

**UDC UPDATE PROJECT
RURAL CLUSTER SUBDIVISIONS CODE REVISIONS SUBPROJECT
FACILITATED DISCUSSION WITH PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANTS OF
SNOHOMISH COUNTY**

AS DISCUSSED ON JULY 11, 2007

In attendance:

Approximately 15 members were present.

<u>Comments</u>
*Comments listed do not include PDS Staff commentary
The water supply concerns with wells drying up must come from people with wells where groundwater sources with perched water tables are marginal to begin with (only 35' deep). Historical wells are shallow and often tied to surface water. A technical analysis is essential before this becomes a legitimate issue.
To obtain a permit the HE and or PDS must see proof that water is available. Studies were done on water supply in 1993 and in 1952, showing abundant resources and substantial aquifers. There has never been an after-the-fact shortage of water in Rural Cluster Subdivision Developments that have been built.
Benefits of clustering should be highlighted. Critical Area Regulations, Native Growth Protection Area preservation is an important result of clustering.
Maintaining rural character can be achieved by modifying the perception of density. Rural Cluster Subdivision Developments maintain wildlife corridor connectivity better than 5-acre lots.
Bonus density is a policy decision. Must consider findings from the buildable lands report.
The same number in a cluster is perceived as a higher density. PCSC is concerned about how things are presented.
Further limit the number of units in each cluster. Pods of 8-12 will maintain more of a rural look.
Reduce the concrete – shared driveways and no sidewalks should be the standard.
Buffers are problematic. A hedge that is 55' wide is expensive. Should it screen from the road; from the neighbor?
Better screening for less density, or less dense appearance, can be achieved through retaining trees and coving the building sites into the existing woods or vegetation.
Landscaping around the house or yard is the traditional landscape pattern in the rural areas, not a thick planting around the perimeter of the entire site. A buffer around the entire perimeter usually results after the whole site has been cleared. Better to keep the landscape, retain trees, and then work on the house. Use restraint and clear coves, not entire lots and not the entire acreage of house sites.
Clearing the forest adversely affects wetlands. Retaining all wetlands is not as important as retaining significant stands of trees and habitat. Consider the property's overall environmental value. The bias to avoid wetlands is not the best ecosystem preservation of the site.

Development is a reductive process; what are we left with?
Native vegetation maintenance can also be a problem. Buffers do not have to be evergreen, deciduous can work.
Putting the lots as close to the center of the site as possible (SCC 30.41C standard) is a poor way to design and interferes with preservation of significant vegetation and other site features. Use more common sense.
Two lot clusters are OK; Maybe a minimum of 8 acres if not in RR Basic zone.
Staff and council members have concerns with short plat Rural Cluster Subdivision Developments.
LID – use against the design criteria of using the center of the site
Are people looking at mature subdivisions? New ones are usually ugly because they are just built.
Are the same people always complaining? Review the design standards.
Don't touch density. You will kill the desire to cluster (and lose the good thing, such as Open Space preservation if you remove the incentive. Landscape and buffering, coving will help. Avoid a strip of houses.
If it is not broke, don't fix it; these are "Not-In-My-Back-Yard" (NIMBY) issues. The aquifer is fine; get the data and record the groundwater issues.
Trade wetlands for upland habitat. 300 feet of alders is not good environmental preservation. Make the building site fits nature; nature is not linear. This can resolve screening issues.
Fewer numbers of houses in pods. Separate pods by 100'.
Hear from those who work with them every day.
Get draft ordinance to the PCSC and other stakeholders with enough time to respond: more than two weeks. (If we have your email, we can send you an announcement of when it is posted on the website.)
In reviewing complaints, consider if you would get the same types of complaints if it were another type of development project. Would it be otherwise a problem?