

# Angels Crossing Golf Club

By Jason Deegan

When the Fox River Paper Company left Vicksburg in the economic downturn of 2001, some locals will tell you the move dashed a community's hopes and dreams. The loss eliminated 250 jobs, and roughly 23 percent of the village's tax base, crippling this bedroom community just southeast of Kalamazoo.

Instead of letting the paper mill's old factory loom over the village like a specter, reminding them of past failures, Bob Thompson and his group of investors saw something different in the property – potential growth, and in essence, a future.

The Angels Crossing Golf Club opened up 18 of its proposed 27 holes on the mill's old irrigation fields in May to symbolize the possible rebirth of Vicksburg.

“There have been a number of

local residents who have put their trust into this project, financially as well as emotionally,” director of golf Mike Hill said. “We have investors who don't even play golf. They believe in what we are trying to do to revive the community.”

The W. Bruce Matthews III design will be affordable, costing less than \$40 for 18 holes (including cart), and playable at 7,169 yards.

Laid out on 350 acres of Michigan's only prairie land overlooking Portage Creek and Barton Lake, Angels Crossings feels expansive and open. And it will stay that way. Most of the 100 home sites and 24 condos of the residential development will be built on the third nine, keeping the original 18 at peace with natural wetlands and prairie grasses.

Matthews revived classic architecture to create a personality that would seem more in line among old-world East Coast designs by Alister Mackenzie and Donald Ross than

Michigan.

“The land has a series of ridges and wetlands,” he said. “It was also gently rolling. It had a diversification of elements that you hope to get on a course.”

Wetlands and hazards dominate the back nine. Several expansive greens are more than 200 feet deep, including the sixth, which is 14,000 square feet.

“Angels Crossing gives a whale of a deal at an efficient cost,” Matthews said.

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*\*Note, readers should click on to <http://michigangolfer.tv/2004shows/show9/index.html> to see the show with architect Bruce Matthews III and owner Jim Thompson.*

