

Attachment 6

Conservation Subdivisions

Conservation subdivision regulations typically reduce the minimum lot size that would be required for each home in a conventional subdivision, while maintaining the overall density of development specified by the local comprehensive plan or zoning ordinance. Homes are located on a portion or portions of a development site, and the balance of the site is maintained as open space or in agricultural use. Community zoning or subdivision ordinances may also allow the construction of recreational facilities, such as trails or playfields, or stormwater management or other public facilities in the open space areas. Conservation subdivisions typically offer more opportunity for preserving open space and maintaining the natural resources of the site being developed in comparison to conventional subdivision designs.

Conservation subdivisions are typically authorized under community zoning or subdivision regulations. Regulations allowing conservation subdivisions may be written differently; however, three basic elements must be included and balanced. These include development density, lot size, and the amount of required open space. Generally, subdivisions with a lower average residential density require a higher percentage of open space to be provided. Communities may also choose to allow a density bonus for subdivisions that use a conservation design (that is, allow more homes in a conservation subdivision than would be permitted in a conventional subdivision in the same zoning district). As of 2010, 15 of the 42 communities in the Region that had adopted specific regulations for conservation subdivisions provided density bonuses for conservation subdivisions. Table IV-32 lists County and local governments that have adopted conservation subdivision regulations and Appendix C includes a summary of those regulations. The conservation subdivision design process is discussed in further detail in Chapter IX.

A review of subdivisions approved in the Region between 1990 and 2005 shows that 87 conservation subdivisions with 4,808 lots were platted in areas with sanitary sewer service and 71 conservation subdivisions with 1,722 lots were platted in areas without sanitary sewers. Conservation subdivisions in areas served by sanitary sewers had an average density of 0.92 homes per gross acre, with a median lot size of about 23,000 square feet and an average of about 25 percent of the site maintained in common open space. In unsewered areas, the average density was 0.28 homes per gross acre, with a median lot

size of about 59,000 square feet and an average of about 51 percent of the site maintained in common open space. Conservation subdivisions in unsewered areas were designed to accommodate single-family homes. While most of the conservation subdivisions in sewerred areas accommodated primarily single-family homes, two of the subdivisions accommodated lots for two-family dwellings, one subdivision included lots for four-family dwellings, and one included an area for development of a commercial/office building in addition to lots for single-family homes.