water to drain through the slab, rather than runoff. Pervious concrete eliminates the erosion and stormwater runoff problems often associated with impervious surfaces.
- A rain garden in the center of the cul de sac of the driveway helps filter stormwater.
- Rain water diffusers added to downspouts cut down on erosion and help water infiltrate into the ground.

The sales center and model home showcase numerous environmentally-friendly features. Homes in *The Sanctuary* are subject to design guidelines enforced by a design review board.