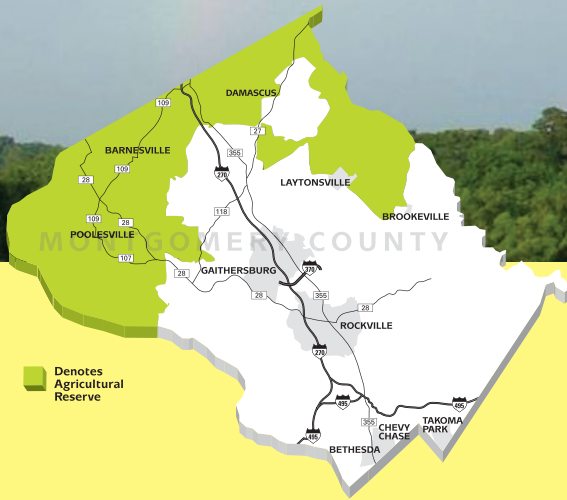


ONE-THIRD OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY'S LAND AREA IS IN AN AGRICULTURAL RESERVE



CREATED IN 1980 to protect Montgomery County's agricultural heritage, the Agricultural Reserve encompasses 93,000 acres which is more than twice the size of Washington, D.C. This section of the County has been specially zoned to encourage agricultural uses. Since its inception, over 70,000 acres, or about 75% of the land area within the Agricultural Reserve, have been further protected through different types of permanent easements which restrict residential, industrial and commercial development.

Why is the Agricultural Reserve important to all residents of Montgomery County?

The Agricultural Reserve area, which encompasses approximately one-third of the land area in Montgomery County, is a unique and valuable resource. Despite increasing development pressures, a high cost of living and land values that are some of the highest in the State, Montgomery County has been successful in maintaining large areas of contiguous farmland and a viable agricultural industry. The Agricultural Reserve affords all the residents the opportunity to buy food locally from farmers who live and work here, enjoy recreational opportunities such as biking, hunting and fishing as well as learn about the agricultural heritage of this area.

Today, Montgomery County has the highest percentage of farmland under agricultural land preservation easements IN THE NATION.

What is an agricultural land preservation easement?

An agricultural land preservation easement is a voluntary agreement between a property owner and an agency or organization that places permanent restrictions on the land. The easement is recorded in the land records and becomes a permanent encumbrance on the property. Some easements are purchased from the landowner by an agency or organization and some are donated by the landowner. The restrictions that are placed on the land are generally for the purpose of forever protecting the farmland for future food and fiber production. Most commonly, these restrictions limit or prevent future residential, commercial and/or industrial development on the property. In addition to these restrictions, easements often require environmental stewardship, forest management planning and/or other plans designed to protect the land.

Preserving farmland enhances the quality of life for all residents

- ▶ Promotes cleaner air
- ▶ Improves regional water quality
- ▶ Eliminates impervious surfaces thus reducing water runoff
- ▶ Provides wildlife habitats
- ▶ Yields local food production
- ▶ Contributes to scenic vistas and rural open space
- ▶ Bestows tax benefits upon landowners for donated and purchased easements
- ▶ Helps to maintain a property's agricultural assessment for tax purposes
- ▶ Creates recreational opportunities such as biking, hunting, fishing and horseback riding

Reserved through zoning, preserved by easements