

# PRESERVE YOUR FARM CREATE A LEGACY

Montgomery County Agricultural Land Preservation Pro-

gram



Montgomery County  
Planning Commission



## About the Program

The Montgomery County Agricultural Land Preservation Program, also known as the farmland preservation program, started in 1990. Under this program, landowners may choose to preserve their land through the sale of the land development rights, which places a conservation easement permanently on the property. The first preserved farm in Montgomery County was the 164-acre Wismer Farm in Trappe Borough. Since then, the county has preserved over 9,800 acres of farmland on more than 160 farms in 18 townships and boroughs. The county has a long-term commitment to preserving agricultural land and promoting farming as an important part of today's economy. The county's comprehensive plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*, has a goal to preserve an additional 6,000 acres of farmland by 2040.



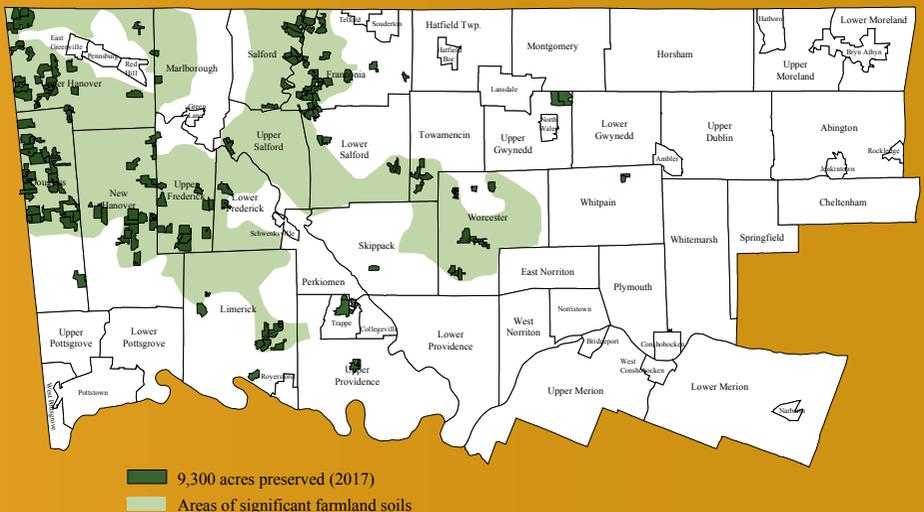
## What Is a Conservation Easement?

An agricultural conservation easement is a permanent restriction on development placed on a property through deed, which is recorded with the county Recorder of Deeds. The land, which no longer can be developed, stays in private ownership and management while remaining on the property tax rolls. Funds to purchase easements come through a partnership with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Montgomery County, and, frequently, a township or borough.

# Why Preserve Your Farm

Farming is an important part of Montgomery County's heritage. Many farmers in Montgomery County have farmed their land for generations, and preserving farmland continues this legacy. The farmland preservation program offers farmland owners a means to liquidate a portion of the equity in their land without selling their farm and compromising their farm operation. It also assists in estate planning for families who plan to pass the farm onto their children or other family members and can significantly reduce estate and inheritance taxes. A key role of farmland preservation is to provide a permanently protected contiguous agricultural land base. This allows farmers to improve and expand their farm operations without fear of losing their land to other uses. By preserving your farm, you protect the agricultural integrity of high-quality soils from development. Farming is an important industry in Montgomery County, providing local food and products, adding to the economy, and enhancing our landscapes.

## Preserved Farmland in Montgomery County



Front cover left to right: *Top-Sheldon Derstine, Robert and Valerie Myers*  
*Bottom-Sunrise Sunflower Farm, Allen Brady*

## Eligibility

Farms applying for preservation have minimum criteria to be eligible for the program. Please contact the Farmland Administrator, Danielle Weiden, with any questions about eligibility.

To apply to the program, a farm must:

- ▶ Contain the greater of 50 percent or 10 acres of land in agricultural production.
- ▶ Be located within an Agricultural Security Area (ASA) consisting of 500 acres or more by deed through the municipality.

If you would like to know if your farm is located in an ASA, contact your municipality.

To be eligible for state funding:

- ▶ A farm must contain at least 50 percent of soils that are available for agricultural production or a commercial equine activity and are of Land Capability Classes I through IV, as defined by the USDA-NRCS.
- ▶ A farm less than 35 acres needs to be adjacent to preserved farmland or grow a crop unique to the area, as defined by the Montgomery County Agricultural Land Preservation Board, including sweet corn, tomatoes, floriculture crops, eggplants, orchard, and/or melons (farms 35 acres or greater do not need to be adjacent to preserved lands).

Visit [www.montcopa.org/FarmlandProgram](http://www.montcopa.org/FarmlandProgram) for the program booklet and application.



*Brandon Yoder farm*

Contact:

**Montgomery County Planning Commission**  
**610-278-3722**

## Steps to Preservation

### Step 1

Download the application at [www.montcopa.org/FarmlandProgram](http://www.montcopa.org/FarmlandProgram). Completed applications for each year are to be received by the Planning Commission's office by February 1 at 3:00 pm. Documents required to be considered a complete application are the program application, deed, a copy of your conservation plan (if one has been written), and the deed book and page of your ASA. Incomplete applications will not be considered for funding. Please contact Administrator if you have any questions about the application.

### Step 2

Farms will be scored based on a formula created by the Pennsylvania Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program, which looks at the characteristics of the property, its location, and how local zoning and nearby land uses support agriculture.

### Step 3

Each farm is ranked by its numerical score from highest to lowest, and, based on available funding, may be selected to be appraised by an independent appraiser. The Montgomery County Agricultural Land Preservation Board tours each appraised farm and makes recommendations for the purchase of a conservation easement. The landowners have a choice to accept the county's offer, get a second appraisal at their expense, or reject the offer.

### Step 4

Following the acceptance of an offer by the landowner, the board presents the offer during a public meeting, which allows the agreement of sale to be sent to the landowner to sign and for the survey of the property to begin. The agreement of sale needs to be signed by the landowner, county staff, and, municipal officials.

### Step 5

After the survey is completed and a final acreage can be calculated, the county submits for approval from the Pennsylvania Agricultural Land Preservation Board. Once approved by the state and when the county receives state funds, a closing date for the landowner is scheduled for preservation.

On average, this process may take one to two years from application to closing.



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PO Box 311 • Norristown, PA 19404-0311

