

# Creating Great Places

Model Ordinances from the Montgomery County Planning Commission



Problematic and inappropriate development can be built if there are weak regulations.



Doesn't match community character



Doesn't foster walking



Lacks amenities and landscaping



Creates traffic problems

# Good regulations will encourage better development.



Adds to community character



Walkable, even if car-oriented



Provides amenities and landscaping



Limited traffic impact



The Planning Commission's 16 model ordinances fall into four broad categories:

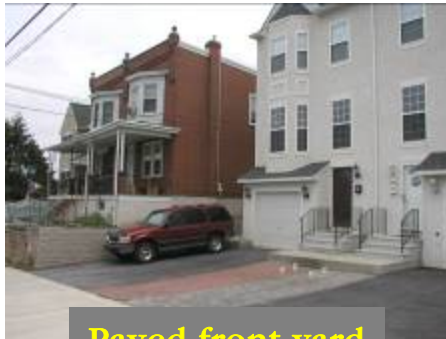
- Residential Use and Design
- Open Space Preservation
- Environmental Protection
- Mixed Use and Commercial Design

# Residential Use and Design

## *Residential*

Most residential development in the county is well designed, although certain problems often crop up, including:

- Developments that appear overcrowded
- Unaffordable housing
- Limited housing choices
- Lack of usable and accessible open space
- Dominance of cars and garages along streets



**Paved front yard**



**Detention basin open space**



**Unaffordable**

# Small Lot Singles

The small-lot single-family detached model ordinance, called the Neighborhood Residential District, includes the following:

- 10% open space with central greens
- 10,000 square foot lots
- Extra-wide lots
- 2.5 homes per acre
- Garages to rear, side, or set back from front



Garage doesn't dominate street



Usable, central open space

# Mixed Residential

The [mixed residential model ordinance](#), called the Village Residential District, includes the following:

- Singles, twins, townhouses, and apartments are allowed
- Mix of housing required on properties five acres or larger
- Parking is generally to side or rear of homes
- 5 homes per acre
- 20% open space with 10% as central open space



**Variety of Housing Types**



**Community Gathering Places**

# Accessory Homes

The county's *Promoting Workforce Housing* series has standards for accessory dwellings - “mother-in-law suites”- on single-family lots:

- Accessory dwellings must meet all setback and coverage regulations
- Accessory units can be no more than 40% of the size of main home
- Units must be buffered from abutting homes
- Accessory units may not be sold separately



Accessory home in converted garage



# Workforce Housing

The *Promoting Workforce Housing* series also includes a model ordinance for requiring more affordable housing:

- 15% of the units in developments with 15 or more homes must be affordable to the region's median income
- Density bonus for providing this housing
- Units must be affordable in perpetuity
- Dwelling must look like normal homes



Ardmore development that includes affordable units



## Open Space Preservation

Zoning can be used as a tool to preserve open space. Without good zoning regulations, municipalities will often have:

- Sprawling development with no open space
- Low priority open space areas
- Open space that is only buffers, ditches, and detention basins
- Fewer scenic views



Sprawling development



Less important open space



Blocked scenic views

# Land Preservation District

This [cluster ordinance for rural areas](#) preserves significant open space and includes:

- 75% open space
- 15,000 square foot single-family detached lots
- One home per 2 developable acres
- Central or public sewers and water



Normal Development



Land Preservation Development

# Rural Residential District

This zoning preserves key scenic, historic, and environmental areas and includes:

- Home placement that preserves most important site features
- 30,000 square foot lots
- One home per 2 developable acres
- Possibility of on-site sewer and water



Normal Development



Rural Residential Development



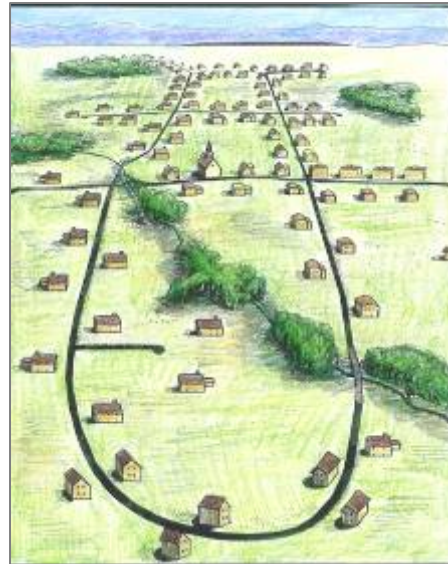
# Transfer of Development Rights

This unique zoning transfers development from a preservation part of a community to a growth area.

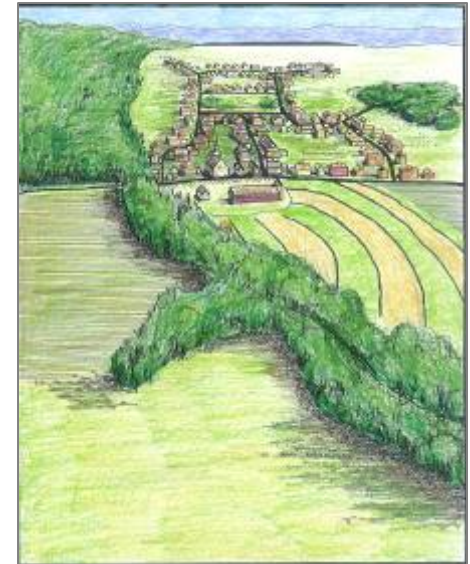
- This is a market driven process
- New development in growth area must meet zoning standards
- Normally, residential development is transferred



Existing Landscape



Normal Development



TDR Development

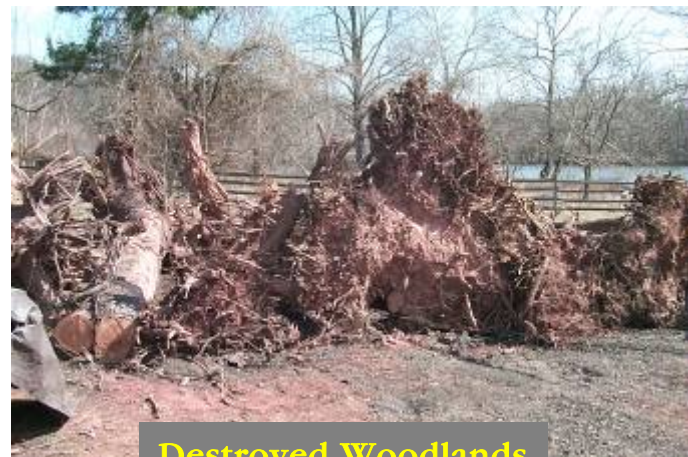
# Environmental Protection

Environmental protection is a critical aspect of zoning and subdivision ordinances. Without it, many problems can occur, such as:

- Erosion and flooding
- Indiscriminate destruction of woodlands and natural areas
- Inappropriate and ineffective landscaping
- Poorly designed streets and other public facilities



Flooding

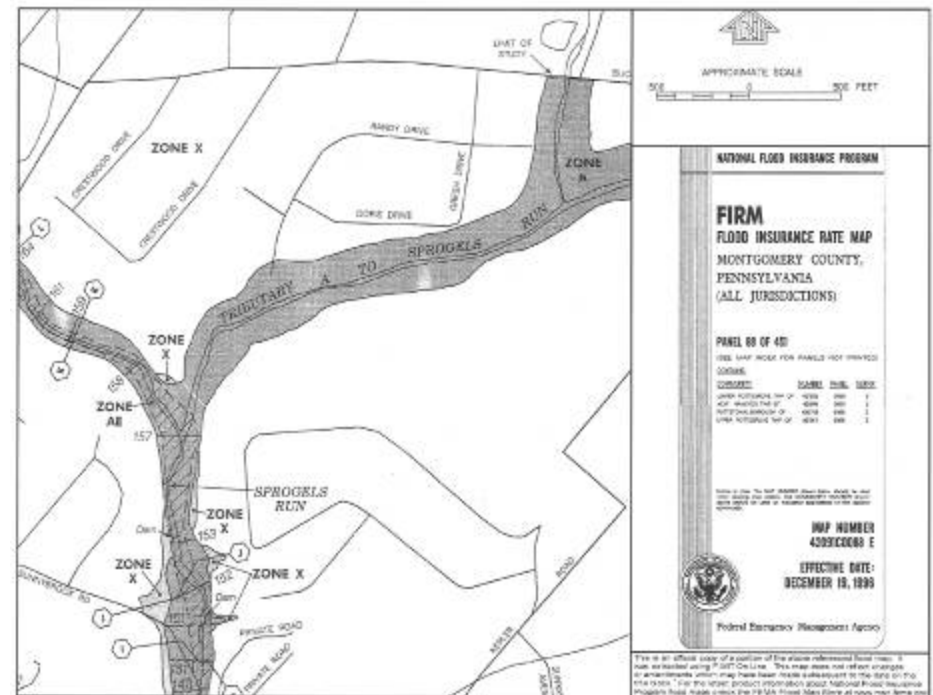


Destroyed Woodlands

# Floodplain Protection

The county's model regulations meet federal FEMA standards as well as unique local conditions:

- Floodplains include the 100-year floodplain plus local soils subject to flooding
- Buildings and most development are prohibited in the floodplain
- Buildings given a variance to be in the floodplain must be floodproofed



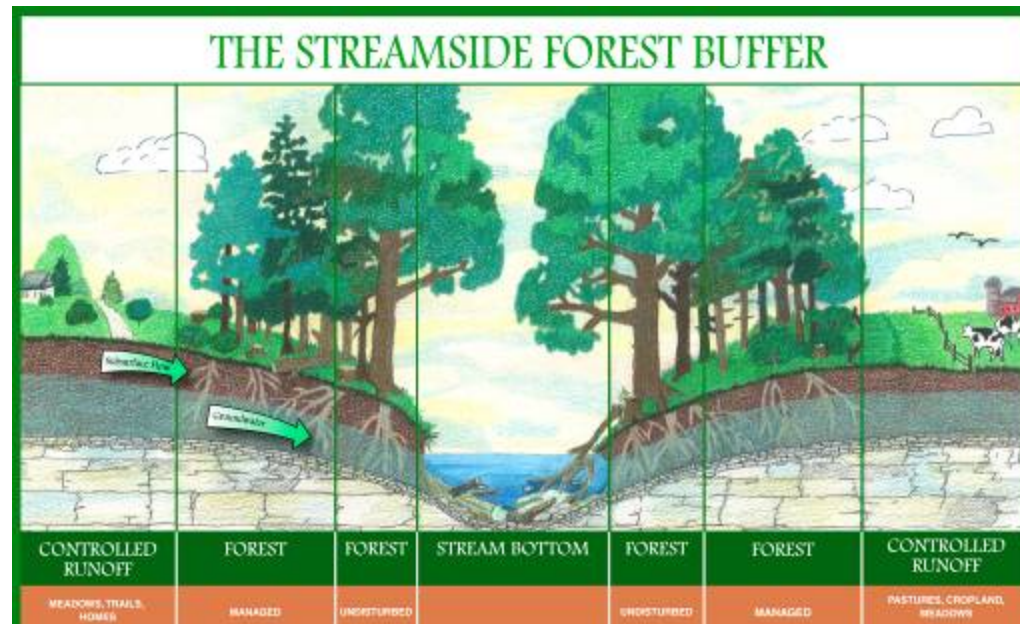
FEMA Floodplain Map



# Riparian Corridor Conservation

This overlay zoning protects wooded buffers along streambanks:

- Applies to all streams with drainage area of 75 acres or more
- No disturbance within 25 feet of streambank
- Limited disturbance, such as sewer lines and accessory buildings, is allowed from 25 feet to 75 feet of streambank

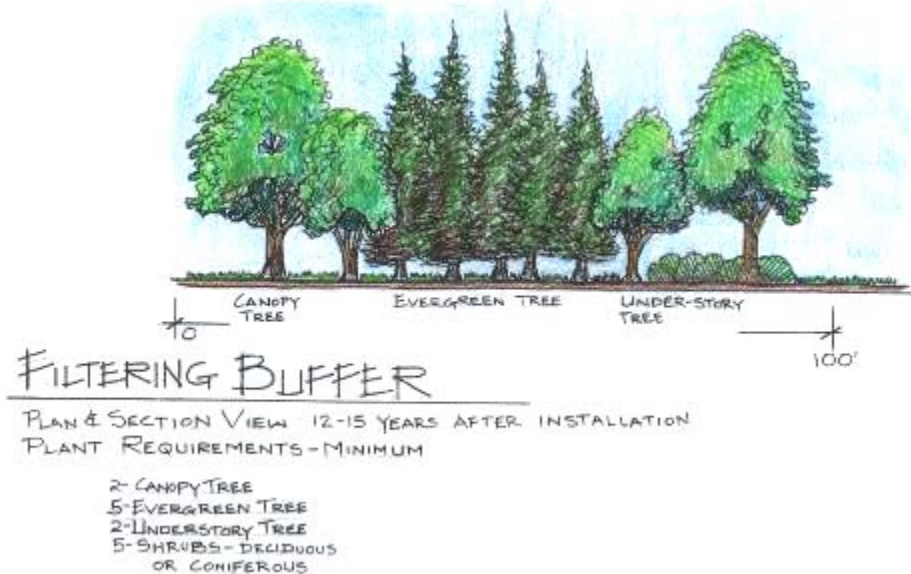




# Landscaping

These regulations, which are normally part of a subdivision and land development ordinance, encourage appropriate landscaping and greening:

- Extensive buffering and screening standards
- Tree replacement requirements
- Parking lot landscaping regulations



Buffer for a Store in Narberth

# Subdivision and Land Development

These extensive and up-to-date standards regulate all aspects of subdivisions and land developments:

- Street, sidewalk, and parking lot design
- Land disturbance and natural features protection
- Best management stormwater control



**Building a New Road  
Through the  
Development Process**

# Mixed Use and Commercial Design

## *Mixed Use/Commercial*

Mixed use development in the county is relatively rare, although it is common in other parts of the country. The quality of the county's commercial development often seems lower than that found in nearby counties and other parts of the country.

Common problems include:

- Poor driveway design and access control
- Inadequate landscaping and buffering
- Incompatible building design with neighboring properties
- Hazardous walking environment



Uncontrolled access



Clashing building style



Poor landscaping



# Residential-Office

These standards are designed for small scale offices in residential areas near busy roads and retail centers.

- Single-family homes allowed by right
- Offices allowed as conditional use
- On smaller lots, offices must be in existing homes
- On larger lots, new offices allowed if residentially compatible
- Driveways for offices must be shared and interconnected



**Residential Office Development**



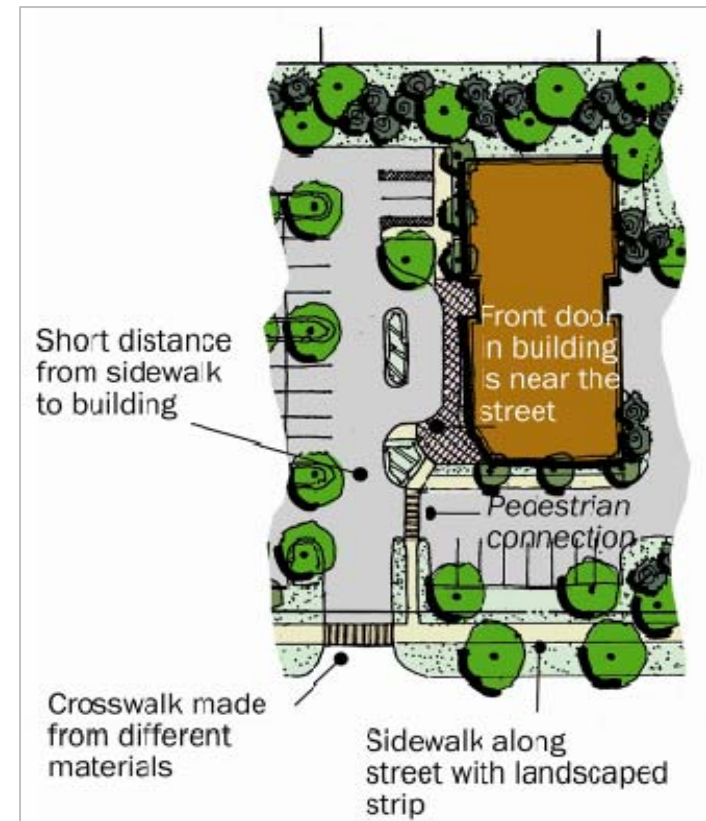
**Typical Development**



# General Commercial

This [commercial ordinance](#) provides regulations for standard car-oriented development.

- Wide range of commercial uses
- Controlled driveway access and interconnected parking lots
- Good landscaping and extensive buffers
- Public plazas and other amenities for large shopping centers



**Design Requirements for Pedestrians**

# Town Center

This zoning is designed for traditional, historic downtowns and town centers.

- Range of permitted uses, but not auto oriented ones or ground-floor apartments
- New buildings must be built to sidewalk and two or more stories high
- Front facades must match historic character
- Unique streetscaping and greening point system is included



**Historic Building in Norristown**

# Village Mixed Use

These regulations apply to both older historic villages and large open tracts where a walkable, mixed-use character is desired.

- Variety of permitted residential and commercial uses
- Full mix of uses required on larger tracts
- Small-scale, village-style buildings close to street
- Central greens must be at least 10% of site
- Historic buildings must be preserved



Village Home



Village Stores

# New Town Mixed Use

This [mixed use ordinance](#) is designed for places where compact, walkable, mixed use development is appropriate, such as near train stations, historic downtowns, old shopping centers, and underutilized industrial land.

- Mix of uses required on larger tracts
- Walkable building design
- Compact development with FAR of 1.5 and height of 6 stories
- Parking garages and parking lots are hidden from view
- Central plazas and open space



Rockville Town Square



Princeton, New Jersey



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**The county's 16 model ordinances provide guidance for improving the quality of new development. These models can be accessed online at:**

**[www.planning.montcopa.org/ModelOrdinances](http://www.planning.montcopa.org/ModelOrdinances)**

# Creating Great Places

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**In addition to our model ordinances, the county also has many other helpful resources. Two of these are:**

## Alternative Energy Sources Series

- Small-Scale Solar Energy Systems
- Small Wind Turbines
- Geothermal
- Outdoor Hydronic Heaters
- Energy Conservation Site and Building Design

## Planning *by* Design Series

- Green Streets
- Green Parking Lots
- Sustainable Paving
- Stormwater Bioswales, Drainage Swales, and Basins
- Traffic Calming Devices
- Pedestrian Amenities
- Cul-De-Sac Islands
- Woodland Edge Treatments
- Street Trees

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**For more information on the county Planning Commission's many resources, go to:**

**[www.planning.montcopa.org](http://www.planning.montcopa.org)**

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