

Outdoors: Subdivision focuses on green space, conservation

JERRY DAVIS

For the State Journal

February 11, 2007

Years ago, it was common to walk out one's back door and be able to hike, watch wildlife, fish, hunt, camp, ski and do just about anything most of us now drive to enjoy.

Today close recreation options are diminishing for most people. However a new option - conservation subdivisions - has caught on and could provide suburban and rural residents some common land as well as a country home.

Cathy Burgweger and her husband looked at purchasing an adjacent farm to add crop land to their present Green County farm near Albany.

"The cost was too high and the land needed irrigation to make it work, so we backed off," Burgweger said. "When a developer put an offer in on the property, many of the neighbors were concerned that they would have a dense subdivision in their back yards. They contacted me, because I was a member of the county board."

Eventually the developer withdrew his offer on the land because of local opposition to the development at the town level.

"A group of us then got together and made an offer, developed a LLC and put a plan together to develop a less dense subdivision with more green space, recreational areas, something that is now being called a conservation subdivision," Burgweger said. "More than 50 percent of the 165 acres will be green space in Sugar River Crossing, owned by the people who purchase lots and build their homes. Everyone will have access and control of what is permitted on the green space, which is hardwood forests, prairie and lowlands with the Sugar River as a backdrop."

The proposed subdivision is in the Town of Albany, 20 minutes south of Fitchburg and 30 minutes south of the Capitol in Madison. Seventy acres will be divided into 41 lots of 1.5 to 3.4 acres. Eighty-five acres would be outlots, with the remainder being used for subdivision roads. A homeowners' association will be responsible for the green space and how it's used. Each lot will have its own sewer and well.

Gary Karls, of Quality West Construction in Mount Horeb, one of about a dozen LLC members, said the meandering Sugar River borders one side of the property for mile. "This type of subdivision is more common in other areas in the Midwest, but not right here in Wisconsin, although others are being considered," Karls said.

"This is the first of its kind in the Madison area," Burgweger said. The members of the LLC hired an ecological firm, Applied Ecological, to help design the conservation subdivision, which, if final Town of Albany approval is given later this month, may open the first of two phases this spring.

This is a unique way to preserve some rural areas, give neighbors a say in what develops and allow farming to continue nearby.

"There's some public hunting land close by, too, and the Madison Astronomy Club is about 5 miles away," Burgweger said. Badger State and Sugar River recreational trails are close to Sugar River Crossing.

Burgweger said those who purchase lots can select their own builders and a homeowners' association may have an architectural committee, too.

"Students would attend Albany School District or use open enrollment," Burgweger said.

Access www.qwc-inc.com to learn more about conservation subdivisions such as Sugar River Crossing.