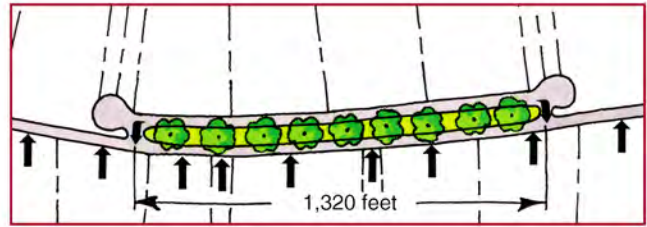


PREVENTING STRIP SUBDIVISIONS

Build new housing in the countryside off side roads or shared drives, screened from the public view, rather than lining rural roads with house lots or commercial uses.

Just a few new houses along an existing public road, subdividing less than five percent of the surrounding land, can block the views of 100 percent of the open landscape. Unfortunately, the cheapest way to develop is to take advantage of the public road system to provide direct access to newly cut-off parcels. Small subdivisions, usually less than ten lots at a time, are lining the roads with individual lots, each with a separate driveway spaced 100 feet or so apart. As a result, vast amounts of fields, forests and open land in Dutchess County are being hidden behind back yards.

Similar to strip commercial development, strip residential subdivisions not only block views from the public roads, the rows of separate driveways create multiple conflict points for the flow of through traffic. This piecemeal pattern of development is all too quickly stealing our rural heritage, destroying the scenic character of the road system, and making the roads less safe. Towns should encourage alternative patterns for minor subdivisions that gradually create a connected interior street system, or at the very least promote shared drives with provisions for possible future connections.



Ten residential parcels in the Town of Washington share a frontage road, providing a landscaped buffer and a safer, quieter street for the home owners, compared to multiple lots with potential driveways across the state highway.

Subdivisions should be designed to settle back into the countryside.



Conservation development off a side road system (top) preserves open space and farmland views and provides substantial green setbacks, rather than the same number of house lots facing the frontage (bottom).

Robinson Lane, just outside the hamlet of Fishkill Plains showing the horse farm to the east and two initial house lots on the left in 1988.



Strip Subdivision Case Study

Before

After



Robinson Lane after the edge of the farm was subdivided into "Rolling Meadows Subdivision", 15 one-acre lots facing the road.

One of the prettiest, tree-lined rural roads in southern Dutchess, Robinson Lane once looked something like this.



The mature maple trees were removed for multiple driveways.

The transformation of Robinson Lane from a distinctive scenic road to a routine residential strip is typical of numerous subdivisions along rural roads throughout the county. It is just too easy for land owners to lop off a few lots along the public right-of-way. Planning Boards should look for longer term solutions that protect the safety, capacity, and rural character of our road system.

In this case, a creative 15-lot alternative could be placed along a private drive or street built to reduced specifications that directly connects the new houses with the existing hamlet,

- allowing easy walking to the nearby stores and neighborhood schools;
- creating more scenic house sites facing farmland and natural ponds, not a busy road;
- reinforcing the hamlet center with a secondary street system;
- preserving the farm frontage as a greenbelt surrounding the hamlet;
- providing a protected street and front yards for children; and
- retaining the rural, tree-lined country road.



Sources:

Dutchess County Department of Planning, *Planning For Service Roads*, 1986

Rebecca Paley, *Lane's New Meets Old, East Fishkill Looks at Zoning*, Poughkeepsie Journal, April 26, 1999