

Towns County Mountain Conservation Community



Benefits

- Fast-track Subdivision Approval, By Pass Planning Commission
Single Point Contact with Mountain Conservation Council (Site Advisor)
Rapid Turn Around Variance Review
- Lot Fees Waived
- Option for Narrower Roads [Minimums: 25' Right-of-Way; 16' Roadbed; 12' Pavement]
- "Mountain Conservation Community" Designation (including a sign and use of the logo)
- Free Positive Publicity

Basic Program Requirements

1. Follow all existing rules and ordinances that pertain to the area developed.
2. Limit overall density of development such that acreage divided by the number of home sites yields at least 3 of acres per home site.
3. Create an "Open Space Plan" for the parcel/development that identifies and sets aside (at minimum) the following primary conservation areas:
 - 100-year floodplain
 - Riparian zones at least 50 feet wide
 - Areas of land with slopes greater than or equal to 25% grade that represent 5,000 square feet or more of contiguous area
 - Archaeological sites, cemeteries, burial grounds
 - Wetlands

The Open Space Plan should consolidate open space into large units as much as possible. Impervious areas (roads, driveways, parking areas) should be limited within the open space. Walking or bicycle trails and agricultural, horticultural, or forestry uses may be included. Passive, non-structural stormwater management facilities may also be considered open space.

4. Develop a set of covenants which shall further specify management of any open space areas and restrict development on privately-owned open space. [Covenants will be enforced and maintained through a homeowners association, management company, or land trust.]
5. Meet the Standards for Designation (below), unless it is demonstrated that a provision constitutes an unusual hardship. [Variances can be granted by the Council.]
6. Pay an inspection fee of a minimum of \$200 (to be determined by the size of the development) at the time of application to Towns County.
7. Sign a written agreement with Towns County which allows for fast-track approval and inspection by the Mountain Conservation Council (MCC).

Note: An approved sediment and erosion control plan is required before land is disturbed. Appropriate best management practices for controlling sediment must be installed prior to land disturbance and maintained throughout the life of construction. A copy of the approved plan (or a letter from GA EPD stating a plan is not required) must be supplied to the MCC.

Standards for Designation

- Clearing and grading of forests and native vegetation at a site should be limited to the minimum amount needed to build structures and the septic system, allow access, and provide fire protection. No clear-cutting is permitted.
- Underbrush should be removed using hand tools only. No mechanical equipment with tracks shall be used for clearing underbrush; however, the Council (*Site Advisor*)
- may allow certain clearing using a bush hog under an approved variance. Best efforts should be made to protect native vegetation from construction damage. The Native Plant Rescue Team should be engaged to perform a site survey of native plants, offer recommendations of areas for preservation, and/or relocate plants in harm's way.
- A reforestation plan should be developed for areas within 50 feet of streams that do not contain an adequate number of trees and shrubs and for lots and/or other areas where more than 25% of trees are removed or damaged during construction. Restoration of vegetation should be accomplished by planting native trees and shrubs a maximum of 10 feet apart. A mix of 1-, 3- and 5-gallon (or greater) potted plants should be used. The Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition will provide technical assistance and guidance related to reforestation, if necessary.
- A three-zone 100-foot buffer system is recommended as defined in the NE Georgia Growth Readiness Report (2007). However, the streamside zone (50' on trout streams; 25' on other waters) is required. This zone shall consist of undisturbed mature forest and should be reforested using native trees and shrubs if no vegetation is present (see above).
- Where density, topography, soils, and slopes permit, vegetated open channels should be used along roadsides to convey and promote infiltration of storm water.
- If storm water drainage is to be piped under the road surface, provisions should be made at the outlet end of the pipe to retain and/or infiltrate the water before it reaches a stream. No concentrated flow is allowed through the streamside buffer.
- Clearing of construction roads should coincide with planned permanent roadways whenever possible.
- Roadways should not exceed 18% grade if paved; if gravel, roadways should not exceed 15% grade. Lots should be planned to allow for private driveways to meet these same criteria to the maximum extent possible. Landowners should be encouraged to follow these guidelines to minimize future maintenance problems. [Variances may be granted by the Council for short segments of steeper grade.]
- Where all safety considerations can be met, it is preferable to minimize impervious surfaces (e.g. paved roads and parking areas).