

# MANAGING RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

In many Southeast Michigan communities, residential development encompasses the largest portion of land use. New development is both necessary and desirable to maintain and improve the quality of life of the people who currently live in the community as well as for those who will live there in the future. Citizens of each community recognize what is unique, beautiful, and desirable about their natural and cultural environment. New development that is compatible with the natural and cultural heritage of a community is an important consideration to those who live there.

The planning process should capture the community's vision of how it wants to shape and integrate residential neighborhoods into the future development scheme, and the desired type, design, quantity, and location for residential development. The master plan and zoning ordinance continue to be the primary land use management tools for shaping development. This chapter presents specific tools that could be included in the master plan and zoning ordinance to manage residential development.

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## KEEPING IT CONNECTED

You can make your community conducive to walking and biking between different land activities. Encourage continuous sidewalks and provide for pedestrian and bicycle access throughout your community and in open spaces. Consider the type of streetscape design that will improve your community's visual quality.

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## Planning and Regulatory Considerations

Local government authority for planning comes from the following laws: Municipal Planning Act (PA 285 of 1931, as amended), Township Planning Act (PA 168 of 1959, as amended), and County Planning Act (PA 282 of 1945, as amended).

Michigan's Land Division Act (PA 591 of 1996 and PA 87 of 1997) governs the process by which lots are created out of larger parcels. In guiding the division of land into multiple lots or a plat, land division regulations address many factors including grading, erosion control, utility easements, street alignments, circulation, lot size, and emergency access.

Local government power to zone comes from the following laws: City and Village Zoning Act (PA 207 of 1921, as amended), Township Zoning Act (PA 184 of 1983, as amended), and County Zoning Enabling Act (PA 183 of 1943, as amended).

Non-exempt local communities are now required to provide developers with the option to conduct open space preservation zoning, otherwise known as cluster zoning, as provided for under the following laws: City and Village Zoning Act (PA 207, as amended by PA 179 of 2001), Township Zoning Act (PA 184 of 1983, as amended by PA 177 of 2001), and County Zoning Act (PA 183 of 1943, as amended by PA 178 of 2001).

Condominium Act (PA 59 of 1978, as amended) authorizes condominiums and site condominiums. Mobile Home Commission Act (PA 96 of 1987) provides the framework for standards related to the development and layout of manufactured housing parks.

## Tools for Managing Residential Development

Several tools for managing residential development are available to communities:

- Use the master plan to define future land development,
- Manage land use through zoning ordinances, and
- Develop a capital improvement plan (CIP).

Each of these methods are highlighted below. However, many sections of this handbook provide detailed information that may be helpful when planning for residential development.



*Residential development within walking distance of a commercial district in Novi.*

## Use the master plan to define future land development

As a community's blueprint for the future, the master plan should be the first tool consulted in managing residential development. (For more information on the master plan, see the Planning and Development Basic Terminology section.) The master plan should contain goals, objectives, and policies on how the community will manage the expected residential growth. Here is a specific goal your community may include in your plan:

- Goal — A variety of housing types, located within a desirable residential setting, ensures a maximum choice of dwelling units and a diverse population within the community.

To accomplish this goal, consider the following objectives and policies:

- Objective — Protect and enhance natural features, including wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, woodlands, streams, hedgerows, slopes, and agricultural lands from adverse development.
- Policy — Consider land capacity when determining the appropriate density of development. Place dwelling units on portions of the site most suited to development in order to preserve natural features. Institute and implement measures that protect the environment during and after development.
- Objective — Recognize that strong, cohesive neighborhoods contribute to a positive community identity.
- Policy — Ensure that new residential development shall be compatible in density and character with existing residences and neighborhoods in the immediate area. Organize and encourage residential development around natural features or recreational amenities and site and architectural design that will create neighborhoods of lasting value and stability.
- Objective — Consider land uses best suited to the land and existing conditions, at a rate of growth that can be financially absorbed by the local government.

Source: Northfield Township Growth Management Plan, 1998.

## Manage land use through zoning ordinances

Zoning ordinances regulate the present allowable uses for land and protect public health, safety, and general welfare of a community. These regulations (e.g., lot sizes, and widths, setbacks, residential dwelling unit sizes, lot coverage, height, signs, and parking) can play an important part in managing residential growth.

Community values and character developed in the master plan will determine neighborhood layouts. Considerations should include housing density, urban or rural concerns, and desires for a walkable community.

Resulting neighborhood layout could include conventional, open space/cluster subdivisions, planned unit development, and traditional neighborhood designs. Road designs should complement the neighborhood structure, adhering to grid standards, curvilinear, and cul-de-sac. Descriptions of neighborhood layouts follow.

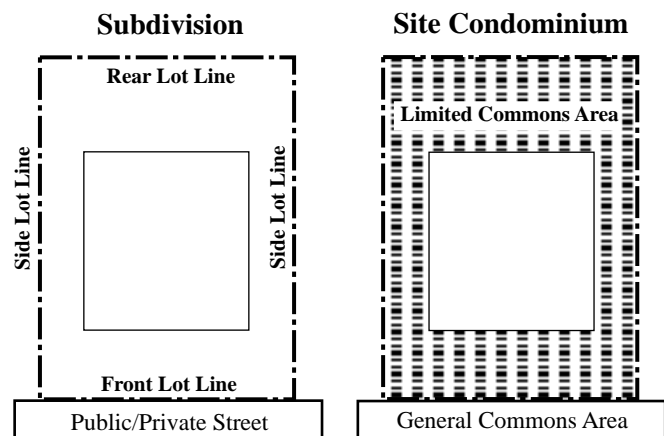
## Explore opportunities for conventional subdivisions and site condos

Many communities utilize a conventional subdivision style when developing residential areas. These subdivisions are identified by single-family, detached houses on like-sized lots within a curvilinear or cul-de-sac road system. Virtually all the land in the subdivision is used for infrastructure or is parceled out to individual lot owners. The balance of the subdivision is generally attributed to regulated wetlands or land with steep slopes.

Condominiums are regulated by the Condominium Act and local regulations. Traditional condominium developments (those individually owned in either attached or detached units) can be regulated using standard zoning provisions. However, site condominiums (developments that include both the dwelling unit and an area of land immediately surrounding each dwelling or building unit) require specific provisions in applying local zoning and subdivision-like regulations. Following are specific design standards local communities should consider when developing subdivisions or condominiums:

- Limit clearing and grading of forests and native vegetation at the site to the amount needed to build lots, allow access, and provide fire protection. Communi-

Figure 6  
A Comparison of a Conventional Lot to a Site Condominium  
(153 lots/units both)



Source: Michigan Society of Planning. *Basic Training: Planning Commissioners and Zoning Boards of Appeals*. 2000.

ties have several tools that might be adapted to limit clearing, including erosion and sediment control ordinances, grading ordinances, tree protection ordinances, and open space development.

- Wherever possible, residential street right-of-way widths should reflect the minimum required to accommodate the travel-way, sidewalk, and vegetated open channels.
- Where density, topography, soils, and slope permit, vegetated open channels should be used in the street right-of-way to convey and treat storm water runoff.
- Conserve trees and other vegetation at each site by planting additional vegetation, clustering tree areas, and promoting the use of native plants. Consider requiring the use of native plants in landscaping requirements.
- When solid walls are used to buffer traffic noise (as is sometimes necessary in residential projects along major streets), avoid visual monotony by providing a change of plan at intervals no greater than 50 feet. This can be accomplished by providing planting “pockets,” varying the setbacks, or providing pilasters for visual relief.
- Fences and walls over three feet high which face public streets should provide a fully landscaped buffer of at least four feet deep on the street-facing side of the wall.
- Review the other techniques discussed in this book, specifically Walkable and Bikeable Communities, Traffic Safety Techniques, Buffering/Screening/Landscaping, Historic Preservation, Private Roads, Storm Water Management, Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control, Floodplain and Stream Corridor Protection, Wetlands, and Woodlands.



*Varying the type of buffer, such as this subdivision in Troy, avoids visual monotony.*

### Utilize open space/cluster subdivisions

Open space subdivisions or cluster subdivisions are increasingly popular options for communities seeking protection of community character. In essence, co-grant



*Open space subdivision in Washington Township.*

incentives for preserving open space or environmentally sensitive features by focusing development in the areas most appropriate for development. Smaller building lots are permitted, with the lots grouped closer together. The balance of land on the site is preserved in perpetuity as open space. When developing the open space subdivision section of your ordinance consider:

- Allowing flexible site design criteria, such as setback and road widths.
- Requiring open space to be consolidated into larger units, such as having a minimum size or width.
- Requiring that a portion of the open space be used for recreational purposes and a portion managed in a natural condition. (The natural areas often treat polluted storm water and provide areas for passive recreation).
- Coordinating recreational opportunities with the community’s Parks and Recreation Plan.
- Protecting the open space through a conservation easement. (See chapter on Public Open Space for more information).
- Delineating open space with permanent markers (especially those areas left natural) to educate property owners about the importance of open space and reduce the possibility of inadvertent clearing.
- Linking open space with adjacent open spaces in the community (and surrounding communities).
- Preparing a natural features, open space, or greenways map that can guide the placement of open space provided through open space subdivisions.

### Preserve open space with planned unit development (PUDs)

PUDs provide communities with flexibility through innovative designs. Authorized under Michigan planning enabling legislation, PUDs can apply to residential, commercial, and industrial uses. PUDs vary from clustering of residential buildings to complex mixed-use developments. The PUD process ties a site

plan to zoning approval. To use the PUD technique, there must be some community benefit, typically:

- preserving some significant natural asset,
- providing recreation facilities and open spaces, or
- providing a complementary and integrated mixture of uses, and housing densities and types.

The specific recommendations noted in the open space/cluster subdivisions section should also be considered in the PUD process.

### Consider traditional neighborhood design

Traditional neighborhood design (TND), sometimes called neotraditional or new urbanism, is another technique to consider in developing areas. TNDs are more recent developments that capture many aspects of traditional neighborhoods. Typically, they are characterized by a discernable town center with commons and civic buildings, a variety of housing types, connected streets, and shopping along the edge. Also, lots are aligned to a grid street system pattern and continuous sidewalks provide convenient pedestrian movement. Specific recommendations when using TND include:

- Focus the center of the neighborhood around a public space and/or buildings.
- Keep the size of the neighborhood to a quarter mile from center to edge. This provides easy walking distance (approximately five minutes) to many of the residents' daily needs.
- Balance neighborhood activities to include shopping, working, schools, worship, recreation, and dwellings.
- Interconnect streets that equitably provide pedestrian comfort and automobile movement.

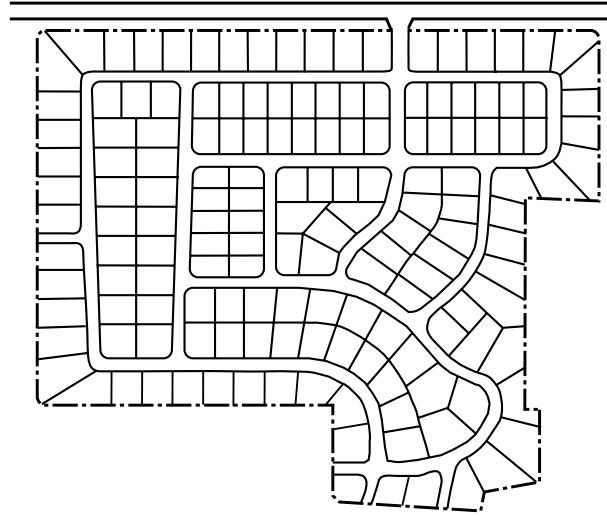
### Establish a site plan review

A site plan is the collection of documents and drawings that present the information depicting what an applicant wishes to do with a particular parcel of land. The plan notes the site's natural characteristics and features, as well as existing and proposed man-made structures. Communities establish a site plan review process in order to provide consistent and uniform procedures and standards for proposed development plans, ensuring full compliance with federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and standards. The zoning ordinance specifies the procedures for submitting, reviewing, and approving the site plan.

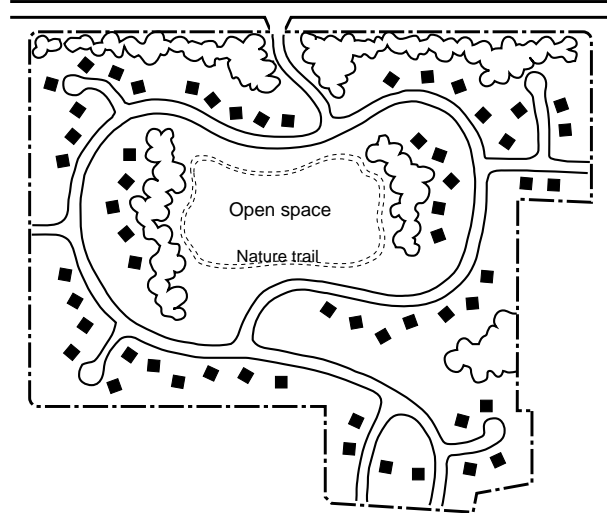
Projects should demonstrate sensitivity to both natural setting and neighborhood context. To accomplish this, a basic site analysis should be incorporated into the site plan review process.

Figure 7  
Comparing Conventional Subdivision to Cluster Development

#### Conventional Subdivision



#### Cluster Development



Source: David Listokin and Carol Walker, *The Subdivision and Site Plan Handbook*.

Typical information should include:

- Basic site data: boundaries and dimensions; location and ultimate width of roads, sidewalks, and right-of-ways; location of setbacks and easements; existing structures and other built improvements.
- Existing natural features: location, size, and species of trees and other significant vegetation; topography, with steep slopes highlighted; patterns of surface drainage; location of floodplain or riparian areas; soil capability; groundwater recharge location; and other features that are either amenities or potential hazards in development.

- Neighboring environment: vies to or from the site; land use of neighboring properties; form and character of neighboring buildings; important site details on neighboring properties which can be seen from the street (such as stone walls, fences, and organized plantings).

### Understand manufactured housing regulations

Communities can approach the zoning of manufactured housing parks under various means. Many communities do so under manufactured housing park zoning districts. Other communities permit manufactured housing parks in certain zoning districts under specified conditions. Communities must allow individual manufactured homes on lots within all zoning districts that permit single-family units, though communities may adopt reasonable standards to ensure compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood.

Unlike most land uses, manufactured housing communities in Michigan are regulated by the state. The Mobile Home Commission (MHC), as directed in the Mobile Home Commission Act, has developed construction standards that are contained in the Mobile Home Commission Code. Table 7 provides examples of the standards contained in the code. Local governments can propose stricter standards than in the code and submit them to the MHC for review and approval. Table 6 contains examples of strict standards (including the justification for these stricter standards) that were approved

by the MHC. (Approval is not required for standards related to manufactured homes not within manufactured housing communities.)

### Develop a capital improvement plan

Capital improvement plans (CIP) are short-term plans (typically five or six years) that identify where major, non-recurring facilities will be provided. The CIP details each capital project, estimated project cost, description, and funding source. Capital items could include such things as transportation facilities, buildings, water facilities, sewage systems, and parks. The overall goal of the CIP is to order and time the community's fiscal expenditures while coordinating public investment with adopted plans and policies to properly manage the city's long-term investments. Working together with zoning and subdivision regulations, CIPs provide local governments with an integral instrument for implementing comprehensive, strategic, and development plans. Specifically, your community may want to include the following in your CIP:

- Installation, maintenance, and replacement of storm water and sanitary sewer utilities.
- Use, maintenance, and replacement of storm water best management practices.
- Constructing and renovating sidewalks, curbs, gutters, and streets.
- Purchasing right-of-way and constructing bicycle facility.

Table 6  
Approved Stricter Standards by the Mobile Home Commission (MHC)  
and Justification for One Municipality

Summary of Stricter Standard	Justification for Stricter Standard
16-foot wide driving surface for one-way streets with no parking (MHC code requires 13 feet for one-way, no parking).	Insufficient minimum width for safe travel, particularly for large emergency vehicles such as fire trucks, which measure 8 to 8.5 feet.
Roof overhangs set back four feet or more from the edge of the internal road (MHC code provides for two feet minimum).	Under the MHC standard, it is foreseeable that vehicles could have protrusions on them that could extend more than two feet past the roadway edge (particularly with emergency vehicles). The stricter the standard provides a means to prevent collisions between vehicles and homes, preventing property damage and injuries.
Two access points shall be provided to a public thoroughfare to allow a secondary access for emergency vehicles. A boulevard entrance extending to the first intersection of a community road shall be interpreted as satisfying this requirement (MHC code has no direct counterpart).	Ensures that emergency vehicles can enter the site, even if one of the access routes is blocked.

Source: Order of the Manufactured Housing Commission, State of Michigan, to Approve Proposed Local Ordinance Pursuant to the Mobile Home Commission Act, October 30, 2002.

Table 7  
Selected Community Standards Contained in the Mobile Home Commission Code

Construction Element	Selected Portions of Standards (Rule Number)
Internal Roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• surfaced width of one-way, no-parking road shall be 13 feet, 21 feet if two-way (125.1920).</li> <li>• all turning lanes shall be minimum 10 feet wide and 60 feet deep (125.1920).</li> </ul>
Parking Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• two parking spaces per site (125.1925).</li> <li>• spaces may be provided side-by-side or in tandem (125.1925).</li> <li>• tandem spaces shall be at least 10 feet in width and have a combined minimum length of 40 feet (125.1925).</li> <li>• minimum one parking space per three sites or visitor parking (125.1926).</li> </ul>
Sidewalks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if constructed, sidewalks shall be minimum three feet wide (125.1928).</li> </ul>
Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• access points to public thoroughfares shall be lighted (125.1929).</li> <li>• minimum .15 footcandles illumination at all street intersections and pedestrian cross walks (125.1929).</li> <li>• minimum .05 footcandles illumination along roads, parking bays, and sidewalks.</li> </ul>
Setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mobile homes shall be set back a minimum 10 feet from mobile home park property line (125.1944).</li> <li>• mobile homes and other structures shall be set back a minimum 50 feet from a public right-of-way (125.1944).</li> <li>• for a home not sited parallel to an internal road, mobile homes shall be set back a minimum of 20 feet from an adjacent mobile home used for living purposes (125.1941).</li> <li>• for a home sited parallel to an internal road, mobile homes shall be set back a minimum of 15 feet from any part of an attached structure of an adjacent mobile home used for living purposes, if the adjacent home is sited next to the home on the same internal road or an intersecting internal road (125.1941).</li> <li>• mobile homes shall be set back a minimum of 50 feet from community buildings, maintenance, and storage facilities (125.1941).</li> <li>• attached or detached structures or accessories that are not used for living space shall be set back a minimum 10 feet from adjacent mobile home or its adjacent attached or detached structures (125.1941).</li> </ul>
Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mobile home park of 50 or more units must have a minimum two percent of park's gross acreage devoted to open space, but not less than 25,000 square feet (125.1946).</li> </ul>
Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• park developer may completely or partially screen the park by installing fencing or natural growth along the entire property boundary (125.1945).</li> </ul>

Source: Manufactured Housing Commission General Rules, Michigan Department of Commerce & Industry Services, 1998.

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## CASE EXAMPLE

### Cherry Hill Village

**Community:** Canton Township

**Contact:** Jeff Goulet, (734) 394-5170

Cherry Hill Village in Canton Township is being touted as Michigan's first Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND). In 2000 the Michigan Society of Planning awarded Canton officials and the subdivision's contractor, Biltmore Properties, Corp., the Outstanding Planning Project Award. This is a public-private 338-acre venture that when completed will be home to over 1,200 households as well as various retailers, restaurants, and a Performing Arts Center.

A system of pedestrian-friendly streets and nearly 22 miles of sidewalks, pathways and bicycle trails will connect the entire community. One trademark of traditional neighborhood communities is their variety of home styles that create a diverse and interesting streetscape, conveying a sense of space much larger than any one individual house. At the center of the community is the Village Square, with planned shops, grocery, and restaurants clustered around the public park, creating an inviting setting for neighborhood events and gatherings.

The development of the village's concept plan was a broad-based collaboration which included public input. The plan built upon the area's historic character and was consistent with the Township Master Plan for the area. A design review committee with a village architect developed a Pattern Book that will guide and control the design of all buildings, site, and landscape improvements, including architectural character, key design elements, and materials. The community will implement these standards by using planned development district regulations, subject to Cherry Hill overlay district regulations, which will be based upon the concept plan's Pattern Book and design guidelines.



*Cherry Hill Village in Canton Township.*

## Additional Resources

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County of San Diego. *Community Design Guidelines: Spring Valley Community Planning Area*. 1992.

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Michigan Society of Planning Officials. *Site Plan Review: A Guidebook for Planning and Zoning Commissions*. 3rd Printing. Rochester, MI: Michigan Society of Planning, 1997.

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