



# NORTHWEST CROSSING

*Creating a Healthy and Livable Community*

## Featured Category

### Healthy Livable Communities



CREATE A HEALTHY AND LIVABLE COMMUNITY

## Location

**Bend, Oregon**

## What's There Now

- » Two schools
- » About 700 occupied homes
- » Three parks
- » Some commercial retail
- » Trails
- » Approx. 100 acres of residential land still to be developed

## Applicable GHG Reduction Strategies<sup>1</sup>

- » Development Types (Compact, Mixed-Use)
- » Schools
- » Pedestrian Environment
- » Bicycle Facilities
- » Roundabouts
- » Plan and Code Amendments

## Planned Livability

Located about 1.5 miles west of downtown Bend, NorthWest Crossing is a master planned neighborhood that exemplifies the concept of a healthy and livable community. In just under 500 acres, NorthWest Crossing contains a variety of housing types, a mix of architectural styles, complete streets, community-scaled businesses, two schools, and an employment area intended to provide jobs within the community. Amenities are provided throughout the neighborhood, including 32 acres of public parks. A community garden, built by the developer and managed by the Oregon State University Extension Service, provides public gathering and gardening space for over 50 families each year. Areas of preserved open space, mature trees and scenic views are connected by a network of paved trails. Thoughtful planning and design, and preservation of natural features, lends to the feel of an older and well-established neighborhood that appeals to a broad demographic.

<sup>1</sup> Transportation and Land Use Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Toolkit Database, ODOT, 2011.

*This case study is an illustration of strategies from the Transportation and Land Use Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Toolkit, and is intended to help local jurisdictions explore actions and programs that can reduce GHG emissions from transportation.*

## Challenges

**The master plan for NorthWest Crossing included an objective of providing affordable housing within the development.** However, efforts to deliver on that goal have been challenging due to the relatively high property values within the community. To address this issue, West Bend PC works with Housing Works, a non-profit housing authority that strives to provide affordable housing in Central Oregon counties. To date, West Bend PC has donated over six lots to the Housing Works land trust; in turn, Housing Works finds a qualified buyer to build on the lot and live in the home. If the homeowner sells, the land remains in the land trust and any appreciated value of the home is shared between Housing Works and the homeowner. This allows the homeowner to realize some return on their investment while also providing needed funding for Housing Works to continue their mission. West Bend PC plans to donate additional lots to Housing Works in the future.

**Attracting and maintaining commercial business within NorthWest Crossing has also proven difficult, particularly during the recession.** West Bend PC has made efforts to promote the neighborhood and provides incentives (discounted land costs) when possible. However, these efforts have limited impact when the market simply does not support new commercial development. The community has recently seen some improvements in the commercial center and more improvements are anticipated as the economy continues to recover. West Bend PC is especially interested in attracting a grocery store to the neighborhood within the next two to four years.



## Background & Land Use Planning

NorthWest Crossing<sup>2</sup> was once a tree farm belonging to Brooks-Scanlon, Inc., an Oregon timber company in the early to mid 1900s. When the last of the company's mills closed in 1994, Brooks-Scanlon was still in possession of roughly 500 acres of land at the western edge of Bend. To explore development opportunities on this land, Brooks-Scanlon created the West Bend Property Company. From the start, West Bend PC emphasized high-quality development that was innovative and environmentally responsive. That stance has been integral to the success of NorthWest Crossing.

The land use approvals for NorthWest Crossing involved amendments to the city's Comprehensive Plan and Development Code to adopt a new NorthWest Crossing Overlay Zone (Chapter 2.7.300) and change the previous base zone to Standard Density Residential (RS). The process also involved a master plan approval.

In addition, prototype handbooks were created that provide detailed development and design standards for new residential and commercial development within the overlay.

During the planning process, West Bend PC worked closely with city departments to ensure that plans for NorthWest Crossing were consistent with previously adopted master plans already in place for schools, parks, water and sewer. Negotiations between the various parties resulted in a number of agreements:

- » West Bend PC agreed to build four parks within NorthWest crossing that they would then donate to the Bend Parks & Recreation District (BPRD). The approach was mutually beneficial; BPRD received new public parks at no upfront cost and the developer created a community amenity that would help boost home sales.
- » West Bend PC donated land to the Bend-La Pine School District for construction of two schools: High Lakes Elementary and Summit High. In turn, the school district paid for infrastructure improvements needed to serve the schools, such as sewer service. This made infrastructure available to a large portion of the area, thus lowering costs for the developer.
- » The master plan for NorthWest Crossing incorporated significant infrastructure improvements, including an arterial road that runs north-south through the development. Major sewer and water infrastructure improvements were also constructed and paid for upfront by the developer. As compensation, the city agreed to provide reimbursements to West Bend PC for each new home that is constructed. The city collects system development charges (SDCs) from new homes as they are built and a portion of those SDCs are given back to the developer.

## Unique Attributes

Four key elements make NorthWest Crossing distinctive and have contributed to its success as a desirable community.

- » **Public ownership.** By design, there is no homeowners association for NorthWest Crossing. All common areas within the development, including parks and right-of-way, are public spaces that have been dedicated to the city. This approach avoids homeowner's dues and an additional layer of governance.
- » **Architectural review.** NorthWest Crossing has its own architectural review committee (ARC) comprised of three voting members. With

<sup>2</sup> Website for NorthWest Crossing: <http://www.northwestcrossing.com/>

## Key Successes



The combination of amenities offered in NorthWest Crossing has made it a desirable neighborhood, as evidenced by the high property values and building rates, even during the recent economic recession. Since development first began in 2001, the eastern two-thirds of the residential lots have been built. Plans are in place to begin development on the remaining approximately 100 acres of land to the west, which will include a combination of residential and commercial.

Other notable successes in NorthWest Crossing include:

- West Bend PC maintains a strong working relationship with a guild of about 25 builders who are invited - through a lottery process - to design and sell homes in NorthWest Crossing. Through the use of the prototype handbooks and careful selection and review process, they are able to prioritize quality home building in terms of materials, aesthetic design and sustainable practices. This practice has also resulted in a high diversity of architectural styles; no two homes in the neighborhood are exactly the same.
- NorthWest Crossing's success has also evidenced by its recognition in several publications, including articles in *Where to Retire Magazine*, *Terrain.org*<sup>2</sup> and a recently published book titled *Unsprawl: Remixing Spaces as Places*<sup>3</sup>. In addition, NorthWest Crossing has received a number of awards and accolades from various local and national organizations.

2 *NorthWest Crossing, UnSprawl Case Study* by Ken Pirie. Website: <http://www.terrain.org/unsprawl/18/>

3 *UnSprawl: Remixing Spaces as Places*, Simmons B. Buntin and Ken Pirie, Planetizen Press, 2013. Website: <https://www.planetizen.com/store/unsprawl>

help from an architect consultant, the ARC reviews proposed plans for all new homes and commercial development for consistency with the design standards established in the prototype handbooks. The ARC has the authority to approve or deny a proposal based on their review.

- » **Ongoing involvement.** West Bend PC remains highly involved in the day-to-day affairs of the community. The company sends out a monthly e-newsletter to residents and offers classified ads twice per week. West Bend PC has also surveyed community members regarding the types of services and amenities that are most desired within the community. In response to that survey, they are currently trying to attract a grocery store into the neighborhood. When all lots have sold and West Bend's role is relinquished, residents will vote on whether or not to elect a board and replace the ARC.
- » **Natural features.** Much of the land within NorthWest Crossing contained mature and healthy trees and scenic mountain views. The developer recognized these assets and, throughout the process, has emphasized retention of trees and other natural features as a priority. In working with home builders, West Bend PC encourages creative ways to preserve trees on lots where ever possible. As a result, many mature trees are located throughout the community.

## Strategies Used

Specific greenhouse gas reduction strategies that have been integrated into NorthWest Crossing are described below.

- » **Development types (compact and mixed-use).** NorthWest Crossing was master planned to include areas of compact, mixed-use development, along with areas of commercial and employment uses surrounded by higher density residential. Allowable densities within the development range from 7.2 units per acre to 19 units per acre, depending on the intended character of the particular sub-area. This approach will ultimately provide more opportunities for residents to live, shop, access services and work inside the community.
- » **Schools.** The inclusion of an elementary and high school within NorthWest Crossing was an important piece of the planning process. The Bend-La Pine School District worked with West Bend PC to strategically locate the schools to maximize opportunities for students to walk or bike to school and for residents to use the school fields after hours. The well-connected network of narrow streets and separated sidewalks and trails provide safe and convenient access to the schools for pedestrians and cyclists.
- » **Pedestrian environment.** NorthWest Crossing was designed to be pedestrian friendly. The street network is a well-connected grid with a distinctive radial pattern. Streets are narrow (9 to 10-foot travel lanes on most local streets) and are built with sidewalks, curb extensions and landscape buffers between the street and sidewalk. The narrow widths, on-street parking bays and roundabouts help slow vehicle speeds and increase pedestrian comfort. The off-street multi-use trails throughout the development provide an additional network of pedestrian connectivity.
- » **Bicycle facilities.** Many of the elements that contribute to a pleasant pedestrian environment also encourage bicycle use. All arterial and collector streets within NorthWest Crossing are required to include a six-foot bike lane in both travel directions. The multi-use trails are paved and designed to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians without conflict. Multifamily developments, schools, neighborhood commercial uses and employment uses are all required to provide sheltered bicycle parking.

- » **Roundabouts.** The street network in NorthWest Crossing includes a series of roundabouts on the two arterial roads serving the community. Use of the roundabouts reduces the amount of idling and supports a parkway-like street aesthetic. Roundabouts also provide traffic calming effects and were designed to emphasize pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- » **Plan and code amendments.** To regulate development within NorthWest Crossing, Bend adopted the Northwest Crossing Overlay Zone (Chapter 2.7.300) that contains development and design standards for various sub-districts within the overlay. The standards in the overlay zone apply in addition to the standards in the base RS zone. The overlay zone contains provisions that promote compact development and contribute to greenhouse gas reductions, including:



- Density targets in some sub-districts that are higher than the base zone densities
- Minimum lot sizes of 2,500 square feet with increased (or no) lot coverage maximums
- Provisions to allow for a broad mix of housing types, including townhomes, multifamily and mixed-use developments
- Provisions to allow cluster housing and cottage developments
- Shared parking allowances and standards to reduce minimum parking requirements under certain circumstances. Community commercial uses may not have more than five off-street vehicle parking spaces.
- Required bicycle parking (including covered parking) for community commercial uses
- Special street standards that require a well-connected grid pattern and allow for narrow street widths with on-street bike lanes

Development in NorthWest Crossing is also subject to the bicycle and pedestrian connectivity standards contained in a separate section (Chapter 3.1.300) of the Bend Development Code.

## Conclusions

Although NorthWest Crossing is somewhat unusual in that it was a large tract of developable land within close proximity to an existing downtown, some of the successful planning strategies used there are applicable in other communities, regardless of size and location. For example, thoughtful negotiations between the developer and the city found mutually beneficial ways to deliver high-quality public amenities such as schools, parks and trails. Though the developer absorbed much of the upfront costs to provide some of these amenities, they are now publically owned and maintained by the city and continue to serve as strong selling points, drawing people into the community and increasing property values.

Additionally, the use of an overlay zone and design prototype handbook provides several “layers” of regulation that help ensure quality development and offer flexibility for a variety of housing types and architectural styles. The avoidance of “cookie cutter” housing is a relatively unique attribute for a newer development and lends to the feel of a more established neighborhood.

The pedestrian-oriented approach to designing the development has also helped create a very livable community. Schools, parks and commercial-employment areas are connected by a gridded street pattern with landscaped sidewalks, bike lanes and off-street trails, all of which reduces the need for vehicle use within the community.

## Quantifying GHG Reduction

The Transportation and Land Use Greenhouse Gas Reduction Toolkit<sup>3</sup> estimates reduction ranges for several of the strategies mentioned in this case study. Those strategies with quantified reduction ranges are:

- Development types (compact development only): 0.2 – 1.8%, can be higher depending on how dense
- Schools: 0.2 – 2.1% for school placement strategy. None established for safe routes to schools program
- Pedestrian environment: 0.10 – 0.31%
- Bicycle facilities: 0.09 – 0.28%
- Roundabouts: 0.1%
- Plan and code amendments: 0.2 – 2.1%

While strategies are often combined to maximize effectiveness, the reduction ranges are not necessarily additive.

*The Toolkit is a component of the Oregon Sustainable Transportation Initiative (OSTI), which was formed to address the requirements of Senate Bill 1059 (2010).*

*For more information, please visit:*

<http://cms.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TP/pages/ghgtoolkit.aspx>

