

# GUIDING LAKESHORE DEVELOPMENT: CONSERVANCY DEVELOPMENTS

*(fact sheet #15 of The Shoreland Management and Lake Classification Series)*

## ISSUE:

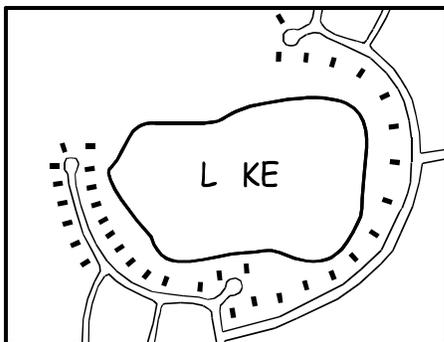
**Definition: Conservancy development** consists of grouping shoreland structures into specific areas of a land parcel while maintaining open space in more environmentally sensitive areas. Dwellings are located further back from the immediate shoreline, more open space and ground cover is maintained for purposes of providing for wildlife habitat and scenic beauty, and the adverse impacts of runoff pollution and land disturbing activities on lake water quality is minimized.



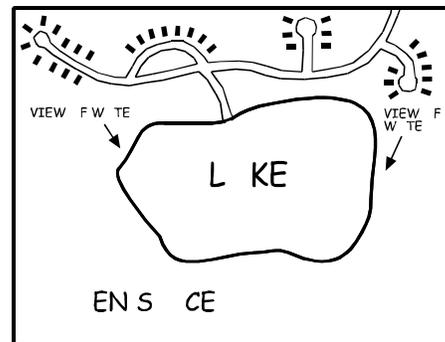
## In sum, with a conservancy development:

- ❖ Development may be located away from the shoreline, preventing polluted runoff from entering the waterway.
- ❖ The buffer zone is left intact and fish and wildlife habitat is protected.
- ❖ An undeveloped shoreline maintains the natural beauty of an area.
- ❖ All may enjoy a view of the water, not just the lots located on the immediate shoreline.

The objective is to develop less total land area while allowing the same number of total housing units that would be allowed under a standard subdivision ordinance.



C NVENTI N L  
EVEL MENT



EN S CE  
EVEL MENT

## ISSUES AND OPTIONS:

**TOTAL AREA.** The land proposed as an open space development should be **at least 40 acres** in size so as to accommodate open areas, roads, housing and lots.

**POLLUTION CONTROL.** Conservancy developments present a significant opportunity to manage stormwater more effectively than may be possible under a conventional residential design. Dwellings may be arranged so that the best use is made of natural drainageways; structures may be sited to reduce the amount of

impervious surface areas. Open space developments also offer an opportunity to treat wastewater in an environmentally sound and cost-efficient manner through community drainfields, wetland systems and other strategies. Individual septic systems can be located and designed in a manner which ensures that septic system effluent will neither pollute surface or ground water quality in any way, or a group system might serve multiple families.

**PRESERVATION OF GROUND COVER AND OPEN SPACE.** Designating certain areas of the parcel as open space is a key characteristic of a conservancy development and critical for maintaining shoreline beauty, preventing erosion, and protecting wildlife habitat. Land not used for lots and development shall be dedicated in perpetuity to remain in open space and shall be conveyed to the private landowners or to the public through the relevant government body. Some counties have specified the percentage of open space which will be dedicated within each development (Waupaca County mandates that at least 50% of the development be dedicated as open space.)

**DENSITY.** In most cases, the number of dwellings in a conservancy development will not exceed the number which would have been possible under a conventional (nonclustered) development scheme. Other counties or units of government may offer a density bonus for landowners who decide to design an open space development provided certain performance standards are met. In these cases, through an incentive to design with conservation principles in mind, the landowner would be able to build units in addition to the number allowed under a standard development.

**LOT SIZES, WIDTHS, SETBACKS and SHORELINE BUFFER AREA.** Lot sizes may be specified as no smaller than current law or other specifications may be provided (ex. 20,000 sq. ft with a 100 ft. minimum lot width). Specific design standards may be outlined for building areas, roadways and infrastructure and site development and land disturbing activities.

**OTHER ISSUES ADDRESSED WITH AN OPEN SPACE DEVELOPMENT TYPICALLY INCLUDE:**

- ❖ Roadways, driveways and infrastructure.
- ❖ Performance standards for site development.
- ❖ Specification of permissible land disturbance activities.
- ❖ Additional conditions regarding common or open space areas (deed restrictions, dedication provisions)
- ❖ Other design standards (development with respect to sensitive areas, forests, historic structures, other environmentally, culturally distinctive zones).

**To learn about the value of planned development for resource protection, natural beauty, and wildlife habitat, see fact sheet #12.**

**References and other sources of assistance:**

Rural Cluster Development Guide. 1996. Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission  
Residential Cluster Development: Fact sheet series. 1998. University of Minnesota-Extension  
Standing, B.H., Bernthal, T.W. and Jones, S.A. 1997. Shoreland Zoning Resource Guide: An Annotated Model Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Madison.

**\*For assistance from counties who have experimented with open space development designs, contact:**

**Waupaca county:** David Rosenfeld (zoning administrator) (715-258-6255);

**Langlade county:** Becky Frisch (zoning administrator) (715-258-6255)

Drafted by Tamara Dudiak -UWEX Lake Specialist (715-346-4744) tdudiak@uwsp.edu; Contributions from Mike Dresen; Graphics by Christopher Meyer.



For more information, contact your regional Department of Natural Resources lake coordinator, the Wisconsin Association of Lakes [800/542-5253] or UWEX/UW-Stevens Point [715/346-2116].