Sheridan County, Wyoming
Conservation Design
Subdivision Option
Recent Amendments to Zoning and Subdivision Rules and Regulations
Adopted November 2010

Mark Reid, County Planner
County Road #255 traffic control
What Is Conservation Design?

- **Conservation Design**: An alternative to conventional subdivision layout

- **Key features:**
  - Significant percentage of buildable land is permanently protected
  - Development clustered on smaller lots—permissible densities maintained by allowing smaller lots
  - Open space conserved for agriculture and working landscapes, wildlife habitat protection, outdoor recreation
  - Can reduce infrastructure costs
Conventional

Conservation Design
National Association of Homebuilders
4-Star Certified Development
National Green Building Standard

Not in Sheridan County!
How the Conservation Design Amendments Work--Overview

- Residential clusters allowed with smaller building lots and permanently preserved open space
- 70% of site conserved for agriculture or open space
- 50%-100% density bonus for using Conservation Design in targeted areas
- Streamlined review process
- New stream setback and steep slope protection standards for all subdivisions
What led to the development of CD...

- Comprehensive Plan (2008) identifies Conservation Design as a top priority action to maintain ag land and protect natural resources
- Nationally recognized firms retained to present Conservation Design best practices
- Stakeholder interviews
- Field design workshop with Sheridan Community Land Trust
- Sonoran Institute public survey
- Public open house
Old Regulations—
Where They Fell Short…

- Nothing specific concerning conservation subdivisions
- Standards were vague or absent:
  - Preserve trees, natural drainage “if possible”
  - No standards regarding riparian setbacks, steep slopes or landslides
  - PUDs require only 25% open space
- Minimum lot sizes not in accord with Comprehensive Plan
Adopted Amendments—A Moderate Approach

- Balance of incentives and rules
- Some new resource protection provisions (streams, steep slopes) but not all (ridgelines, wildlife) recommended in comp plan
- Change in base density in the A-Agricultural zoning district (to 1 unit per 80 acres), but offset with density bonus options (up to 1 unit/20 acres in Conservation Development Area)
Location—Where Allowed

- Available county wide in A, RR, and UR districts (except Urban Service Area)
- In Conservation Development Areas, bonuses
New, Streamlined Review Procedure

- Pre-application meeting with staff
- Preliminary site analysis map and site visit, BUT no Preliminary Plat—concept plan submitted and reviewed by staff
- Planning and Zoning Commission reviews Final Plat and makes recommendation
- Final Plat reviewed and approved by BOCC
Conservation Design Standards

- Amendments to Zoning and Subdivision Regs. to encourage the county’s open character and agricultural viability.
- Minimum Conservation area: 70% of gross land area
Conservation Design Standards

Minimum gross land area:
- Ag District – 70 ac
- RR District - 10 ac
- UR District - 10 ac

Densities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Base Density</th>
<th>Density w/Bonuses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>1 unit/40 ac</td>
<td>1 unit/20 ac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RR (outside GPA)</td>
<td>1 unit/2 ac</td>
<td>1 unit/1.33 ac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RR (within GPA)</td>
<td>1 unit/5 ac</td>
<td>1 unit/3.33 ac</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Menu of Density Bonuses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Density Bonus</th>
<th>% Density Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providing Central Sewer</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conserving Prime Farmland</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicating Add. Conservation Area</td>
<td>25-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting Streams &amp; Riparian Areas</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting Visual Resources</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conserving Connected Open Space</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replat Old Large Acreage Development</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing Fire Protection Measures</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Trail Dedication</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stream Bank Restoration; Tree Planting</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife-friendly Fencing</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Minimum Lot Area

- None in RR or UR Districts
- .25 ac. in Agriculture District

Conservation Area Ownership Options:

- Dedication to County
- Dedication to other government
- Dedication of easement to County
- Convey to Association
- Retain Title (w/development deed restriction)
- Convey title or easement to Cons. Org.
Generally Applicable Amendments

- Base density in A-Ag zone district changed from 1 unit/35 acres to 1 unit/80 acres as recommended in Comp Plan
- Smaller lot sizes allowed in RR and UR zone district, but base density stays same
- 50-200 foot stream setbacks
- Limit development on steep slopes (30% or greater)—density transfer allowed to developable portion of parcel
Critical components…

- Open Space Use
- Open Space Ownership and Rights
- Open Space Perpetuation
- Prioritization of features worthy of preservation.
Observations & Issues

- Incentives are requisite.
- Existing-neighbor resistance.
- Uncertainty about on-site water/sewer.
- Property taxation questions.
- Access questions.
- Is it “right” everywhere?
Rules & Regulations accessed at:

- Sheridan County Website:
  - www.sheridancounty.com
  - Click on “Department/Offices”
  - Select “Public Works”
  - Then “Rules & Regulations”
  - And finally, “Division of Land” and “Zoning”