

MONDAY AT HOME



A walking/interpretive path is just one of the amenities that made the Blue Heron Pointe plan an award-winner

From eyesore to eye-catcher

Condos win planning award

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Staff Writer

Once upon a time there was a large gravel pit in Northville Township. The pit presented problems, being an eyesore and also the site of erosion.

Although the area was home to a lake and wetlands, it had also lain dormant for nearly 30 years. Many developers surveyed the one-time gravel pit and many turned away because of several problems.

But almost two years ago Robert C. Leighton Associates, Inc. tackled the site disadvantages, behind Beck Development Company and with architect Walter Coponen Associates, Inc. and JCK Engineering, to create an award-winning development.

The Michigan Chapter of the American Planning Association (MAPA) recently recognized Robert Leighton's consulting firm with the Outstanding Planning Award for participation in the Blue Heron Pointe condominium development which now sits on the site of the old pit.

In addition, the project has garnered praise by Builder/Architect magazine and the Areawide Water Quality Board.

The board recognizes Leighton Associates and Beck Development for

the wetland . . . This positive earth stewardship . . . enhances both the environment and the community economically and aesthetically."

MAPA also singles out the environmental sensitivity of the project. Leighton Associates was able to preserve all the wetlands in the pit, except one.

Further, the firm innovatively employs a storm-water filtration system to insure the water quality of the lake. The system catches the water and funnels it through a septic tank, which is cleaned annually by residents.

Despite the success of the unique system, Leighton experienced difficulties gaining its acceptance.

"It took us a while to convince the DNR to take a look at it," Leighton said. "I think they're going to use it as a standard technique now."

James Anulewicz, director of the Plymouth Township Department of Public Services, nominated the project for the MAPA award, saying, "They made a liability into an asset."

Located on Beck Road between Six and Seven Mile roads, Blue Heron Pointe has 140 residential units, each with direct access to the water, and is 75-percent complete, Leighton said.



From eyesore to asset, Blue Heron Pointe demonstrates how sound planning can overcome

iciz said. "And just as we're critical, we need to point out areas that need to be highlighted."

He also highlighted the storm water filtration system in his praise of Leighton Associates.

much attention, Leighton modestly credits the development firm, the architect, the engineers and Northville for the project's success.

"First of all, when we came in with what we wanted to do, (Northville

nances to help us."

Leighton previously worked for large consulting firms throughout the nation, but started his own Arbor-based group nearly four years ago.