



LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION IN SRPEDD

OVERVIEW

Also known as “Conservation Subdivision,” “Cluster,” or “Natural Resource Protection” Zoning, Open Space Residential Design (OSRD) bylaws allow developers to create subdivisions with smaller lot sizes, provided that the remaining land is permanently preserved as open space. These bylaws give towns the option to guide development in a way that prioritizes the protection of natural areas. Rather than forcing a tradeoff between development and conservation, OSRD allows for thoughtful site design that balances housing needs with the preservation of community character, natural resources, and recreational opportunities.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS & CONSIDERATIONS

BENEFITS

1. **Land and Environmental Conservation:** OSRD clusters development to protect forests, wetlands, and farmland, supporting biodiversity, water quality, and sustainable stormwater management by reducing impervious surfaces.
2. **Sustainable Development:** By focusing growth in appropriate areas and minimizing environmental impact, OSRD fosters low-emission, climate-resilient development that safeguards ecosystems.
3. **Preservation of Community Character:** Integrating homes into the natural landscape helps maintain a community’s rural, scenic, and historic identity.
4. **Recreational and Community Amenities:** Preserved open space can offer passive recreation, such as trails and parks, enhancing residents’ quality of life.
5. **Cost-Effective Infrastructure:** Compact layouts reduce the need for extensive roads, utilities, and municipal services, lowering long-term public costs.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR OSRDS

1. **Supportive Regulations:** Flexible zoning that allows smaller lots and conservation-focused planning is essential.
2. **Community Engagement:** Broad stakeholder involvement helps align OSRD projects with local values and build support.
3. **Site-Sensitive Design:** Careful site analysis ensures natural features are protected and development fits the landscape.
4. **Ongoing Stewardship:** Long-term plans are needed to maintain and manage conserved land effectively.

CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

1. **Loss of Natural Resources:** Traditional development fragments forests, wetlands, and habitats; OSRDs preserve these through clustered design and contiguous open space.
2. **Inefficient Land Use:** Conventional zoning leads to sprawl; OSRDs promote compact development while conserving land.
3. **Community Opposition:** Environmental and neighborhood concerns often block new projects; OSRDs help ease opposition by preserving natural features and open space.
4. **Regulatory Hurdles:** Outdated zoning bylaws often restrict OSRDs; regulatory adjustments are needed to support this approach.
5. **Economic Concerns:** Developers may see OSRDs as risky; highlighting cost savings and increased property values help address these perceptions.
6. **High Development Pressures:** OSRDs offer a meaningful way for developers to contribute positively to communities by preserving open space, protecting natural resources, and enhancing the long-term quality of life for residents.

RESOURCES

- Massachusetts Smart Growth Toolkit
- Innovative Zoning Strategies Workshop
- Preserving Lynnfield’s Open Space
- SRPEDD Housing Production Plans
- MA Water Resources Commission, Low Impact Development
- National Association of City Transportation Officials
- Whole Building Design Guide
- Charles River Watershed Association

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