

Sonoran Institute

Imagine developing projects in
an environment of *cooperation*



...with a spirit of *engagement*
...for mutual benefit.

Imagine projects that further
conservation...creating a lasting
commitment to stewardship.

We can show you how.



Building Conservation Within Communities



Organizations that support local conservation efforts in the face of development are unusual. Organizations that are community-based and take market-based mechanisms into consideration without polarizing communities are much more rare. A group that does all of that, is self-sustaining, and has an ongoing positive relationship with the developer, the community, the surrounding landscape, and the region is almost unheard of.

Until now.

UP-AND-COMING

Across the country, new non-profit groups called Community Stewardship Organizations (CSOs) are emerging, growing, and succeeding—each tailored to the particular needs of the local community. Development is created in an environment of cooperation for mutual benefit, furthering conservation goals, and creating a lasting commitment to stewardship.

Building on and learning from existing CSOs in such diverse areas as Carmel, California; Tucson, Arizona; Grayslake, Illinois; and Palm Beach, Florida, the CSO Network was established in the spring of 2004 to develop this new tool for promoting conservation and community well-being in rapidly growing areas throughout the country.

JUST WHAT IS A CSO?

A CSO helps developers collaboratively build conservation within their communities. It is a formal partnership between developers, conservationists, and other area stakeholders to address local land development and conservation issues cooperatively. CSOs take into account the needs and economic realities of all participants. An effective CSO develops a real “sense of place”—a community built in its natural setting rather than on it.

The CSO’s impact extends beyond the development itself, often forging partnerships with local and regional governments, adjacent public land managers, local land trusts, and other specialized interests.

What makes it even more effective is that it includes funding mechanisms tied to the development that allow the CSO to contribute to community life even after the development is completed and the developer is focusing on other projects.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF INTEGRATING CONSERVATION IN DEVELOPMENT?

Development agreements associated with CSOs can produce many of the following benefits and positive outcomes:

- Developments that incorporate natural areas, trails, etc. tend to sell more quickly and put their communities at a competitive advantage over other developments. A survey by Professional Builder magazine found that nearly 90 percent of buyers said they would pay extra for green features and that 66 percent of them would pay \$2,500 or more extra for them;
- Developers create positive public relations and avoid and/or lessen negative reactions to their projects;

- Natural amenities are driving population change; counties with the highest population growth rates are those with a warm climate, mountains, and presence of rivers, streams, and lakes;
- There is a growing, emerging market interested in conservation-based development: several national surveys, including some by American LIVES and the National Association of Realtors show that homebuyers think natural open space, trails, and native plants are extremely important in their housing choice;
- Baby boomers, the largest segment of the population, are retiring and looking for that “perfect spot” to live;
- “Footloose entrepreneurs” bring their businesses with them when they relocate, and they seek areas with high amenities;
- Health and wellness lifestyles are becoming an increasingly important market niche; and
- Homes in master-planned communities with protected open space appreciate in value more than homes in large-lot conventional subdivisions, which positively impacts resale value.

WHY BECOME A CSO MEMBER?

- CSO members have instant access to peers across the country who have successfully navigated the balance of conservation and development. This helps you avoid the pitfalls and overcome the challenges associated with this style of development.
- The CSO Network hosts hands-on seminars and complete training courses on how to effectively integrate conservation and development by learning from experts.
- CSO members know that they have created a community that will continue as a good steward of the land, long after the development is complete.
- It is easy and cost-effective to become a member of the CSO Network.

WHAT MAKES A DEVELOPMENT A GOOD CANDIDATE FOR A CSO?

Here are some attributes of projects where CSOs are particularly effective:

- Development is planned for environmentally-sensitive areas and the developer seeks to work collaboratively to mitigate the development's impact;
- The land is appropriate for development and the proposed development offers an opportunity to integrate conservation and restoration to protect or enhance the site's ecological values;
- The development is next to protected land such as a national park, wildlife refuge, or wilderness area; and
- The scale of the proposed development allows for the creation of long-term dedicated funding for conservation and community enhancement activities and programs.



IS A CSO RIGHT FOR YOUR PROJECT—AND FOR YOU?

Here's a checklist...

- Is your development project located in an environmentally sensitive area? Does it contain significant cultural resources, or any other assets valued by the community?*
- Would you consider setting aside a significant amount of natural open space as part of your project?*
- Are you willing to meet with members of the public and discuss your plans for the development and the CSO?*
- Would you be willing to establish a set of funding mechanisms that underwrite a new or existing organization dedicated to preserving the special qualities of the land?*

“Both the developer's clients and the community at large can win from this type of collaboration.”

-NAN STOCKHOLM WALDEN, J.D.

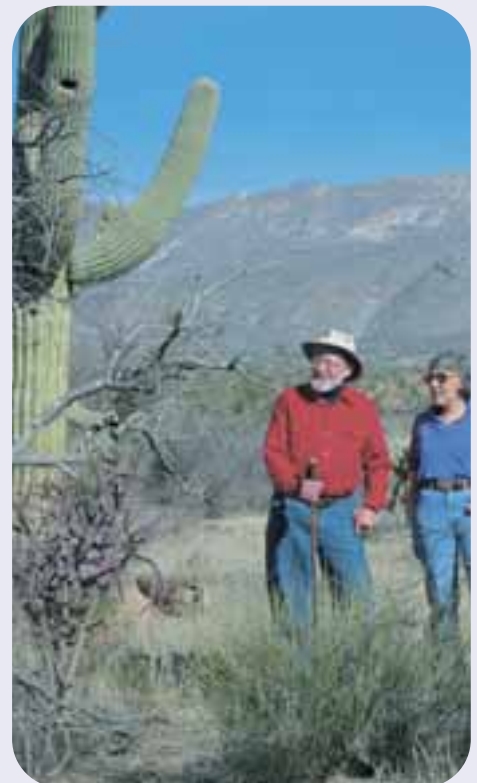
VICE PRESIDENT GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

WHAT'S THE NEXT STEP?

Contact the CSO Network at 520-290-0828 or csonetwork@sonoran.org. We have a series of promotional materials about CSOs on our Web site at www.sonoran.org/cso and we offer workshops where CSOs can learn from builders and developers who have organized successful CSOs across the country. We also can assist developers in integrating CSOs as part of their development proposals.

The CSO Network also includes a hands-on training course to provide the knowledge and tools needed to assess the feasibility of, and plan for the establishment of a CSO as part of your development plan.

Most importantly, the CSO Network provides a framework for sharing the real world knowledge gained from the diverse CSOs already in existence.



Does it work? Really work?

Yes. And we can prove it.

Here are summaries of five diverse case studies, each with special opportunities, special challenges, and unique CSO partnerships that work. Additional detail for each of the case studies is available at www.sonoran.org/cso.



Case Studies

Liberty Prairie Conservancy

Prairie Crossing, Grayslake, Illinois



Prairie Crossing is a master-planned community in Lake County, Illinois dedicated to preserving open space and encouraging living in harmony with the environment. The community serves as the western anchor of the Liberty Prairie Reserve, a 3,200-acre conservation unit that includes agricultural lands and nature preserves. Prairie Crossing integrated the conservation by limiting the number of family homes to 20 percent of the permitted density, protecting 350 acres as open space, building homes with high energy-efficiency standards, and incorporating environmentally sensitive infrastructure designs. To support stewardship programs, the partners also established the Liberty Prairie Conservancy to manage the Reserve, coordinate volunteer habitat restoration, and promote environmental educational programs. The Conservancy is supported in part by the Liberty Prairie Foundation, a separate funding entity organized by the partnership.

Santa Lucia Conservancy

Santa Lucia Preserve, Carmel, California



The Santa Lucia Conservancy was formed in 1995 as part of the Rancho San Carlos development in Carmel, California. The developer permanently protected 18,000 acres of the ranch as open space, and allotted the remaining 2,000 acres for development. The Conservancy manages the undeveloped 18,000 acres as open space, but is also involved in land protection, resource management, scientific research, and community education activities within and beyond the ranch. The developer is funding the Conservancy through revenues generated by the development that will result in a significant endowment.

Abacoa Partnership for Community

Abacoa, Palm Beach County, Florida



Abacoa is a 2,055-acre, master-planned, mixed-use community in Palm Beach County, Florida planned with the concepts and principles of traditional neighborhood development. Houses, neighborhoods, schools, shops, offices, recreation sites, and nature preserves are integrated in a pedestrian-friendly environment that promotes a strong sense of community. The Abacoa Partnership for Community (APC) is a Community Stewardship Organization associated with the master-planned community. In addition to its work in Abacoa, APC is part of a team organized by the Joint Center for Environmental and Urban Problems at Florida Atlantic University. They review plans for new developments and often recommend the establishment of CSOs as part of the development.

Spring Island Trust/Low Country Institute

Spring Island, Beaufort, South Carolina



Spring Island is a small development project located on a 3,000 acre tidewater island near Beaufort, South Carolina. It accommodates only 410 residences while setting aside 1,000 acres to protect the island's natural habitats. In order to ensure that their vision of Spring Island as a private nature reserve would endure, the developers created the Spring Island Trust, to manage the nature reserve and encourage environmental education. These activities are financed through transfer fees associated with the sale of residential properties. The developers subsequently expanded their conservation vision to include all of Beaufort and Jasper counties and established the Low Country Institute to address regional stewardship issues. The Institute funds much of its work through grants and donations, and also helps support the work of the Trust.

Rincon Institute

Tucson, Arizona



In 1990, an historic agreement was forged for a proposed development adjacent to Saguaro National Park, near Tucson, Arizona. The developer sold 2,000 acres of prime wildlife habitat adjoining the park to the National Park Service and restored two-and-a-half miles of degraded riparian habitat on the property. He also reduced the total number of planned units by half, clustered the remainder, and preserved more than one-half of the remaining area as natural open space. Finally, the developer also created binding revenue-generating deed restrictions to underwrite a newly established conservation organization, the Rincon Institute, to carry out a wide range of conservation and education programs for the community at large.



“A CSO will ensure that my commitments to the land and community will continue long after I have finished this project.”

-DAVID PARSONS, CONSERVATION PROPERTIES INC.

The Sonoran Institute works with communities to conserve and restore important natural landscapes in Western North America, including the wildlife and cultural values of these lands. The lasting benefits of the Sonoran Institute’s work are healthy landscapes and vibrant, livable communities that embrace conservation as an integral element of their quality of life and economic vitality. For more information, please visit www.sonoran.org.



healthy landscapes vibrant economies livable communities



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**CSO Network
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