



Share your input. Join the conversation.

What is Conservation Design? And How Does That Affect Housing?

Thursday, October 24th

6:00 - 8:00 PM

Jaffrey Fire Station - 138 Turnpike Road, Jaffrey

The Town and Resilience Planning & Design (RP&D) is facilitating a community workshop focusing on updating our Open Space Development ordinance. We will hear an update on the Natural Resource Inventory being completed with the Conservation Commission and Moosewood Ecological and RP&D on our housing data and needs. Community feedback is key as we discuss open space development, the future of housing, and conservation at this workshop. Our goal is to thread the needle of conservation and growth, protect that which is the region's namesake, Mount Monadnock, and provide opportunities for our citizens, now and in the future.

This project is funded by New Hampshire's Housing Opportunity Program (HOP) and is being guided by the HOP Town Committee made up of representatives from the Planning Board, Economic Development Council and Conservation Commission.

For questions, please contact Jo Anne Carr (Planning and Economic Development Director) at (603) 532-7880 x110 or at jacarr@townofjaffrey.com.

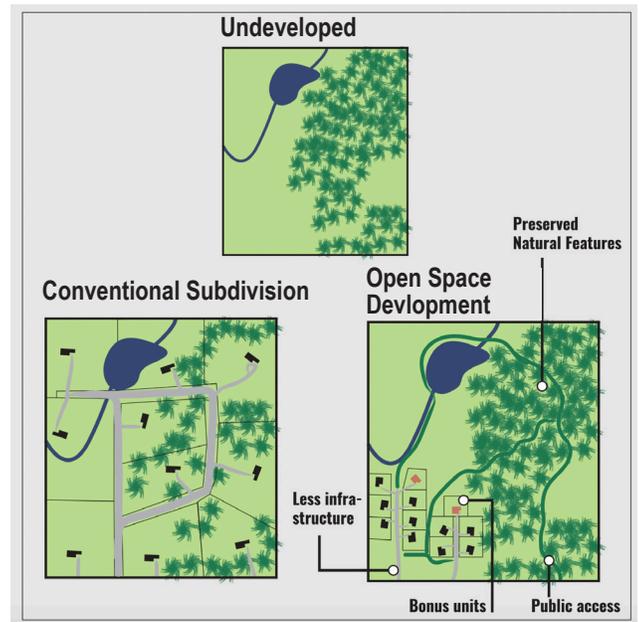


What is an Open Space Development?

A conservation design approach where the homes are grouped together on a site, and a substantial amount of the site remains as permanently protected land. This practice mirrors historic patterns of neighborhood development before towns thought about incorporating land protection into residential developments. Jaffrey is also updating the Natural Resource Inventory which can help inform the design of future open space developments.

WHY PROMOTE OPEN SPACE DEVELOPMENTS?

- Increases the overall supply of housing, with the potential for some smaller lots and less expensive housing types.
- Facilitates the preservation of large tracts of open space, protecting farmland, natural features, and key resources like aquifers.
- Reduces the footprint of new development, minimizing impervious surfaces, and the area of site disturbance.
- Reduces the cost of construction and maintenance of infrastructure.
- Protects important views and vistas in the community.
- Provides habitat connectivity and outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Provides flexibility to both planning boards and developers for handling unique site characteristics, such as steep slopes, wetlands, and wildlife corridors.



Today in Jaffrey

- Open space development is the required approach to residential subdivisions for most of the town. However, the existing ordinance is confusing and not user friendly.

Looking Forward

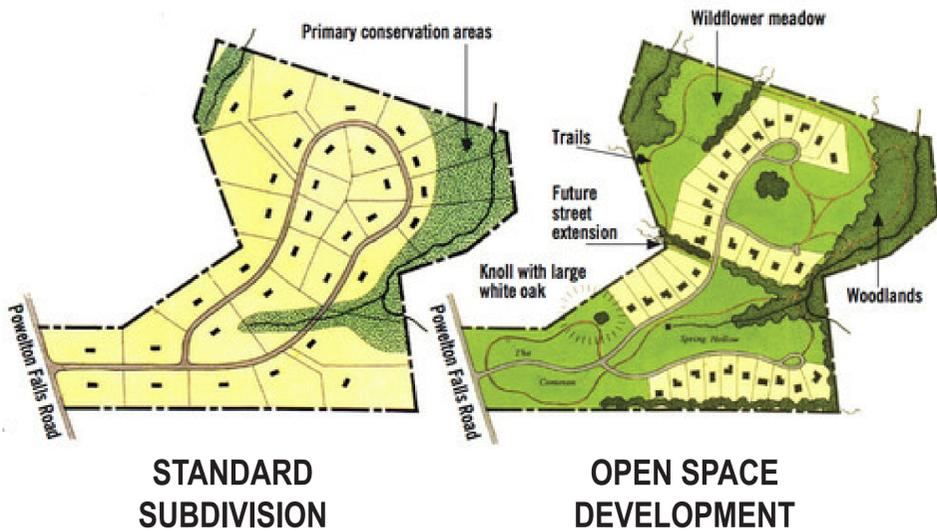
- A committee of residents is researching open space development language from other NH communities, and drafting a new ordinance that could be adopted in Jaffrey.

Master Plan Principles that Support Open Space Developments

- Encourage housing diversity
- Promote preservation of natural and rural landscapes
- Enhance economic advantage

Open Space Development Ordinance Potential Changes

Should the Open Space Development Approach be required or optional, with incentives, for all new subdivision developments?



Required approach: Currently, open space development is the required approach to residential subdivisions for most of Jaffrey. If the ordinance continues to be required, residential subdivisions in most zoning districts would need to retain a large portion of their land as permanently protected. Under this required scenario, an immediate 20% density bonus would be granted to the applicant to increase the number of units constructed. If required, there will still need to be an avenue to allow standard subdivisions. This could take the form of a waiver granted by the Planning Board or a more structured Conditional Use Permit submitted to the Planning Board.

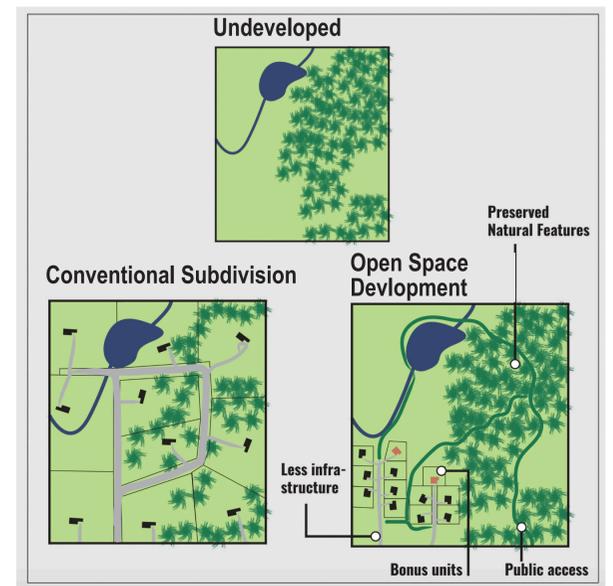
Optional approach: If the Open Space Development ordinance is optional, traditional residential developments would be allowed and not required to accommodate open spaces, viewsheds, or natural resources. However, applicants opting for an open space development would be granted density bonuses as an incentive.

*What do you think of the following density bonus categories?
Are there other categories worth considering?*

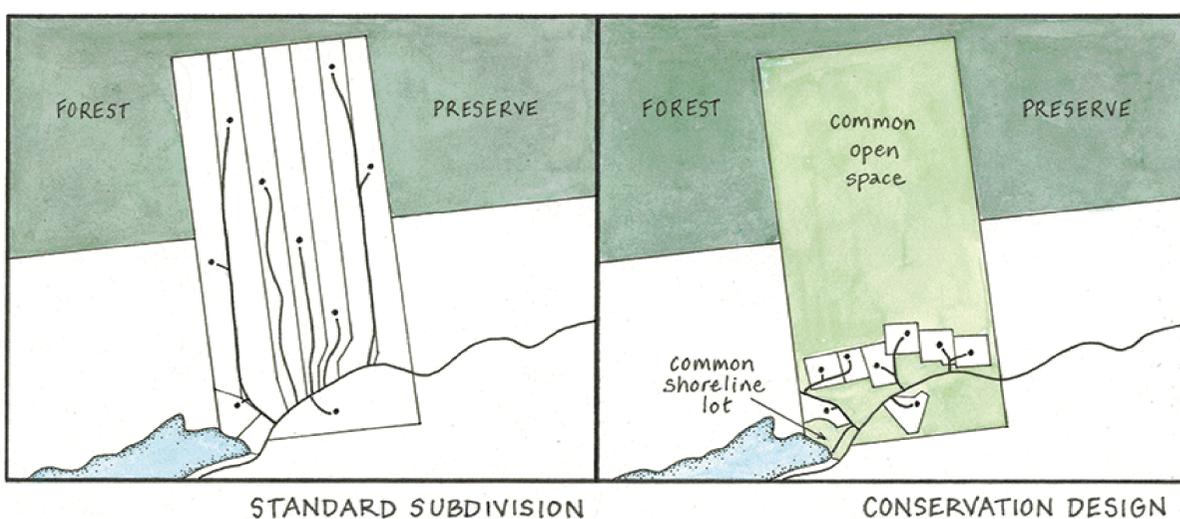
Bonuses are important incentives for applicants to ensure they benefit from the design and construction of an open space development. Bonuses are provided in the form of increased residential units that can be built. For example, if a traditional development allowed for 10 units, bonuses would be applied to increase that number. In turn, this increases the overall supply of housing in Jaffrey and reduces the cost of construction and maintenance of infrastructure.

Currently, the bonuses outlined in Jaffrey's ordinance are confusing and difficult to calculate. The committee identified the following categories for allocating additional density bonuses:

- Affordable workforce or senior housing
- Increasing the amount of open space
- Allowing public access to open space land
- Locating open space lands adjacent to existing conserved land
- Improved energy efficiency of the structures



What do you think is an appropriate amount of conserved land (percentage) for open space developments?



The current Open Space Development Ordinance requires at least 40% of the property (excluding wetlands) to be conserved in perpetuity. In some communities that have an open space development ordinance, the amount of conserved land can range from one-third to more than half of the property.



Discussion Questions

The ad hoc committee that is tasked with updating the Open Space Development Ordinance is narrowing in on a preliminary draft. However, several critical decisions still need to be resolved. To help the Committee make recommended changes to the Ordinance, please explore the following discussion questions:

Should the Open Space Development Approach be required or optional, with incentives, for all new subdivision developments?

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If required, there will still need to be an avenue to allow traditional subdivisions. This could take the form of a waiver granted by the Planning Board or a more structured Conditional Use Permit submitted to the Planning Board.

Optional approach: If the Open Space Development ordinance is optional, traditional residential developments would be allowed and not required to accommodate open spaces, viewsheds, or natural resources. However, applicants opting for an open space development could be granted a variety of density bonuses as incentives to construct open space development subdivisions.

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Turn Page Over

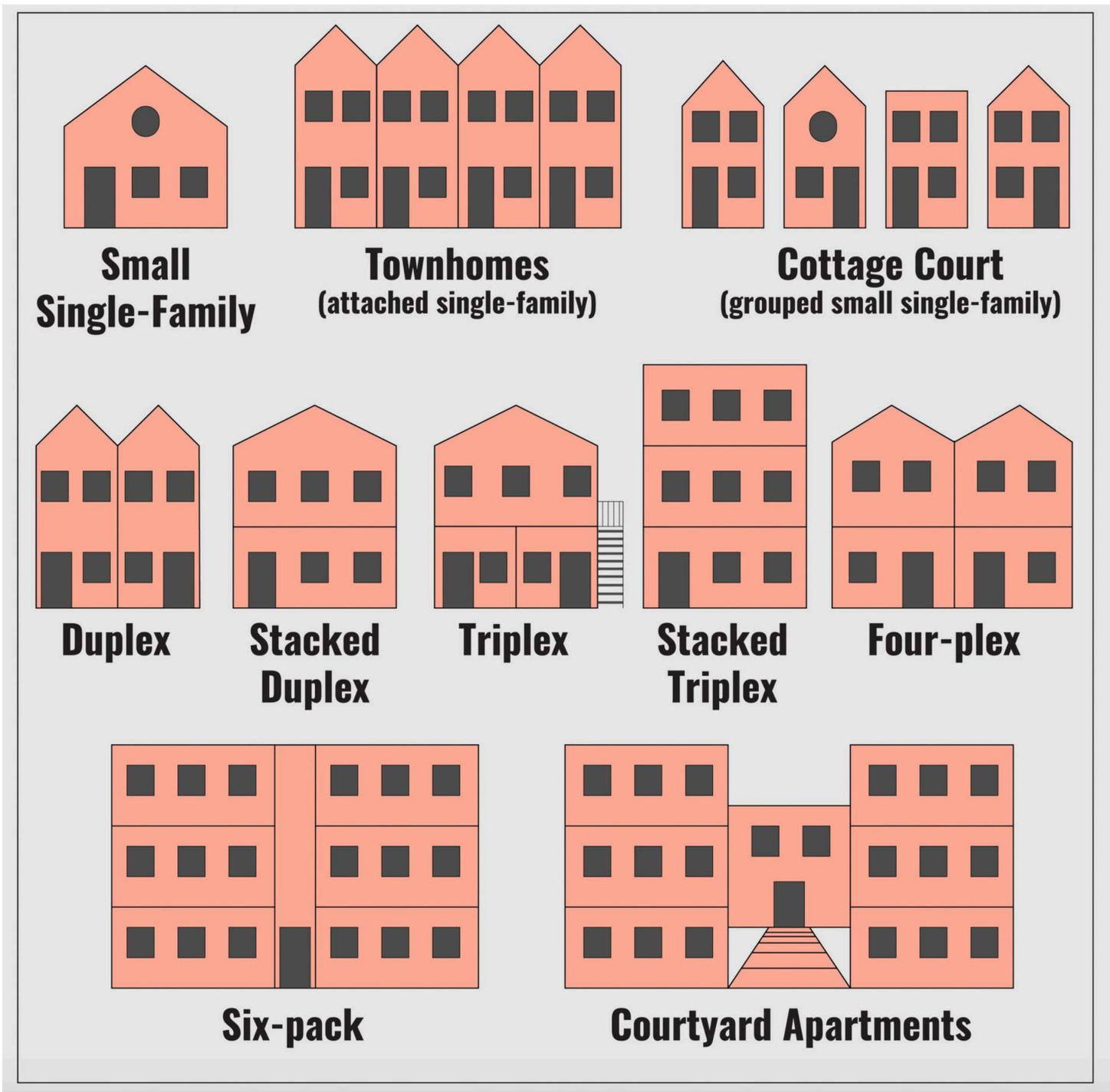
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Examples of Housing Types



Regulations cannot mandate unaffordable housing everywhere



Workforce housing must be allowed in a majority of residential areas



Jaffrey, NH Community Forum – October 2024

Open Space Development

Question 1 - Should the Open Space Development Approach be required or optional, with incentives, for all new subdivision developments?

Feedback included:

- If conservation is the goal, make it required and workable.
- Scale this requirement to two sized developments so there is a difference between a 5-acre development and a 50-acre development.
- Required in some districts and optional in others?
- Consider if there is a difference between in-town vs. outside, or if water/sewer are available. However, not many parcels in-town or on water/sewer that are large enough.

Note: If there is interest in a different standard for smaller developments maybe a lot sized averaging or feature based density regulation could be used for small developments?

Question 2 - What do you think is an appropriate amount of conserved land (percentage) for open space developments?

- If the number is low to start it leaves more room for bonuses. This would allow the applicant to pick the path forward, and character of the development.
- Key the % conserved to the natural resources on the site or the size of the lot? This may be harder to communicate and regulate.
- Some felt 40% may be too high of a bar, and 25% too low. What do other towns nearby require?
 - Keene, NH – requires 50 – 60% of the parcel be protected.
 - Peterborough, NH – requires 50 % of the parcel be protected.

Question 3 - What do you think of the following density bonus categories? Are there other categories worth considering?

- The suggested bonuses seemed to have support.
- A scoring system for natural resources bonuses was suggested. Such a standard could be linked to and informed by the Natural Resource Inventory. Other resources it could address include groundwater, agricultural soils, etc.