

# Neighbors and Developers Working Together

## Executive Summary:

The owner of a 42-acre parcel in Springfield Township, PA, had proposed a change in the zoning of the property from residential to institutional. The intention was to allow construction of a four-story assisted living apartment complex on the front of the property and dwelling units on the back. Friends of the Springfield Panhandle are a community organization committed to maintaining the unique natural character of a portion of Springfield Township, just north of Philadelphia, PA. They engaged Conservation Economics (CE) to assist them in formulating a land plan that would balance development with efforts to maintain the natural character of the area.

CE worked with community leaders, land planners and other professionals to find a solution that would conserve as much of the natural landscape as possible, while still providing living facilities for seniors and revenue for the developer.

CE helped to evaluate:

- The natural character on the site
- Trails and recreational use
- Storm water runoff
- Potential funding sources

## Client Challenge:

Friends of Springfield Panhandle were looking for creative ways to mitigate the impact of a development on the fields, woodlands and drainage on a 42-acre parcel of land. The owner of the property had approval for construction of 52 dwelling units and was seeking a variance to allow a four-story senior living facility on the front portion of the property, as well as single units on the back.

The Friends group argued that the high density of the senior facility on the front should be offset by an increase in open space surrounding the units on the back. They needed assistance in creating a housing plan that would maximize the percentage of open space, give the developer the revenue he needed, and be approved by the Springfield Township Commissioners.

## Conservation Economics Solution:

CE brought extensive expertise in optimizing the financial and environmental aspects of property development. Working with land planners, landscape managers, and specialists in storm water management, CE helped to design planning options that would meet both the goals of the developer and those of the Friends organization.

Through CE's consultation, these plans included:

- Preservation of the fields and woodlands
- Location of housing property boundaries
- Provisions for trails and recreational use of the site
- Management of storm water
- Potential financial support from foundations, government agencies, and private donors.

## Results:

A plan for an assisted living facility on 6.2 acres and 32 age-qualified homes on 31.7 acres with associated open space was approved by the Springfield County Board of Commissioners on May 11, 2016. Construction has begun on the assisted living facility. Plans for development and conservation of the back portion of the property are receiving further consideration.