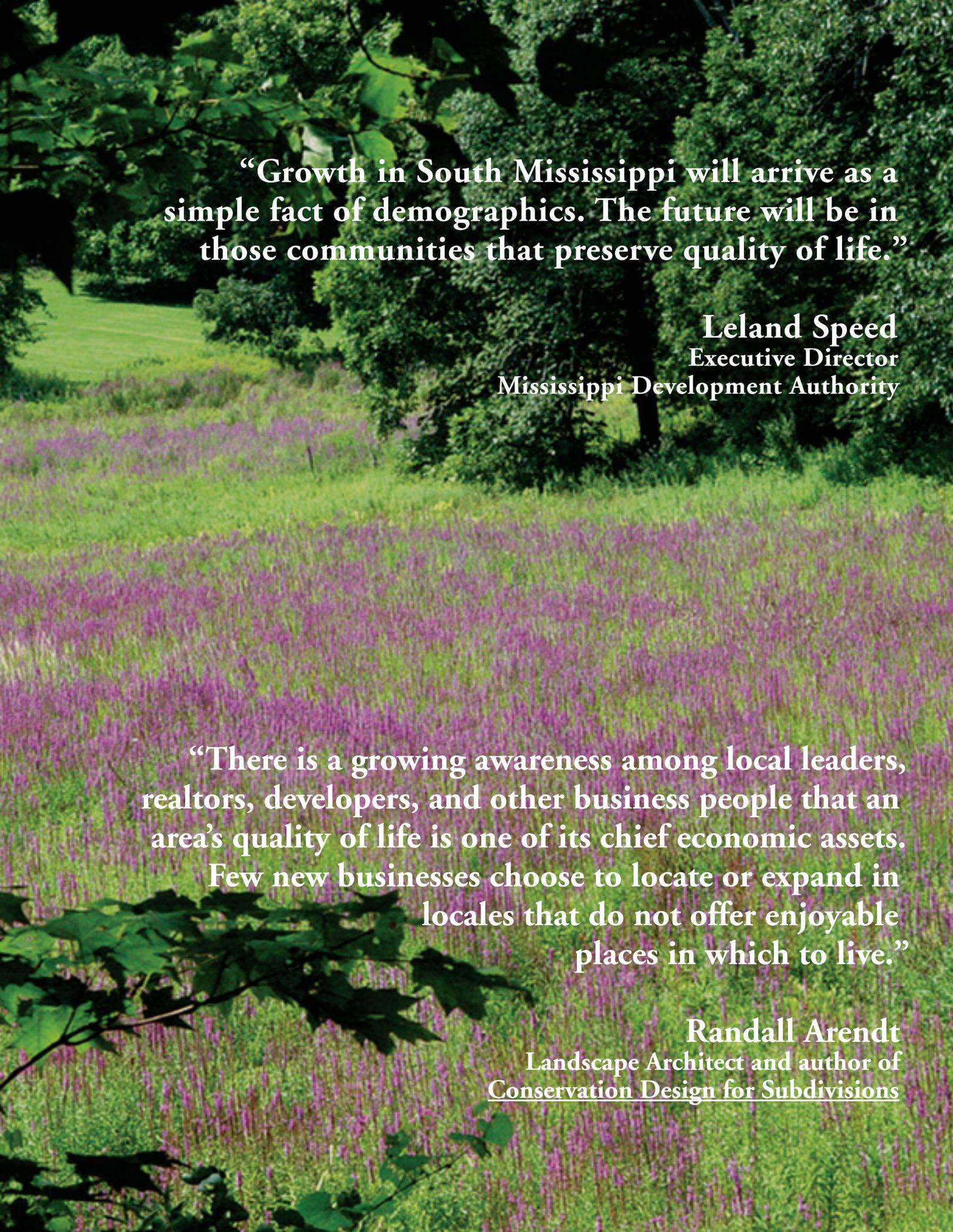
A photograph of a forest path covered in fallen leaves, with sunlight filtering through the trees. The path is a narrow, winding trail that leads into the distance. The ground is covered in a thick layer of brown and orange leaves. The trees are tall and thin, with their branches reaching up towards the sky. The overall atmosphere is warm and serene.

# Twice Green

Your economic advantage.  
Your community's future.

A resource guide for land development.



**“Growth in South Mississippi will arrive as a simple fact of demographics. The future will be in those communities that preserve quality of life.”**

**Leland Speed**  
Executive Director  
Mississippi Development Authority

**“There is a growing awareness among local leaders, realtors, developers, and other business people that an area’s quality of life is one of its chief economic assets. Few new businesses choose to locate or expand in locales that do not offer enjoyable places in which to live.”**

**Randall Arendt**  
Landscape Architect and author of  
Conservation Design for Subdivisions



Dear Fellow Mississippians,

The Growing Greener Initiative and the design concepts of conservation development are long overdue in our state. As a partnership between the Mississippi Department of Marine Resource's Comprehensive Resource Management Plan (CRMP) and Pearl River County Board of Supervisors, the Growing Greener Initiative is promoting conservation development based on "smart growth" principles that balance conservation efforts and economic growth.

Conservation developments offer an ideal union of environmental and economic interests by preserving our

natural resources without sacrificing a developer's bottom line. The concept is surprisingly simple: reduce the average lot size to maintain density while setting aside a portion of the land for preservation and common use by subdivision residents. The success of similar developments throughout the country is testament to the effectiveness of conservation design. Frequently, conservation subdivisions cost less at the front end to develop, and allow for greater marketability and increased value of home lots.

This introductory guide, titled "Twice Green," underscores the potential for developments to be both profitable and environmentally friendly. It describes the economic, environmental, and social benefits inherent to conservation development; it also outlines the design process, and highlights local project examples and testimonials from conservation developers across the region.

The Growing Greener Initiative is perfectly in-line with the intent of the U.S. Congress' recent designation for the six coastal counties as a National Heritage Area, a hard-earned achievement for the Department and the CRMP. This designation gives our region national recognition for our unique natural and cultural resources, and recognizes that we, as a community, feel that they are assets worth preserving. Further, by protecting our environments, we are also promoting economic development, as ecological health and aesthetics are critical factors in drawing business to Coastal Mississippi. The look and feel of our communities relate directly to our own quality of life, and affect our economic opportunities.

It is my hope that developers throughout South Mississippi will consider conservation development as a compelling option, and that other communities will follow the lead of Pearl River County in promoting this concept. By working together, we can have the best of both worlds – economic growth and resource preservation.

Sincerely,

William W. Walker, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
MS Department of Marine Resources

## Table of Contents

Why Conservation Development?

A Proven Advantage

Building a New Market in Mississippi

Conservation Development Basics

Land Use

Protecting Conservation Areas

Project Examples

Learn More

**"The US Census projects 75 million more Americans in the next 30 years, 80 percent of whom will live in the South and West on the edges of Metropolitan areas. Green development thinking should guide the building of their future homes and workplaces."**

**Charles E. Fraser, Founder  
The Sea Pines Company,  
South Carolina**

## Twice Green

Preserving the natural beauty of your community while giving you a marketable advantage.

# Why Conservation Development?

- **Increases market value and resale value of home lots**
- **Improves market absorption rates**
- **Increases marketability of a larger range of lot sizes**
- **Lowers infrastructure, engineering, and construction costs**
- **Enhances site aesthetics**
- **Protects environmental and cultural heritage for future generations**

The six-county region of Coastal Mississippi is growing at more than twice the rate of the rest of the state, and in some places as much as five times the state average. It is important that we consider the long-term effects of this growth, and plan accordingly, so that our region continues to be a community of choice for businesses and individuals in the decades ahead.

"Twice Green" is a guide for developing in ways that protect both our natural resources and our financial interests. It promotes the concept of "conservation development," a design process that allows for the preservation of natural assets while maximizing the economic value of a property. As the following pages illustrate, the conservation development concept is rapidly gaining popularity across the United States as a highly marketable, common sense alternative to the conventional "cookie-cutter" subdivision.

From a marketing perspective, conservation development makes good sense. When given a choice, consumers show a clear preference for buying homes that look out onto farmland, woods, or other open space, rather than houses where the only view is the neighbor's window or backyard. Sales strategies focusing on green space amenities strike a responsive chord among many homebuyers, particularly when lots are laid out to maximize views of the conservation land. In conservation subdivisions, homebuyers are actually purchasing more than their individual house lot: they are also receiving the use of common greenspace, which can encompass more than 50 percent of the development. As a result, homes in conservation subdivisions tend to appreciate faster than their counterparts in conventional developments.

From the builder's viewpoint, conservation development offers several advantages. Conservation development allows for a density-neutral approach, but can also be adapted to a wide range of density options and income

ranges, from condominiums to estates. Conservation subdivisions also typically cost less to build in terms of road construction, cut and fill, engineering, and other infrastructure since they impact less land. Common green space can also serve as a buffer to stormwater runoff, significantly reducing drainage costs. Finally, if shared green space is placed within a conservation easement, the developer/owner may realize tax benefits.

Overall, conservation design respects private property rights and the ability of developers to create new homes for an expanding population, accommodating newcomers without unduly impacting the remaining natural areas that make our communities such special places in which to live, work, and recreate. This approach thus provides an equitable and profitable way to balance conservation and development objectives, creating more livable communities in the process.

**"A national survey found that 37% of homeowners who live in golf course developments don't play golf. They live there just to get the open space. We should build more golf course developments –just leave out the golf courses."  
– Randall Arendt**



Randall Arendt is a land use planner, site designer, author, lecturer, and an advocate of conservation planning. He received his M. Phil. degree in Urban Design and Regional Planning from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. He is Senior Conservation Advisor at the Natural Lands Trust in Media, Pennsylvania, and is the former Director of Planning and Research at the Center for Rural Massachusetts, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where he also served as an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning. He is an elected member of the Royal Town Planning Institute in London.

Mr. Arendt is the author of more than 20 publications, including Conservation Design for Subdivisions: A Practical Guide to Creating Open Space Networks, and has designed conservation subdivisions for a wide variety of clients in 16 states.

Photo by Randall Arendt (left)

## Testimonials from the field...

"On a 60-acre development in Texas, the project engineer calculated a **\$250,000 savings in grading costs** by redesigning the original site plan according to conservation methodology. It also enabled most of the large trees to be preserved in this otherwise open landscape, retaining the value they added to the neighborhood."

Randall Arendt, Landscape Architect

"By incorporating open space in the site design, a developer in Indiana was **able to charge \$20,000 to \$25,000 more per lot** than for lots in a conventional subdivision he developed the previous year, for the same upscale market, at the same overall density. On that 40-lot subdivision, the total added value was \$800,000 to \$1,000,000."

Randall Arendt, Landscape Architect

"Centerville Farms in Florida ranks among the most outstanding conservation communities across the country, owing to the high regard and care to the **significant natural resources and aesthetic amenities**. The bar continues to be raised as the project exceeds all expectations. It would not surprise me to see Centerville Farms on the cover of Southern Living. Tallahassee truly has a role model community of national significance."

Randall Arendt, Landscape Architect

"The first phase of Centerville Farms has been a great success. **All 86 lots sold in 7 hours!**"

Jon Kohler, Centerville Farms, Tallahassee, Florida

"In our experience, **green development sells**. Homebuyers value the increased quality of life."

Judy Corbett, Developer, Village Homes of Davis, California

"I believe that **conservation subdivisions are a good product for our area**. My belief is that older buyers might be more attracted to such an arrangement - less grass to cut, more exercise options, more 'get away' and back to nature opportunities."

Jean Callihan, Callihan Property Sales, Poplarville, Mississippi

"Conservation development is a powerful means to preserve shrinking natural spaces, while offering unique financial benefits. We were able to **increase our lot count and elevate profit projections** by using low-impact design principles."

Ben Kaufman, Owner & Developer, GreenWorks Development  
Newcastle, Washington

# Building A New Market in Mississippi

## Smart Growth

**“Those communities which today promote and protect their character and quality of life, not just in terms of public education, public safety, and healthcare, but also in terms of heritage preservation and the natural environment, are the places that tomorrow -- economically and culturally -- will be wealthiest. Smart growth policy is ultimately a simple matter of committing to the long-term development of one’s community, and it must be carried out by those who care about their children and grandchildren.”**

**Richard Howorth,  
Mayor of Oxford, Mississippi**

Last year, Pearl River County was listed as one of the top 100 fastest growing rural counties in the US. Rapid growth presents new opportunities to capitalize on the growing demand for housing along with new planning challenges of preserving the character of the region and developing sites that reflect what the local area really wants.

**As you develop for smart growth, success will come from knowing your selling points...**

- Access to shared green space
- Increased sense of community
- More exercise and recreation opportunities
- Less yard maintenance
- Saving energy and reducing utility bills from utilizing shaded areas in site design
- Quality of life

**...and knowing what the local community wants.**

Tenets one developer created after working with the local community to create a new conservation subdivision:

- Protected natural beauty
- Supportive and sound environment for community members
- Less traffic congestion and increased transit opportunities
- Affordable housing
- Greater community self-reliance

## Design Basics for Conservation Subdivisions

Conventional subdivision design typically results in "checkerboard" layouts of nearly identical lots covering an entire parcel. This practice fails to consider the natural features of the property that are worth preserving or enhancing. By using land conservation as the central organizing principle for laying out house lots and streets, conservation areas become the focus for construction and marketing purposes. This concept can be applied to a wide range of density options, from rural estates to high-density subdivisions, allowing for a flexible system of development design. Examples of conservation design in South Mississippi and elsewhere are featured later in this publication.

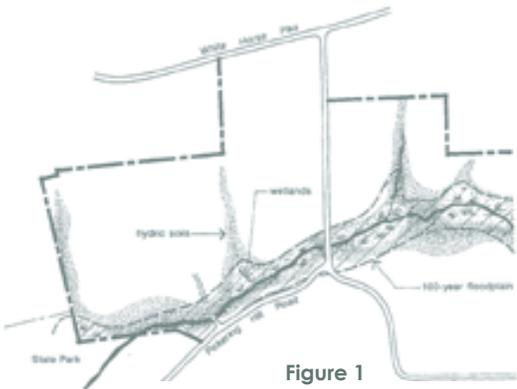


Figure 1

## Identifying Conservation Areas

The first design phase is identification of conservation areas. This process involves walking the property and consulting aerial photographs, topographic maps, and soil maps. Primary conservation areas that are inherently unfit for development include wetlands, floodplains, and steep slopes (Fig. 1). Secondary conservation areas are uplands that have historic or cultural significance, scenic value, or ecological importance. These areas might include mature woodlands, open meadows, farmlands with old barns and buildings, views into the property from an existing road, or any other place that has unusual attributes worthy of preservation (Fig. 2). At this point, conservation areas can be delineated, leaving the remaining land open for development (Fig. 3).

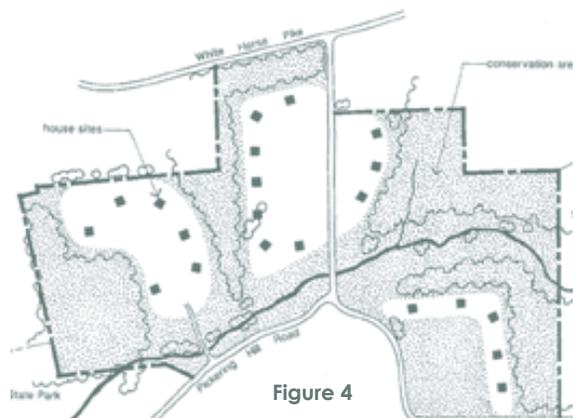


Figure 4

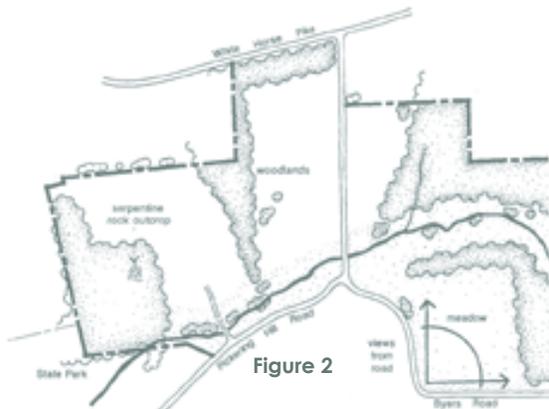


Figure 2

## Locating House Sites

Most people prefer (and are willing to pay extra) to see open space from their windows, so it makes economic sense to create as many "view lots" as possible. House sites should be located near conservation areas, with homes backing up to woodlands for privacy, fronting onto a central common green space, or enjoying long views across open fields. In a full density plan, in which the number of lots is equal to that of a conventional subdivision, house lots would be reduced in width to accommodate a larger number of homes in a more compact area. With smaller individual lots, the properties would require less maintenance, but the owners would still enjoy the benefits of large tracts of shared green space (Fig. 4).

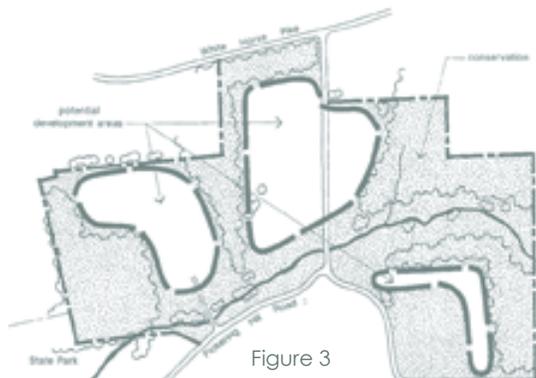
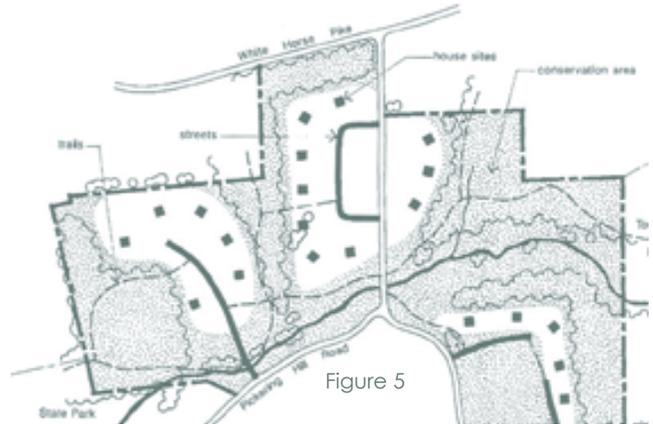


Figure 3

# Conservation Development Basics

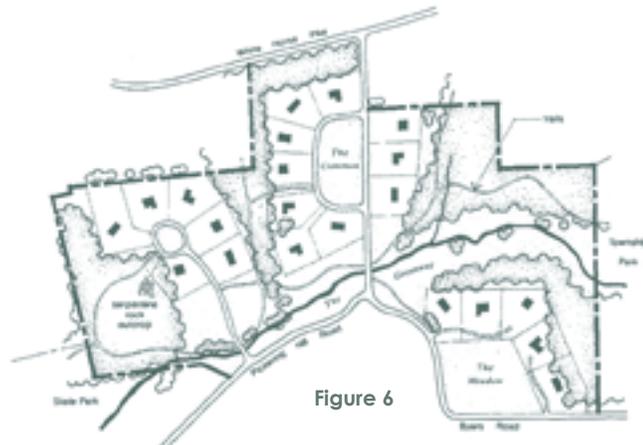
## Aligning the Streets & Trails

Once the conservation areas have been identified and potential house sites sketched in, streets and trails should be designed to access every residence as inexpensively and unobtrusively as possible. Major considerations include avoiding routes that cross wetlands and prominent features such as large trees and wildlife habitat. Designing streets with the landscape often reduces costs associated with cut and fill. Conservation development also tends to shorten road and utility lengths, further reducing costs. From an aesthetic and speed control perspective, it is preferable to build curving streets that allow for terminal vistas of green space elements. Residents and visitors will thus correctly perceive the conservation emphasis that has guided the development design. Trails can also be incorporated to connect various neighborhoods to one another and to green spaces, allowing pedestrian-friendly enjoyment of the entire community (Fig. 5).



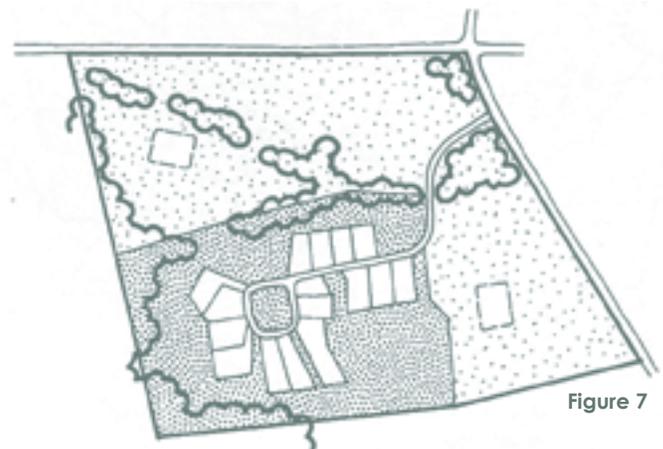
## Conservation Design, A Menu of Choices:

There are a variety of options for manipulating lot size and density within a conservation framework. Once the conservation areas are identified, lot size and density can be changed to fit market demand. The density-neutral approach reduces lot size while maintaining lot density. This option allows for the same number of lots as in the yield plan, but because the lot size is smaller, more green space is preserved for common use. Another option is to reduce lot density in a "limited development" plan. This maintains the lot size of the yield plan but reduces the number of lots. Lot density and size can also be varied within a given development. One section might contain compacted lots for townhouses, for example, and another area can have large estate lots, thus providing for a wider market range (Fig. 7).



## Drawing in the Lot Lines

At this point, the final and simplest part of the design process can be completed – drawing in the lot lines. Whereas in conventional subdivisions, streets and lot lines are generally the first items to be determined, lot lines in conservation subdivisions invert this process, making lot lines little more than a formality. Homebuyers are most concerned with how their houses relate to open space, to each other, and to the street. With that in mind, this design phase should emphasize village-style lot lines, which reduce individual lot size while psychologically enlarging the dimensions of the lot because of proximity to green space. Potential buyers quickly understand that when they purchase an individual lot, they are receiving the use of large tracts of land for scenic, recreational, and "sense of place" amenities. Within this context, most buyers actually prefer smaller lots due to the reduction in yard maintenance (Fig. 6).



Figures 5-6 Arendt, Randall, in Reshaping the Built Environment, Island Press, 1999

Figure 7 Arendt, Randall, in Growing Greener: Putting Conservation into Local Plans and Ordinances, Island Press, 1999

## Introduction

Conservation areas can serve scenic, recreational, agricultural, silvicultural, or equestrian purposes, to name a few. Developers around the country have been creative in generating revenue and serving market demand in determining potential use for conservation areas. The common element in conservation design is simply that conservation areas be protected from future development. This land is most commonly preserved in perpetuity through a conservation easement.

### Scenic

One advantage to conservation design is that the natural character of the land is preserved. This enhances subdivision marketability to buyers desiring a rural atmosphere. Natural areas are often best managed by leaving them alone, making “wildscaping” an attractive alternative to manicured lawns and expensive landscaping. A field planted with wildflower seed, for example, is a low-maintenance option that only requires mowing once or twice a year. Wooded areas can be kept clear of underbrush through periodic burning, a practice that also stimulates the growth of pitcher plants in bog areas. Because it is the aesthetics of conservation areas that are likely to attract buyers to the development in the first place, it is important to reserve at least part of the natural landscape.

### Recreation

Most conservation subdivisions are well-suited to recreational purposes. Wooded areas are often ideal for walking trails, since they offer shade, privacy, and encounters with nature. Old fields work well for conversion to ball fields and playgrounds. Old stock ponds can serve as fishing ponds or create a backdrop for picnic areas, and bike lanes might be considered around green space perimeters. Swimming pools, golf courses, and other expensive recreational facilities such as spas or gyms are generally discouraged due to their high upkeep costs, which are typically passed on to the property owners' association. Unlike low-maintenance options such as walking trails and playgrounds, these high-maintenance amenities limit the buying market due to prohibitive property owners' association dues.



**“Sustainable design supports ways for humans to become resources for nature, rather than the reverse. Growth can become not less destructive, but constructive in providing habitat for all creatures and restoring balance to our relationship with nature.”**

**Allison H. Anderson, AIA  
Unabridged Architecture and  
President of the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain**

# Land Use

## Agriculture

Since much of the land in Southern Mississippi is already in agricultural/silvicultural use, it is reasonable to continue these practices within the conservation areas of the property. Farming, ranching, equestrian, or orchard operations are revenue-generating enterprises that also offer marketing opportunities to the developer and scenic potential for the homebuyer. The developer or the property owners' association can manage these practices, or sell or lease the land to others. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) has been used successfully in other parts of the country. In these operations, land is used for market gardens that supply produce to shareowning members of the CSA.



## Wildscaping

Wildscaping involves gardening with native plants in order to provide habitat for songbirds, hummingbirds, butterflies, dragonflies, and other wildlife. Conservation subdivisions are perfect communities for wildscaping both in private gardens and in the common areas. By offering a quality habitat to wildlife, wildscaping within a conservation subdivision offers a way for residents to enjoy and preserve nature in their gardens and neighborhood. Further information on the benefits of wildscaping is available at the National Wildlife Federation's Backyard Habitat program. [www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat.com](http://www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat.com)

## Sustainably Harvested Timber

On larger tracts of conservation land, timber harvests can provide income, and can be done in a way that improves or maintains the aesthetic, wildlife, or recreational value. But on smaller parcels, the noise, liability, and logistics associated with harvesting timber directly adjacent to residential areas may preclude this land use option in many projects.

# Protecting Conservation Areas

## Wetland Mitigation

Although it is preferable to avoid impacting wetlands in a development, there are situations where it is impossible to do so, especially for road construction. State and federal laws regulate wetland impacts, often making it necessary to mitigate impacts by purchasing wetland credits from a mitigation bank. In certain situations, it is possible to offset the cost of purchasing mitigation bank credits by preserving or restoring wetlands in the conservation areas of the development. A qualified environmental consultant can advise the developer in these matters.

## Land Trusts

Land trusts are nonprofit organizations established for the specific purpose of protecting land. Since its inception in 1999, the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain has been a valuable tool for property owners in the six-county region of Coastal Mississippi wishing to protect their land in perpetuity. For developers interested in conservation development, there are tax advantages to working with the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain, which is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization. Consider the following possible scenarios:

- A developer donates conservation areas in a conservation subdivision to the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain, through a simple deed transfer. The developer is eligible for a charitable donation tax deduction, reflecting the fair market value of the property. This deduction can be taken over a six-year period.
- A developer retains title to the land, but grants a conservation easement to the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain on the undeveloped areas in the subdivision. By placing a conservation easement on these areas, the developer gives up specific rights to future development, thus "de-valuing" the land. This reduction in value can be calculated, and the developer is eligible to claim the difference as a tax deduction over six years.

Individuals interested in the tax advantages of conservation should consult a Certified Public Accountant and/or a tax attorney.

## Heritage Preservation

On December 8th, 2004, President Bush signed into law P.L. 108-447, designating Mississippi's six coastal counties as The Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area. This designation identifies that the Mississippi Gulf coastal region has significant natural and cultural resources that contribute to the fabric of our national history and identity.

The Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area is the result of hard work on the part of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Senator Trent Lott, Senator Thad Cochran, Congressman Gene Taylor, and community leaders throughout South Mississippi, and will be a tool for resource preservation and economic development. National Heritage Areas are successful when a diversity of stakeholders – government, business, and non-profit – work collaboratively to promote both the local heritage and the economy.

Conservation developers can contribute substantially to the mission and vision of the Heritage Area, and can play an important role in shaping the continuously evolving character of our region. As the popularity of conservation developments increases, the combined conservation areas could ultimately form "green corridors" connecting environments across our region and ensuring their protection for future generations.

**“Many times, people take extreme and opposing positions when dealing with sensitive issues such as balancing environmental concerns with a growing and robust economy. It is my hope that the intent, design, and construction of Wildwood subdivision, with a strong emphasis on preserving the environment, represents this balance, and will provide the ‘greatest good for the greatest number’ in our community, county, and state.”**

**E.C. “Sonny” Stuart, Developer**

## Project Background

Owner/developer E.C. “Sonny” Stuart retired from law 26 years ago and has since developed over 70 subdivisions throughout the Southeast. When he first purchased 1200 acres in Carriere, his intention was to follow the conventional practice of converting the entire property to a full-density subdivision. The original master plan resulted in 900 1-1.5 acre lots. Landscape architect Randall Arendt re-sketched the plat design according to conservation methodology (see Conservation Development Basics), and presented the plan to Stuart. As a Pearl River County native, Sonny Stuart was quick to appreciate the benefits to the community in Arendt’s conservation design. He also recognized the market advantage of offering something unique in a competitive housing market.

**Conservation design of Wildwood Subdivision, as designed by landscape architect Randall Arendt.**



## Anticipated Key Benefits

### Economic

Reduced engineering and construction costs

Tax benefits through conservation easement

### Market Edge

A variety of housing options – from condos to estates

Private home sites adjacent to green space

Access to 350 acres of shared conservation lands

Seven miles of walking trails

### Environmental

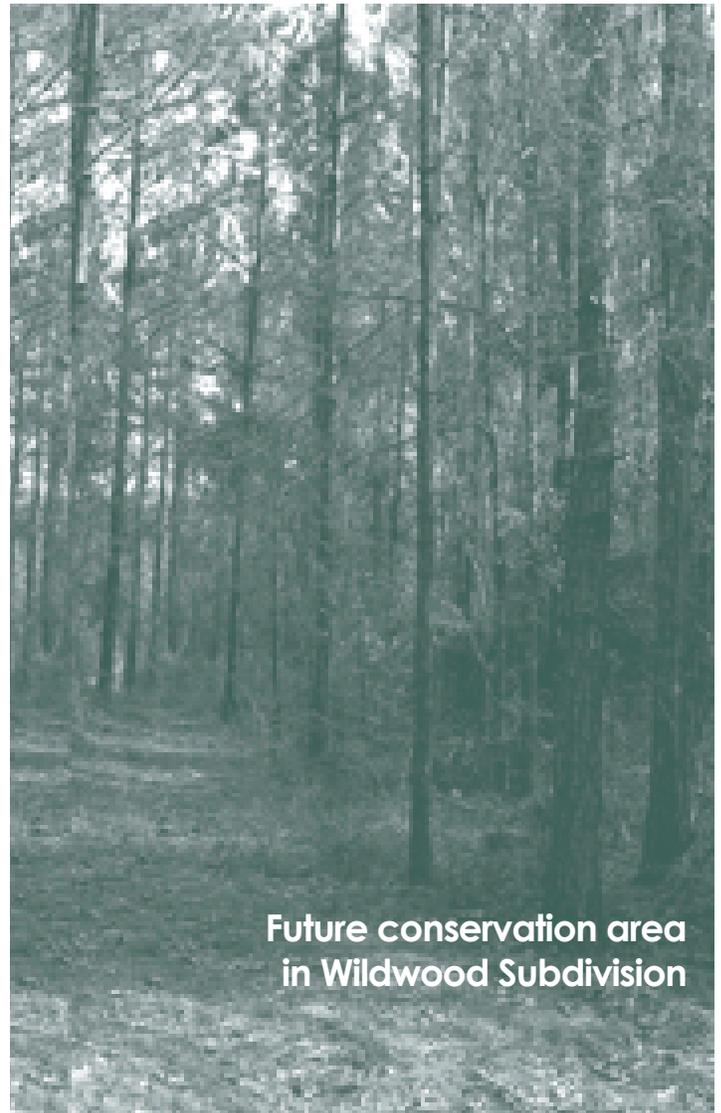
Minimized impact on land and watershed

Protection of 350 acres in perpetuity

## Project Description

Carriere has experienced tremendous growth in the past decade, stemming from its proximity to Picayune, Stennis Space Center, and neighboring metropolitan areas. Most of the subdivisions in this area follow the typical cookie-cutter pattern of identical house lots filling the entire property. As a result, the once-prevalent green space is quickly being overtaken by suburban sprawl, which diminishes the rural character of this area.

The new design for Wildwood includes roughly 330 acres of common wooded areas and more than 20 acres of park-like open space. To accommodate this green space while maintaining lot density, the average lot size for the new Wildwood conservation design is smaller than the average lot of the original design. The new plan, however, incorporates a wider range of lot sizes, from condensed condominiums to larger estates, which broadens the target market. Most of the lots will be adjacent to a portion of the wooded green space and/or a park, and all residents will have access to all common areas. The plan incorporates nearly seven miles of trails, further enhancing the pedestrian-friendly, community-style atmosphere.



Future conservation area  
in Wildwood Subdivision

## Benefits

Stuart expects to save money on construction and engineering costs because less acreage will be impacted in the conservation design. Overall road lengths were decreased and were built to follow the natural contours of the land, which results in a significant decrease in road construction expenses. Additionally, stormwater runoff will be reduced since there is more green space to absorb rainfall that would otherwise require extensive drainage systems.

Additionally, Stuart is working with the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain to preserve the 350 acres of shared green space in perpetuity. Residents will be assured that the privacy and sanctity of the conservation areas will always be protected.

## Target Market

Because the conservation design of Wildwood incorporates a wide range of housing options – from condominiums to estates – Stuart expects his lots to sell quickly. The abundance of green space offers buyers a unique alternative to the typical housing options in neighboring areas. Homeowners will have the same sense of privacy as in a standard subdivision, but with the added benefits of shared access to woods, walking trails, and recreational fields. If a homebuyer has the option to purchase a 1-acre lot, for example, in a conventional subdivision or a 3/4-acre lot with access to 350 acres, for roughly the same price, the decision should be easy.

# Wolf River Restoration

**“You don’t have to break property up into smaller parcels to make a profit. There’s market demand for large parcels of land, and as those properties become harder to find, the market will only get stronger. We’re finding that buyers are willing to pay just as much per acre for 100-acre properties as for smaller parcels, so it makes sense to keep those large tracts intact.”**

**Darrin Harris**  
**Owner & Developer**  
**Wolf River Restoration**

## Project Background

Wolf River Restoration developers Hudson Holliday and Darrin Harris are seasoned entrepreneurs, with a combined 45 years’ experience in the real estate business. Hudson Holliday, a retired General in the U.S. National Guard and lifelong resident of Poplarville, opened Holliday Real Estate in 1975. When Darrin Harris, also a Poplarville native, entered the real estate business, his goal was to slow the growing trend of subdividing large parcels of land into small lots. An avid outdoorsman with a background in agriculture and forestry, Harris is committed to protecting the environmental and cultural integrity of Pearl River County.

When the pair learned of almost 2000 acres for sale near the Wolf River, they seized the opportunity to buy it. Rather than selling off the land into small lots, as is the conventional practice, they decided to keep the property intact. Through research and market analysis, they determined that the best income-generating option for developing the property while maintaining its environmental integrity was to incorporate a conservation subdivision. This allows them to place a conservation easement on much of the property, ensuring that it will be protected in perpetuity from future development.

## Project Description

Most of the land around the town of Poplarville is still rural, composed primarily of woodlands and pastures. However, like surrounding communities, Poplarville is

Conservation design of Wildwood Subdivision, as designed by landscape architect Randall Arendt.

## Anticipated Key Benefits

### Economic

- High-end market sales of home sites
- Selective timber harvests
- Mitigation credit sales
- Tax benefits through conservation easement

### Market Edge

- Private home sites with scenic vistas
- 80-acre lake
- 3.6 miles Wolf River access
- Walking trails
- Recreational areas

### Environmental

- Minimized impact
- Ecosystem restoration
- Protection of 1,400 acres in perpetuity



# of Poplarville, Mississippi

becoming an alternative location for people commuting to Hattiesburg, the Gulf Coast, Stennis Space Center, and New Orleans, and is also attracting retirees. As such, it is simply a matter of time before Poplarville experiences the growth that is now occurring in neighboring areas. And the results will be the same: permanent loss of the unique rural character that attracts people here in the first place.

Located five miles off I-59, the Wolf River Restoration property encompasses over 1,600 acres of land along the Wolf River. The plan is to build an 80-acre lake and surround it with 35-40 home sites. Landscape architect Randall Arendt designed the development area, selecting the best location for the lake and home sites with minimized environmental impacts. The resulting design places the home sites atop ridges that surround the future lake site, affording sweeping views across the lake and into the Wolf River basin. Each home site will be surrounded by shared green space, thus ensuring homeowner privacy.

The remaining 1,400 acres will be protected in perpetuity by the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain. Use of this land will vary from walking trails and wildlife viewing areas to managed timber harvest and ecosystem restoration.

## Benefits

By placing a conservation easement on the property, the owners will realize significant tax benefits through preventing future development on the designated lands. Additional income will be generated through selective timber harvests in areas that are already planted in Loblolly pine, and will eventually be restored to the native Longleaf pine. Parts of the property will also be used as a wetland mitigation bank, through which credits can be sold to other developers in exchange for restoring ecosystems to their pre-silvicultural condition. This will encourage



the expansion of threatened and endangered species populations, and will greatly improve its aesthetic value, as well.

## Target Market

By enhancing the ecological and aesthetic value of the land through restoration projects, the home sites can be sold at a premium. Homebuyers will have all the benefits of private ownership and the added amenities of lake, river, and woods access, without the burden of maintenance. As such, the targeted market for these lots will be second-home buyers and others looking for a quiet retreat from urban life. The 80-acre lake will provide multiple recreational options for homeowners, in addition to scenic value. Owners will have shared access to 3.6 miles of the Wolf River, much of which boasts beautiful sandy beaches, allowing for swimming, camping, canoeing, and tubing. Extensive walking trails will be incorporated throughout the 1400-acre conservation area, creating opportunities for homeowners to enjoy the outdoors and feel a strong sense of pride in helping to protect a beautiful piece of land in perpetuity.

Because of their extensive experience in the real estate business, Holliday and Harris have a firm grasp on market trends. They expect their project to be a very attractive option to the high-end buyer, and expect financial success in this enterprise. For them, it is the perfect merger of monetary, environmental, and social interests.

# The Woodson Place

“While new to our area in East Texas, the Conservation Subdivision approach at the Woodson Place has garnered much attention. Buyers are excited to know that neighborhoods can offer much more than just a collection of houses. Conservation and enhancement of open space makes a rural neighborhood special and inviting...and that makes sense in the marketplace.”

Marilyn Woodson Abegg  
Owner and Co-Developer

The Woodson Place is featured in this brochure because it is smaller in scale than the two local projects and is being developed by the family that owns it. This project is also in a more advanced stage of development, several lots having pre-sold. The Woodson Place is a compelling example of a small conservation project designed to generate revenue while respecting family heritage.

## Project Background

In 1999, Marilyn Woodson Abegg inherited a 155-acre family farmstead owned since 1898. Faced with the decision of whether to sell, develop, or find a long-term management solution, she began working in 2000 with her son and daughter on options. The conservation subdivision model came to the family's attention and offered an attractive approach for pursuing a limited development on a portion of the property.

The family began project planning during 2000, which included a consultation by Randall Arendt. Following a feasibility study and market analysis, the family assembled a team of Dallas-based professionals to complete the final site design and begin construction planning.

## Project Description

The Woodson Place is located 80 miles east of downtown Dallas in Rains County between two large recreation reservoirs. The area is beginning to experience rapid growth sprawling east of the metroplex area as homebuyers seek the solitude and beauty of rural and small town living. It is among the first neighborhoods of its kind in the region and demonstrates well-designed preservation of open space in rural development.

## Key Benefits

### Economic

Provides a solution for a legacy landowner to realize equity in an inherited farmstead without having to sell the entire property.

### Environmental

Preserved more than half of the 66 acre development in open space

Managed for native plants and wildlife habitat

Expanded and restored ponds, prairie, and woodlands

### Community

Offers a new model for development in an area beginning to experience growth associated with the Dallas-Ft. Worth Metroplex

Provides homeowners with access to a wealth of knowledge and sense of community in management of the open space amenities

### Best Practice Tip

Assemble a professional team that understands the many aspects of developing a high-quality conservation neighborhood.

### Key Lessons Learned

Coordinate the development team early in the process to ensure that everyone has clear understanding of the vision and how and when the various components of the project have to be integrated.





The ongoing restoration and management activities will provide a range of community activities for homeowners while also providing the region with a demonstration site and resources for wildscaping.

## Target Market

The Woodson Place is designed for couples, families, and individuals who want to live in the country without having to buy, manage, and pay taxes on a large parcel of land. As many leave urban areas in search of “good country living” near the lakes and forests of East Texas, a conservation neighborhood offers the best of both worlds: the quietude and beauty of rural living coupled with the benefits of living in a master planned neighborhood. With Dallas and Tyler only an hour away, buyers can enjoy the peaceful countryside yet easily access two metropolitan areas with a wide range of amenities.

**“We are looking forward to living at the Woodson Place with its green space environment. The natural habitat is just outside our back door—birds, squirrels, butterflies, trees, and native grasses. What you see and experience changes with each season.”**

**David Seago  
Homeowner, The Woodson Place**

The development features 38 half-acre homesites on more than 66 acres, half of which is a protected common area managed for native plants and wildlife habitat. The site is a good example of a post oak savannah environment and features a combination of woodlands, swales, ponds, and open prairie punctuated by large, mature oak trees. A trail system offers access to the site’s natural amenities. A common area building modeled after a famous old-style Texas dance hall in Groene, Texas, serves as the heart and soul of the neighborhood.

Homes at the Woodson Place focus on architecturally distinctive designs that combine features of the classic farmhouse with contemporary styling. The model home and project office follow the top-rating standards for “Green Building” by the nationally recognized program of the city of Austin, Texas. The home features design strategies and technologies that maximize efficiency in energy, materials, and water and also ensures a high level of indoor air quality. The concept and practice of “Green Building” is gaining in popularity among consumers, and the National Association of Home Builders recently adopted a national standard for green building practices.

## Benefits

The Woodson Place applied for and received a wildlife management tax appraisal on the common open space. This will reduce the tax liability for homeowners while providing an annual framework for best management practices in protecting and enhancing native plant habitats.



## Local Resources

### **Mississippi Department of Marine Resources Comprehensive Resource Management Plan (CRMP)**

The CRMP is the State's primary promoter of "smart growth," acting as a planning resource for communities in South Mississippi.

[www.dmr.state.ms.us/CoastalEcology/CRMP/crmp-home.htm](http://www.dmr.state.ms.us/CoastalEcology/CRMP/crmp-home.htm)

### **Pearl River County Department of Planning and Development**

The Department has taken a leadership role in promoting conservation development in Mississippi.

[www.pearlrivercounty.net/planning/index.htm](http://www.pearlrivercounty.net/planning/index.htm)

### **The Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain**

The Land Trust's mission is to conserve, promote and protect the open spaces and green places of ecological, cultural or scenic significance in the six coastal counties. Conservation developers in South Mississippi can look to this active land trust to help fully realize the tax advantages of setting aside land and to maximize conservation options. The Land Trust is involved in the two local projects described in this brochure: Wildwood and Wolf River Restoration.

[www.ltmcp.org](http://www.ltmcp.org)

### **Unabridged Architecture**

Located in Bay St. Louis, MS, Unabridged Architecture creates architecture of exceptional craft and urban consequence, and leaves a sustainable imprint. Focus is on community character, including projects to promote tourism, education and recreation within the context of the local environment. Principal architect Allison Anderson is the first certified sustainable architect in Mississippi as accredited by the U.S. Green Building Council.

Email: [unarch@att.net](mailto:unarch@att.net)

Phone: 228-467-1149

### **The Landscape Studio**

The Landscape Studio is a landscape architectural firm in Hattiesburg, Mississippi offering services in site design and land planning. The Studio often works with multidisciplinary teams of planners, architects and engineers to conserve the land's biodiversity, its waters, and its topographic uniqueness. Team members are familiar with strategies for achieving smart growth and best management strategies, all within the framework of a developer's program.

[www.thelandscapestudio.com](http://www.thelandscapestudio.com)

Phone: 601-544-1935

## General Resources

### **Growing Greener**

This illustrated workbook by Randall Arendt presents a new look at designing subdivisions while preserving green space and creating open space networks. It shows readers how to design residential developments that maximize conservation without reducing overall building density.

Available at [www.greenerprospects.com/products.html](http://www.greenerprospects.com/products.html).

### **Conservation Designs for Subdivisions**

Randall Arendt's [Conservation Designs for Subdivisions](#) presents a simple step-by-step approach to designing subdivisions around the central organizing principle of protecting open space. It shows how communities can adopt new standards in their plans and ordinances to ensure that future developments will ultimately produce an interconnected network of conservation lands.

Available at [www.greenerprospects.com/products.html](http://www.greenerprospects.com/products.html)

### **Green Development: Integrating Ecology and Real Estate**

This Rocky Mountain Institute book describes an exciting new field in which environmental considerations are viewed as opportunities to create fundamentally better buildings and communities that are more comfortable, more efficient, more appealing, and ultimately more profitable.

Available at [www.rmi.org](http://www.rmi.org).

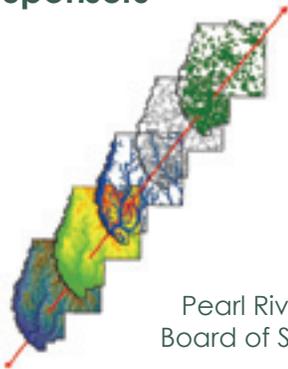
### **Smart Communities Network**

A wealth of case studies, articles, funding opportunities and other information related to conservation development is found at this web-based federal clearinghouse on energy and sustainable communities.

[www.sustainable.doe.gov/greendev/subdivision.shtml](http://www.sustainable.doe.gov/greendev/subdivision.shtml)



## Sponsors



Pearl River County  
Board of Supervisors

Mississippi Department of Marine Resources



Printed on 100% post consumer paper  
with vegetable-based ink.

## Acknowledgements

<b>Consulting &amp; Content:</b>	<b>Christopher Allen + Associates Randall Arendt Michael Kustudia Heather Nordell, Swift Impressions David Spector Jennipher Spector</b>
<b>Graphic Design:</b>	<b>Swift Impressions</b>
<b>Photography &amp; Illustrations:</b>	<b>Randall Arendt Kristi Harris Melinda Lyman, Crosby Arboretum Jennipher Spector</b>
<b>Printing:</b>	<b>M&amp;M Printing</b>

**Disclaimer:** The information in this publication is offered with the understanding that the publishers, editors, and contributors are not engaged in rendering legal, financial, or any other professional service. The reader is encouraged to independently seek legal, financial, and/or other professional advice before applying the information contained in this publication.

The Pearl River County Board of Supervisors and the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources/Comprehensive Resource Management Plan (CRMP) are proud to launch our “Growing Greener Initiative.” This effort seeks to balance economic development with preservation of environmental and cultural resources. We do not want to discourage growth, but rather wish to foster “smart growth” that preserves a community’s sense of place, rural character, and environmental resources. The “Twice Green” approach succeeds both environmentally and economically.

**Pearl River County Department of Planning & Development**

402 S. Main Street, Poplarville, Mississippi 39470

601 403 2202 . [www.pearlrivercounty.net](http://www.pearlrivercounty.net)