

The Town of Kinnickinnic's Options for Conservation Design Development

Conservation Design Development refers to the grouping of a particular development's residential structures on a portion of the available land, reserving a significant amount of the site as protected open space. This open space can be used for agricultural purposes, exclusive use by the residents such as private trails or recreation areas, or preservation of natural wildlife. Conservation Design Development (CDD) also allows developers more flexibility in designing new subdivisions, while still preserving any unique or sensitive natural areas.

Although CDDs are becoming more popular in the St. Croix River area, the Town of Kinnickinnic Subdivision and Platting Ordinances currently do not allow conservation subdivision design. The following are a couple of different types of CDD that are viable options that the Town of Kinnickinnic should consider.

Cluster Developments

A cluster development is characterized by common open space and compact clustered lots for homes. This allows for a community that is both aesthetically pleasing and a healthy choice for our environment. The open space is generally shared by the residents and the public, and usually restricts development on areas that include woodlands, rivers, streams, drainage areas, wetlands, floodplains, prairies, steep slopes, endangered species, and productive farmland.

Cluster developments, if planned correctly, end up as an economic win-win situation for both developers and communities. Developers end up with a marketable subdivision, whereas the communities end up having fewer total miles of roadways, sewer and water service, and other public infrastructure to maintain because the homes are closer together.

According to a case study of Lake Elmo, one drawback to a cluster development is the fact that it really only supports high-end subdivisions. This means that these subdivisions typically do not support affordable housing units. Cluster developments are not recommended if the goal of the town is to support low income homes, however it is possible to build low income homes while still protecting the integrity of the environment.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

An alternative form of Conservation Design Development would be Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). A CSA is basically an economic partnership between consumers and farmers in a localized area. The consumers benefit with fresh, safe, and usually organic food, and the farmers benefit from a more stable local market. Most CSAs offer a variety of vegetables, fruits, and herbs. Some others provide a full array of farm produce, including eggs, meat, milk, baked goods, and even firewood.

The growers and consumers provide mutual support and share the risks and benefits of food production. Typically, members of the CSA make a pledge of about \$15-\$20 per week in

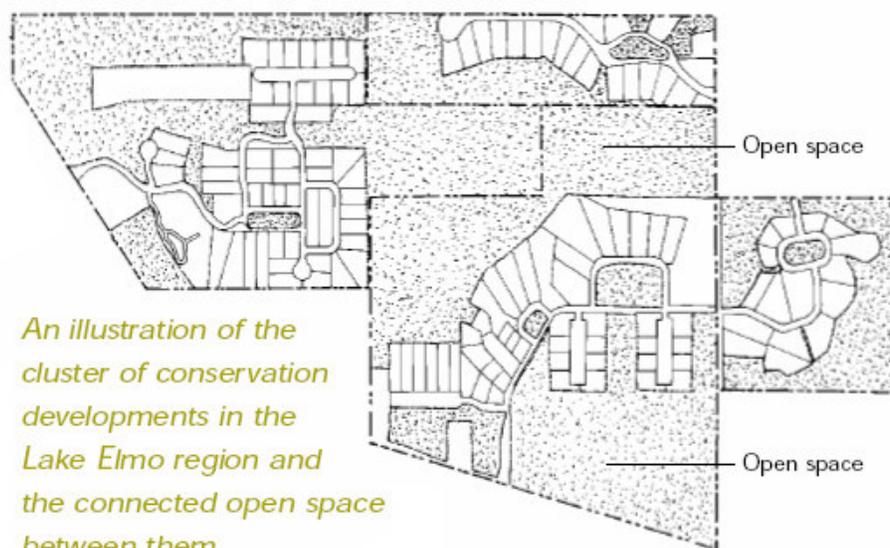
advance to cover the anticipated costs of the farm operation and farmer's salary. In return, they receive shares in the farm's goods throughout the growing season. By direct sales to community, growers receive better prices for their crops, gain some financial security, and are relieved from the heavy burden of marketing.

Some areas along the St. Croix River have greatly benefited from CSAs. Stillwater and Lake Elmo both have successful CSAs like Blue Roof Organics, specializing in tomatoes, potatoes, carrots, garlic, and onions. There are four CSAs in the City of Osceola like Foxtail Farm and The Community Homestead with a mix of over 40 types of fruits, vegetables and herbs, including strawberries, raspberries, corn, tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, potatoes, greens and lettuce, garlic, onions, cabbage, kohlrabi, summer and winter squash.

St. Croix County Subdivision Ordinances Purposes

There are a number of ways that the Town of Kinnickinnic and St. Croix County can benefit from some kind of Conservation Design Development. The following is a listing of purposes for the creation of a Conservation Subdivision:

- To reduce perceived density of development, while still providing privacy for dwellings.
- To incorporate large areas of permanently protected open space.
- To allow continuation of agriculture in the areas that are best suited for such activities.
- Maintain and protect St. Croix County's rural character.
- Protecting environmentally sensitive areas such as woodlands, rivers, streams, drainage areas, wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, endangered species, and productive farmland.
- To connect open space areas between adjacent clusters.
- Maximize efficiency of infrastructure with less total length in roads, utility lines, drainage requirement, and amounts of impermeable surface.
- Permit active and passive recreational use of open space by the residents and/or public.
- Reduce erosion and sedimentation by retaining existing vegetation.



Regulations in St. Croix County Subdivision Ordinances

There are a number of ordinances in the county that apply specifically to cluster developments. Most or all of these regulations should be taken into consideration by the Town of Kinnickinnic before adopting an official plan for any kind of conservation design.

The total number of homes allowed in a cluster development is an additional 25 percent higher than the average residential base density in the county. Also, the prescribed lot size is set at no less than one-half acre. The minimum percentage of open space in a CDD zoned for agricultural residential is set at 65 percent, excluding any already existing right-of-way and utility easements.

Design and Dimensional Standards for Cluster Groups in St. Croix County:

- All dwelling units shall be in clustered groups.
- In areas less than 40 acres, all groups must not cover more than 40% of the area.
- In areas greater than 40 acres, each group shall contain between 6 and 16 dwelling units.
- Each cluster group may be divided into smaller or larger groupings if the applicant can show that the alternative design is more appropriate for the site.
- Plats may contain one or more cluster groups.
- All lots in a cluster group shall take access from interior roads only.
- Clustered groups should be built with minimum disturbance to woodlands, hedgerows, and individual mature trees.

In order to best preserve the open space in any cluster development, the county does not allow the following structures to be built in any open area:

- Parking areas
- Railroads and utility rights-of-way, except underground pipelines
- Private lot areas
- Roads and highways, public or private