

# The Preserve at Birch Run

*Conservation subdivision retains pastoral landscape in West Vincent Township*



*This conservation subdivision preserved an historic farmstead on an 11-acre "conservancy lot."*

**Location:** Beaver Hill Road,  
Flowing Springs Road, Clarkson Drive,  
West Vincent Township, Chester County

**Developer:** Woodstone Development, Inc.

**Development Period:** 2001 – Present

**Size:** 35.5 acres

**Percentage of Open Space:** 54% (19 acres)

**Project Highlights:**

- Preserved horse farm on conservancy lot
- 10 single-family homes
- Stormwater management area in the open space
- Preserved woodlands and wetlands

**Description:** This 35-acre site is located in a largely pastoral area of West Vincent Township, Chester County. Its surroundings are dominated by agriculture and natural features including woodlands, steep slopes and wetlands. Therefore, it was important for the developer to preserve these same kinds of features on the site, in order for The Preserve at Birch Run to harmonize with the surrounding landscape.

**Conservation Areas:** Eleven new homes have been built on lots measuring approximately one acre in area (about half the normally required minimum lot size). Trimming lots in this manner permitted approximately nineteen acres of land to be protected as permanent open space. The original farmstead has been preserved on an 11-acre "Conservancy Lot" (which cannot be further subdivided). The additional eight acres of eased land constitute a central feature of this



conservation neighborhood, with eight of the new homes facing onto it, accessed by a “single-loaded” cul-de-sac (meaning a street having homes on one side only). This green space, maintained primarily as a meadow, is bordered by wooded wetlands and forested slopes, and also contains locations for stormwater and wastewater management. A small group of three homes, sharing a driveway and fronting onto Beaver Hill Road, is surrounded by preserved open space. Through careful planning, every home either faces onto or abuts value-adding conservation lands.

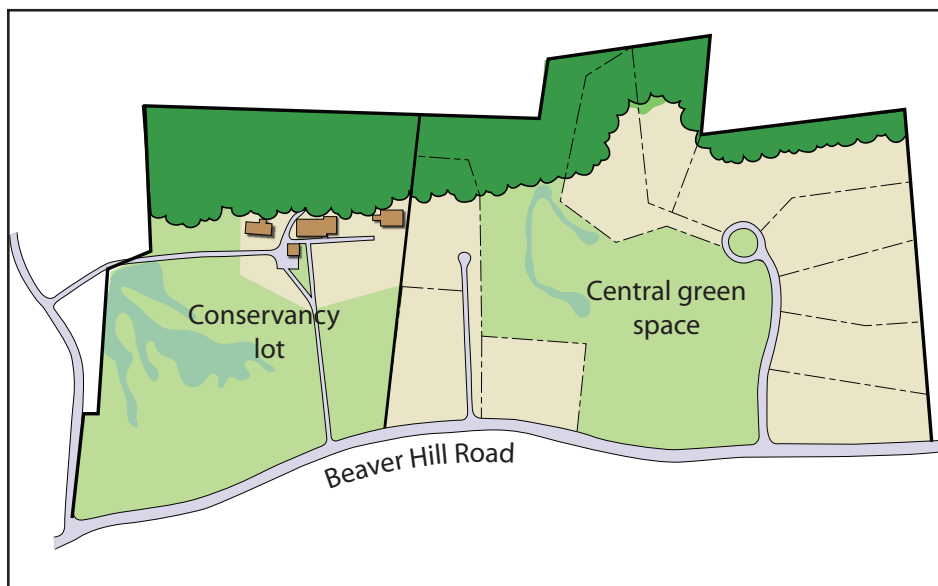
**Fitting In:** The open space and preserved farmstead face onto, and are visible from, two public roads bordering the property: Beaver Hill Road and Flowing Springs Road. The new homes were deliberately arranged so that none of their rear yards would be oriented toward these township roads, thereby avoiding a very common practice which degrades public viewsheds and robs homeowners of their privacy. Following the ordinance’s rural design principles, the preserved farmstead and meadows therefore become visual focal points, allowing the homes to fade into the background as the landscaping matures. These



*One of eight new homes arranged to face a permanently-protected central green space.*

design decisions have helped maintain the rural character of these two roads, and have enabled The Preserve at Birch Run to blend into its pastoral surroundings.

**Water and Sewer:** The lots are all served by individual on-lot wells and septic systems. An easement has been provided within the open space to permit a reserve area for the drainfield serving one of the lots.



*The permanently-protected open space in this conservation subdivision consists of privately-owned lands on the conservancy lot; and Homeowners' Association lands in the form of the central green space and preserved woodlands.*

Growing Greener: Conservation by Design is a collaborative program of the PA DCNR, the Governor's Center for Local Government Services, Natural Lands Trust, and advisors from state and local agencies. The program helps municipalities use the development process to their advantage to protect interconnected open space networks. Communities that adopt these standards are preserving an average of 62% of land each time a property is developed.

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