

ARTICLE 1
GENERAL PROVISIONS

SECTION 100 TITLE

This Ordinance shall be known and cited as the "**Rice Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.**"

SECTION 101 AUTHORITY

Rice Township is empowered to regulate subdivisions and land developments within its municipal limits as provided for under the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, Act 247, as amended.

MAJOR SUBDIVISION/ MAJOR LAND DEVELOPMENT

The Rice Township Board of Supervisors shall retain and exercise the authority for the approval or disapproval of all major subdivisions and major land developments as set forth in this Ordinance. The Rice Township Planning Commission shall act in an official advisory capacity to the Board of Supervisors for the review and recommendation of the approval or disapproval of all major subdivisions and major land developments set forth in this Ordinance.

MINOR SUBDIVISION/MINOR LAND DEVELOPMENT

The Rice Township Board of Supervisors hereby confers the exercise the authority for the approval or disapproval of all minor subdivisions and minor land developments as set forth in this Ordinance to the Rice Township Planning Commission/

SECTION 102 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

102.1

This Ordinance has been adopted to protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the Township and its by establishing regulations to allow for the proper and controlled development of the Township, to provide for environmental protection and to ensure the proper provision of community facilities. Regulations for specific types of development for which additional standards have been deemed necessary are intended to protect the rights of the residents of the Township to enjoy clean air, pure water, and the natural, scenic, historic, and aesthetic value of the environment and, in particular, to preserve and conserve the rural and natural features of the Township. The basic tenet of subdivision and land development in the Township is to base design on land capability by encouraging flexibility of design via the *conservation subdivision design process*. Each development is based on the *existing resources and site analysis plan* and the *four-step* design process required by this Ordinance. This is intended to promote and provide larger areas of open space within subdivisions

In addition to the Community Development Objectives set forth below, this Ordinance is intended to implement the goals and objectives contained in the Township Comprehensive Plan and the Township's Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan which may be adopted by the Township. The Community Development Objectives include, but are not limited to, the following:

Through the adoption, administration and enforcement of this Ordinance, Rice Township proposes to create conditions favorable to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the Township with regulations aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- 102.1 To guide the future growth and development of the Township in accordance with the policies and objectives contained within the Rice Township Comprehensive Plan.
- 102.2 To provide a standard set of minimum regulations to guide applicants in the design and development of subdivisions and land developments.
- 102.3 To provide for adequate light, air and privacy, to secure safety from fire, flood, and other danger, and to prevent overcrowding of the land and undue congestion of population.
- 102.4 To protect and conserve the value of land throughout the Township and the value of buildings and improvements upon the land, and to minimize the conflicts among the uses of land and buildings.
- 102.5 To insure that public facilities are available and will have a sufficient capacity to serve a proposed subdivision or land development.
- 102.6 To provide the opportunity for a wide-range and variety of housing types to meet the needs and affordability of all Township residents, newly-formed households, growing families and senior citizens.
- 102.7 To establish reasonable standards of design and procedures for subdivisions and land developments in order to further the orderly layout and use of land and to insure proper legal descriptions and monumentation of proposed subdivisions and land developments.
- 102.8 To guide public and private policy and action in order to provide adequate and efficient transportation, water, sewage, schools, parks, playgrounds, recreation, and other public requirements and facilities.
- 102.9 To provide the most beneficial relationship between the uses of land and buildings and the circulation of traffic throughout the Township, with particular regard to the avoidance of congestion in the streets and highways, and the pedestrian traffic movements appropriate to the various uses of land and buildings, and to provide for the proper location and width of streets and building lines.

102.10 To prevent the pollution of air, streams, and ponds; to assure the adequacy of drainage facilities; to safeguard the water table; and to encourage the prudent use and management of natural resources throughout the Township in order to preserve the integrity and stability of the community and the natural environmental characteristic of the land.

102.11 To protect and regulate land in critical areas which may be unsuitable for development.

SECTION 103 APPLICATION OF THE ORDINANCE

103.1 No subdivision or land development of any lot, tract, or parcel of land shall be made, and no street, sanitary sewer, water main, gas, oil, or electric transmission line, or other facilities in connection therewith shall be laid out, constructed, opened, or dedicated for public use or travel or for the common use of occupants of buildings abutting thereon, except in accordance with the provisions of this Ordinance.

103.2 No lot in a proposed subdivision or land development may be sold, and no zoning and/or building permit to erect any building, structure or other improvements upon land in a subdivision or land development may be issued unless and until each of the following conditions are met:

- (a) Based upon vested authority, the plans and application have been granted final approval by the Township Board of Supervisors or by Township Planning Commission.
- (b) All required conditions and/or improvements as set forth in the grant of approval have been met and required improvements have been constructed or until the applicant has posted a form of financial security, acceptable to the Board of Supervisors, which guarantees that all required improvements shall be subsequently constructed within a defined period of time.
- (c) the final plan, as approved, is filed and recorded with the Luzerne County Recorder of Deeds.

SECTION 104 EFFECT OF ORDINANCE CHANGES UPON PLANS

104.1 PENDING ACTION

From the time an application for approval of a plat, whether preliminary or final, is duly filed as provided in this Ordinance, and while such application is pending approval or disapproval, no change or amendment to the Township subdivision or other governing ordinance or plan shall affect the decision on such application adversely to the Applicant and the Applicant shall be entitled to a decision in accordance with the provisions of the governing ordinances or plans as they stood at the time the application was duly filed. In addition, when a preliminary application has been duly approved, the Applicant shall be entitled to final approval in accordance with the terms of the approved preliminary application as hereinafter provided. However, if an application is properly and finally denied, any subsequent application shall be subject to the intervening change in governing regulations.

104.2 PROJECT COMPLETION AND EFFECT OF LITIGATION

When an application for approval of a plat, whether preliminary or final, has been approved under the terms of this Ordinance without conditions or approved by the Applicant's acceptance of conditions, no subsequent change or amendment to the subdivision or other governing ordinance or plan shall be applied to affect adversely the right of the applicant to commence and to complete any aspect of the approved development in accordance with the terms of such approval within five (5) years from such approval. The five-year period shall be extended for the duration of any litigation, including appeals, which prevent the commencement or completion of the development, and for the duration of any sewer or utility moratorium or prohibition which was imposed subsequent to the filing of an application for preliminary approval of a plat. In the event of an appeal filed by any party from the approval or disapproval of a plat, the five-year period shall be extended by the total time from the date the appeal was filed until a final order in such matter has been entered and all appeals have been concluded and any period for filing appeals or requests for reconsideration have expired. Provided, however, that no extension shall be based upon any water or sewer moratorium which was in effect as of the date of the filing of a preliminary application.

104.3 FIVE YEAR INITIATION

Where final approval is preceded by preliminary approval, the aforesaid five (5) year period shall be counted from the date of the preliminary approval. In the case of any doubt as to the terms of a preliminary approval, the terms shall be construed in the light of the provisions of the governing ordinances or plans as they stood at the time when the application for such approval was duly filed.

104.4 SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED IMPROVEMENTS

Where the landowner has substantially completed the required improvements as depicted upon the final plat within the aforesaid five (5) year limit, or any extension thereof as may be granted by Board of Supervisors, no change to a Township ordinance or plan enacted subsequent to the date of filing of the preliminary plat shall modify or revoke any aspect of the approved final plat pertaining to density, lot, building, street or utility location.

104.5 INSTALLATION OF IMPROVEMENTS BEYOND FIVE (5) YEARS

In the case of a preliminary plat calling for the installation of improvements beyond the five (5) year period, a schedule shall be filed by the landowner with the preliminary plat delineating all proposed sections as well as deadlines within which applications for final plat approval of each section are intended to be filed. Such schedule shall be updated annually by the Applicant on or before the anniversary of the preliminary plat approval, until final plat approval of the final section has been granted and any modification in the aforesaid schedule shall be subject to approval of Board of Supervisors in its discretion.

104.6 SECTIONS

Each section in any residential subdivision or land development, except for the last section, shall contain a minimum of twenty-five (25%) percent of the total number of dwelling units as depicted on the preliminary plan, unless a lesser percentage is approved by Board of Supervisors in its discretion. Provided the landowner has not defaulted with regard to or violated any of the conditions of the preliminary plat approval, including compliance with landowner's aforesaid schedule of submission of final plats for the various sections, then the aforesaid protections afforded by substantially completing the improvements depicted upon the final plat within five (5) years shall apply and for any section or sections, beyond the initial section, in which the required improvements have not been substantially completed within said five (5) year period the aforesaid protections shall apply for an additional term or terms of three (3) years from the date of final plat approval for each section.

104.7 FAILURE OF COMPLIANCE BY LANDOWNER

Failure of landowner to adhere to the aforesaid schedule of submission of final plats for the various sections shall subject any such section to any and all changes to subdivision or other governing ordinance or plan enacted by the Township subsequent to the date of the initial preliminary plan submission.

SECTION 105 RESUBDIVISION OF LAND

A revision or resubdivision of a plan of record and/or lot of record shall be considered as a new subdivision and shall come under the jurisdiction of this Ordinance, under the same procedural requirements as the original subdivision.

SECTION 106 INTERPRETATION

In the interpretation and application, the provisions of the Ordinance shall be held to the minimum requirements for the promotion of the public health, safety and general welfare. When provisions, standards and specifications of this Ordinance differ from those of any other ordinance, statute or regulation, the more restrictive or higher standards shall apply.

The provisions of this Ordinance are not intended to abrogate any private easement, covenant or any other restriction of record, provided that where the provisions of this Ordinance are more restrictive or impose higher standards or regulations than such easement, covenant, or other restriction, the applicable provisions of this Ordinance shall govern.

SECTION 107 MODIFICATION OF REQUIRED STANDARDS

107.1 The provisions of this Ordinance are intended as a minimum standard for the protection of the public health, safety, and welfare. If the literal compliance with any mandatory provision of these regulations is shown by the applicant, to the satisfaction of the Supervisors, to be unreasonable or to cause undue hardship as it applies to a particular property; or, if the applicant shows that an alternative proposal will allow for equal or better results, the Supervisors may grant a waiver from such mandatory provision so that substantial justice may be done and the public interest secured while permitting the reasonable utilization of the property.

However, the granting of a waiver/modification shall not have the effect of making null and void the intent and purpose of this Ordinance.

107.2 All requests for waivers/modifications shall be in writing, shall accompany and be made a part of the development application, and shall include:

- A. The specific sections of this Ordinance in question.
- B. Provisions for the minimum modification necessary as an alternate to the requirements.
- C. Justification for the waiver/modification, including the full grounds and facts of unreasonableness or hardship.

107.3 Based upon vested authority as set forth in Section 101 of this Ordinance, all proposals for waiver/modification of provisions or requirements of this Ordinance shall require final approval by the Planning Commission or Board of Supervisors. In cases of proposals for waiver/modification of provisions or requirements of this Ordinance for a major subdivision or major land development such request shall be subject to initial review and recommendation the Planning Commission.

107.4 If the request is denied, the applicant shall be notified in writing of the basis for denial. Based upon vested authority, if the Board of Supervisors or Planning Commission grants the request, the final record plan shall include a note which identifies the waiver/modification as granted. The Board of Supervisors and/or the Planning Commission, as the case may be, shall keep a written record of all actions on all requests for waivers/modifications.

SECTION 108 FEES

108.1 ESTABLISHMENT OF FEES

The Rice Township Board of Supervisors shall establish by resolution, a fee schedule for subdivision and land development applications. Said fees schedule shall cover all costs incurred by the Township associated with the processing and review of all plans and documents and all plan and document revisions. Such cost may include, but not be limited to, Township administrative costs and the reasonable and necessary charges by the Township's professional consultants as defined and authorized by §503(1) and §510(g) of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. Professional consultants, shall include, but shall not be limited to, architects, attorneys, certified public accountants, engineers, geologists, land surveyors, landscape architects, and planners.

108.2 APPLICATION FEES

In accordance with the adopted fee schedule, an applicant, at the time of the filing an application, shall pay to the Township the required fee representing the administrative fee for filing said application. Said fee shall be separate and distinct from review and inspection fees.

108.3 REVIEW AND INSPECTION FEES

At the time of the filing of any application, the applicant shall pay to the Township a fee deemed sufficient to cover the cost of:

- A. Reviewing compliance with ordinance requirements and engineering details.
- B. Inspecting property for the site for conformance.
- C. Evaluating cost estimates of required improvements.
- D. Inspection of required improvements during installation.
- E. Final inspection or reinspection on completion of installation of required improvements.
- F. Fees charged for other related consulting services.
- G. Any other review costs incurred by the Township.

108.4 SUPPLEMENTAL FEES AND ADJUSTMENT

If the review fees collected at the time of application are not sufficient to cover the cost of engineering services and other related professional consulting services incurred by the Township, an additional fee shall be collected from the applicant prior to any action on the plan. If after Township action on the plan, any review fees remain, there shall be a refund made to the applicant of the balance within thirty (30) days of action on the plan.

108.5 COUNTY FEES

The applicant shall also be required to pay for all required fees for review and comment by the Luzerne County Planning Commission.

108.6 FILING DATE AND PAYMENT OF FEES

A completed application and plans for any proposed subdivision or land development shall not be considered as filed until all fees are paid and all applications are properly signed.

SECTION 109 PENALTIES

109.1 PREVENTIVE REMEDIES

In addition to other remedies, the Township may institute and maintain appropriate actions by law or equity to restrain, correct or abate violations, to prevent unlawful construction, to recover damages and to prevent illegal occupancy of a building, structure or premises. The description by metes and bounds to the instrument of transfer or other documents used in the process of selling or transferring shall not exempt the seller or transferor from such penalties or from the remedies herein provided.

The Township may refuse to issue any permit or grant any approval necessary to further improve or develop any real property which has been developed or which has resulted from a subdivision of real property in violation of this Ordinance. The authority to deny such a permit or approval shall apply to any of the following applicants:

1. The owner of record at the time of such violation.
2. The vendee or lessee of the owner of record at the time of such violation without regard as to whether such vendee or lessee had actual or constructive knowledge of the violation.
3. The current owner of record who acquired the property subsequent to the time of violation without regard as to whether the current owner had actual or constructive knowledge of the violation.
4. The vendee or lessee of the current owner of record who acquired the property subsequent to the time of violation without regard as to whether such vendee or lessee had actual or constructive knowledge of the violation.

As an additional condition for the issuance of a permit or granting of an approval to any such owner, current owner, vendee or lessee for the development of any such real property, the Township may require compliance with the conditions that would have been applicable to the property at the time the applicant acquired an interest in such real property.

109.2 JURISDICTION

District Justices shall have initial jurisdiction in proceedings brought under Section 112.3 of this Ordinance.

109.3 ENFORCEMENT REMEDIES

Any person, partnership or corporation who or which has violated the provisions of this Ordinance, shall upon being found liable therefor under civil enforcement proceedings, commenced by the municipality, pay a judgment of not more than \$500.00 plus all court costs, including reasonable attorney fees incurred by the municipality as a result of such proceedings. No judgment shall be commenced or be imposed, levied or payable until the date of the determination of a violation by the District Justice. If the defendant neither pays nor timely appeals the judgment, the municipality may enforce the judgment pursuant to the applicable rules of civil procedure. Each day that a violation continues shall constitute a separate violation, unless the District Justice determining that there has been a violation further determines that there was a good faith basis for the person, partnership or corporation violating this Ordinance to have believed that there was no such violation. Under such circumstances, there shall be deemed to have been only one such violation until the fifth day following the date of the termination of a violation by the District Justice and thereafter each day that a violation continues shall constitute a separate violation.

The Court of Common Pleas, upon petition, may grant an order of stay, upon cause shown, tolling the per diem judgment pending a final adjudication of the violation and judgment.

Nothing contained within this Section shall be construed or interpreted to grant any person or entity other than the municipality the right to commence action for enforcement pursuant to this Section.

SECTION 110 AMENDMENT PROCEDURE

The regulations set forth in this Ordinance may, from time to time, be amended by the Rice Township Board of Supervisors. The following requirements shall be observed prior to enacting any amendments to this Ordinance.

- A. A public hearing on the proposed amendment shall be held by the Board of Supervisors pursuant to public notice.
- B. In the case of an amendment other than that prepared by the Planning Commission, the Board of Supervisors shall submit such amendment to the Planning Commission not less than thirty (30) days prior to the public hearing.
- C. The proposed amendment shall be submitted to the Luzerne County Planning Commission not less than thirty days prior to the public hearing.
- D. The proposed amendment shall not be enacted unless public notice is given which shall include the time and place of the meeting at which passage will be considered and a reference to a place within the municipality where copies of the proposed amendment may be examined without charge or obtained for a charge not greater than the cost of reproduction.
- E. Public notice of the proposed amendment shall include the full text thereof or the title and a brief summary, prepared by the municipal solicitor, setting forth all the provisions in reasonable detail. If the full text is not provided, a copy shall be supplied to the newspaper in which the public notice is placed and an attested copy shall be placed on file at the Luzerne County Law Library.
- F. Within thirty days following the adoption of an amendment to this Ordinance, the Council shall forward a certified copy of the amendment to the Luzerne County Planning Commission.

SECTION 111 PENNSYLVANIA MUNICIPALITIES PLANNING CODE
AMENDMENTS

The provisions of this Ordinance that only reference provisions of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code shall be deemed to be automatically superseded and replaced by any applicable amendments to such provisions of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code at the date such amendments become effective as State law.

SECTION 112 APPEALS TO COURT

Decisions rendered by the Board of Supervisors may be appealed to a Court of proper jurisdiction in accordance with the procedures, provisions and time limitations as contained in Article X-A of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, Act 247, as amended.

SECTION 113 CONFLICTS WITH OTHER ORDINANCES

All Ordinance, or any parts thereof, which are inconsistent or in conflict with this Ordinance, including are hereby repealed.

SECTION 114 SEVERABILITY

The provisions of this Ordinance are severable. If any part of this Ordinance is declared to be unconstitutional, illegal or invalid, the validity of the remaining provisions shall be unaffected thereby. It is the intention of Rice Township that this Ordinance would have been adopted had such unconstitutional, illegal or invalid part not been included.

SECTION 115 EFFECTIVE DATE

This Ordinance shall be in force and effect from and after its enactment as provided for by law.

APPROVED AND ENACTED BY THE RICE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ON THIS _____ DAY OF _____, 2006.

RICE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS