

CONSERVATION COMMUNITIES



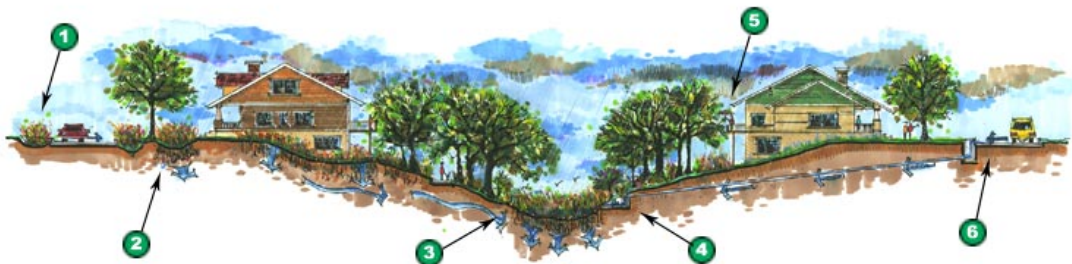
Conservation Communities are a form of development that focuses around maintaining and enhancing the ecological integrity of the land. While they vary in size, shape, and location, they share these common principles:

1. *Environmental protection and enhancement*
2. *A sense of community*
3. *Aesthetic design and high quality construction*
4. *Energy conservation*
5. *A healthy lifestyle*

In the planning stage of the development, the most sensitive natural features of the site are identified and protected. From this analysis, developable areas respond to the natural character of the land and development takes place in the least sensitive areas. The preserved areas then function to help create a sense of place and they provide activities and amenities for residents. Conservation Communities may have an organic farm that provides a sustainable source for locally grown food. They could also have community gardens, open park lands, forest, nature trails, biking, horseback riding, fly fishing etc...

Conservation Communities integrate the practices of Low Impact Development (LID) and Site Design. Some LID features that one might find at a conservation community are

1. Bioswales: A vegetated swale that conveys water to storm sewer inlets or surface waters. They provide a filter or “first flush” of runoff.
2. Rain Gardens: Rain gardens are native, perennial gardens strategically located to capture runoff from impervious surfaces. Rain gardens increase aesthetic value, adsorb water, reduce runoff, protect water quality and prevent flooding.
3. Bioretention Cells: Bioretention cells are shallow, landscaped depressions that can handle large volumes of water. They are well suited for commercial, institutional, industrial or residential settings. Bioretention cells usually have an engineered substratum to offset compacted soil conditions.
4. Level Spreader: Level spreaders dissipate water velocity and prevent erosion by spreading water flow over a wide area rather than releasing it from a pipe or other point source of discharge.
5. Native Landscaping: Native plants have tremendous root structure that build soil quality and increase organic matter content. Organic matter helps soil hold water and infiltrate rain. Native landscaping is a key component of infiltration-based stormwater management practices.
6. Permeable Paving: Permeable paving surfaces include paver blocks, porous concrete and grassed surfaces. They provide the support of traditional parking surfaces, but they allow water to infiltrate. Subdrains can be used to move water through these systems.



There are many great examples of Conservation Communities. Click on these links to learn about a few notable ones located near large metropolitan areas...and visit the RDA Landscape Architects web site at www.retnauer-design.com to learn how we incorporate these principles into our design projects.

Praire Crossing : <http://www.prairiecrossing.com/pc/site/index.html>

Tryon Farm: <http://www.tryonfarm.com/main.html>

Hidden Creek: <http://www.hiddencreekdarby.com/home.asp>