July 15, 2010

LandChoices offers online guide to preserve land and water

To help communities preserve natural areas, clean water, wildlife and working farmland, LandChoices, a national nonprofit group based in Milford, is offering the online guide, "Top 10 ways to preserve land and water in your community. Tailored toward professional and volunteer citizen planners, it also includes a link to additional information for citizens interested in bringing land conservation to their communities.

"Many communities make the huge mistake of requiring developers to submit detailed, expensive and so-called "preliminary" plans as a first step in the development process," said planner Randall Arendt, considered the nation's expert on conservation subdivisions and a member of LandChoices' advisory group. "This is extremely premature, akin to bringing a diamond ring on a first date.

"Instead, municipalities should require a simple inexpensive sketch plan, often drawn by hand but to scale, as an overlay on top of the base map showing the locations of all significant natural and cultural features. This way any deficiencies can be corrected prior to submission of the detailed, expensive preliminary plan," he said.

To preserve land and water, LandChoices recommends that communities make the following 10 items mandatory for new developments:

1. Inexpensive conceptual preliminary sketch plan prepared according to the four-step design process for creating conservation subdivisions

2. Site walk on the property

3. Involve a qualified landscape architect and physical planner

4. Existing features site analysis map

5. Safer, less-wide streets

6. Preserve a minimum of 50 percent of the buildable land

7. Conservation subdivisions

8. Conservation subdivisions designated as a "by-right permitted use" option

9. Create interconnected open space networks

10. Workshop on conservation subdivisions

Learn more and a download a free checklist at www.landchoices.org/toptenways.htm. Learn more about LandChoices at www.landchoices.org.