


**Introducing the Discover<sup>®</sup> Motiva<sup>SM</sup> Card**  
 The only card that pays you a full month's interest for paying on time  
 • No Annual Fee

**Apply today**



Subscribe Now | Pay Bill | Place an Ad | Contact Customer Service | Contact The Detroit News

RSS | Email Newsletters | PDA

Search 

Archive: Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun | Mon | Today

Home News **Local** Sports Autos Business Entertainment Lifestyle Opinion Classifieds Jobs Cars Real Estate For Rent Shopping

**Local** Metro/State Macomb Oakland Wayne Livingston Schools Commuting Michigan History Obituaries

**Oakland County**

Oakland County RSS Feed Email Headlines Text Alerts On Your PDA



Print Email Comment Read Comments Text Size:  Save Share

Tuesday, August 26, 2008

**Milford**

## Neighborhoods can be green too

Developments that preserve land are catching on

Steve Pardo / The Detroit News

**MILFORD** -- Kirt Manecke is a man with a mission, working to convince people there are alternatives to boxy, cookie-cutter subdivisions.

In these days of green car initiatives and green housing ambitions, Manecke asks, "What about green neighborhoods?"

"When they build these green homes, they clear-cut the land, destroy all the wildlife," Manecke said. "All the water runs off those fertilized lawns and pollutes our lakes and streams. There's not much green about a green home other than it's a little more efficient."

Advertisement



**HOW MUCH SHOULD I WEIGH?**

**GET THE ANSWER**

**Ask.com**  
NEED ANSWERS? JUST ASK.

Manecke, who works as a publicist for nature photographer Carl Sams II, became involved in land preservation as a student at Eastern Michigan University. He came home from college and saw the land across from his Orchard Lake home clear-cut and leveled for a new subdivision called, ironically, "The Woods of Orchard Lake." That motivated him to start the nonprofit organization LandChoices, and he is helping owners preserve land while educating people on land-friendly neighborhoods.

Manecke extols the virtues of "conservation subdivisions" -- those that use natural landscape as the basis for their design, preserving at least 50 percent of the buildable land. The latest campaign is called "Supersize my backyard" with the goal to take conservation subdivisions mainstream.

"Our goal is to educate people and planners and make it easier for them to implement conservation subdivisions into their ordinances," Manecke said.

The conservation subdivision is slowly catching on -- Hamburg Township in Livingston County has a few that fit the definition. But it's not always easy to get municipalities on board. Officials outside Traverse City had to write new ordinances so developer Dan Paulson could build 35 homes on 177 acres. The Cedar Valley Ridge subdivision kept 75 percent of its buildable land open, Paulson said.

"People get privacy trails and great views out of their backyards," Paulson said. About half of the lots are sold. "In spite of the fact that we're in a serious housing downturn, we've sold four lots last year -- three of them in the winter."

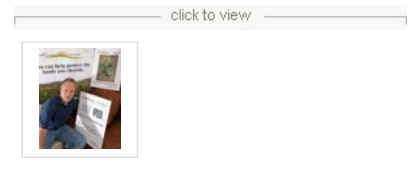
A study conducted by Wayne State University assistant professor Rayman Mohamed concluded that conservation subdivisions have advantages over traditional designs.

"Lots in conservation subdivisions carry a price premium, are less expensive to build, and sell more quickly than lots in conventional subdivisions," Mohamed said in the study.

Developers are wary about new styles -- especially now.



Kirt Manecke, at his home in Milford, is promoting the "conservation subdivision," which showcases, rather than destroys, the natural landscape. (John M. Galloway / Special to The Detroit News)



**More information**

**To find out more**

For information on conservation subdivisions, go to [landchoices.org](http://landchoices.org) or call (248) 685-0483

**Most Popular**

Most Read E-Mailed Printed

- Opening challenges for U-M Gov. may decide on ouster hearing today
- Questions could linger on Lions' runners
- Tigers to try Larish at third
- Lambert to debut for Tigers; Beltran out
- Delphi's emergence from bankruptcy is uncertain
- Lions' Brown is happy but holds hopes
- 'Victors Walk' will kick off for U-M
- Interactive: Michigan high school graduation rates for 2007-08 school year
- Automakers tweak car models to get best

It's been one of the worst years for home builders in 40 years. So far, 1,549 residential building permits have been issued in the region, according to the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, the quasi-governmental agency tracking population trends and development through seven southeast Michigan counties. There have also been 1,659 demolitions this year, resulting in a net loss of 110 homes. The region hasn't seen a yearly decline in homes since 1981. By comparison, in 2004 there were 15,399 residential permits and 4,058 demolitions.

But Manecke said the economic downturn is a good time to change perceptions of what makes a satisfying homestead.

"You're never going to stop people from wanting to build their dream house in the country," he said.

You can reach Steve Pardo at (734) 462-2191 or [spardo@detnews.com](mailto:spardo@detnews.com)

Article Tools: [Print](#) [Email](#) [Comment](#)

**In the Blogs...**

**Politics Blog**



**George Bullard:** Bill and Hillary Clinton are showing no class as they lose their grip in the Democratic Party, now owned by Barack Obama via winning the nomination. Tension still ... Continued

**Tuned In: TV Blog**

**Mekeisha Madden Toby:** One of the fun parts about coming back to the newsroom in Detroit is that I'm actually there to answer my phone calls. See usually, because I'm in L.A., all my Detroit ... Continued

**Terry Foster's Blog**



**Terry Foster:** Do you believe in now? These are words we will be hearing the rest of the season as the Detroit Lions try to make believers out of all of us. Now they are 3-0 in the ... Continued

[More blogs](#)

**MORE IN: OAKLAND COUNTY**

- [Police tax up for vote, again - 08/26/2008](#)
- [Neighborhoods can be green too - 08/26/2008](#)
- [Fraud alleged in failed festival - 08/26/2008](#)
- [Oakland briefs - 08/26/2008](#)
- [Report: 1 person may be dead in Madison Heights house fire - 08/25/2008](#)
- [Fundraising walk targets child poverty - 08/25/2008](#)
- [Oakland Briefs - 08/25/2008](#)

**Site Index**

<b>Essentials:</b> <a href="#">Home</a> <a href="#">Page One PDF</a> <a href="#">Sports PDF</a> <a href="#">Weather</a> <a href="#">Horoscope</a> <a href="#">Lottery</a> <a href="#">Crossword</a> <a href="#">Sudoku</a> <a href="#">Contact Us</a>	<b>News:</b> <a href="#">Nation/World</a> <a href="#">Politics/Govt.</a> <a href="#">Elections</a> <a href="#">Religion</a> <b>Local/State:</b> <a href="#">Metro/State</a> <a href="#">Wayne</a> <a href="#">Oakland</a> <a href="#">Macomb</a> <a href="#">Livingston</a> <a href="#">Commuting</a> <a href="#">Schools</a> <a href="#">Michigan History</a> <a href="#">Charlie LeDuff</a> <a href="#">Obituaries</a> <a href="#">Death Notices</a>	<b>Autos:</b> <a href="#">Autos Insider</a> <a href="#">Drive</a> <a href="#">Joyrides</a> <a href="#">Auto Shows</a> <a href="#">Auto Reviews</a> <a href="#">Auto Photos</a> <a href="#">Autos Talk</a> <a href="#">Test Drive blog</a> <b>Business:</b> <a href="#">Business News</a> <a href="#">Personal</a> <a href="#">Finance</a> <a href="#">Stocks</a> <a href="#">Technology</a>	<b>Sports:</b> <a href="#">Sports</a> <a href="#">Lions/NFL</a> <a href="#">Pistons/NBA</a> <a href="#">Red Wings/NHL</a> <a href="#">Tigers/MLB</a> <a href="#">Shock/WNBA</a> <a href="#">MSU</a> <a href="#">U-M</a> <a href="#">More Colleges</a> <a href="#">High Schools</a> <a href="#">Golf</a> <a href="#">Motor Sports</a> <a href="#">More Sports</a> <a href="#">Ski Guide</a> <a href="#">Scoreboards</a>	<b>Entertainment:</b> <a href="#">Entertainment</a> <a href="#">Music</a> <a href="#">Calendar</a> <a href="#">Movies</a> <a href="#">Movie Finder</a> <a href="#">TV Listings</a> <a href="#">TV/Radio</a> <a href="#">Restaurants</a> <a href="#">Wine Report</a> <a href="#">Celebs</a> <a href="#">Performing Arts</a> <a href="#">Casinos</a> <a href="#">Puzzles/Games</a>	<b>Forums:</b> <a href="#">Forums Index</a> <a href="#">Lions Talk</a> <a href="#">Wings Talk</a> <a href="#">Pistons Talk</a> <a href="#">Tigers Talk</a> <a href="#">Ask Mike O'Hara</a> <a href="#">Big Ten Talk</a> <a href="#">News Talk</a> <a href="#">Autos Talk</a> <a href="#">Faith Talk</a> <b>Opinions:</b> <a href="#">Editorials</a> <a href="#">Letter to Editor</a> <a href="#">Blogs</a> <a href="#">Columnists</a> <a href="#">Cybersurveys</a>	<b>Lifestyle:</b> <a href="#">Lifestyle</a> <a href="#">Homestyle</a> <a href="#">Food</a> <a href="#">Recipe Finder</a> <a href="#">Health/Fitness</a> <a href="#">Fashion/Shopping</a> <a href="#">Families/Parenting</a> <a href="#">Travel/Recreation</a> <a href="#">MichMoms</a> <a href="#">MichDads</a> <b>Other</b> <a href="#">Special Reports</a>
--	--	---	---	---	--	--

**Special Reports**



**The Synagro deal: FBI investigates Detroit City Council**

A waste contract approved last year by the Detroit City Council is under federal investigation. The council voted 5-4 in November 2007 to award Synagro Technologies Inc. - Jul. 8, 2008

[Russian market red hot for carmakers - May. 20, 2008](#)

[Special report: Maxed out on prison spending - Apr. 14, 2008](#)

[The war in Iraq: Five years and counting - Mar. 14, 2008](#)

[Special report: Detroit's mayor under fire - Jan. 24, 2008](#)

[More Special Reports](#)

**Never Pay A Monthly Phone Bill Again!** **Local & Long Distance for only \$19.95 A Year!** **Try it FREE!** COMPATIBLE WITH Windows

© Copyright 2008 The Detroit News. All rights reserved.

[Terms of Service](#) | [Contact](#) | [Help](#)