Part 3:

Conservation Subdivision

Case Studies

Michigan & Pennsylvania

Conservation Subdivision

Virtual Tour
Case Studies: Hamburg, Michigan

Hamburg Township:

• **1990** - Population was 13,000.

• **1991** - Minimum lot size increased (1.5 acres).

• **1992** - Wrote PUD Open Space Ordinance to allow development with the old minimum lot size, if certain open space conditions were met.

• **1993** - Stanley Home Builders built Spencer Woods. The township’s first open space development.

• **As of 2002** - 42 out of the 43 developments since 1993 have been open space developments.

(Source: www.livgenmi.com)
Solitude Point (Hamburg, Michigan)
Solitude Point (Hamburg, Michigan)

Developer: Ore Creek Development

Overall Density: 1 unit per acre
Average lot size: 0.5 acres
House values: $250k to $300k
Open Space Use: Wetlands/Walking Paths
Percentage of Open Space: 50%
Boulder Ridge (Green Oak, Michigan)
Boulder Ridge (Green Oak, Michigan)

Developer: Mitch Harris Building Co.
Overall Density: 1 unit per acre
Average lot size: 0.5 acres
House values: $250k to $300k
Open Space Use: Wooded/ Pond
Percentage of Open Space: 50%
Boulder Ridge (Green Oak, Michigan)
Chadwick Farms (Green Oak, Michigan)
A Conventional Subdivision

Developer: Mitch Harris Building Co.
Overall Density: 0.5 unit per acre
Percentage of Open Space: 0%
Setter's Point (Hamburg, Michigan)

Developer: Mitch Harris Building Co.
Overall Density: 1 unit per acre
Average lot size: 0.5 acres
House values: $250k to $300k
Open Space Use: Recreation/Walking Paths
Percentage of Open Space: 50%
Setter’s Point (Hamburg, Michigan)
Spencer Woods (Hamburg, Michigan)

Developer: Stanley Home Builder

Average lot size: 0.5 acres

Open Space Use: Wooded/ Pond

Overall Density: 1 unit per acre

House values: $260k to $320k

Percentage of Open Space: 50%
Spencer Woods (Hamburg, Michigan)

Spencer Woods

“An Open Space Community”

Stanley Home Builder, Inc.

Homes start at $260,000

• SOLD

810-229-9788
Winans Woods (Hamburg, Michigan)
Winans Woods (Hamburg, Michigan)

**Developer:** Keller Williams  
**Overall Density:** 1 unit per acre  
**Average lot size:** 0.5 acres  
**House values:** $300k to $350k

Open Space Use:  
Wooded/ Walking Paths  
% of Open Space: 50%
Winans Woods (Hamburg, Michigan)
Winans Woods (Hamburg, Michigan)
Winans Woods (Hamburg, Michigan)
Case Studies: Pennsylvania

Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery Townships:

• Township zoning codes encourage conservation by density bonuses.

• Some list the conservation subdivision as a conditional use, while others consider it an alternative use.

• The transfer of development rights are used in many cases to preserve agricultural land in adjacent parcels, where development rights from one piece of land are added to an adjacent parcel to increase density and preserve the other.

(Source: www.wilson.edu)
Canterbery (Bucks Co., Pennsylvania)

Developer:
John Crestell

Overall Density:
1 unit per acre

Average lot size:
0.25 acres

Percentage of Open Space:
50%

Use(s) of Open Space:
Hay field, meadow, pond & woodlands.

(Source: Pennsylvania Examples with Substantial Conservation Areas)
Farmview (Bucks Co., Pennsylvania)

Developer: Realen Homes

Overall Density: 0.77 unit per acre

Average lot size: 0.64 acres

% of Open Space: 51%

Use(s) of Open Space: Farmland, Wooded & Ponds.

(Source: Pennsylvania Examples with Substantial Conservation Areas)
Garnet Oaks (Delaware Co., Pennsylvania)

Developer: Garnet Oaks

Overall Density: 0.73 unit per acre

Average lot size: 0.25 acres

% of Open Space: 51%

(Source: National Lands Trust)
Plumsock at Willistown (Chester Co., Pennsylvania)

Developer:
Leonard Blair & Son

Overall Density:
0.57 unit per acre

Average lot size:
0.5 acres

% of Open Space:
70% (50 acres)

Use(s) of Open Space:
Wooded with ponds and streams.

Zoning:
1 d.u. per 80,000 SF
or
1 d.u. per 4 acres

(Source: National Lands Trust)
The Ponds at Woodward (Chester Co., Pennsylvania)

Developer: Harlan Corporation

Overall Density: 0.5 units per acre

Average lot size: 0.3 to 0.5 acres

% of Open Space: 70% (10 acres)

Use(s) of Open Space: Orchard, Woodlands and Meadow.

Zoning: Granted PRD to develop 2 units per acre, but kept original density of 1 unit per 2 acres.

(Source: National Lands Trust)
Ringfield (Delaware Co., Pennsylvania)

**Developer:** Richard Chalfant  
**Overall Density:** 0.5 unit per acre  
**Average lot size:** 0.27 acres  
**% of Open Space:** 86%  
**Zoning:** PRD at 1 dwelling unit per 2 acres with no restrictions on lot size.

(Source: National Lands Trust)
Narbrook Park (Montgomery Co., Pennsylvania)

Developer: Narberth Civic Association

Average lot size: 0.28 acres

Overall Density: 0.4 unit per acre

% of Open Space: 30%
Indian Walk (Bucks Co., Pennsylvania)

**Developer:** Tom James  
**Overall Density:** 0.2 units per acre  
**Average lot size:** 1 acre  
**% of Open Space:** 80 %

(Source: Pennsylvania Examples with Substantial Conservation Areas)
Case Studies: Summary of Findings

The value of a half acre lot with 50% publicly owned open space is slightly higher than a one acre lot with no public open space.

Residential lots in conservation subdivisions sell at faster rates than those in conventional developments, due to their aesthetic appeal and lack of need for private open space maintenance.

Developers prefer conservation developments, so they can sell lots faster and don’t face the cost of clearing unnecessary land of trees, shrubs and other environmentally sensitive elements.
Part 4:
How can a community encourage Conservation Subdivisions?

Conservation Subdivision Virtual Tour
Encouraging the Conservation Subdivision

By Zoning Ordinance:

• Adopt a new Planned Conservation Development District:

  • Either “Float the P.U.D. Cloud” 519.021(c) over rural residential districts (less than 1 dwelling unit per acre) making conservation subdivisions a permitted use, subject to site plan review; or

  • Allow conservation subdivisions as a conditional use P.U.D. (Involves BZA, which is probably not experienced at subdivision review)
Encouraging the Conservation Subdivision

• Consider a slight density bonus in rural residential districts, if certain open space requirements are met.

• Allow for the Purchase of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) on adjacent open space to count toward the conservation subdivision (Farm Village Concept).
ORC 519.021: methods of adopting a PUD

a.) Community adopts PUD standards. Owner applies for PUD. Zone change is legislative action subject to referendum. Approval of development plan is administrative action subject to 2506 appeal only.

b.) Community has no PUD standards. Owner submits PUD development plan and his own standards and asks for approval. Zone change and text amendment referendable, development plan is administrative review subject to 2506 appeal only.

c.) Community may adopt standards, then “float” the PRD zone over property they wish to see PUD. This is legislative act subject to referendum. PUD regulations take no effect, and underlying zoning remains in effect until landowner request PUD zoning applied to his property by filing a development plan, whose review and approval is an administrative act, and subject only to 2506 appeal.

d.) Planned Unit Developments can be a conditional use. If so, it would appear that they are an administrative act and not subject to referendum, but only to administrative appeal.
1.) While most zonings specify lot sizes (i.e. 1 du/ acre, 1 du/ 2 acres, etc.) PUDs allow the creation of a variety of lot sizes, with a mix of uses. Generally, the second use is no-build or open space.

2.) Townships in Delaware County express the PUD through the “Planned Residential”, “Planned Commercial”, and “Planned Industrial” districts.

3.) The following cases deal only with the Planned Residential District (or PRD) of each township.
Liberty Township Standard
Liberty Township Conservation Alternative
North Star (Kingston Twp.)

0.84 du/acre
Estates of Sherman Lakes

.83 du/acre

21-04 ZON
Project: Estates of Sherman Lakes
Owner: James Property Management
34 lots / 40.7 acres, FR-1 to PRD
Estates of Sherman Lakes
Comparison of standard FR-1 zoning and PRD Conservation zoning

Eagle's Ridge  66 lots/87.82 acres  .75 du/ac

Estates of Sherman Lakes  34 lots/40.79 acres  .83 du/ac
Eagle Crest Estates

.86 du/ acre with 40% open space

RPC#43-04 zon
The Keethler Company
Berlin Twp.
66.432 acres from FR-1 to PRD
Roh Tract (concept)

1.25 units per net developable acre
(1.03 units per gross acre)

158 gross acre
131.7 net acre
164 lots
86 acres open space (54%)
Scioto Reserve North

1.25 du/acre with 156 acres of open space
Summerwood Lakes
1.25 du/acre

RPC#06-04
Summerwood Lakes
Berkshire Twp.
101 units/81.01 acres
The Roop Property
Conservation Subdivision Process

S.R. 521, Brown Township

70.73 gross acres
9.3 acres in primary conservation areas.
61.43 net developable acres

30.71 acres = 50% open space
The Roop Property
Conservation Subdivision Process

Yield Plan

28 lots
2-acre minimum lot size

7 lots with frontage on SR 521
6 new curb-cuts on SR 521
The Roop Property
Conservation Subdivision Process

Conservation Plan

28 lots

18,000 s.f. minimum lot size
100 feet of frontage per lot

22 ac. developed
48 ac. of open space (68%)

Community leach beds in the open space along SR 521.
The Roop Property
Conservation Subdivision Process

Plan as reviewed at Sketch Plan Phase

29 lots

.4 units per acre
For more information please contact:
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