

Open Space Residential Development, Creative Development, & Conservation Development Bylaws

What are the objectives of Open Space Residential and Conservation Developments?

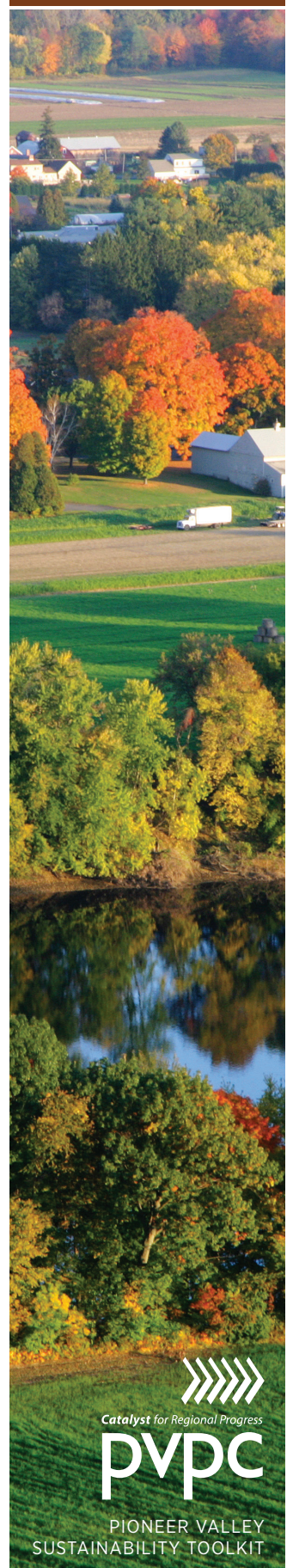
Cluster, Open Space, Conservation or natural Resource Developments, they are called many names as they've evolved over the decades but they are all essentially a variation on a theme, developments utilizing smaller lots in order to create more common open spaces. By promoting compact residential developments utilizing more flexible dimensional standards communities can preserve and enhance their rural town character by protecting open space, natural resources, and scenic areas, as well as promote the use of sustainable and energy efficient development standards .

Why do we need Open Space Residential & Conservation Developments?

Growth in many of our small cities and towns has been primarily comprised of ANR residential development along existing town roads and large lot single family home subdivisions. This has resulted in sprawling residential strips and the clearing of large swaths of woodlands and the conversion of farmland for individual single family homes. This has not only resulted in the loss of natural resources but has also contributed to the loss of a community's rural character and small town identity. Open Space Residential and Conservation Developments provide an alternate way for towns to accommodate growth, but in a more flexible manner which preserves open space and reduces the visual impact of residential development.

DID YOU KNOW...

In a national random sample survey of 1,130 adults age 18 and older, about 55 percent of Americans prefer a smart growth community and 45 percent prefer a sprawl community, after hearing detailed description of the two community types. (2004 National Community Preference Survey, conducted for Smart Growth America and National Association of Realtors).

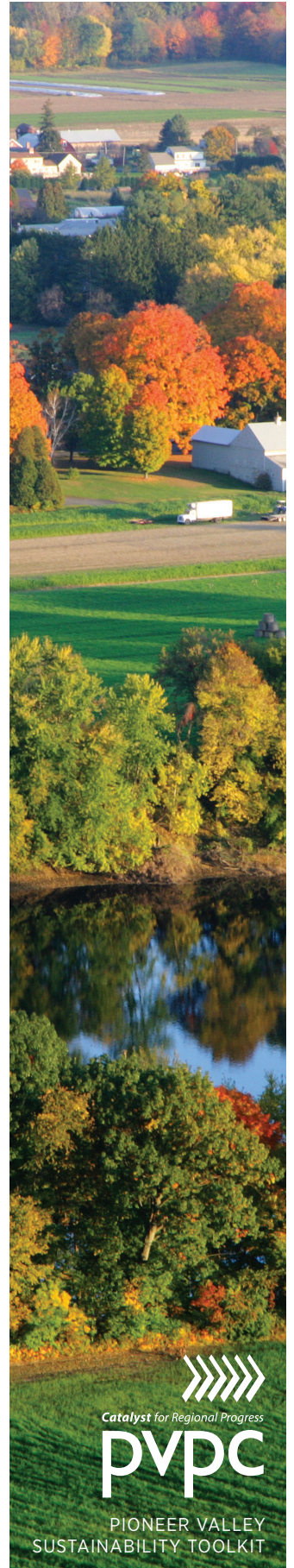




How do Open Space Residential and Conservation Development bylaws work?

These types of bylaws promote development using common driveways and flexible area and frontage requirements to create permanent open space and avoid standard Approval Not Required and conventional subdivision developments. While some versions are permitted by Special Permit recent variations are allowed by-right with a Site Plan Approval process. Through this process, towns work with the applicant to consider development standards such as Stormwater Management, Low Impact Development, Green Energy and Open Space Connectivity in designing the layout of lots and designing the development around the unique characteristics of the land. A portion of the development must also be set aside as permanently protected open space.

Over 65% of the communities in the Pioneer Valley Region have adopted Open Space Residential or Conservation Development Bylaws in one form or another.



PVPC OFFERS THREE MODEL VARIATIONS OF THESE BYLAWS:

Open Space Residential Development bylaw

This model is based on the more traditional cluster concept adopted by most communities in the region over the last 30 years. It often requires a Special Permit, Open Space Residential Developments permit greater density on smaller lots but includes specific minimum dimensional requirements for the reduced lot sizes and frontages. This bylaw typically requires a minimum 50% open space requirement. Only a limited percentage of the open space can be composed of wetlands, floodplains and areas of steep slopes to ensure adequate open space for active outdoor recreational activities.

Creative Development Bylaw

Expanding on the original version, Creative Development Bylaws utilize the same principles as Open Space Developments but allow more flexibility by utilizing common driveways and permitting reduced minimum lot sizes with no minimum frontage requirements. The purpose of this approach is to preserve open space and encourage structures to be situated on the site in a manner that minimizes their visual impact. Creative Developments are permitted by Special Permit and offer Farmland Preservation Standards as well as an Affordable Housing alternative.

Conservation Development Bylaw

Representing a more recent evolution of the concept, and building on the Creative Development Bylaw, Conservation Development Bylaws provide extremely flexible dimensional standards with no dictated minimum lot size or frontage requirements. The purpose of this is to encourage the design of the development that best fits the parcel's unique landscape--conserving the most unique features and blending roads and structures into the site's existing topography, vegetation, and context. The type of conserved open space has been expanded to also include farmland, historic/cultural and significant natural features, endangered species habitat and scenic views. The intent is that through the imaginative layout of the road, buildings and open space these parcels can appear to be undeveloped from the town roads giving the appearance of open space. To encourage developers to take advantage of this alternative Conservation Developments are often permitted By-Right with Site Plan approval and apply to both "ANR" lots and subdivisions.

A model bylaw or strategy is included in the Pioneer Valley Sustainability Toolkit.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

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