

Halifax Regional Municipality

A Guide to Conservation Design Development

Planning and Development
December 2022



HALIFAX

Introduction

Section 3.4.1A of the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (RMPS) identified that the subdivision of land may proceed as a Conservation Design Development within the Rural Growth Centres and in between the Centres within the Agricultural, Rural Resource and, non-growth management areas of the Rural Commuter designations shown on the RMPS Generalized Future Land Use Map – Appendix 1.

This Guide provides an introduction to the concepts, application process, information and studies required to carry out the types of Conservation Design Development pursuant to policies S-14A to S-17A of the RMPS.

What is Conservation Design Development?

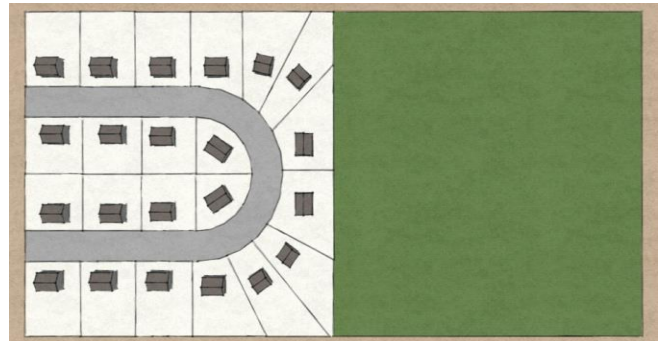
Conservation Design Development is a creative form of subdivision designed to conserve open space. The basic principle of the design is to locate homes on the portion of the site best suited for development while retaining the remainder of the site as open space.

Two types of Conservation Design Development may be considered by development agreement to varying densities within the rural areas of the Municipality. These forms include the Classic Conservation Design Development and the Hybrid Conservation Design Development.



Classic Conservation Design Development

The Classic Conservation Design Development includes the lower and higher density forms of development. Both forms require the retention of an open space component to be held in common.



The maximum density of a Lower Density Classic Conservation Design is one unit per hectare of net developable area, where a total of 40% of net developable area is retained as open space.

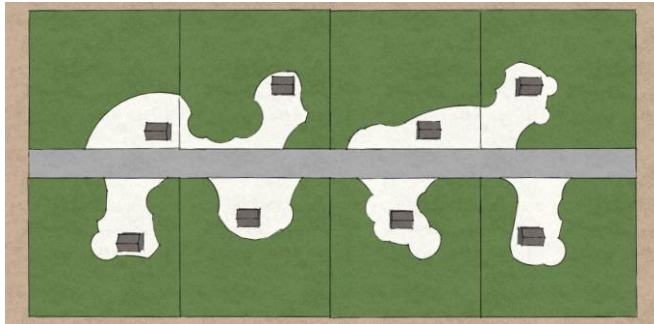
The maximum density of the Higher Density Classic Conservation Design is one unit per 0.4 hectares of net developable area, where the parcel is serviced with municipal water, and where a total of 40% of net developable area is retained as open space. This density is reduced to one unit per 0.5 hectares of net developable area where the development is serviced with a groundwater supply.

The maximum density is affected by the specifics of the site and is determined through the review process. Net developable area means the area of land remaining after the area containing riparian buffers, wetlands, slopes in excess of 30% and floodplains have been removed.

Both the Lower and Higher Density forms of Classic Conservation Design may be considered up to the maximum allowable density where at least one third of the parcel is located within a Rural Growth Centre. Where two thirds of the parcel or more is situated outside of a Rural Growth Centre, only the Lower Density Classic Conservation Design may be considered up to a maximum of 100 units. The parcel must have a minimum of 20 metres of existing road frontage to be eligible for consideration (Policy S-15B).

Hybrid Conservation Design Development

Hybrid Conservation Design Development is a form of development designed to preserve open space by restricting the area for lawns, pavement and buildings to a maximum of 20% of the lot. All of the open space within these subdivisions, except parkland, is located on large individually owned lots.



The maximum density of this form of development is 1 unit per hectare of net developable area.

The maximum density is affected by the specifics of the site and is determined through the review process. Net developable area means the area of land remaining after the area containing riparian buffers, wetlands, slopes in excess of 30% and floodplains have been removed.

Where at least one third of the parcel is located within a Rural Growth Centre, the maximum density may be applied. In these areas, the permitted uses are single or two unit dwellings, and townhouses. Where more than two thirds of the parcel is situated outside of a Rural Growth Centre, the maximum number of lots permitted per parcel is 30, the permitted uses are single or two unit dwellings, and the parcel must have a minimum of 20 metres of existing road frontage to be eligible for consideration (Policy S-15B).

What is the process?

All Conservation Design Development Agreement applications shall follow a two step process. The first step is a preliminary site design to determine open space areas to be preserved and potential areas for development. The second step involves the delineation of roads, lots, parks and other physical design features of the development. Both steps form part of the Planning Application, one site plan delineates the open space area and potential areas of development through the net development area calculation and second site plan shows the proposed development.

Step 1: Site Analysis

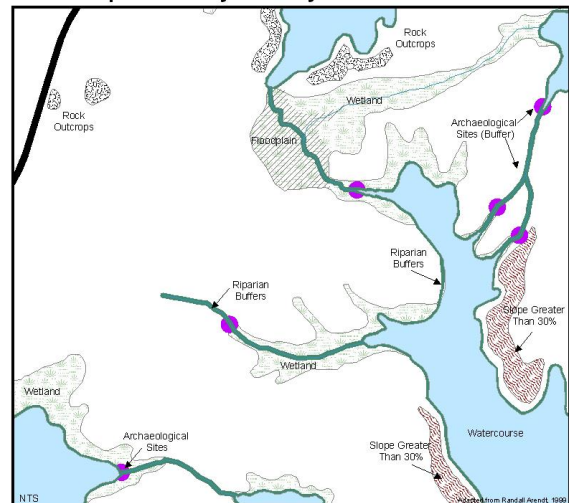
The Step 1: Preliminary Design Process takes place in three steps as illustrated to the right. Applicants are required to submit a digital copy of Potential Development Areas Map, showing the primary and secondary conservation areas, to be avoided. The map must also show the primary and secondary conservation features on adjacent lands for a distance of 300 metres on parcels of 40 ha or less and 600 metres on parcels greater than 40 ha. In the review of a proposal, consideration is made into the connectivity of natural networks with open space on adjacent parcels as shown on Map 5 of the Green Network Ecology Map on Halifax's Green Network Plan.

Primary and Secondary conservation areas to be included, are outlined below:

Primary Conservation Features

- ✓ Minimum riparian buffers and watercourse setbacks as per the requirements of the applicable land use by-law;
- ✓ All wetlands including those identified in the schedule of the applicable land use by-law;
- ✓ 1:100 year floodplains as delineated by a NS Land Surveyor;
- ✓ Rock outcroppings that should be avoided;
- ✓ Class 1 - 3 Agricultural Soils as identified in the Canada Land Inventory mapping <http://geogratis.cgdi.gc.ca/cgi-bin/geogratis/cli/agriculture.pl>;
- ✓ In areas of Class 1-3 Agricultural Soils, describe and show the location of any agricultural activities on the property and in the specified context area;
- ✓ Potential Archaeological Sites as shown on Map 9 - Areas of Elevated Archaeological Potential - of the RMPS;
- ✓ Any groundwater recharge areas;
- ✓ Significant Habitat and Endangered Species as shown on Map 5 of the RMPS; and
- ✓ Steep Slopes.

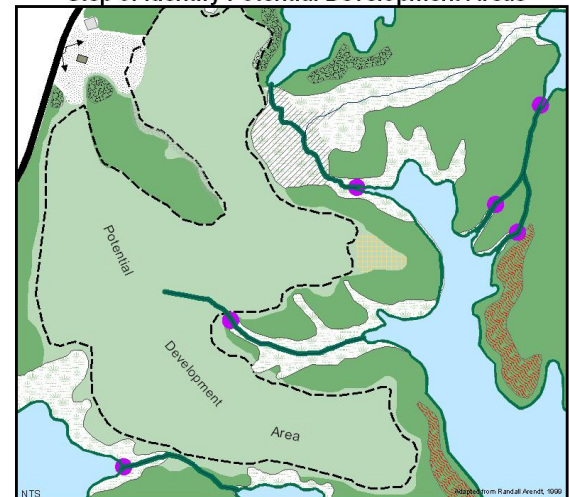
Step 1: Identify Primary Conservation Areas



Step 2: Identify Secondary Conservation Areas



Step 3: Identify Potential Development Areas



Secondary Conservation Features

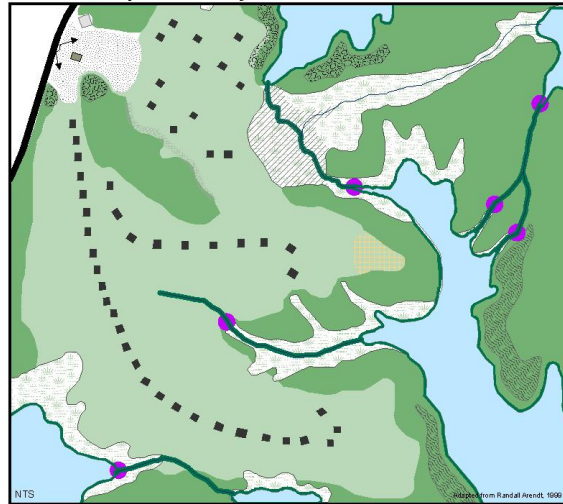
- ✓ Scenic Views from within and onto the site from the surrounding area illustrated through maps and photographs;
- ✓ Any municipally or provincially registered heritage properties;
- ✓ Historic buildings, stone walls, pastoral landscapes, old fields, meadows & other important features;
- ✓ Mature forests & other vegetation & comments on their health & condition;
- ✓ Trails and natural networks shown on Map 3 - Trails and Natural Network - of the RMPS;
- ✓ Parks and natural corridors shown on Map 4 - Parks and Natural Corridors - of the RMPS; and
- ✓ Current & past land use, all buildings & structures, waste disposal sites, geo hazards such as sulphide bearing slates or areas subject to geological subsidence.

Step 2: Conceptual Design

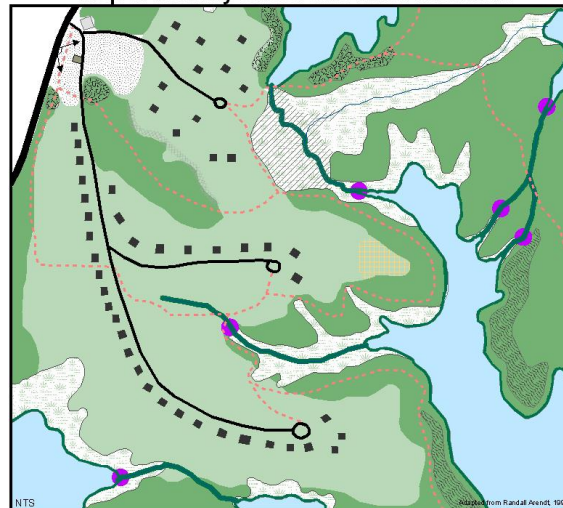
The Step 2: Conceptual Design Process also takes place in three steps as illustrated to the right. The Conceptual Plan including the following:

- ✓ Proposed frontage, and front, side, and rear yard setbacks for each lot/unit;
- ✓ In a Hybrid Conservation Design show development envelopes (disturbance area not exceeding 20% of the lot) for each lot/unit, including areas for grading, lawns, pavement, buildings and septic systems;
- ✓ In a Classic Conservation Design, show location of communal or individual septic system areas;
- ✓ Total ha and location of areas to be retained as open space (conservation areas, parks, trails, etc.) and include a breakdown of total ha to be dedicated for public use and the total ha to be retained in non- municipal ownership; and
- ✓ Trails and natural networks.

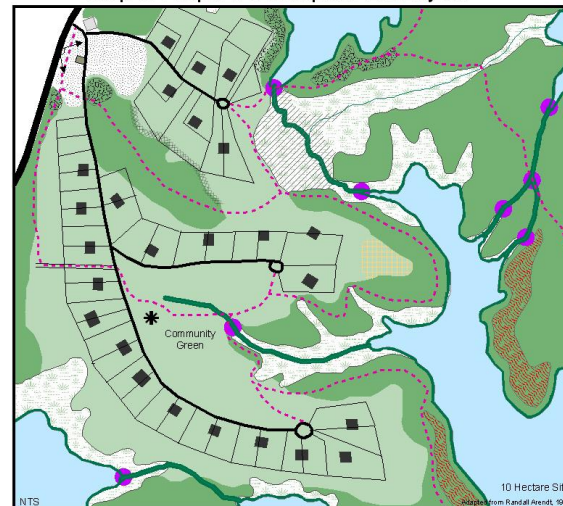
Step 1: Identify House Site Locations



Step 2: Identify Street and Trail Locations



Step 3: Prepare Conceptual Lot Layout



Planning Application Requirements:

The Planning Application included the information collected from Step 1 and Step 2 and the following:

- ✓ Letter of intent outlining the rationale for the potential development area, total ha of the site, total ha of net developable area, and proposed mix of land uses (See Table 3-4A of the RMPS for permitted range of uses);
- ✓ Traffic Impact Statement prepared in accordance with HRM's Guidelines for the Preparation of Traffic Impact Studies;
- ✓ Level 1 Groundwater Assessment Report prepared in accordance with the Nova Scotia Environment Guide to Groundwater Assessment for Subdivisions Serviced by Private Wells
<<http://www.novascotia.ca/nse/groundwater/doc/Guide.to.Groundwater.Assessments.for.Subdivision.Developments.pdf>>;
- ✓ Proposed sewage treatment system prepared with a sufficient level of information for NSE to conclude that it is feasible to service the development;
- ✓ Archaeological Assessment if required by the NS Museum;
- ✓ Conceptual Stormwater Management Plan;
- ✓ Conservation Design Management Plan for the long-term restoration and management of open space areas.

Planning Application Process

Planning Application process includes:

1. Schedule and facilitate a Public Information Meeting (PIM) to obtain public feedback on the conceptual plan of development;
2. Circulate the proposal and public comments to any applicable Planning Advisory Committee appointed by the applicable Community Council having jurisdiction in an area;

Planning Application Sign-off

Modifications may be required to the Conceptual Plan pending inter-agency review. Once the proposal is adequate, the Planner will prepare a report and development agreement which will then be forwarded for approval before the applicable community council having jurisdiction in the area.

Approval

The development agreement and report is considered by the respective community council pursuant to the requirements of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*. Before an application can be approved, a public hearing before a community council must be held to receive public feedback on the proposed development. The decision of community council is also subject to a period for appeal before the Utility and Review Board.

The agreement only takes effect after the appeal period has lapsed or any appeals have resulted in an approved agreement and after the agreement has been signed by the applicant and the Municipality. Following the signing of the agreement, applications may be made for final subdivision approval pursuant to the agreement and the Regional Subdivision By-law.

Where do I apply?

Please contact the HRM's Planning and Development Offices before preparing plans for submission at 902-490-4472.

For incoming mail, please use:

Planning and Development
PO Box 1749
Halifax NS
B3J 3A5

For Courier:

Planning and Development
5251 Duke St.
Ste. 300

Email: PlanningApps@halifax.ca