

The new application process, while only including one additional step, can take from one to three years to navigate. Months would be spent on a project before an application is even submitted to staff. This is not just expensive; it represents a higher degree of risk for investors. Until an application is submitted, the rules under which the development process moves forward can change and, as has happened in Chatham County in the past, they can change dramatically.

Adding another element of risk, the proposed subdivision ordinance states that the Board of County Commissioners can choose to require planning board and BOC approval for construction plans and final plats. Requiring these additional appearances before County Commissioners seems to do nothing more than provide an opportunity to slow down certain, unpopular projects. How will this decision be made? Why can't guidelines for this decision be clearly outlined in the ordinance?

Construction plan review currently has no mandated timelines. County officials could theoretically waste months without ever addressing an application at this stage. Final plat again is two to four months for approval. In total, a subdivision application could take anywhere from ten months to over two years.

We all agree that environmental protection is important. One of the most successful ways to accomplish this goal is with a conservation subdivision ordinance. When well written, they encourage cluster development that preserves open space and natural resources and reduce the need for roads and other infrastructure.

Unfortunately, you are presented with a conservation subdivision ordinance that discourages its use in the most environmentally sensitive areas of the county. By not allowing the inclusion of floodplains in the open space calculations, this ordinance encourages traditional development near any body of water. Is that really the message you want to send?