

Woodstock Commons - A Sensible Solution For All Of Woodstock

Environmental Concerns, Considerations & Facts

Buildings, Roads & Utilities

The materials used in the construction of all buildings, roads and parking areas will be green and sustainable. This simply means selecting and specifying products and materials that have recycled content, low or no VOC's (Volatile Organic Compounds), FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certified woods, low water use fixtures, light-colored roofing to reduce heat gain, energy efficient building components, and rapidly renewable resources.

It also means using narrow roads, reducing the number of required parking stalls, and using permeable concrete at all parking areas to minimize the storm water runoff. Finally, the installation of geothermal wells for heating and cooling of all buildings means that Woodstock Commons will be completely fossil fuel free.

Tree Removal

Woodstock SAGE has decried the "clearcutting of acres of trees." As with any human habitation, trees will be removed to allow for the construction of Woodstock Commons. Several factors should be considered here. First, it should be recalled that the present grove of trees in the northern section of Bradley Meadows represents a late-20th Century growth.

Prior to mid-century, the land was for generations meadows and pastures as part of the Risely Farm. Second, no more than seven acres - about 25% - of the trees on the parcel will be removed. The average area of trees removed is just over 1/10th of one acre per unit built, a level of disturbance lower than the typical suburban, non-clustered home construction.

Woodstock Commons is the antithesis of the traditional suburban tract development, where large, low density lots consume open land and introduce chemicals and pesticides used for lawn maintenance into the earth and groundwater.

Density & Clustering

The average density of Woodstock Commons and four surrounding similar-sized areas (shown on the attached diagram) is measured in two ways, area coverage and number of buildings. The average building coverage of these four areas is 0.1085, or about 1/9th of one acre per acre. The average number of buildings in each of these four areas is 14.5 buildings, or about 2 buildings per acre. Over an equal amount of area at Woodstock Commons, the building coverage is 0.12, and there are 14 buildings of various sizes proposed. Both methods of measurement demonstrate consistency with the surrounding neighborhood density.

Nature Preserve

All of Woodstock will benefit from the restoration of walking and biking trails through the preservation land of Bradley Meadows. Approximately twenty acres of land will be held in a permanent, natural easement, with only two maintained trails crossing east-west and north-south. These trails will be groomed, maintained and cleared by RUPCO, and will avail residents on all sides of the property ease of access to and from Elwyn Quarry Road, Mill Hill Road, and Playhouse Lane. A clear, safe path for the first time will allow residents passage across Ferguson Brook, for the walking and biking enjoyment that Bradley Meadows offers to all Woodstockers.

Open Space

The United States Green Building Council (USGBC) advocates the preservation of open space, as does renowned land use and public policy writer Randall Arendt. Woodstock Commons hews to this approach in three critical ways:

- clusters buildings to reduce development impact area
- is not located in open farmland or visually exposed areas
- is located in a village center, close to transit and 1/4 mile walking distances

Open space is important to preserve. While not on open farmland, by clustering the buildings on only one fifth of the parcel, Woodstock Commons will preserve the great bulk of the wooded and wetland areas of Bradley Meadows. RUPCO will act as a responsible steward of this natural “open” space, on behalf of all of Woodstock.

Visual Impact

The visual impact of Woodstock Commons will be professionally studied and rendered from all sides of the property. From Elwyn Quarry Road and Playhouse Lane, the proposed buildings will be heavily screened by several hundred feet of light and medium density tree and plant growth. The entry road across the short bridge will quickly bend to the north, and then again to the west, effectively screening any views of the buildings from Playhouse Lane.

The only street that will be directly impacted will be Elwyn Quarry Extension, on which three homeowner buildings front. These structures are set back about 50' from the edge of the road, and are 28' tall to the highest roof ridge. To mitigate their presence, a dense row of evergreen trees will be planted. Within a few years, the buildings will be almost completely screened from view of Elwyn Quarry Extension neighbors.

Wetlands & Flooding

There are approximately 10 acres of wetlands on the Bradley Meadows property. Of this, less than 1/4 of one acre will be disturbed to construct a bridge crossing over Ferguson Brook and a 22' wide entrance road into Woodstock Commons. This represents less than 2.5% of the total wetland area, a wetland that is in large part manmade as a result of the construction of commercial structures and a parking lot on Mill Hill Road several decades ago.

Though not obligated to mitigate this disturbance, RUPCO will seek to recreate any reduction of wetland in the form of an onsite constructed wetland. This will be engineered to meet the high standards set forth by the state DEC, and will result in NO NET LOSS of wetland area on the parcel. Contrary to what some implicitly or explicitly have claimed, there will in no way, shape or form be a “destruction of the wetlands.” Additionally, naturally lined bioswales and bioretention ponds will capture and filter 100% of all onsite storm water runoff. The wetlands will be preserved, protected, and respected.

The heavy rains of April and October of 2005 demonstrated the high capacity for absorption the lands of Bradley Meadows possess. The bridge and entrance road design and construction will respect the natural currents of Ferguson Brook, and provide uninterrupted flow during times of heavy rains and flash flooding. If, in the extremely rare case the road level is breached, a secondary emergency access road may be utilized at Elwyn Quarry Extension.

Your questions and comments are always welcome - please email project architect Brad Will, R.A., LEED at Ashokan Architecture & Planning, PLLC. bwill@ashokanarchitecture.com