

DEVELOPMENT WITH OPEN SPACE

Some large landowners rely on the occasional sale of home sites to supplement their income. However, this should be an option for property owners without resulting in piecemeal, strip residential or strip commercial development that can undermine an area’s rural qualities. Conservation development plans offer an alternative strategy that protects equity, open space, farmland, and in many cases priority views. Landowners then subdivide home sites as needed over time according to a pre-approved plan based on conservation design principles.

A goal of development with open space is the conservation of productive farmland for the long-range continuation of farm operations. Maintenance of open land is not an issue when conserved farm acreage continues to be a part of the working landscape.

Because every farm, forest, and large lot is different, each conservation plan will be unique. The location of acreage that is most appropriate for residential or commercial development will depend upon the natural features of the landscape and on the density the landowner considers most compatible with the long term management of the farm, forest, or property. Plans may also identify potential acreage for placement of a farm or forest related business or cottage industry.

Gradual Development with Open Space example:
 On a 100 acre farm in a five acre (minimum lot size) zoning district, the total potential density, excluding the farmstead, roads, steep slopes, wetlands and water may be 15 five acre lots.

Locate development pocket on 25 acres of marginal land, hiding the houses and roads within woodlands and along the far edges of open fields.

Approve incremental subdivision plan for up to 12 lots within the 25 acre development pocket, reducing minimum lot size.

Negotiate a density easement allowing 3 additional lots on the remaining 75 acres. Full density (15 lots) may be reached over time at the discretion of the landowner. Even at full density, more than 50 percent of the farm is protected.



Image: Dutchess County Planning

“Any development proposed in rural areas should be designed and sited to encourage the retention of open space through innovative techniques such as clustering. Commercial and large scale residential development in rural areas should minimize conflicts with traditional land uses such as agricultural and natural resource business enterprises and related economic activity.”

Growth and Development Guidelines, Jefferson County Planning Board - 2005



Create development plans for farm, forest, and other large lots using conservation or rural friendly techniques: Such plans will allow future home sites or commercial sites to co-exist with active farmland or forest activities, conserve the best agricultural soils, discourage roadside sprawl, and preserve scenic views of priority areas.

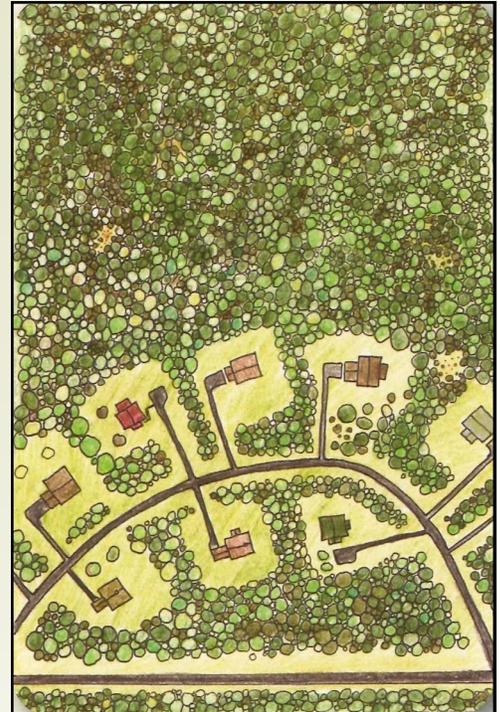
BENEFITS TO DEVELOPMENT WITH OPEN SPACE

For Land Owners:

- Capital for farm or forest reinvestment or expansion
- A broader range of density options
- More flexibility in locating home sites
- Control over the pace of subdivision
- Incremental extension of roads or shared access roads
- Reduced costs when planned lots are actually subdivided

For the Community

- Prevent repeated, uncoordinated subdivision
- Home sites can be sited away from scenic roads
- Support the agricultural economy
- Keep farmland on its tax rolls
- Protect important farm soils
- Retain the defining character of the countryside



Images: Wildlife Conservation Society

Flexible Farm Development techniques:

- 1) Use conservation design to locate development, reserving the best farmland.
- 2) Determine density option that best meets farm owner's goals.
- 3) Locate home sites within identified development pocket, reduce road frontage requirements and standards to allow access via shared driveways or reduced width local roads.
- 4) Assure fast-track approval for future subdivisions based on pre-approved plan, maintaining agricultural assessment until subdivision occurs.
- 5) Home sites located away from farmland, with shared access, and farmland still leased to farmer.

