Strafford Regional Planning Commission

Issue Date: September 24, 2004

"Planning and action for sustainable development and an improved quality of life".

Fact Sheet:

Conservation/Cluster Development Subdivisions: The Benefits

What is a Conservation/Cluster Development Subdivision?

Conservation/Cluster Development Subdivision is a type of subdivision design that allows the preservation of important land features such as open fields, hilltops, forests, and rivers. Conservation/Cluster Development Subdivision locates houses on smaller parcels of land while the additional land, which would have been allocated to individual lots, is converted into common shared open space for the subdivision residents or public use.

Economic Benefits

Lower Costs – Infrastructure engineering, construction, and long-term maintenance costs can be reduced, because compact developments allows for shorter street and utility lines. Also, the size and cost of stormwater management facilities can be reduced as a result of less street pavement.

Marketing and Sales Advantages – Realtors and developers can capitalize on preserved open space by marketing the benefits of living in a community where forest habitat, wetlands, and greenways have been protected.

Value Appreciation – Conservation subdivisions tend to appreciate faster than conventional subdivisions.

Property Taxes – No loss in property taxes, and possible higher revenues due to higher appraised value.

Environmental Benefits

Wildlife Management – The preserved greenways within the conservation subdivision provide important wildlife habitats and travel corridors for animals in the area.

Improved Water Quality Protection Through Improved Buffers – Conservation subdivisions generate less stormwater than conventional subdivisions because of the larger areas of natural vegetation. These areas trap pollutants from stormwater runoff and prevent them from entering nearby lakes, ponds, rivers and streams.

Greater Aquifer Recharge – In conventional subdivisions impervious surfaces and suburban lawns cover a greater amount of area. This results in less rainfall being able to percolate into the ground, therefore reducing the amount of water available to replenish the aquifer. A conservation subdivision reduces the total area of impervious surfaces and suburban lawns allowing for more water to reach the aquifer.

Social and Recreational Benefits

Pedestrian-Friendly Neighborhoods – Neighborhoods that include: inviting places to walk such as shady sidewalks, and woodland trails, and interesting destinations such as scenic views, meadows, ponds, and playing fields.

Community Activities – Common features of a conservation subdivision such as formal greens and commons allow neighbors to meet occasionally and get to know each other. This fosters more neighborhood activities ranging from annual picnics and sporting events to garden tours. Cluster development also may enable increased use of public transit with increased mobility and reduced air pollution.

For further information, contact Senior Planner Gerald Mylroie, AICP, Strafford Regional Planning Commission, at (603)742-2523 or grm@strafford.org.

Source: Arendt, Randall. 1999. Growing Greener: Putting Conservation into Local Plans and Ordinances. Washington, DC: Island Press.