

# Creating Rural Design Standards

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Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute  
Friday, March 4, 2011

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# What is Rural Design

"The central question in defining rural is how to accommodate the demand for a rural lifestyle without diminishing the rural setting in the process."

- *Yakima County Comprehensive Plan*



# Defining Rural Character

- Open space, the natural landscape, and vegetation predominate over the built environment;
- Traditional rural lifestyles, rural-based economies, and opportunities to both live and work in rural areas;
- Visual landscapes that are traditionally found in rural areas and communities;
- Compatible with the use of the land by wildlife and for fish and wildlife habitat;





# Defining Rural Character

- Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development;
- Typically no extension of urban governmental services; and
- Consistent with the protection of natural surface water flows and ground water and surface water recharge and discharge areas.





# Rural Design Issues

- Sprawl and loss of prime agricultural land
- Social conflict between farm dwellers and non-farm dwellers
- Unmanaged change to demographics and aesthetics
- Sense of loss – identity, place, and purpose
- Loss of biodiversity and degraded ecological function

*University of  
Minnesota  
Center for Rural  
Design*





# Rural Design is Not "Modified Urban"

## Urban Design

- Built context
- Structural form, bulk, and density
- Pedestrian connections
- Landscaping
- Parking
- Views with structures
- Architectural design

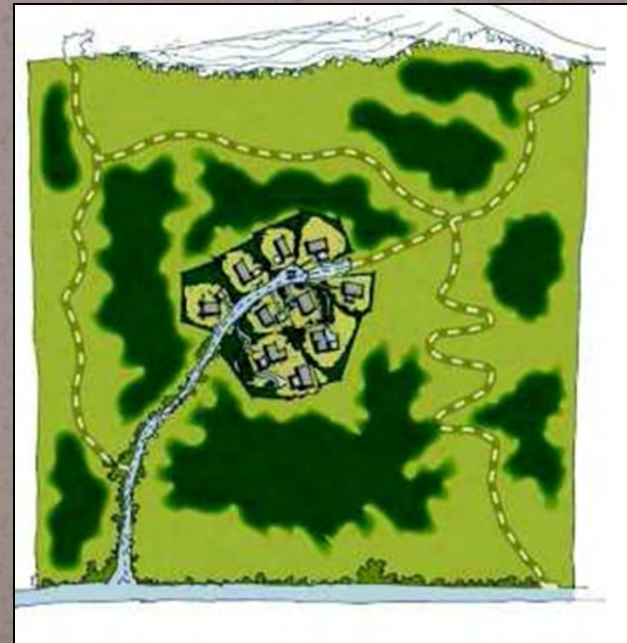




# Rural Design is Not "Modified Urban"

## Rural Design

- Country-side context
- Open spaces – natural or created (fields)
- Longer views
- Natural features
- Preservation
- Agricultural structures





# Implementation Techniques

## Traditional

- Agricultural zoning
- Cluster development
- Conservation easements
- Wetlands/floodplain regulations
- Agricultural buffer
- Transfer of development rights
- Rural design standards





# Implementation Techniques

## Bigger Picture

- Hillside, slope, and ridgeline standards
- Building envelopes
- Critical area protection
- View corridors
- Low impact development
- Road/driveway design





# Implementation Techniques

## Rural Sustainability

- Renewable energy - wind, solar, geothermal
- Agritourism and recreation
- Multifunctional agricultural landscapes - commodities plus environmental services (USDA sustainable agriculture)
- Community places
- Agricultural practices in harmony with natural cycles





# Limitations

- “Agricultural activities are a beneficial and worthwhile feature of the New Hampshire landscape and shall not be unreasonably limited by use of municipal planning and zoning powers or by the unreasonable interpretation of such powers;”



RSA 672:1, III-b  
Zoning and Planning  
Declaration of Purpose



# Components of Rural Character

- Views – countryside, hills/slopes/mountains
- Drainage patterns of streams and river corridors
- Open space
  - Fields and pastures
  - Forests
  - Untouched open space
- Fences and hedgerows
- Farm structures
- Wildlife habitat areas
- Existing development





# Basic - Site Design

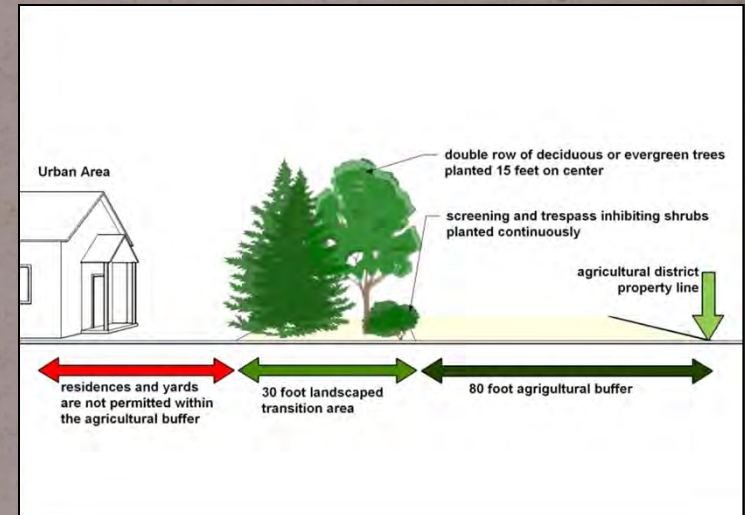
- Small lot size
- Defined disturbance envelope
- Lot is geologically stable/away from fire hazard areas
- Design incorporates existing hedgerows and tree lines
- Lawns discouraged
- Natural vegetation on site preserved
- Minimize impervious surface





# Basic-Building and Structure Placement

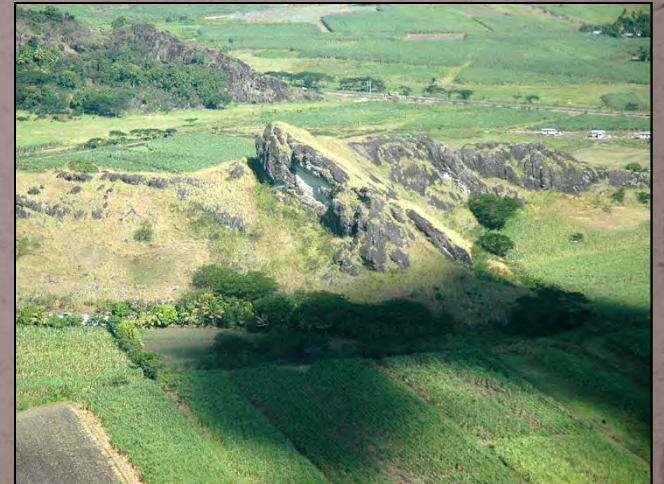
- Houses are located away from agricultural uses
- Buildings are screened from view
  - Structures placed along tree lines or field edges
  - No structures on hilltops/ridgelines
  - Structures on hillsides blend with topography





# Basic-Building and Structure Placement

- Vary setbacks and lot widths to create open spaces
- Locate structures to preserve environmental and visual resources such as:
  - Open grass lands, trees, unique plant habitats
  - Ridges, hilltops, rock outcroppings, saddles between peaks
  - Lakes, rivers, streams





# Basic - Roads and Driveways

- Design roads to follow contours of land
- Incorporate existing roads into subdivision design
- Limit driveway ingress and egress
- Design roads and driveways for minimal length and visibility
- Use paving materials that blend into the environment





# Adding On – Scenic Resources

- Identify local views important to the community
- Conserve areas within viewshed
- Limit building heights in protected view areas
- Design buildings so the visual bulk of the structure is not prominent in view areas





# Adding On - Hillside/Slope

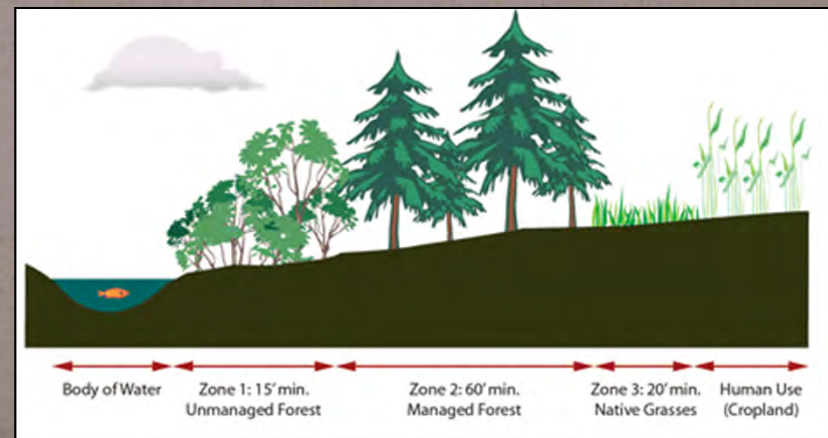
- Prohibit ridgeline and hilltop development
- Establish steep slope development standards ( $\geq 30\%$ )
- Limit hillside development to a percentage of the site
- Require structures on slopes to fit natural topography





# Adding On - Riparian Buffers

- Riparian protection buffers with little/no use allowed
  - Habitat
  - Wetland
  - Slopes
  - Sensitive features
  - Sedimentation control
- Riparian transition buffer
  - Gardens
  - Fencing
  - Patios





# Adding On - Architectural Character

- Traditional styles and forms
- Eliminate front-facing garages
- “Agricultural courtyards” building arrangement
- Avoid suburban design characteristics
- Local massing, scale, height, and proportion





# Questions

