

# CONSERVATION SUBDIVISIONS

## AT - A - GLANCE

September 2005

### An Option for Conservation

Municipalities that are interested in conserving the natural, historic, and cultural aspects of their communities have often relied on voluntary acts of preservation by private and public land owners. Other options exist, such as conservation subdivisions, to help conserve special features in a community while still allowing development to occur on the land.

In its purest form, the term conservation subdivision design refers to residential developments where half or more of the buildable land area is designated as undivided, permanent open space (Arendt, 1996). There are four essential, and sequential steps needed to design a conservation subdivision:

- (a) identify potential conservation areas

### Definition

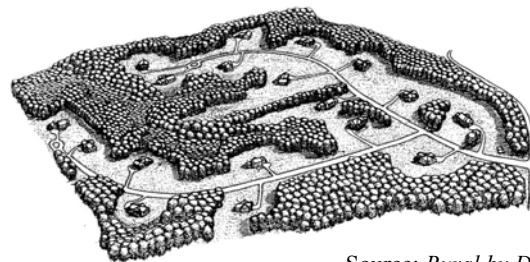
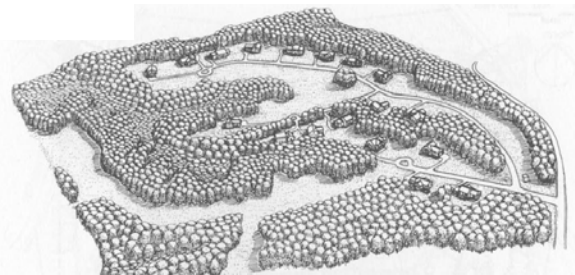
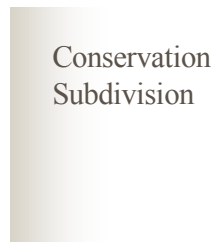
*A conservation subdivision is a type of subdivision design that allows the preservation of community-identified local resources.*

### Characteristics

- Permanently preserved open space
- Preserved viewsapes
- Variable lot sizes
- Flexibility in design



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Conventional Subdivision

Source: *Rural by Design*, 1994. Arendt.

Development Type	Conventional	Cluster	Conservation
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developers are familiar with local regulations concerning conventional development.</li> <li>• Sets a minimum lot size.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developments are more dense, and more efficient, than conventional designs.</li> <li>• Can provide a variety of housing types to serve diverse needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land preservation is required.</li> <li>• A cultural and natural resources inventory is recommended, leading to the preservation of identified areas or sites.</li> </ul>
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not always take into consideration environmental or social concerns.</li> <li>• Landscapes are often severely altered, and may occur over a large area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preservation is not always required.</li> <li>• Does not necessarily provide common open space.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process may be more complex and difficult to implement</li> </ul>

### Eight Self-Diagnostic Questions

1. HAS THE COMMUNITY ADEQUATELY INVENTORIED ITS RESOURCES, AND DOES THE PUBLIC HAVE A SUFFICIENT UNDERSTANDING AN APPRECIATION OF THEM?
2. IS THE COMMUNITY MONITORING AND ASSESSING ITS LIKELY FUTURE UNDER ITS CURRENT GROWTH MANAGEMENT PRACTICES, AND IS IT TAKING STEPS TO CHANGE WHAT IS DOES NOT LIKE?
3. HAS THE COMMUNITY ESTABLISHED APPROPRIATE AND REALISTIC POLICIES FOR LAND CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT, AND DO THESE POLICIES PRODUCE A CLEAR VISION OF LANDS TO BE CONSERVED?
4. DO THE COMMUNITY’S ZONING AND SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS REFLECT AND ENCOURAGE ITS POLICIES FOR LAND CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT?
5. DOES THE COMMUNITY KNOW HOW TO WORK COOPERATIVELY AND EFFECTIVELY WITH SUBDIVISION APPLICANTS?
6. DOES THE COMMUNITY HAVE A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF WORK RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS MAJOR LANDOWNERS?
7. DOES THE COMMUNITY HAVE IN PLACE THE ARRANGEMENTS REQUIRED FOR SUCCESSFULLY OWNING, MANAGING, AND USING LANDS SET ASIDE FOR CONSERVATION PURPOSES?
8. HOW ARE LOCAL OFFICIALS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC MAINTAINING THEIR KNOWLEDGE FOR THE STATE-OF-THE-ART IN MANAGING GROWTH TO CONSERVE LAND?

Source: *Conservation Design for Subdivisions*, 1996. Arendt.

**For books, videos, or more information, please contact LRPC at 279-8171.**