

The following is an excerpt from *Chapter 2 - Identifying & Resolving Quality of Life Issues* from the Community & Environmental Defense Services (CEDS) book *How to Win Land Development Issues: A Citizens Guide to Preserving & Enhancing Quality of Life in Developing Areas*. You will find this section more helpful if you read the Chapter 2 introductory text. Also, the following is just the text we could fit into the book without making it unduly large. We have a substantially greater amount of information available in our files on this topic. To learn how CEDS can assist you with concerns about this topic visit the CEDS website at: www.ceds.org or contact us at: 1-800-773-4571 or info@ceds.org

NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION

In the context of this book, neighborhood conservation is intended to preserve those aspects of a residential area from development impacts threatening quality of life. The broader definition of neighborhood conservation includes measures to address problems which have little to do with growth, such as street lighting, crime, and so forth; although one might argue that development has an indirect effect on these issues.

Neighborhood conservation begins by defining what it is about a block or street which residents wish to conserve and enhance. The best way to do this is to talk directly with the residents either through neighborhood meetings, door-to-door surveys, focus groups, charrettes¹, and so forth. In the context of potential development impacts, the neighborhood conservation process should look at questions such as:

- Are there vacant parcels of land adjoining the neighborhood which could be developed? If there are, then who owns parcel and what are their plans? Would they be interested in permanently preserving the parcel? If not would they be willing to commit to limiting development to uses compatible with the neighborhood? If not what uses would current zoning allow on the parcel and if any of these uses are incompatible can zoning or other laws be changed to resolve the conflict?
- Are there any dead-end (cul-de-sac) streets which might be extended to serve more homes or connected to other roads? If yes, how would this affect traffic volume, speed, noise levels, property value, and most importantly, pedestrian safety? If an undue threat may exist how can the neighborhood ensure that the cul-de-sac is not extended or that it is limited in ways that preserve quality of life?
- Is there already a problem with traffic volume, speed, noise levels, property value, and most importantly, pedestrian safety? If yes, then could the calming measures presented below in the traffic section be used to resolve the problem?
- Do neighborhood children play in a nearby stream or other waters? Would further watershed development cause the waters to exceed any of the thresholds described above under Aquatic Resources? Could development improve water quality by eliminating an existing pollution source? Does the local government currently require the use of highly-effective water quality protection measures?

¹ See the discussion of charrette in Chapter 4.

- Are existing park and recreation facilities adequate to meet neighborhood needs? If not, then could development of nearby parcels include an excess of new facilities so the existing deficit is resolved while providing for the needs of new residents? Or, would development simply increase overcrowding at existing facilities?

Obviously there are many other questions neighborhood residents might raise as they consider the potential implications of nearby development. The earlier these questions are addressed, the better. It is vastly less difficult and expensive to find a solution before a development plan is submitted for a vacant parcel or a road extension is proposed.