

Land Development

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TREE TOPS

IT WAS A WALK AROUND THE SITE that convinced the principals of Tree Tops Development, LLC, that the property could become an extraordinary residential community. Gently rolling hills, mature treelines, hardwood stands, ephemeral ponds, a stream, and wetlands all made the perfect framework for a conservation subdivision.

At Tree Tops, the wooded homesites remain wooded and wetlands are undisturbed.

TREE TOPS

Village of Germantown, Wisconsin

DEVELOPER

Siepmann Realty Corporation
Waukesha, Wisconsin

PARTNER

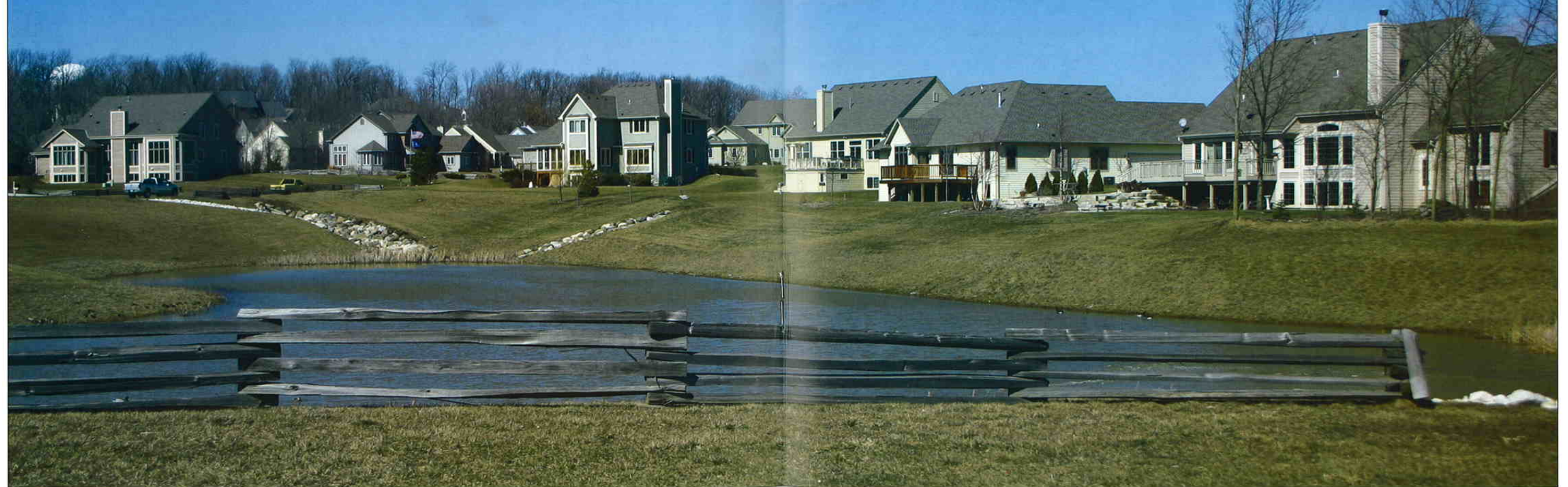
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TREE TOPS



THE PROPERTY'S NATURAL RESOURCES were easy to plan around; the local politics and surrounding land uses were not. Even though the property was an infill site surrounded largely by homes built in the 1960s and 1990s, local politicians tested the Tree Tops plan and a density reduction of nine lots finally opened the door to approval. The higher-density zoning—with its smaller lot sizes and reduced building setbacks in favor of preserving open space—permitted development of the conservation subdivision. The outcome is a 185-lot conservation subdivision with 39 of the subdivision's 146 acres (27 percent) in open space.

The Tree Tops plan called for wooded homesites to remain wooded and wetlands to be left undisturbed. Trails meander through the open spaces to the centrally located sport court, ball field, and children's play area. Winding roadways lead from the unique entryways past the open spaces to the carefully planned homesites.



The homes at Tree Tops range in size from 2,000 to 3,800 square feet with average lot size at 0.4 of an acre.



Tree Tops, LLC, comprising Siepmann Realty Corp. and Kings Way Homes, set the bar high for the Village of Germantown. In fact, Tree Tops acquired the three-parcel site from another developer unwilling to deal with the property's challenges. For this site, Tree Tops, LLC, envisioned a mid-priced conservation subdivision. Five years and four phases later, Tree Tops remains one of the most desirable new neighborhoods in metropolitan Milwaukee and is the second Siepmann Realty Corp. conservation subdivision in the Village of Germantown.

One of the site's greatest challenges related to surrounding

land uses and the availability of infrastructure. In addition to residential uses, a large and visually intrusive landfill located just a mile to the east of the site prompted skeptics to predict that the landfill would stall sales. Furthermore, while sanitary sewer and water mains had been extended to the east edge of Tree Tops, the more desirable part of the site—characterized by mature woods and the most impressive views—is located at the site's west edge. To overcome these dual challenges, the first three phases of development called for extensive landscaping to achieve the same level of appeal as the natural landscaping in the



Siepmann Realty enforced strict architectural controls during all phases of Tree Tops homes' construction.



project's final phase—the attractive west edge.

The subsurface bedrock conditions of the site could have posed problems for the project; however, careful utility and homesite planning minimized the issue. Rock blasting for utilities, some basements, and stormwater facilities was required nonetheless. Another challenge was the construction of Phase II while the main access road, County Line Road, was reconstructed simultaneously.

Months before building permits were available, homesites at Tree Tops presold to individuals and builders alike. In 2002, The Metropolitan Builders Association of Greater Milwaukee hosted its Parade of Homes on 17 Tree Tops homesites. In 2005, just two years after becoming available during Phase IV, the final Tree Tops homesite sold.

The construction of Tree Tops occurred amid an unusually strong period of builder-driven sales. The metropolitan Milwaukee market for homesites had traditionally catered largely to individual buyers, but the early parts of the decade saw speculative building become rampant. Homes sold as they were completed.

The homes at Tree Tops range in size from 2,000 to 3,800 square feet with average lot size at 0.4 of an acre. The gross density (acres/dwelling and including open space) is 0.79 of an acre. Original lot prices ranged from \$82,000 to \$115,000 with the original home and lot package costs running between \$275,000 and \$625,000.

Metropolitan Milwaukee is an anomaly in American home construction. Almost every builder in the area builds a custom home, allowing for a unique streetscape. Tract building by a single builder is rare. Therefore, Siepmann Realty enforced strict architectural controls during all phases of Tree Tops, ensuring a seamless transition from the earliest to the last and most expensive phase.

Siepmann Realty's development philosophy is reflected in site characteristics such as generously sized open spaces, smaller homesites, well-planned streets, public gathering areas, outdoor amenities, and sensitive landscaping. Tree Tops includes all the hallmarks of a Siepmann development, proudly positioning it as a premier address in a busy homesite marketplace. **LD**

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