

Thursday, July 24, 2003

Subdivisions to mate with nature Developments planned for Anderson, Union Twps.

**By Reid Forgrave
The Cincinnati Enquirer**

ANDERSON TWP. - It's not really a nature preserve.

It's not really a suburban subdivision, either.

Developer Peter McGarey says his soon-to-be-built enclave of more than 150 homes in Anderson Township in Hamilton County, and Union Township in Clermont County, will be somewhere in the middle.

"It's not going to be your typical subdivision," McGarey said one recent weekend afternoon as he darted in and out of trees and down the steep, muddy terrain in a small utility tractor. "It will cater to the land as it is now with all these trees and creeks."

As McGarey bumped along, a whitetail deer hopped by. The densely wooded area soon will have more than two miles of walking trails, he explained, and more than one-third of the land will stay undisturbed, bucking the typical complaint against developers overrunning nature.

Indeed, Mother Nature will be the focal point of the Ivy Trails residential development on this 148-acre wooded plot of land only 15 minutes east of downtown Cincinnati and a half-mile from the Eastgate exit of Interstate 275.

"Typically you divide up every piece of a lot in a subdivision," said Steve Sievers, director of development services in Anderson Township.

"But with this, nearly 40 percent of the acreage is owned by the development itself. We're just really happy with all this open space, especially along Eight Mile Road," a curvy road in Anderson Township flanked by canopies of trees.

The development in Anderson Township will feature larger "estate" homes, ranging in price between \$450,000 and \$1.5 million.

In the Union Township section, "lifestyle" homes will be built - smaller homes on smaller lots, designed primarily for empty-nesters and selling between the upper \$300,000 range to \$600,000.

McGarey hopes to break ground for the development in September, then start building some of the more expensive homes at the beginning of 2004 on the shore of a five-acre lake. Homes should be ready for residents to move in by the end of 2004.

With much of the county built out by larger subdivisions in the 1980s, these days most new subdivisions in Anderson Township are relatively small - about 25 acres, Sievers said.

Albert Peter, who has lived there since 1944 and sold the land to McGarey's company, said it used to be as "country" as you can get - his father raised cattle, pigs and turkeys there. As a child, Peter would play in an apple orchard with some 300 trees.

"It was going to happen sometime, so we might as well do it right," Peter said. "We wanted to preserve the character of the property. What the development is really selling here is trees."

Peter, also an Anderson Township trustee, said the development will increase the tax base in the township.

"It's the kind of high-quality development Anderson Township needs, and there's a nice balance of housing," Peter said.

E-mail rforgrave@enquirer.com