

Sanctuary takes shape near Woodstock

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WOODSTOCK - It may not be the ultimate sanctuary, but for this earth The Sanctuary of Bull Valley will do.

More than 50 percent of the 200-acre subdivision will be devoted to open space, which includes a landscape that receding glaciers left behind.

That landscape included broad, open prairies where tall grasses flourished, and gently rolling hills studded with forests or kettle moraines. Where the landscape has eroded or become infested with non-native vegetation, the restoration process is under way.

There is still room for 105 homes at the Sanctuary, which works out to almost one house an acres but the lot size ranges from 3/4 to 3 acres.

Lot prices start in the \$100,000s and can rise to more than \$300,000.

Homes will be of the more expensive variety, said developer Jack Porter, with prices ranging from \$800,000 to \$2 million.

"we've already sold 38 of the 105 lots," Porter said in late June.

"We project all the lots will be sold in two to three years.

"It might take 10 years or more before the area is built out as some properties are bought for investments."

Construction on the first homes begins in this month. "We have five qualified builders in The Sanctuary.

"The builders we allow in have to go through an information process, especially on environmental issues.

"The five we have given permission to build are custom builders and experienced in this type of development." Porter said.



Greg Hess / Northwest Herald

Jack Porter of Knickerbocker Properties in Woodstock helped plan the heavily wooded strategy for The Sanctuary of Bull Valley subdivision.

Sanctuary

Roads and home sites are placed to maintain mature trees and open vistas.

Grass swales and moraines replace curbs and gutters and are used to handle water runoff. The swales filter the rain and let it return to the earth to replenish the groundwater supply.

Savannas are being reestablished with native grasses and wildflowers. An historic oak savanna dominates the site and will be restored with a canopy of burr, red and white oak (the Illinois state tree).

Other species of trees have been planted, including maple, ash, basswood and butternut hickory.

A team of ecologists, foresters, landscape architects, and engineers has been working with state and local agencies to preserve and rebuild the natural features.

Their work began in the fall of 2002 with the thinning and removal of non-native and weedy vegetation. Space and light became available for the native trees to thrive.

“The Sanctuary relies on traditional and environmental fundamentals and we are committed to moving forward wisely,” Porter said

“The result will be a truly eco-friendly community for people interested in taking care of the land.”

Strict covenants and guidelines address issues such as use of pesticides and fertilizers, mowing and grading, protection of wetlands, prairies and woodlands.

“People who choose to live in The Sanctuary will be stewards of the environment, protecting this rare landscape for future generations,” Porter said.

CITY LIFE GOES ON NEARBY

Proximity to Woodstock means homeowners benefit from city sewer and water as well as the schools, shopping, and city amenities.

When Hollywood producers were looking for the quintessential American city as a setting for the movie “Groundhog Day,” they chose Woodstock. And no wonder.



Greg Hess / Northwest Herald

Jack Porter has restored prairie and preserved old-growth trees for The Sanctuary of Bull Valley subdivision.

This community celebrates both its heritage and its future with Victorian architecture, a bustling business community, and downtown’s The Square, Porter said.

Shops and restaurants surround The Square, which has been the scene of summer band concerts since 1885.

The Woodstock Opera House, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, hosts a variety of entertainment year round.

The opera house has been a fixture on The Square for more than 110 years.

Woodstock is an hour by car from Chicago and Rockford. Milwaukee is 90 minutes northeast by car. Metra serves the Chicago

area and there is a Woodstock depot.

Proximity to major cities means Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport, Midway, Greater Rockford Airport, and Milwaukee’s Mitchell Field are not far away.

Porter has lived in Woodstock nine years, and is developing The Sanctuary in conjunction with Knickerbocker Properties.

In addition to his responsibilities with The Sanctuary, Porter currently heads Jack Porter & Associates, a consulting and development firm, Portal Construction, a construction company, and Portico Homes, a custom home builder.

Knickerbocker Properties is a real estate investment company owned by Wells Manufacturing Co. of Woodstock, which has been in business more than 50 years.

Wells is the world leader in the production and machining of continuous cast iron bar stock and has operations in Illinois, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania.

The company provides engineered metal products and services to a number of industries, including fluid power, aerospace, automotive, and agriculture.

For information, call (815) 334-8265 or visit www.sanctuaryofbv.com.