



In this special section see how one developer, one cottage owner, and a group of entrepreneurs represent the best of “the green life.” Whether you change your lightbulbs or lifestyle, you’ll get ideas for your community, your home, and what you put on the kitchen table

## “This community walks the talk”

Prairie Crossing in Grayslake, Illinois (north of Chicago), combines urban, suburban, and rural experiences to set a new standard for responsible neighborhood development

**HOME ON THE RANGE JUST GOT EASIER**, for the people and the prairie. Clustered cottages resemble homesteads overlooking historic hedgerows, native prairie and wetland grasses, trails, and 90 acres of organic farmland. In its native setting, bluestem grows chin-high. Kids ride their bikes to the on-site public elementary school, and residents buy their produce at a farm market. And the picture-perfect pastoral has an urban side: The Metra train to downtown Chicago takes just over an hour.

Forty miles north of the Windy City, the decade-mature community of Prairie Crossing combines the best of suburban and urban with a deep-rooted connection to rural natural history.

In the seventies, a developer swooped in and bought up many small farms here, but some concerned neighbors, including printing mogul and conservationist Gaylord Donnelley, banded together and resisted plans for a “conventional” build that they feared would destroy the countryside. After a long court battle that went to the U.S. Supreme Court (but settled in 1986), Donnelley and seven other neighboring families bought the property and established the Prairie Holdings Corporation, Prairie Crossing’s developer.

George and Vicky Ranney, a former business executive and landscape historian, respectively, then later conservation developers in the >



**Ten miles of trails** traverse the open spaces and restored prairies. This loop (left) encircles the 22-acre Lake Aldo Leopold.

**When two-thirds of the neighborhood** is preserved open space, who needs a yard?

### Community Profile

**Where:** Grayslake, Illinois, 40 miles north of Chicago

**Average House Price:** \$330,000

**Home Size Range:** 1,600 to 3,500 square feet

**Green Space:** about 60% is protected open land