

Project Name: The Lakes

Developer: The Lakes, LLC

Location: 5901 Lapeer Road, Kimball Township, Michigan 48074

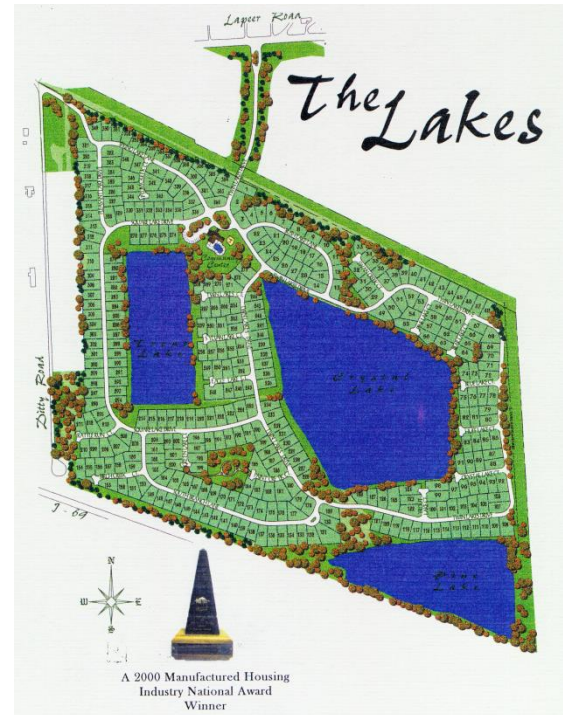
Site Data:

- **Acreage:** 112.93 Acres
- **Number of Homesites:**
366 planned (222 currently existing)

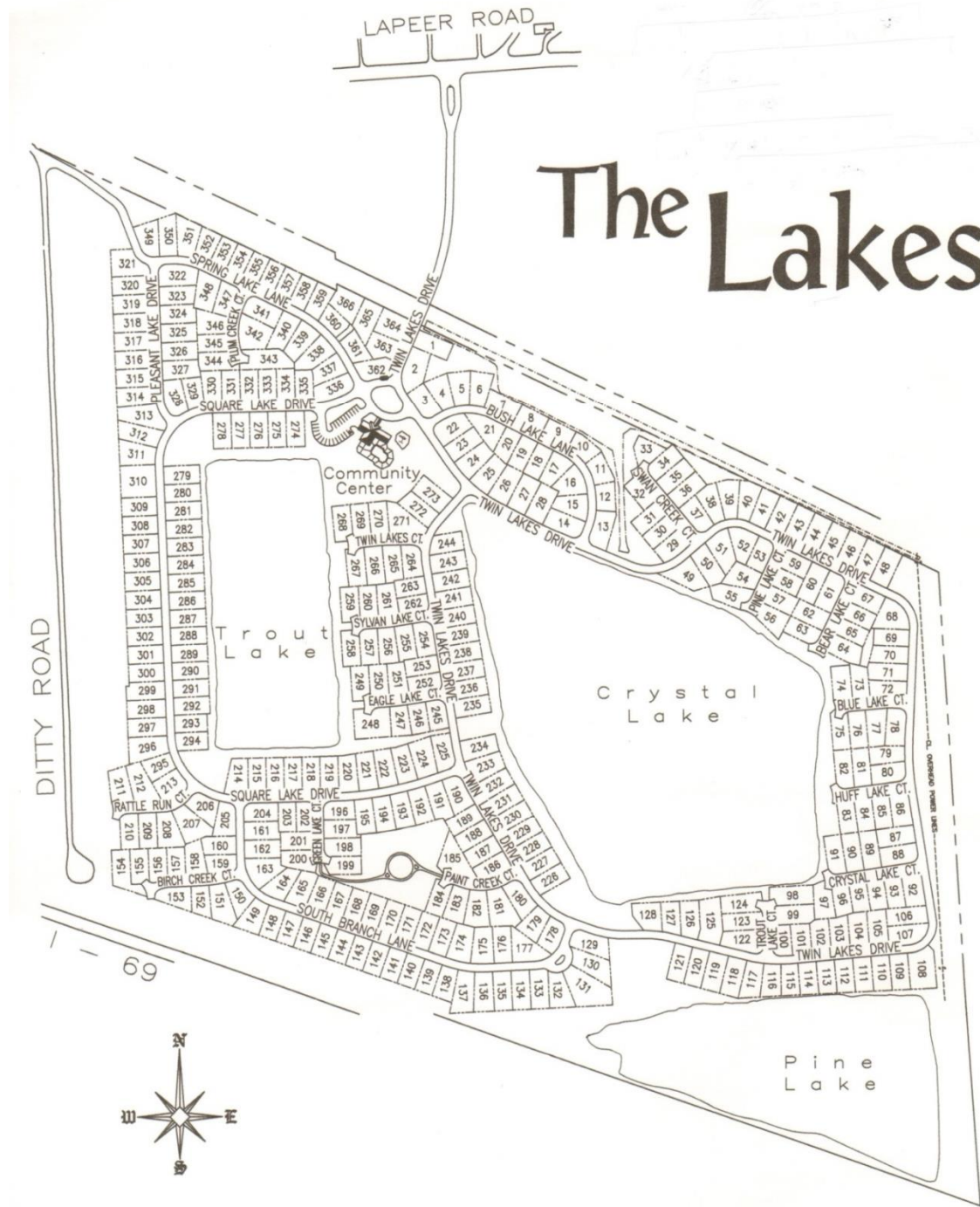
Phase 1 – Lots 1-128

Phase 2 – Lots 129-309

Phase 3 – Lots 310-366
- **Density:** 3.47 Units per acre
- **Zoning:** R-4
- **Year Built:** 1998



The property owners of this site were a well-respected excavation business family. Two attractive lakes had been created by a sand mining operation on the 112 acre site. Municipal sewer and water was available for the project, although not enough sewer taps were available initially to service the completed project. The remainder of the site was relatively flat with some regulated wetlands which were professionally identified and surveyed in. As with most Manufactured Home Communities we have planned, zoning was quite difficult. To assist in the approval process, a very thorough study of the benefits to the township was prepared and presented. The key to the approval, the township treasurer, was very busy and difficult to access. After a concerted effort by the consultant, who had been a township treasurer as well, the treasurer read the report and publicly stated that the project would be a substantial benefit to the township and local school district. With his recommendation, the project won approval by a slim margin.



The approval process for the state permit to construct was started next. Michigan requires that each project have preliminary plan approval by the local community and the county road, health, and drain commissions who are given 60 days to approve, deny or amend the plan. Unfortunately, the county drain commissioner who had campaigned as an environmentalist refused to give his approval because of some wetlands on site (and prejudice about manufactured Homes.) This issue was resolved in a meeting initiated by the state health department plan reviewer with the planners and the drain commissioner. None of

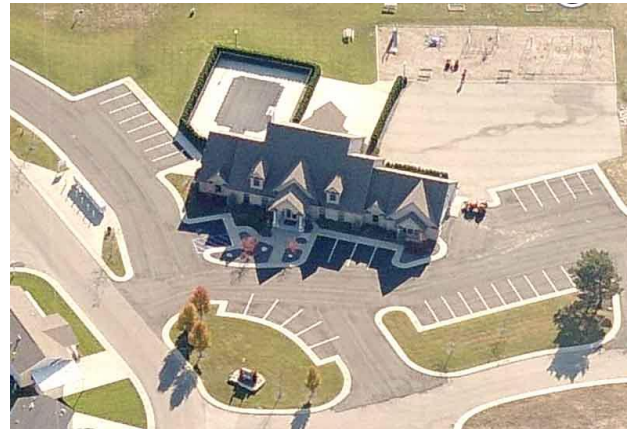
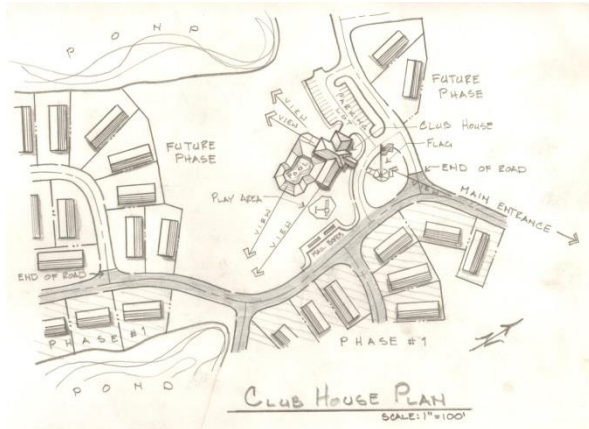
the parties wanted the plans to be approved without the local drain commissioner's approval over the 60 day lapse in the drain commission response.



Plan approval by the state was routine with minor corrections in the initial submission. During the approval process, the developers who were new to the industry were counseled on the marketing, imaging and management of the community. It was recommended that the project be composed of multi-section homes with strict controls over appearance standards spelled out in the Guidelines for Living. The lakes on site offered an amenity that would justify the up-scale approach to marketing and attract quality residents to the community. A local retailer with a great reputation was commissioned to set up a model center in the community and handle the sale of homes on site.



An attractive entry sign and landscape treatment was designed and plans for a community center adjacent to one of the lakes with pool, play equipment and picnic area were made. Construction of these important features was started in the early stages of the project development to assist in the marketing effort.



This award winning Manufactured Home Community has been described as the most attractive community in Michigan. The decision to take an up-scale approach to the homes and amenities resulted in a slightly slower fill-up of the community, but fewer vacancies and repossessions during the recent downturn in the market when compared to the performance of less attractive nearby communities built in the same time period. As with most communities, the demise of retailers in the area required the owners to become responsible for the sale of homes in the community and resulted in an additional profit center for the developers.



Lessons Learned:

Zoning for a manufactured Home Community is very difficult even when knowledgeable professionals are orchestrating the process. The team of a well-known and trusted developer, and an experienced professional planner who provide accurate and convincing drawings and studies made the approval without a lawsuit possible.

With proper planning, imaging and management, the decision to provide an up-scale image helps to assure the stability of a community in difficult economic times.

As a footnote, the Township Clerk, who opposed the project during the approval process, is now a resident of the community. A testimony to the integrity of the developers and their willingness to do what they promised!

Don Westphal
Donald C. Westphal, associates
71 North Livernois
Rochester Hills, MI 48307
248-651-5518
Web: dcwestphal.com
Email: don@dcwestphal.com