

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The development of the historic Mineral Springs Sanitarium property was controversial. The former TB sanatorium, which was later used as an adolescent treatment center, was vacated in the late 1980s. Harry Jensen of J Consulting and Development purchased the 4-story hospital and the adjacent farm, intending to convert the old hospital into housing for the homeless and build some additional houses. Since the hospital had been empty for at least a year, however, the conditional use permit expired and the zoning reverted to the Wild and Scenic River zoning, requiring lots at least four acres in size with 1000-foot spacing between the homes. The rules would have permitted eight houses on the site.



The Mineral Springs Sanatorium once occupied this bucolic site. The administrator's house is preserved as one of the private lots and is the last reminder of a bygone era.

After several years of lawsuits and negotiations between the developer, the Department of Natural Resources, Goodhue County and Cannon Falls Township, the developer hired landscape architect Roger Clemence to draw up an ecologically sensitive design, which was later modified and approved. The lot sizes and 1,000-foot spacing requirement were waived in order to allow the homes to be located in the least sensitive areas and to avoid the need for excessive road building. A 25% density bonus was granted, resulting in a development with 10 houses. The old hospital and its outbuildings were demolished in 1991, but the administrator's house remains. No conservation easement has been placed on the open space, but by agreement with the Department of Natural Resources, no additional homes can be built on the site.

The design for Mineral Springs is an effective example of how flexibility in an otherwise conservative land-use tradition can provide for more efficient development and preserve the public's investment in a Wild and Scenic River.

“We really looked to the site and to the natural topography to inspire our planning.”

*– Harry Jensen,
J Consulting and Development*

A view of the bluff near the Mineral Springs site.

PROJECT STATUS

A model home was built in the fall of 2000. The lots went on the market in February 2001 and two had been sold as of early April. Lot prices range from \$171,000 to \$290,000.

PROJECT PARTNERS

J Consulting and Development Company

Roger Clemence

Harry Jensen Construction

MN Department of Natural Resources

Choice Wood Co.

Ecotec

MINERAL SPRINGS

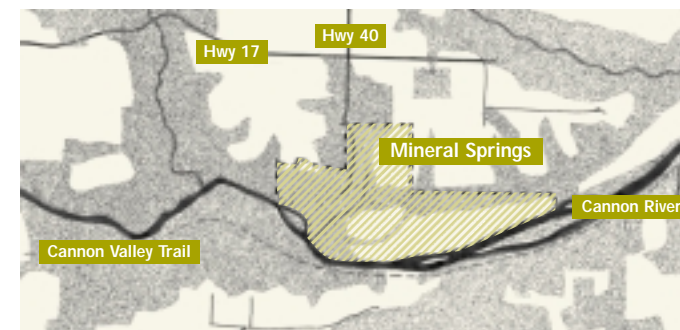
MINERAL SPRINGS, situated on a beautiful former sanatorium site in rural Goodhue County, demonstrates that conservation development is not an all-or-nothing prospect. This project shows how the views and natural habitat of a Wild and Scenic River – in this case, the Cannon River – can be protected even as a relatively large-lot development is being planned along its banks. In addition, this project reflects densities more compatible in many rural areas of the state.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Mineral Springs is located on the beautiful site of the former Mineral Springs Sanatorium and is in the Wild and Scenic land use district of the Cannon River. Located off Goodhue County Road 40, the site is approximately five miles east of Cannon Falls on the northern bank of the river. The site is hidden from view of the nearest road and has a feeling of remoteness. Its 10 homesites are located well back from the bluff edge. The homes are surrounded by woodlands and 70 acres of restored prairie. Eagles, wild turkey, trumpeter swans, deer and hawks share this peaceful spot. In recent years, this part of Goodhue County has seen a number of large country homes constructed among the wooded bluffs of the river. Therefore, after protracted discussions and legal battles over developing the site, the following project goals emerged:

- Protect the views and habitat along the Wild and Scenic Cannon River
- Protect the extensive prairie complex and woodlands on the site
- Maintain a density compatible with rural Goodhue County
- Provide a common open space network throughout the project

Though still rural in nature, Goodhue County has come under more development pressure in recent years, both from the Twin Cities metro area to the north and Rochester to the south. Though restrictive agricultural zoning still dominates the land-use patterns, rural clustering such as in Mineral Springs may be one way to buffer the county's large scale agricultural base from any permitted developments in the future. It also may provide landowners with



wooded bluffs

SPECIFICATIONS

SITE SIZE:

160 acres

NUMBER OF UNITS:

10 single family homes

LOT SIZES:

1.9 – 3.8 acres

OPEN SPACE:

130 acres (81%)

WASTE TREATMENT:

Individual sewage treatment systems

WATER:

Individual wells

TRAILS:

Several miles through restored prairie and along the river

NATURAL FEATURES:

70 acres prairie; wooded bluffs; riparian buffer along river

rural development options to land-consuming rural estate properties that do not maintain active agriculture and that can negatively impact the rural scenic character of the county.

RIVER AND BLUFF PROTECTION

Since none of the lots extend to the water's edge, the ecologically important streamside vegetation should remain intact, and so should the views from the bike path and from the river itself along this popular canoe route from Cannon Falls to Welch.



ROADWAYS

The clustering of the homesites in one part of the development reduces road lengths and frees a large area for open space preservation. The private streets are 18 feet in width with unpaved shoulders, thereby reducing the overall stormwater runoff impact.



ARCHITECTURE

Guidelines for architecture and landscaping are provided for in the covenants for Mineral Springs. In order to blend in with the natural beauty, all houses will be constructed with natural looking materials, such as wood, native stone, stucco and brick. All structures will be properly integrated with the site and natural grades will be preserved to the greatest extent possible.



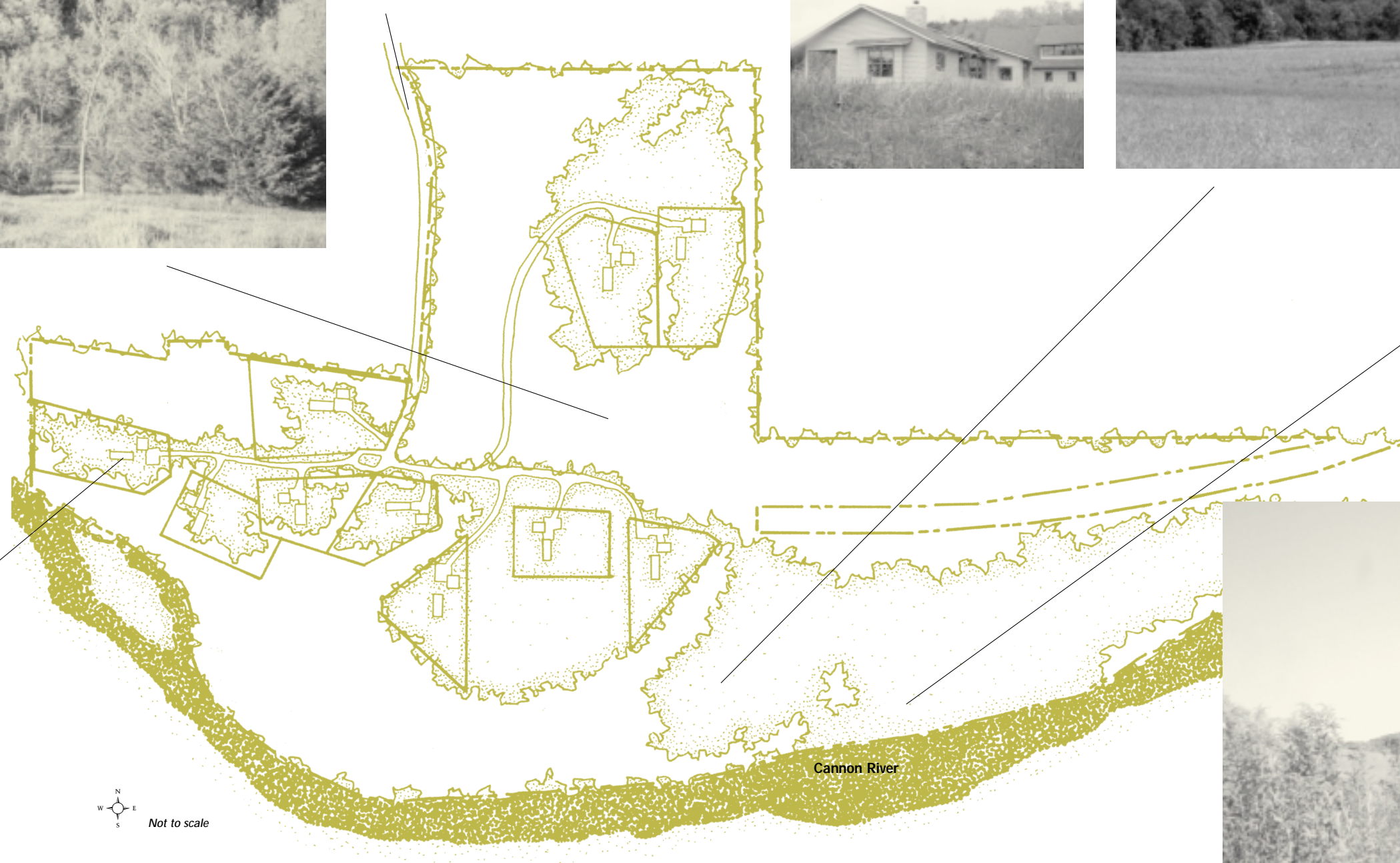
PRAIRIE AND WOODLANDS

Ecotec of Cannon Falls designed and planted a 70-acre prairie restoration. The open view over the prairie preserves the pastoral feeling of the former farm. In addition, riparian forest and wooded bluffs are preserved through this design.



LOT LAYOUT

The lots are located in the western portion of the site, with the eastern part reserved for trails, prairie restoration and a possible future horse stable. All of the lots are above the bluffs of the river, on relatively level ground, with views across the valley. The layout is unusual in that many of the lots are not contiguous and the common open space threads throughout the development.



TRAILS

Trails wind through the prairie and along the river, allowing residents access to more than a mile of riverfront. An abandoned railroad right-of-way acts as an informal trail all the way to Cannon Falls. The trails are intended to be rustic in nature.

