

Conservation communities

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What is a conservation community?

A conservation community is a group of individuals and families living in a community who are committed to saving large parcels of land from ecological degradation. This land can be forested land, agricultural land, ranch land, or any other type of land that needs protecting from high-impact development.

Conservation communities are models of sustainable community development, a new approach to development which provides alternatives to conventional forms of development.^[1] They are adaptable to the needs of different regions and they use small-scale residential development to fund conservation, eliminating the need to depend on funding from private donors or governments. This land development model is important to the environmental movements towards sustainable development, Green homebuilding, local food security, and responsible management of natural resources.

Some of the tools used to create conservation communities are conservation covenants, ecoforestry covenants, and other forms of covenant registered to the title of the land. Covenants are a legal contract used to protect the integrity of land. Covenants help protect the ecological health of watersheds (which are damaged by increased development),^[2] maintain long-term access to natural resources and associated value-added opportunities, protect native plant and animal species, and prevent climate change impacts of intense development practices. Conservation communities are developed under a standard of performance that not only minimizes their ecological footprint on the Earth but also ensures that the development improves (or at the very least does not diminish) the existing ecological system's performance.

The planning basis for the residential community focuses around maintaining and enhancing the ecological integrity of the land. The community, therefore, sits on the least sensitive part of the land from an ecological point of view, and is often built using low-impact infrastructure such as LEED-targeted housing.

The economy

Conservation communities can also offer the opportunity for other eco-compatible uses such as sustainable resource extraction, value-added manufacturing opportunities, organic horticulture, live/work enterprises, ecotourism, recreational and ecological educational opportunities.

Conservation communities can create sustainable employment opportunities for those living in the communities as well as the surrounding region. Ecotourism promotes environmental protection and support for the well-being of local community members by bringing visitors into the conservation community for educational and recreational purposes.^[3]

Community

Conservation communities can be designed to strengthen the connections between neighbors and communities. Kim Davis, of the Vancouver Sun newspaper notes that "while hardship, economic or otherwise, is not something most people desire, let alone seek, adversity does have a way of inspiring collaboration, creativity and innovation."^[4]

- [Elkington Forest Website](#)
- [Prairie Crossing Conservation Community](#)
- [Deerpath Farm Conservation Community](#)
- [Tryon Farm Conservation Community](#)
- [Trust for Sustainable Forestry](#)
- [Living Forest Communities](#)
- [Barnet Society](#)

References

1. Simon Fraser University Centre for Sustainable Community Development, <https://www.sfu.ca/cscd/>
2. Purdue University College of Engineering, "Watershed Protection", <https://engineering.purdue.edu/SafeWater/watershed/>
3. Randall, A. (1987). Resource economics, Second Edition. New York, USA: John Wiley and Sons.
4. Davis, Kim, "Hard Times Can Increase Innovation and Collaboration", (December 13, 2008), *Vancouver Sun*, Westcoast Homes.

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