

## ESSEX PARK

Families of all kinds find a home in Essex Park community

by Julia Versau

Few builder-developers have a track record to match Coolman Communities, Inc. This Porter County company has constructed some of the most enduring, picturesque, and livable communities – from the Village at Aberdeen to Heritage Valley to Rockwell Corners to Walden.

That's why prospective homebuyers will want to visit Essex Park, one of Coolman Communities' newest Valparaiso neighborhoods. Essex Park is a family-focused kind of place. Top notch residential design, affordable prices, and the amenities of the community have attracted every kind of family. The neighborhood is home to young families, single parents, newlyweds, and even empty nesters who want to live in a bustling community and who serve as Essex Park's honorary grandparents. Located five minutes from downtown Valparaiso off State Road 2, Essex Park is a quiet enclave, but still close to local schools, parks, and shopping.

Twelve different home plans allow buyers to find the style and layout they prefer. Prices start at just \$135,595 for a brand new single family home; home site prices start at \$36,400. Plans include two story, one and a half story, and single story ranch style residences, most with goodies – from bonus space to large walk-in closets in master bedrooms – that families crave.

Buyers should take advantage of some current deals at Essex Park. Families looking to buy a home here can get a new house started at Essex Park for just \$1000, which reserves the lot and gets construction rolling. And right now, Coolman Communities is offering some special incentives, including a low three percent down payment (instead of the usual five) and free homeowner association membership through the remainder of 2006 (Coolman will pay the annual dues). Also, the company will give \$1500 in upgrades chosen by the customer on the next four homes sold at Essex Park. Two finished home models and two currently under construction are available for viewing, and the company is now taking reservations for choice home sites in Essex Park's Phase III.

Residents here love the neighborhood. Pretty houses are clustered on a 40-acre site designed to maximize open space, including enlarged backyard play spaces for children the builder calls "rambles." Streets gently wind and curve to slow traffic and up the safety net for youngsters. A 75-foot greenbelt separates Essex Park from its closest residential neighbor (Heritage Valley) and a 90-acre wetland (harboring a host of native flora and fauna) is the community's own wildlife preserve. There's a skating pond, a soccer field, and an abundance of pocket parks.

The homes are built to be big enough for growing families, but affordable enough that the market is open to a broad range of homebuyers. That's a Coolman Communities specialty: designing great-looking homes with the amenities families want without an impossible price tag. Homeowners are able to choose many finishing features.

"We let the customer make as many of the selections as possible," explained Deanna Hardwick, the project manager at Essex Park. "Personalization is a big deal to us - we want our customers to feel their homes are singular in design, and unique to their own families."

Coolman Communities, Inc. has other design guidelines at Essex Park that make it a great place for families - and frankly, any homebuyer. Ninety percent of Essex Park homesites back up to green space. Street trees are cultivated to enclose streets, and sidewalks throughout the neighborhood make walks (from stroller age to cane age) enjoyable. Generous garages pulled to the

sides of the homes allow more room for family and friends to park on visits - and also create elevations that underscore the idea of houses built for people, not for cars.

The atmosphere at Essex Park is neighborly. This is a community where people look out for one another, where they join together to throw an all-neighborhood rummage sale, where seasoned and novice gardeners work hand-in-hand in Essex Park's own Garden Club. The ample front porches Coolman Communities likes to build come in handy in a neighborhood becoming known for its community spirit.

The homes are built to strict guidelines. Not only are the houses built to be functional and durable, but also to maximize energy efficiency. Every residence constructed by Coolman Communities complies with the U.S. Department of Energy's "Energy Star" program which reduces utility bills, provides healthier indoor air, lowers maintenance costs, provides a more comfortable and quieter home, helps protect the environment, and provides access to preferred financing programs.

Becoming partners with families so that the homes and neighborhood work for real people is important to Coolman Communities, Inc.

"Happy families who love their homes and community are our best messengers," Hardwick said. "A great home in a fantastic neighborhood is the American Dream. Our whole mission is to make that dream a reality for as many families as possible."

#### ON A SIDE NOTE

\* Visitors who stop by Essex Park tonight will see the community in action. The annual Essex Park all-neighborhood block party starts at 5 p.m. The neighborhood is also known for its active play groups for toddlers, social events, garden club, and community-wide garage sales.

\* Essex Park was named for the U.S.S. Essex, the flagship of Commodore David Porter. Porter, hero of the War of 1812's "Battle of Valparaiso" off the coast of Chile, has a name that lives on in Porter County - and now a neighborhood that pays homage to history. All of the streets in Essex Park derive their names from the various villages and towns in Essex County, Massachusetts where the mighty ship was built.

#### IF YOU GO

Essex Park's models and sales office are open today from 1 to 5 p.m. Hours are Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday from 1 to 5 p.m. To get to Essex Park, follow State Road 2 south to the entrance. For more information, call Coolman Communities, Inc. at (219) 464-7510. A wealth of information is also available on Essex Park and other Coolman neighborhoods at [www.coolmanbuilt.com](http://www.coolmanbuilt.com).