

GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION INFORMATION

RURAL OPEN SPACE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENTS

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Frequently Asked Questions

How is a Rural Open Space Community Development different than a conventional development?

The difference is that in a Rural Open Space Community Development the most important design feature is open space. When designing such a development, the first step is to choose what areas in the site to save as open space. Then you identify the house sites and align the streets to connect them. Only at this point do you lay out the lot lines.

Where can I develop one?

Any property in either the A-B or A-R zoning districts is eligible. The rural open space community development must also meet certain eligibility criteria, such as creating recognizable benefits for the Township. It must also have a minimum of six units.

How many lots can I develop on my property?

The number of lots is based on the number that could be developed under conventional zoning plus a density bonus. The density bonuses is earned if a certain percentage of a site is preserved as open space. If 40% of the property is preserved, the number of units is increased by 25%. If 60% of the property is preserved, the number of units is increased by 30%.

What is the approval process?

Rural Open Space Community Developments are permitted by right. The approval process is the same as a conventional development.

How much of my site must be saved as open space?

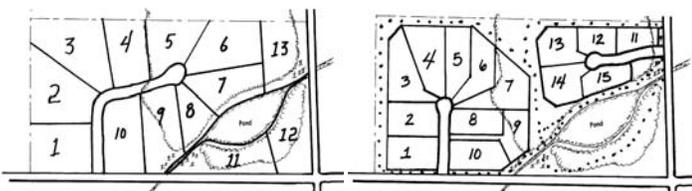
At least 35% of the gross area of the site must be preserved as open space. There are two types of open space. Primary conservation areas, such as wetlands, are areas that typically cannot be built on. They must be preserved. Secondary conservation areas are areas that could be developed but have significant features that make them worthy of preservation. At least 25% of the open space must be secondary conservation areas.

What are some of the other rules for the open space?

Open space can be used for recreation, agriculture or conservation. Section 22.4(B) of the *Gaines Charter Township Zoning Ordinance (GTZO)* gives further regulations about the use of the open space. The open space may be located centrally, along the road frontage, to preserve significant features, or to connect to other open spaces. The open space must forever remain open space, and there must be an irrevocable conveyance to ensure that this happens.

Traditional Subdivision

Conservation Cluster Design



Can private roads be used?

Yes. Section 22.6 of the GTZO lists the standards for roads and trails.

How big must the lots be? What are the setbacks?

The following table lists the development standards for Rural Open Space Community Developments. These are flexible standards and the Planning Commission may grant variations if they result in a higher quality development.

District	% Open Space	Min. Lot Area/Width	Front Setback	Side Setback	Rear Setback
A-B	35-59	30,000sf/120'	40'	15'	50'
A-B	60+	30,000sf/100'	40'	15'	50'
A-R	35-59	20,000sf/100'	35'	15'	50'
A-R	60+	15,000sf/80'	35'	10'	50'

What do I need to submit with my application?

You must submit the following:

- Site Analysis Map: It must show the primary and secondary conservation areas, the developable areas, all significant natural assets, and the tentative location of the house sites.
- Parallel Plan: A plan showing how the property could be developed under conventional development, which is used to calculate the permitted density.
- Development Plan: Must meet the requirements of the Township Subdivision Ordinance and the site plan requirements in the Zoning Ordinance.

The Township Master Plan places a strong emphasis on preserving the rural character of the southern part of the Township. It states:

"Conservation cluster and open space design techniques should be promoted to enable a reasonable yield for development purposes while seeking to preserve the rural character and natural features of the area."

To accomplish this goal, the Township has adopted the Rural Community Open Space Developments chapter in the Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 22). This brochure explains the chapter through a set of frequently asked questions about Rural Open Space Community Developments. The fundamental premise behind the chapter is that by clustering homes on lots smaller than traditionally allowed, significant amounts of open space can be preserved. The Township wants to encourage this type of development because it preserves open space, reduces infrastructure costs, and preserves the rural character of the southern part of the Township.

GAINES
TOWNSHIP
MEETINGS

All the regularly scheduled meetings of the Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and the Township Board are held in the meeting room of Gaines Township Office, located at 8555 Kalamazoo Ave. S.E. , Caledonia, MI, 49316. The Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and the Township Board Meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. unless otherwise noted.