

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

AS DISCUSSED ON JULY 13, 2007

In attendance:

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

<u>Comments</u>
*Comments listed do not include PDS Staff commentary
Existing code is adequate and should be left alone
Perceptions of Rural Cluster Subdivisions are that they do not look rural
Transportation
Is Open Space held in perpetuity if the Rural Urban Transition Area absorbs rural land?
Consider having a community meeting upon intake of large permits
Community Meetings: a) Some developers think that they can be time consuming b) Some developers think that they could be very beneficial
Provide incentives for the developer to work with the community
Rural Cluster Subdivisions are based on topography
Is the ability of children to be able to walk to school an important feature?
PDS should attend meetings between the developer and the community
Code versus project level requirements – what is an appropriate venue for collaborating with public?
The County should provide more flexibility
Compliance with Growth Management Act (GMA) regulations ensures approval for the developer and is predictable
Administrative review is less desirable based on experiences between plats and short plats
Allow buffer reduction next to road
Explore setting a minimum width for rural cluster lots
Allow more Rural Urban Transition Area (RUTA) around cities
Where will future roads be?
Front-load infrastructure planning
Develop requirements for standard and reduced width buffers

Planning & Development Services (PDS) needs to be consistent with buffer requirements
There is a good market for small lots; Tradeoff should be to require 80% or more of site be dedicated to open space
Set Planning Standard
The definition of sight obscuring buffer is not clear. Planning & Development Services (PDS) needs to set the standard, for example, something such as: two rows, staggered, six ft trees ten feet off center
Location of buffers: Should they be around the perimeter of entire site or around individual units? Look at the existing quality and longevity (or lack thereof) of buffers
Perhaps there should be a requirement to relocate buffer for developments that include 30 units or more?
Look into the timing of re-vegetation; if we can wait two to five years, the end result may be a better product than if we demand vegetation reappear within twelve months
Re-consider the cost advantages of allowing a site to re-vegetate naturally
Re-address Planning & Development Services (PDS) inspections of buffers and stormwater maintenance facilities
Provide more administrative flexibility (Director Discretion) – If a builder violates a setback rule in one area, yet provides more than the required Open Space in another, then make the administrative process easier for him/her. Give developers the ability to be able to reason with someone at the County
Look into lot size averaging in rural areas
Provide different options with subdividing
Look at the functionality of the open space: habitat, corridors
Rural character includes elements such as Traffic, Ponds, and Architecture and is not only limited to site obscuring buffers
Engineering Design & Development Standards (EDDS) allows for roadway and walkway separation yet developers must also meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, which do not allow for the same flexibility
Look at the requirements of private, detached roads; why subject to federal standards?
Look at the aesthetics of stormwater detention ponds and retention facilities
Difficulty with implementing Low Impact Development
Difficulty getting rural walkways approved through Planning & Development Services (PDS)
Allow flexibility in perimeter landscaping; Why does type A landscaping requires a

modification letter?
Allow flexibility in utilization of existing vegetation
Look at isolated lot issue
Look at Boundary Line Adjustment ordinance
Allow developers to experiment with innovative designs, such as berms
No provisions for coves or islands which help with appearance
Cove individual house sites into lot itself
Suburban techniques are being used in rural environments
Flexing of road standards impacts quality of developments
Don't require driveways to extend back deeply into developments
There is a market for urban people in the rural area, which is a social/political issue that is larger than rural character
When people drive by Rural Cluster Subdivisions, there is low visibility of protection of slopes, wetlands and other environmental features, as well as preservation of open space
Explore how to increase the larger public's awareness of the amenities that Rural Cluster Subdivisions actually provide. Utilizing aerial photos to illustrate these benefits with an identifiable border around the entire perimeter of the site
The process developers must go through just to provide public amenities is ridden with environmental analyses, traffic analyses and other, time consuming requirements like Conditional Use Permits (CUP)
Some developers feel as if they are being penalized for providing public goods, for example, one developer described wanting to put in a ball field but not being able to because the community demanded an environmental analyses be performed
Collaborate with Parks on the open space issues
Allow flexibility for open space issues
Road improvements also require studies and analyses, which becomes cost-prohibitive for developer. One developer described offering to place an overlay on a private street but the property owner required a study which then increased the costs, so that he was unable to do it.
Low Impact Development (LID) delays
Low Impact Development (LID) works well in Rural Cluster Subdivisions, but is an unappealing option to developers because it takes two to three months for pre-application
Exempt well standard has different requirements at the Snohomish Health District (12 lots) than it does at the Department of Ecology (6 lots). While the County's role is limited, there should be some guidance with water availability certificates

Lot Status
Inform developers of our negotiations with the Health District
Difficulty in obtaining water rights permits
Increase neighborhood education about Rural Cluster Subdivisions
Buffers/Plantings
Work with Snohomish Health District; Collaborate on management of drainfields
Rural Character is subjective
National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) provides extensive research on Visual Preference; the County may want to search for tools that we can use that have been proven to demonstrate rural character
Internal appearance of Rural Clusters is urban; innovative design should be used to increase rural character
Increase and improve education of public on individual developments
Become more politically involved; Communicate
Explore the economic feasibility of potential regulations before we put them into place
Bring citizen concerns back to this group after we engage in facilitated discussions with them
Look deeply into the sections of code that say: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) "Central location of cluster" b) "Table A"
Take our time drafting code
Allow flexibility with internal appearance in exchange for increases in open space
Realize that property owners who are next to pods have a very different perspective than property owners who are next to open space and that we should take that into consideration accordingly
Don't make regulations so stringent that we cannot comply
Look at the maintenance of existing structures such as barns and other rural facilities
Seek involvement from the Snohomish Health District and discuss why drainfields are allowed in open space through one entity but not the other
If a developer could retain 90% open space by orienting lots closer together then that should be allowed - If a developer cannot, then he/she should offer some other techniques for breaking up the urban character internally
Post comments from other Rural Cluster Subdivisions stakeholders to the web for development community to review
Many developers do not see any problem with the existing code and believe that Council wants to eliminate it all together

Maintain a historical perspective when considering what we should be discussing; Do not bring up issues that have already been covered before, for example, the Growth Management Hearings Board already legally addressed the question of whether rural cluster subdivisions were in compliance with the Growth Management Act

Developers would like to meet again and hear what other groups (citizens, cities, etc.) are saying, perhaps the first week in August (2 weeks after individual stakeholder meetings)

Allowing more density enables development community to fund public amenities

Rural Cluster Subdivisions are more expensive than building an urban plat

Good land and suitable soil is usually set far back off the road, so developers must build more road just to allow homeowner access.