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ACT Solutions

Online Training on Sustainable Community Design for Subdivisions

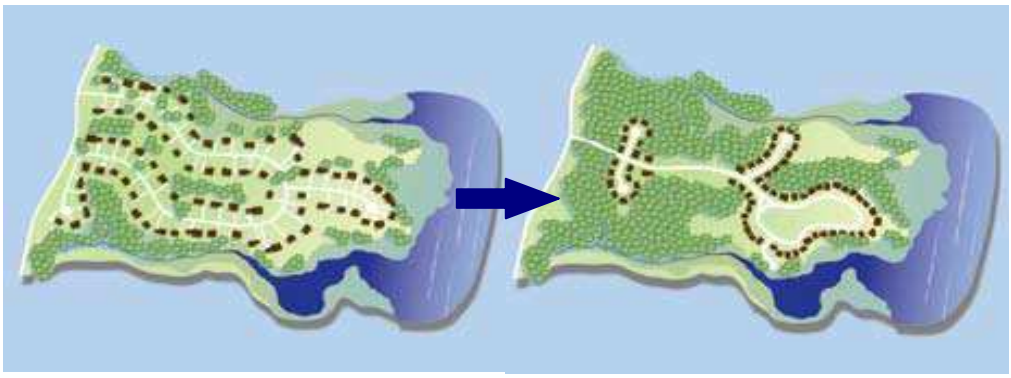
The Department of Environment of New Brunswick and the Association of Municipal Administrators of New Brunswick

Issue

Conventional subdivisions tend to spread individual lots evenly across a development area. This practice uses more land than necessary, requires more infrastructure for roads and services, and minimizes opportunities to protect ecologically sensitive areas.

In response to this issue, the Department of Environment of New Brunswick has promoted over the last few years an innovative way to build new subdivisions that can meet the goals of a community and the developer while at the same time protect at least 50% of the natural area of the property being developed. The new concept is called Conservation Design for Subdivisions, and is known in New Brunswick as Sustainable Community Design for Subdivisions (SCD projects).

Instead of distributing lots evenly across the land area, developers can cluster lots around natural features. In this way, the same number of units can be built in a smaller area; reducing the requirements for road and utility infrastructure, while preserving more land as natural areas or open space.



Instead of distributing lots evenly across the land area, developers can cluster lots around natural features. *Source: Government of New Brunswick*

In SCD projects, water and septic systems may not be located on individual lots but in shared open areas. These areas can also support effective stormwater management measures, or recreational facilities that build a sense of community and improve quality of life.

After several years of sharing information and providing training sessions on the SCD concept to professionals and the public, the Department wanted to provide easy access to the information through online training.

It could work for you!

Plan

The Department, in partnership with the Association of Municipal Administrators of New Brunswick, developed online training on the SCD concept with the financial assistance of the ACT Program. The seminar modules were developed for those interested in building subdivisions and other developments using sustainable development practices. Each module represents a piece of the puzzle for concept implementation.

Results

The Department's website now provides 17 training modules that are easily accessible to stakeholders interested in developing more sustainable communities. These modules describe:

- the issues and context of subdivision building in New Brunswick
- the SCD concept and how to implement it at the local level
- the stakeholders who should be involved in implementation
- the sequence of implementation
- the legal ramifications of implementation, and adaptation to the provincial and local context

The training modules are available in both English and French in video and in PDF formats on the Department's website at http://www.gnb.ca/0009/0136/0005/index-e.asp.

Through this online resource, professionals in subdivision design and construction will be better prepared to coordinate their own SCD projects. Implementation of the SCD concept can provide multiple benefits including increased housing affordability (smaller lots and infrastructure requirements), reduced municipal maintenance costs, a reduced environmental footprint and an increased quality of life.

Related reports

Department of Environment of New Brunswick website: http://www.gnb.ca/0009/0136/0005/index-e.asp

Randall Arendt, *Conservation Design for Subdivisions* (1996) and *Growing Greener* (1999)

Contacts

Daniel Savard
New Brunswick Department of Environment
(506) 444-4391
daniel.savard@gnb.ca

Eva Turnbull
Association of Municipal Administrators of New Brunswick
506-453-4229
amanb@nb.aibn.com

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ACT Administration

c/o Federation of Canadian Municipalities
Tel: 613-241-5221 ext. 242
Fax: 613-244-1515
E-mail: info@actprogram.com

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