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K/RLT Journal Times Article

### **Conservation Subdivision Update**

With the addition of the Blue River and Prairie Pathways subdivisions in Caledonia, K/RLT now holds conservation easements on eight subdivisions which permanently protect 214 acres. Subdivision Easements are in discussion in Yorkville and Waterford. These will be the first for us in those communities. It is gratifying to see more and more communities embracing the conservation development principles K/RLT promotes.

Ponds I and II in Caledonia were the first subdivisions where K/RLT accepted conservation easements and the first to form home owners associations (HOA). Recently, our easement support team confirmed that the commonly owned lands in each are being maintained according to the easements. Follow-up meetings with the HOAs reviewed the results. K/RLT takes these opportunities to build a cooperative relationship for maintaining easements. By educating home owners on the main provisions of their easements and environmental features being restored, a better appreciation and stewardship of the land takes place. Conservation Subdivisions allow people to form communities similar to what our grandparents may have had with the added benefit of open space and views.

### **Illinois Rolls Northward**

If there is any doubt about the threat to our remaining natural lands, a recent review in the Town of Bristol showed over 6000, I repeat 6000, new housing units in various stages of approval! Many municipalities in our area are accustomed to handling 100 or fewer new units annually. As Illinois development spills over into Wisconsin, the pace of building can quickly grow by a factor of ten or more. Major factors driving the move are lower land and building costs in Wisconsin. People in Illinois consider a \$350,000 home in Wisconsin inexpensive.

None too soon, communities in SE Wisconsin are responding with updated land use plans. Still the challenge to manage such rapid growth is daunting. Conservation development is one useful tool, but comprehensive land use planning will be needed if we are to avoid becoming another northern Illinois.

### **Best of the past and future**

At the recent RAMAC annual dinner the keynote speaker, Fisk Johnson, stated that SC Johnson and, indeed, Racine itself will succeed by combining the best of the past with the best of the future. His idea fits well with the goals of K/RLT.

For current residents of Racine and Kenosha the best of the past can be seen in the remaining land and water resources in the two counties. Flying over the area during the summer one marvels at the abundance of woodland, water, and agricultural fields. Other than buildings and roads, virtually everything else is green or blue. Compare that to the

stark, barren landscape seen nightly on newscasts from the Middle East. We are indeed very fortunate.

K/RLT is working hard to preserve those greens and blues by sharing our experiences and thoughts on land preservation. We advocate land use plans which direct development to areas which minimize impact on the environment and the tax payer. We also provide information on using conservation development as a tool to meet their open space objectives.

And the message is resonating. Village of Caledonia residents just voted for a slate of board supervisors who strongly support the eight recently completed neighborhood plans. In general, these plans call for keeping the rural area rural and to carefully plan development such that is not a tax burden to the community.

K/RLT is already advising five communities on their land use plans and by the end of 2006 plans to share our experiences on conservation development and neighborhood planning with the remaining towns in Racine and Kenosha.

If you would like to help K/RLT protect open spaces and natural areas, please consider becoming a member. To obtain membership information, including our Fall/Winter Newsletter and brochure, write to the land trust at P.O. Box 085153, Racine, WI 53408-5153 or call us at 262-552-6861. Additional information is available on the web at [www.krlt.org](http://www.krlt.org).

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