

Department of Planning And Development

Memorandum # 23-004

To: Planning Commission
From: Tommy Paradise, Director
Subject: Conservation Subdivisions
Date: February 8, 2023

As the Planning Commission has noted, there are significant differences in the proposed and existing Conservation Subdivision regulations. The current regulations provide relief from connectivity, parking, lot size, minimum frontage, and lot width. The proposed draft does not provide these incentives but in 16.9.2 under benefits it states, "Providing design flexibility" without detailing what this flexibility entails.

Section 2.3.5.2 in the current NADC states, "2.3.5.2 In order to provide undivided open space, direct views and access, not less than forty percent (40%) of the lots within a Conservation Subdivision shall abut a Conservation Area. Direct pedestrian access to the open space from all lots not adjoining the open space shall be provided through a continuous system of sidewalks and Greenways." In section 2.3.10.3 of the current NADC it provides a list of designated conservation areas. Section 16.9.5 of the draft provides a list of area qualifying for a conservation subdivision based on the current terrain or use of the property.

Below is the Conservation Subdivision section from the current NADC. The Planning Commission may wish to compare the current regulations with the proposed regulations.

2.3 CONSERVATION SUBDIVISION

2.3.1 Purpose

Conventional subdivisions typically produce little open space except floodplains and steep slopes. Common open space areas in conventional subdivisions are often unusable or are devoted only to specific purposes, such as golf courses. Most open space in conventional subdivisions is contained in private yards with no common access or maintenance. Further, private open space typically involves lawns and landscaping that require heavy maintenance and water demands. Accordingly, the purpose of this section is to provide flexibility in site design in order to allow developers to preserve common open space and natural resources in Conservation Areas within a subdivision.

The specific purposes of this section are:

- a. To protect the public health, safety and general welfare by avoiding surface and ground water pollution, contaminated runoff, air quality contamination and urban heat islands which result from pavement and the clearing of natural vegetation;

- b. To protect and preserve natural resources such as wetlands, streams, lakes, steep slopes, woodlands and water recharge areas;
- c. To reduce infrastructure and housing costs by reducing the engineering and construction costs produced by conventional subdivision design, which requires more pavement, wetland crossings, grading of trees and natural areas, and lawn and landscaping maintenance;
- d. To protect property values by allowing open space design features which enhance the marketability of development;
- e. To provide design flexibility; and
- f. To promote development on soils which are most suitable for urban densities, while preserving soils that are primarily adaptable to other uses such as woodlands, wildlife habitat and agricultural uses.

2.3.2 Applicability

This section applies to any application meeting the requirements of this section and which is designated a Conservation Subdivision by the applicant.

2.3.3 Processing Procedures

A Conservation Subdivision shall be processed in accordance with the subdivision procedures of this Chapter.

2.3.4 Size and Location of Site

2.3.4.1 A Conservation Subdivision may be approved in any residential zoning district, and with conditions in some commercial districts, where a Conservation Subdivision is listed as a permitted use in Table 3-2, Use Matrix.

2.3.4.2 There is no minimum or maximum size for a Conservation Subdivision provided, however, that the minimum open space requirements may limit the availability of this option for some landowners. Parcels that cannot demonstrate compliance with the minimum open space standards on-site shall dedicate and maintain an open space system that is connected to an open space system on an adjacent site in accordance with Article 11, Open Space and Parks.

2.3.4.3 Platted lots located within subdivisions and PDs shall be located outside of the Conservation Areas, which constitute the total required open space. Conservation Areas shall be placed in undivided preserves, although they are not required to be contiguous.

2.3.5 Uses and Density

2.3.5.1 Permitted uses are governed by the applicable zoning district regulations.

2.3.5.2 In order to provide undivided open space, direct views and access, not less than forty percent (40%) of the lots within a Conservation Subdivision shall abut a

Conservation Area. Direct pedestrian access to the open space from all lots not adjoining the open space shall be provided through a continuous system of sidewalks and Greenways.

2.3.6 Lot Layout

2.3.6.1 A Conservation Subdivision shall comply with §3.5, except as otherwise provided herein.

2.3.6.2 Lots within a Conservation Subdivision are not subject to the minimum lot size, minimum frontage or minimum lot width requirements of the Use Matrix, Table 3-2.

2.3.6.3 Lots within one-hundred (100) feet of a Conservation Area shall front on a Local Street, as defined in Article 14, Streets. Lots shall not front on a Collector or higher order street.

2.3.7 Street Design

A Conservation Subdivision shall comply with Article 14, Streets, unless otherwise provided, and this subsection. The design of local streets shall comply with the standards for rural streets, as set forth in Article 14. The Connectivity Index for internal streets as set forth in Article 14 shall not apply to local streets within a Conservation Subdivision.

2.3.7.1 The Conservation Subdivision shall include a pedestrian circulation system designed to assure that pedestrians can walk safely and easily on the site, between properties and activities or special features within the neighborhood open space system, by complying with the standards set forth herein. All sidewalks shall connect to other sidewalks or with Greenways, which in turn shall connect to potential areas qualifying as Conservation Areas on adjoining undeveloped parcels or with existing open space on adjoining developed parcels, where applicable.

2.3.7.2 Streets shall not cross wetlands or existing slopes exceeding fifteen percent (15%).

2.3.8 Stormwater Management

A Conservation Subdivision shall comply with Article 15, Stormwater Management.

2.3.9 Utilities

A Conservation Subdivision shall comply with Article 16, Water and Sewer.

2.3.10 Open Space and Parks

2.3.10.1 Lands designated as permanent open space including Conservation Areas:

- a. Are not to be further subdivided; and
- b. Shall be protected through a conservation easement or fee simple title held by the

city or by an approved land trust or conservancy. The conservation easement or fee simple title shall prohibit further development of the open space.

2.3.10.2 Article 11, Open Space and Parks, relating to maintenance, shall apply to a Conservation Subdivision. No other requirements of the Open Space and Parks standards shall apply to a Conservation Subdivision.

2.3.10.3 Conservation Areas – A minimum of forty percent (40%) of the total tract area shall be designated as Conservation Areas. The following areas may be designated as Conservation Areas:

- a. Wetlands;
- b. Woodlands;
- c. Sensitive aquifer recharge features, including areas with highly permeable, excessively drained, soil;
- d. All of the floodway and flood fringe within the 100-year floodplain, as shown on official Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) maps;
- e. All areas within one hundred (100) feet of the edge of the 100-year floodplain as delineated on the FEMA maps and any Letter of Map Revision;
- f. All areas within one hundred (100) feet of the banks of any stream shown as a blue line on the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 1:24,000 (7.5 minute) scale topographic maps for Aiken County;
- g. Slopes exceeding twenty-five percent (25%);
- h. Soils subject to slumping, as indicated on the medium-intensity maps contained in the county soil survey published by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service;
- i. Significant wildlife habitat areas;
- j. Historic, archaeological or cultural features listed, or eligible to be listed, on national, state or county registers or inventories; and
- k. Scenic views into the property from existing public roads.

2.3.10.4 Stormwater detention ponds or basins and land within the rights of way for underground pipelines may be included as part of a Conservation Area. Not more than fifty percent (50%) of the land within the right of way of high-tension power lines shall be included within a Conservation Area.

2.3.10.5 Conservation Areas shall abut existing open space land on adjacent parcels, including the North Augusta Greenway, passive open space located in other subdivisions, public parks or properties owned by or leased to private land conservation organizations.

2.3.11 Natural Resource Protection

A Conservation Subdivision shall comply with Article 9, Floodplain Management, and Article 10, Landscaping. In addition, the Conservation Subdivision shall comply with the following standards:

2.3.11.1 No Conservation Area shall be cleared, graded, filled or subject to construction. However, rights of way for Greenways, Article 14, Streets, any streets needed to provide access to the proposed subdivision, and water, sewer, electric, or cable lines may be cleared. The width of rights of way for streets or Greenways shall be restricted to the minimum as designated in §14.4.

2.3.11.2 No lot may be platted within woodlands located on highly erodible soils with slopes exceeding ten percent (10%).

2.3.12 Landscaping

A Conservation Subdivision shall comply with Article 10, Landscaping.

2.3.13 Parking

In order to encourage design flexibility, to preserve open space and to minimize impervious surfaces, a Conservation Subdivision shall not be subject to the minimum parking requirements of Article 12, Parking. A Conservation Subdivision shall be subject to the maximum parking requirements of Article 12.

Department of Planning And Development

Memorandum # 23-005

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The current North Augusta Development Code (NADC) does not address signage for the Public Use, P, zoning district. The proposed draft states in Section 9.6.3.1.b, "Public District signage shall be determined by City Council."

At the January 18th study session the Planning Commission asked for additional information concerning possible signage in the Public Use district. In particular, the size of the signs of the electronic message center signs which have received variance approval to be placed at area schools. These signs totaled 40 square-feet in area with 60%, instead of the required 50%, being electronic message center

Below are the signage standards allowed by district in the current NADC:

Zoning District	Maximum of All Signs	Maximum of All Wall Signs	Maximum Area of Freestanding Sign	Maximum Height Freestanding Sign
Neighborhood Commercial	200 SF	160 or 10% of wall	60 SF	10-Feet
Office Commercial	300 SF	300 or 10% of wall	100 SF	12-Feet
General Commercial	300 SF	300 or 10% of wall	100 SF	20-Feet
Throughfare Commercial	300 SF	300 or 10% of wall	100 SF	25-Feet
Highway Corridor Overlay	300 SF	300 or 10% of wall	100 SF	25-Feet
Georgia Ave. Overlay	100 SF	100 or 7% of wall	20 SF	8-Feet
Neighborhood Preservation Overlay	100 SF	160 SF	60 SF	10-Feet
Industrial	200 SF	N/A	150 SF	20-Feet