

**UDC UPDATE PROJECT
RURAL CLUSTER SUBDIVISIONS CODE REVISIONS SUBPROJECT
2ND FACILITATED DISCUSSION WITH DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY**

AS DISCUSSED ON AUG 20, 2007

In attendance:

Approximately 25 representatives, including developers, home builders and consultants were present.

<u>Review Process</u>
Is our goal to have greater public participation? The public is notified approximately five times (mailings) when an application is filed. Is the County suggesting that there be a different standard for Rural Cluster projects? The current notification process is not broken.
Public participation at hearings is substandard. The public needs to get more involved early on at the legislative level.
Citizens need to be re-educated about the legislative process.
There are opportunities for the public to get involved during the pre-application process.
Having neighborhood meetings would eliminate problems upfront.
Neighborhood meetings are a waste of time. Our projects do not garner opposition and if they did, it is our choice if we want to work with the community or not.
Citizens show up too late in the process (at the Hearing) and do not seem to realize when they have opportunities to participate.
We need administrative approval of plats up to a certain number. The Growth Management Act (GMA) mandates public participation process already.
What percent of Rural Cluster Subdivisions are 9 lots or less?
Rural Cluster Subdivisions, on a per lot basis, require more work than any other development type. Rural Clusters require more studies and analyses and are subject to tremendous scrutiny already.
<u>Housing</u>
We can make Rural Cluster Subdivisions more affordable if we are allowed to build condominiums.
Rural Clusters (1/2-acre lots) are more affordable than traditional 5-acre development which doubles the infrastructure costs.
The variety of housing (or lack of) in the rural area is market driven and is a reaction to what is happening in the urban area.
What is the basis for the County to regulate affordable housing? What is the impact of regulating affordability?

The housing market is driven purely by economics.

If you want more affordable housing, increase the density bonus or allow us to build condos.

There is no code provision that will address the affordability issue because all housing will devalue the rural area.

Community drainfields should be allowed on 60 or 70-foot wide lots. Create incentives that would allow us to group affordable units in the corner of a specific project/development.

If community drainfields were allowed, we could get 95% open space.

The County has displayed a lack of leadership in working with the Snohomish Health District on the community drainfield issue.

Rural Urban Transition Area (RUTA)

Two code sections specifically need to be revised:

- a. The mandate that units must be in the central portion of the site.
- b. Buffer requirements around the perimeter of the site.

Reduce buffers to allow placement on the perimeter.

Transition areas will be part of the RUTA in three years.

The County needs to look at the bigger policy question of how RUTAs are going to be used in the future.

Cities need to pay particular attention to their own RUTAs.

Cities are not providing predictability as to where they plan on expanding. If so, developers would be able to build accordingly. Some developers are buying up lots in the RUTA, but certain cities have no intention of annexing those areas.

Water

Some developers would like nothing more than to place their projects on public water, but water purveyors and Utilities do not seem to want to work with them.

The County should make the Department of Ecology issue water rights.

Citizens seem to want the development community to show proof of water availability at the preliminary plat level although proof is not required until the final plat stage. These requirements are backwards under state law.

Citizens requesting these changes should substantiate how current water availability requirements have caused problems.

What is the main issue? Exempt wells. Who is complaining? Those who are totally opposed to rural cluster subdivisions. Problems may be variable based on how exempt wells were drilled. Complaints should be substantiated with documentation.

Plats can be recorded without a well. Developers usually put in wells because they can record a higher sales price if the lot has a well. It is up to the buyer to make sure that there is

water availability before he/she is able to get a building permit.

The health district is reluctant to accept water supplies until the time when the well is drilled.

Roads

Rural road congestion or declining function of rural roads may not be caused specifically by Rural Cluster Subdivisions. There are no studies that have been performed to indicate that.

20 and 50-lot projects in urban areas go unnoticed although they may impact traffic.

Look at the limiting design speed of rural roads (35 mph). Lower speeds allow us to better fit contours.

The public has no concept of the amount of traffic mitigation fees that developers pay (one example paid \$80,000 on one project). Perhaps the public should be more educated about fees and understand that even if traffic triples, we will still not exceed rural levels of service (LOS). Constituents may want traffic mitigation fees to be used in a different way.

A narrower net paved width allows for flexibility in grading.

One developer was asked to install a 7-foot walkway on both sides of the street. A traffic calming measure? There should be different menu of options allowed for pathways.

Another developer was asked to install two 700-foot parallel driveways because shared driveways are not allowed in the code. This should be fixed.

Fix portion of the code that allows a plat to have a driveway but does not allow it for a short plat.

Transportation Service Area (TSA) money is not being spent on improvements to impacts of rural cluster subdivisions. The County should mandate that traffic mitigation fees are being spent in an area where development is occurring.

The public needs to be made aware that the recent flood of incoming development applications is likely due to developers wanting to get in prior to adoption of new critical area regulations.

The Department of Public Works should be responsible for improving rural roads.

There seems to be a lack of arterial planning; there are no east-west connections.

Everything east of I-5 seems to be an island.

The County lacks courage in condemning properties along 180th, 196th or 212th. The County should use police power to force condemnation of properties that are preventing needed east-west connections to improve circulation.

Character

Plans that are approved are not the same as what is built on the ground. The County allows shoddy landscape plans.

The constraints for development of a 12-acre site are plentiful while options are limited.

Potential changes to code seem to be most possible in the rural character aspect.

Fix the portion of code that describes the "visual buffer". There is adequate, well documented data regarding natural, impenetrable buffers.

Rural character is blue tarps and old abandoned vehicles.

Develop a buffering standard; allow for one side with public access. Concentrate bigger buffers where impact is the worst. Give us flexibility in high-impact area. PRD developments do not require double buffers but rural cluster code does.

What about when a buffer is actually blocking a viewshed? A neighborhood meeting upfront could address this as a problem before it escalates.

Give us regional water detention standards.

What are your final thoughts? What are the most pressing issues?

Community drainfields and public education.

Community drainfields and lack of adequate landscaping code are the problems. Do not make us install expensive plantings around the entire perimeter of the site.

Make the comments from stakeholder meetings available.

Lower the internal speeds within rural clusters.

Allow Low Impact Development (LID) projects, which would reduce grading.

Allow community septic systems and reduce permitting timeline for shared detention ponds. Keep in mind that rural cluster subdivisions look better than many rural residences. For this reason, developers would not mind hiding their projects to improve their bottom line.

Landscaping issues are important; buffer only what is impacted and the area built.

Implement road sizes that make sense. Educate the public.

Homeowners should be educated about the zoning in their area and what that type of zoning allows *before* they purchase a home. The public should utilize the resources available to them to find out what type of development is allowed in certain zones. The opposition to rural clusters is because they work.

Allow smaller roads and shared driveways. 1000 Friends of Washington needs to be challenged on the misinformation that they are providing to the public.

Allow only a 15% minimum slope on roads.

Use low impact drainage techniques.

Allow smaller lots with community drainfields.

Buffers do not make sense on farmlands. Allow shared driveways.