

**Draft Report**

## **Lincoln Ridge Landscape Issues and Opportunities**

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Draft Report on Landscape Issues and Opportunities  
Lincoln Ridge  
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## Introduction

At the request of the Lincoln Ridge Home Owners Association Board of Directors, an analysis of landscape issues and opportunities is presented for review and discussion. The community, being 40 years old, enjoys a landscape setting that is part preserved woods and part introduced species. Over the years the basic structure of the landscape setting has not changed, and in some cases has matured in a positive manner. However, opportunities to maintain and enhance the landscape structure remain to be pursued, and in some areas recently installed plantings have been eclectic and confused as to their rationale.

This report summarizes the author's initial observations. The observations are structured around the three zones previously discussed: 1.) the common landscape of the main roadway corridors and associated parking areas; 2.) the "front door landscape" associated with the walkways and yard areas connecting the garages and the front of the units; and 3.) the woodlands associated with the rear of the units and the adjacent conservation land. It should be noted that the distinctiveness of these three zones is offset to some degree by the overall unity of the native forest that Lincoln Ridge is located within. A canopy of oaks, maple, ash and other native shade trees interspersed with white pine prevails to some degree in all three zones.

## Criteria For The Analysis

The analysis of the Lincoln Ridge landscape was guided by four main criteria:

- Relationship to the natural setting: how successful is the relationship between the existing woodland setting and the introduced landscape? Are some plants too exotic for the setting? The existing woodland establishes an aesthetic and ecology which should be respected.
- Functionality: does the designed landscape of Lincoln Ridge fulfill functional roles such as screening, privacy, etc? Fortunately, privacy fencing is not a dominant feature in the landscape, thus placing greater importance on the effective use of plantings.
- Planting composition: are plant species selection and composition successful in terms of overall massing, foliage textures, spatial definition, relationship to architecture, etc? Conversely, have species selection and placement created discordant and random effects?
- Quality of details: Is the quality of site details such as roadway edges, parking, and walks consistent with the overall quality of the community? The paved infrastructure of the community, while utilitarian, is nonetheless an important design component of the landscape.

## Zone 1. The Common Landscape

The common landscape of the roadway corridors and parking areas is unified by the preserved woodland. The initial plantings by the developer of hemlock, rhododendron, forsythia and other shrubs have added seasonal color and foliage textures to the native woodland. The issues and opportunities associated with the common landscape include:

- **1.1 The entry road up to the service building/tennis court area:** this heavily wooded roadway segment allows views to adjacent development in Wayland which should be screened. Greater landscape interest

could be created by adding shade tolerant understory trees, particularly on the east side of the road. Some selective removal of trees would allow more sunlight to reach the new plantings.

- **1.2 The service building area:** Relatively little landscape enhancement exists in this area. As a first impression for the community, the area looks like a service zone as opposed to the community gateway which it should be. Ground covers, flowering shrubs, and/or evergreen plantings could transform the area into a landscape comparable to that of the better examples of landscape elsewhere in the community. New fencing of the service yard should extend the architecture of the service building.
- **1.3 East side of Birchwood Lane adjacent to units 12-24:** this area is confused between preserved native woodlands and areas recently planted with a mixture of new pines, spruce, amelanchier, birch, rhododendron, etc. To add to the confusion, the various plant species are randomly interspersed and located in lawn in one area and a mulch bed in the other. The total effect is neither a planned ornamental landscape nor a landscape intended to replicate the existing woodland.
- **1.4 West side of Birchwood Lane at Units 13-21:** A grouping of rhododendrons to the north of the entrance to units 13-21 is particularly strong visually given the curvature of the road driving north. A similar grouping of plants to the south of the entrance would help to screen the view to parking related to these units.
- **1.5 The intersection of Birchwood Lane and Winding Wood Lane:** The landscape impression conveyed at the northeast corner of the intersection is one of the weakest compositions of planting in the community.
- **1.6 Windingwood Lane:** A large, newly planted zone referred to above exists to the south of the road east of the intersection. This area is a lost opportunity. The new plantings are a random mixture of plants located in a large mulch bed with the final effect neither native nor planned. Given the amount of sunlight available in this area, the planting design could have featured a large lawn area with flowering trees along the road which would have added a striking landscape feature to the community.
- **1.7 Windingwood Lane at the turning circle:** this area has a positive and a negative: the interior of the circle is a very weak combination and composition of plants, while the recently planted lawn bordered by pines to the south of the circle is a pleasant relief to the dominant woodland landscape.
- **1.8 Birchwood Lane north of the Windingwood intersection:** the sharp curve in the roadway is visually reinforced by an attractive grouping of hemlocks on the east side, while on the opposite side a steep bank that drops to a lower lawn area is sparsely planted and covered by mulch and wood chips. While the view to the lower lawn area is positive, the landscape of the steep bank should be modified by adding ground cover and/or low shrub plantings.
- **1.9 Birchwood Lane near the entry to units 23-39:** Birchwood Lane at this location reaches a high point in its vertical alignment and is flanked by a planting of forsythia. The effect, which is positive, could be even more dramatic by substituting plants with more seasonal interest such as viburnums which have spring flowers, fall color, fall fruit, and handsome branching characteristics.
- **1.10 Birchwood Lane at its north terminus circle:** the interior of the circle is another example of confusion between a native woodland landscape and a planned landscape. The confusion is further aggravated by the presence of struggling rhododendrons that have been pruned back to their base stems and should be removed.
- **1.11 Landscape species in the roadway corridor and associated parking areas:** in general the hemlocks and rhododendrons introduced into the common landscape zone are appropriate for the setting. Fortunately the woolly adelgid apparently has not been a significant problem for the hemlocks and in most cases the rhododendrons have matured successfully. Questions could be raised about an over reliance on forsythia as a shrub, since it has one season of interest, and the presence of *Euonymus alatus* (burning bush) which is now considered an invasive plant in a woodland setting.

## **Zone 2. The Front Door Landscape**

The front door landscape is a zone loosely defined as the area associated with the garages and front entry areas of the residences. The landscape of this zone includes the greatest variety and extent of introduced plant materials and

is the area where over time residents have had the greatest influence on plant selection, placement, and maintenance. While the number of individual residence-related landscapes is too large to evaluate them individually, certain themes and observations are observable:

- **2.1 Planting composition:** noticeable differences exist between plant groupings that are cohesive in terms of textures and massing versus groupings that incorporate very diverse plant types and are spotty or random in terms of placement.
- **2.2 Relationship of plants and architecture:** notable examples exist of plantings that successfully frame building entrances, create attractive silhouettes and shadows on facades, and soften architectural lines.
- **2.3 Ground covers:** given the amount of shade that exists throughout the community, maintenance of lawn can be a challenge. Successful examples exist of ground cover plantings that not only replace lawn, but add texture and interest to the landscape on a year-round basis. Numerous ground cover species, both native and introduced, exist and thrive in the area and their broader use is an opportunity.
- **2.4 The mulch effect:** closely related to the ground cover issue is the presence of mulch beds within the residence/garage/parking zone. While mulch beds are certainly an accepted part of the managed landscape of the community, they very often create a jarring and discordant note in an otherwise green environment. This condition is even more noticeable when the beds define planting areas containing sparse and declining plants.
- **2.5 Pavements:** two types of pavement dominate the community: asphalt roads and parking areas and masonry brick sidewalks. After years of use the asphalt pavements are in disrepair and their repair or replacement should consider the addition of low-profile curbs, particularly in parking areas, to contain vehicles and protect adjacent landscape areas. While the masonry brick sidewalks are in good repair, the overall quality they convey is not as positive as the residences themselves. The wooden edging is in many cases in poor condition and the pink pavement color itself is an odd choice given the setting. Substitution of higher quality pavements such as bluestone or dark brick would be an option to explore.

### **Zone 3. The Woodlands**

The woodlands zone incorporates the landscape at the rear of the residences and the adjacent woodlands which are in large part owned by the Lincoln Ridge Conservation Trust (LRCT). In general this is an area with only modest amounts of new plantings and in many cases an area where preserved woodlands are very close to the units themselves. Issues of note for this zone include:

- **3.1 Shade:** depending upon orientation, the close proximity of tall trees, both deciduous and evergreen, to the residences creates a permanent shade condition that limits landscape options and equally importantly robs units of natural light. In some cases selective removal of trees would be desirable, but is subject to approval by the LRCT and possibly the Lincoln Land Conservation Trust (LLCT).
- **3.2 Lack of landscape:** in some situations the woodland side of residences is devoid of landscape altogether. The resultant barren condition detracts from the overall quality of the units themselves. Good examples exist of ground cover and shrub plantings that create a continuity of landscape quality around the entire unit.
- **3.3 Woodland plantings:** most, if not all, of the residences have living areas that look into the woodland zone. While it would require permission from the LRCT and possibly the LLCT, supplemental plantings of native species would add texture and color interest to the view. So-called understory trees and tall shrubs such as viburnums, amelanchier, redbud, witch hazel, and other shade tolerant species would add branching patterns, fall color, spring flowers, and other textures that would benefit the community and enhance the woodland scene
- **3.4 Trails:** extensive trails exist through the conservation lands and are maintained by the LLCT. Community interest in how the trails are maintained and how public safety concerns are addressed should be conveyed to the LRCT which in turn can take action directly under its authority and/or work with LLCT and its volunteers and employees.
- **3.5 Glades:** a notable example exists of a woodland glade or meadow west of Birchwood Lane north of units 3-11. The bowl shape of the glade with its border of mature shade trees and evergreens is a positive addition to the landscape of the community and should be protected. While it technically it falls in the LRCT

conservation zone, its management should be of interest to the community and could be an area where wildflowers are added for seasonal interest.

## **Summary**

Based on prior discussions, the initial changes and improvements to the Lincoln Ridge landscape will be focused on the common landscape of the Birchwood and Windingwood Lane corridors. Of the areas mentioned, several stand out for consideration:

- Improvements to the entry corridor up to and including the service building and tennis court area (1.1 and 1.2).
- Improvements to the intersection of Birchwood Lane and Windingwood Lane (1.5)
- Bank planting on the west side of Birchwood Lane described in item (1.8).
- Plantings in the north terminus circle of Birchwood Lane (1.10).

Projects requiring more lead time for planning and execution would include:

- Items 1.3 and 1.6: areas recently planted which have confused design parameters and could be the subject of redesign which could include transplanting existing materials.
- Changes to the planting in the Windingwood Lane terminus circle (1.7).

Proceeding with implementation of individual landscape projects will include several steps:

- Review and feedback on the analysis by the Board and the Landscape Committee.
- Meeting with David Anthony
- Approval of selected priority project(s); establish budgets
- Prepare plan(s) for implementation