

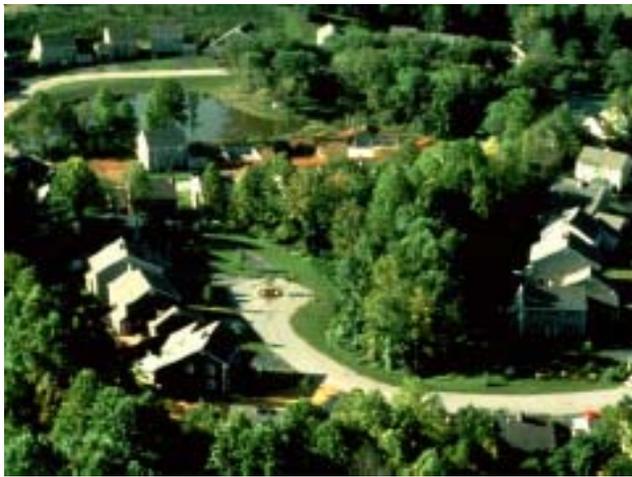


# Conservation Subdivisions

## A better way to develop Minnesota's shorelands



The subdivision process is an important element in the development of shoreland. A planned subdivision process and ordinance are essential elements in good land use control. Good subdivision standards should reflect and complement the community vision for itself and its comprehensive land use plan. In addition, a good subdivision ordinance addresses and encourages good subdivision design.



Conservation subdivision

Traditional lot and block developments, or conventional subdivisions, do not lend themselves to adequately preserve or protect the state's shoreland assets. Conventional subdivisions with their uniform lots and blocks spread development throughout a parcel of land without considering natural or cultural features. This has resulted in shoreland fragmentation, with homes and docks every 100, 150, or 200 feet regardless of the area's vulnerability or unique natural features or conditions.

Conventional subdivisions essentially produce only lots and streets. They provide few green spaces for walking, little habitat for wildlife, and few opportunities for residents to interact with their neighbors.

In contrast, a conservation subdivision is characterized by common open space and clustered, compact lots. The purpose is to create greater community value through open space amenities for homeowners and

protection of natural resources while allowing for the residential densities consistent with prevailing densities and a community's comprehensive land use plan.

Conservation subdivisions provide numerous other benefits, including the following:

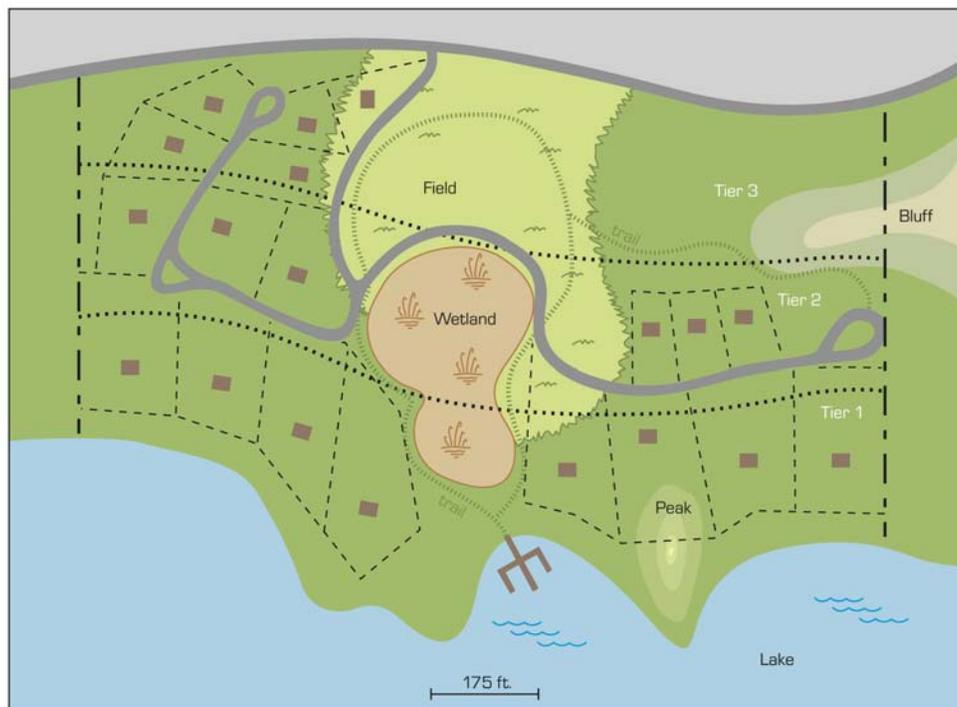
- Provide better lots for homeowners while protecting water quality; promoting economic development; and creating open space for recreational use, wildlife, and riparian buffers to protect water quality.
- Resemble golf course developments. First, critical natural areas and community recreational areas are identified and protected. Buildable areas are then identified and most lots and homes are clustered around these protected areas.
- Create a sense of community and allow more interaction with the outdoor environment. People find these developments more attractive than conventional subdivisions. Open spaces provide walking and biking trails, play areas, and community gathering places.
- Provide critical protection. Protected natural areas mean lower development costs, preservation of wildlife habitat, and less pollution runoff into lakes and wetlands.

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- Offer cost effectiveness to communities, developers, and buyers. By preserving the natural amenities on a site, the lots can be sold at a premium. Public service costs for sewers, water lines, and public access roads are generally 4 percent to 8 percent lower than a comparable lot block subdivision because of the more compact design. Similarly, construction costs may be reduced as much as 66 percent because of reduced grading, fewer hard surfaces, and innovative stormwater management designs in place of costly storm sewers and retention ponds.

All of this leads to both higher property values and higher community value that strengthen local economies. In addition, these developments place fewer demands on public entities or charities to establish open space areas for community use.

Conservation subdivisions do require more thought and planning than traditional lot and block developments. For future shoreland subdivisions, thoughtful, deliberate designs that protect sensitive natural areas, quality open spaces, and water quality are worth the extra effort.



Plan view of a conservation subdivision on a shoreline.

*The comments in this brochure address jurisdictional matters and concerns of the DNR, Division of Waters. Please contact your DNR Area Hydrologist to discuss issues relating to your project or this brochure. More information is available at this website: <http://mndnr.gov/waters/shoreland.html>*

