

Introduction

Welcome to the Rural Design Workbook!

This workbook is an easy-to-use collection of real-life development designs and recommended land use language for use by municipal planning boards as they review subdivision and site plan proposals. It has been developed by the Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board in conjunction with classes in Cornell University's Landscape Architecture program, and emphasizes design which promotes environmental health and conservation, preserves the rural character, and provides financial benefits or alternatives.

Audience and Goals of the Workbook:

This workbook is targeted at everyone involved in the planning and development process in rural land. Its goals are as follows:

- To use actual sites as examples of good design which is economically beneficial to the owner but protects the environment and water quality.
- To help landowners take advantage of environmental cost share and tax incentive programs which may make it "worth their while" to try a different approach to developing their land.
- To inspire local developers to design creatively.
- To give local planning boards the confidence to ask for (and get!) good design for their communities.

Organization of the Workbook:

CHAPTER 1 looks at the problems facing rural communities which are in the process of development; the ecological impacts, the loss of rural character, and the other consequences of the typical design approach will be addressed.

CHAPTER 2 describes the four step "conservation subdivision" process and the tools that planning boards and landowners need to develop a creative and sound design.

CHAPTER 3 lists the environmental stewardship cost share programs and other financial incentives to protect the land and water, and to promote better design.

CHAPTERS 4 AND ON are filled with examples of these principles and programs in action, based on real properties, noting benefits and cautions to keep in mind. Each chapter takes on a real property, performs a quick analysis of the site, and then looks at various student proposals for developing that land and the potential benefits of each.

The Appendices include the background of this Workbook and further information and definitions.

APPENDIX A: HISTORY OF THE WORKBOOK describes the development of this publication, including how we found willing landowners to work with the Cornell University School of Landscape Architecture, how the work was accomplished, and how area board members and developers responded to the Rural Design Showcase Presentations held at the end of each Rural Design Clinic.

APPENDIX B: OBTAINING MORE INFORMATION includes contact addresses or numbers for obtaining further information on each of the programs and incentives listed in the earlier chapters.

APPENDIX C: BETTER SITE DESIGN REPRINT contains a portion of a detailed analysis of open space design, reprinted with the permission of the Center for Watershed Protection.

APPENDIX D: PAINTED POST'S SUBDIVISION LAW is a portion of the subdivision regulations enacted by the Village of Painted Post, and is provided as an example of how design guidelines such as those proposed in the Workbook can be codified.

APPENDIX E: DEFINING A STREAMBANK explains what is meant, officially, by the term "streambank" in the context of the programs detailed in the Workbook, and gives a visual diagram of the extents of a bank.

APPENDIX F: RIPARIAN BUFFERS contains a portion of the Chesapeake Bay Program's "Riparian Forest Buffers," discussing these important transitional areas.

The workbook is designed in a modular, easily-expanded and easily-updated format. As new study sites are tackled or new funding sources become available, we will periodically release additional materials, which can then simply be added to the appropriate sections of the workbook.

We hope you use this booklet often. Direct landowners and developers to go on line at to get their own copies through the STC website (www.stcplanning.org). And please let us know if there is useful information which we have overlooked.