Agricultural Landscapes
Design Guide
Chester County, PA

CHESTER COUNTY Planning COMMISSION

Prepared by the Chester County Planning Commission

July 2024

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Contents

This is the sixth and final design guide the Planning Commission has prepared for Chester County's Landscape categories. The framework for each guide is the same with the intent to support your municipality's objectives, values, and priorities in regard to the character of new development.

Purpose

Chester County is committed to quality of design in its built environment.

Quality design of new development is characterized by context sensitivity and the thoughtful arrangement of details that define streets, public spaces, and communities. Ultimately, quality design improves a community's function and appearance by unifying diverse elements.

The purpose of this guide is to:

- Protect agricultural activity and prime farmland
- Promote development with compatible rural character
- Protect and restore the environment
- Promote the preservation of open space
- Promote interconnected greenways and wildlife and other natural corridors

The design elements in this guide are focused on the maintenance of a low density development pattern and conservation of agricultural lands and sensitive environmental resources.

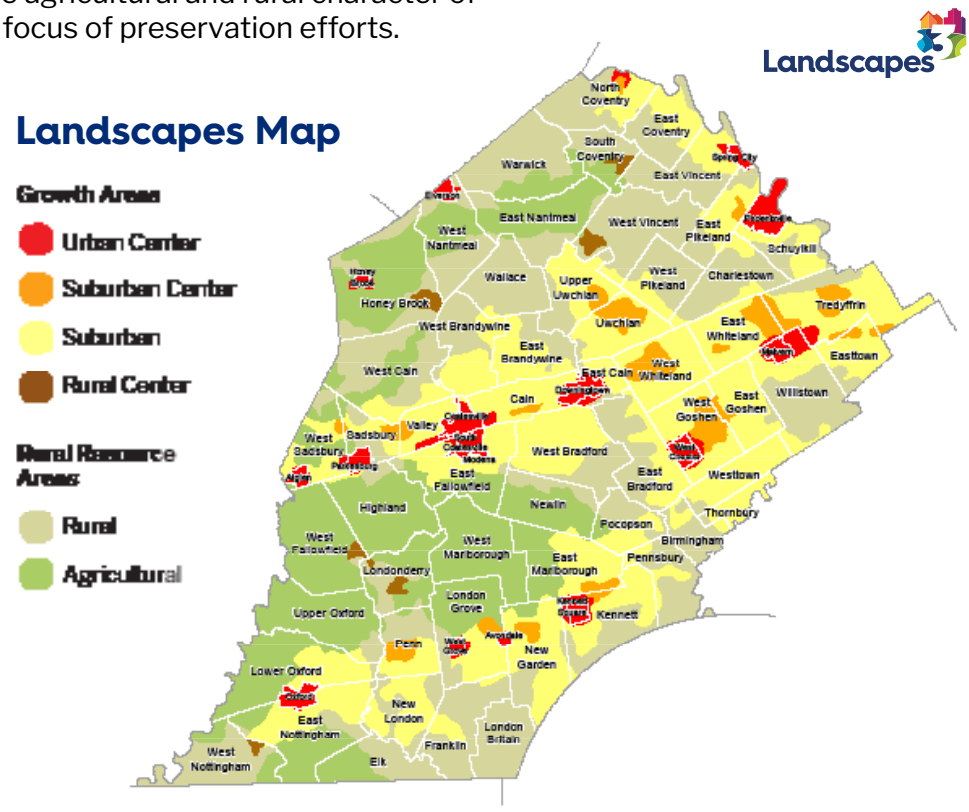
View of a farm in Upper Oxford Township.

Audience

This guide is intended for use by developers, design professionals, community members, municipal attorneys, elected officials, administrative staff, engineers, planners, businesses, county planning commission members and staff, and the general public. Each has a role in ensuring that new development fits within its context and contributes to the livability of Agricultural landscapes.

Foundation

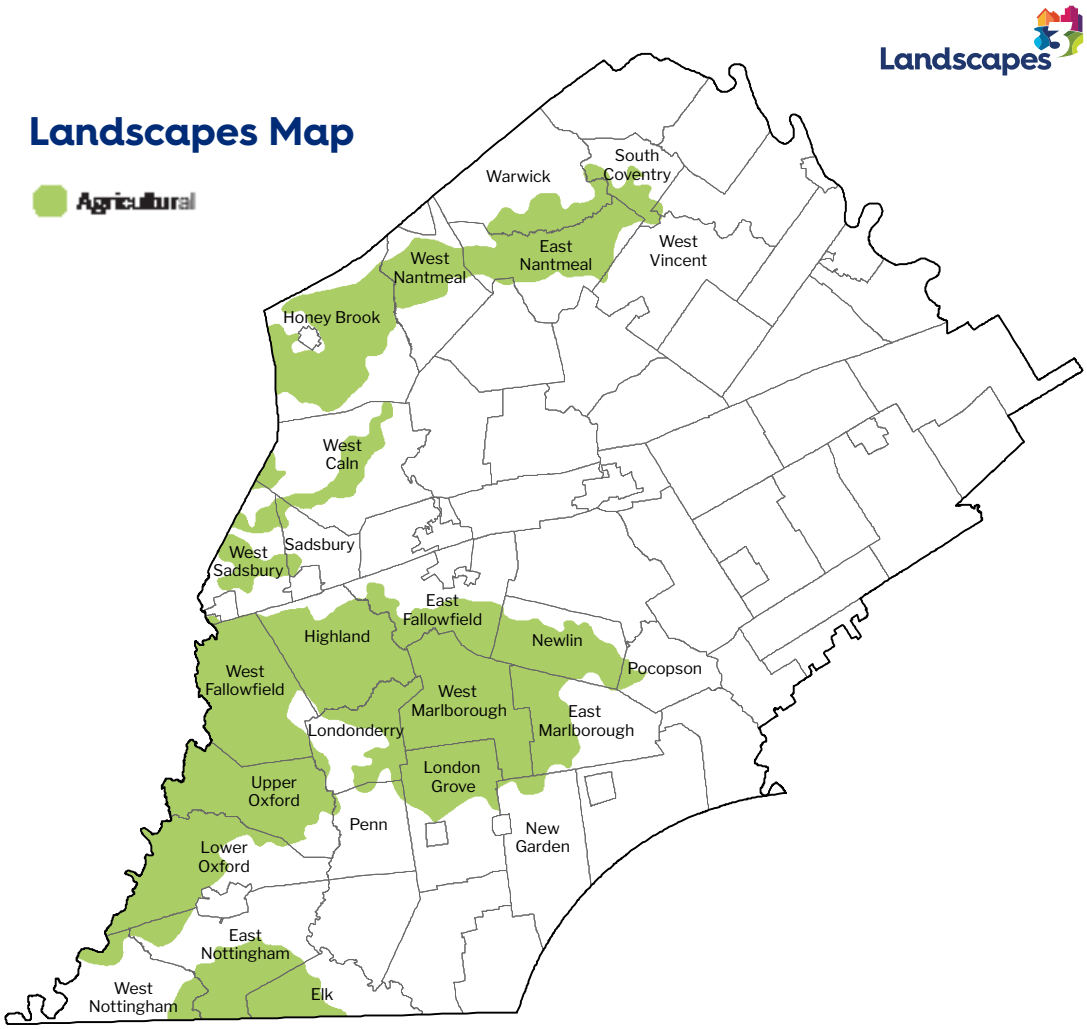
The foundation for this guide is *Landscapes3*, Chester County's comprehensive plan. The plan, adopted in 2018, establishes a preservation and growth vision for the county and its municipalities. Within the plan, the Landscapes Map identifies six landscape categories where growth and rural resource protection should occur to achieve the vision. The four Growth Area landscape categories best accommodate future growth. These are planned for a full range of infrastructure and are highly suitable for development and redevelopment. The two landscape categories of the Rural Resource Areas, including Agricultural landscapes, are not appropriate for significant growth, strongly reflect the agricultural and rural character of the county, and serve as a focus of preservation efforts.



Long-term Vision

As a Rural Resource Area for Chester County, the vision for the Agricultural landscape is very limited development occurring at low densities to preserve agricultural soils and farm operations.

Agricultural landscapes are mostly located adjacent to rural landscapes and consist of large contiguous areas of farmland with primes soils and physical characteristics that support economically sustainable yields.



Format

The planning principles and design elements established in the *Landscapes3* vision for the Agricultural landscapes serve as the basis for the format of this guide.

Planning Principles

The key objectives, values, and priorities to consider when creating long range plans, investing in infrastructure, or evaluating proposed development.

This section has four themes: **Growth Outlook**, **Preservation Focus**, **Land Use Patterns**, and **Infrastructure**. The importance of each principle is discussed along with a list of example supportive policies that guide municipal action and facilitate rural resource protection. For further information, a link to on-line resources is provided.

Design Elements

The guidelines for the treatment of development and related features based on well-established patterns of building and quality design.

This section has three themes: **Building Character**, **Site Amenities**, and **Transportation**. Each guideline is introduced with an overview of "why" it is important to the health, safety, and welfare of the county's Agricultural landscapes. The overview is followed by an illustration or graphic to express design considerations and best practices to carry out each design element. A regulatory strategy from a local source is found at the bottom of each topic as well as a link to additional on-line resources.

Planning Principles

Key objectives, values, and priorities to consider when creating long range plans, investing in infrastructure, or evaluating proposed development

GROWTH OUTLOOK

PRESERVATION FOCUS

LAND USE PATTERNS

INFRASTRUCTURE

GROWTH OUTLOOK

Very limited future growth

The county's Agricultural landscapes will accommodate very limited growth that is context sensitive to its agrarian character.

West Fallowfield Township, with approximately 95 percent of its land area in the Agricultural landscape has agricultural and very limited residential and commercial uses.

Example Policies

- Protect agriculture and farmland to preserve the community's economy, identity, and sense of place.
- Limit residential development to very low densities in locations that have a minimal impact on agriculture.
- Specify those portions of the municipality, outside of designated growth areas, that are intended for agriculture, in conformance with the Future Land Use Plan.
- Require buffer zones between residential developments and active agricultural operations to minimize conflicts and protect residents from noise, odors, and pesticide drift.

MUNICIPAL EXAMPLE

- Provide for use of land in a manner that preserves the township's farmlands, open spaces, and natural and historic resources.

  West Caln Township Comprehensive Plan, 2020; p.26. ▶

Toolbox

Smart Growth ▶
Growth Boundaries ▶

GROWN OUTLOOK

Growth is primarily related to agricultural uses

Development is appropriate if it relates to the agricultural context or natural resource based industries, such as sustainable timbering.

Agricultural buildings and uses can have a large scale to make operations economically viable, such as these building in Highland Township.

Example Policies

- Protect farming operations from incompatible, non-farming related uses.
- Maintain agricultural zoning to promote agriculture and discourage non-farm residential uses in prime agricultural areas.
- Recognize that the breeding, raising and training of horses is a legitimate and economically important form of agriculture.

MUNICIPAL EXAMPLE

- Promote economically viable and environmentally sustainable agriculture as an important land use and industry within the Township.

  South Coventry Township, Comprehensive Plan, 2014; p.2-2.

Toolbox

Agricultural Zoning ▶

PRESERVATION FOCUS

Protection of agricultural land and prime agricultural soils

Prime agricultural land and soils are critical resources for food production, economic stability, and environmental health.

Upper Oxford Township has excellent agricultural soils.

Example Policies

- Promote soil conservation practices such as no-till farming, contour plowing, and the use of cover crops.
- Consider enacting effective agricultural zoning for those portions of the municipality intended primarily for agriculture.
- Encourage local participation in the "Clean and Green" Act (preferential tax assessment), the PACE program (purchase of development rights), and Chester County Agricultural Land Preservation Board (ALPB) and private land preservation activities.
- Consider enacting Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) provisions, as well as other innovative land preservation techniques.

MUNICIPAL EXAMPLE

- This district (A-Agriculture District) includes much of the township's class I, class II, and class III agriculturally productive soils.

  Honey Brook Township zoning ordinance, section 27-1701ᵻ

Toolbox

Agricultural Conservation Easements ▶

PRESERVATION FOCUS

Preservation and restoration of stream corridors

Stream corridors in agricultural areas are vital for maintaining water quality, preventing erosion, providing habitat for wildlife, and supporting the overall health of ecosystems.

Having wooded riparian corridors along streams helps protect water quality, as shown here in East Fallowfield.

Example Policies

- Ensure municipal regulations protect woodland and riparian areas and areas with rare or endangered plant species.
- Limit new development from encroaching into riparian buffers and require, at the time of permit or development approval, reforestation of stream corridors.
- Encourage the use of conservation easements to protect stream corridors and adjacent lands from development.
- Promote the planting of native vegetation along stream banks to stabilize soil, reduce erosion, and enhance habitat.

MUNICIPAL EXAMPLE

- Preserve the rural character of the township by ensuring that future growth is in harmony with open space protection, agricultural preservation, and natural, cultural, and historic resource protection efforts.

  Highland Township Comprehensive Plan, 2022; p. 13. ▶

Toolbox

Conservation easements ▶

PRESERVATION FOCUS

Preservation of farmsteads and farm buildings

Farmsteads and farm buildings are vital components of agricultural heritage, providing historical, cultural, and architectural value. Preserving and restoring these features ensures their continued use and contribution to agricultural communities.

This historic property in Honey Brook Township helps maintain the agricultural character of the community.

Example Policies

- Maintain a database that defines, inventories, maps, and prioritizes historic resources.
- Encourage rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of existing buildings rather than demolition.
- Consider the creation of an Agricultural Historic District or an overlay historic resources ordinance.
- Support efforts to educate residents on the long-term value of historic resources to the community.

MUNICIPAL EXAMPLE

- Identify roadways with particularly strong visual characteristics as well as scenic vistas that are worthy of special preservation efforts.

  London Grove Township Comprehensive Plan, 2011; p. 3-2-12. ▶

Toolbox

Historic Resource Protection Standards ▶
Adaptive Reuse ▶
Historic and Cultural Resource Preservation Planning ▶

LAND USE PATTERNS

Diverse agricultural uses

Working lands, farms, and forests are central to the heritage of the county. Allowing a full range of contemporary agricultural uses and jobs supports agriculture related economic development that is sustainable over the long term.

The agricultural industry is a leading employer and tax generator throughout the county. It provides open working lands, which can help keep costs of local services low, such as police and fire protection, as opposed to when the land is developed.

Example Policies

- Support the development of local markets and direct-to-consumer sales channels, such as farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs, and farm-to-school initiatives.
- Allow farm and farmers to have new uses and approaches to keep their farms competitive. .
- Encourage collaboration between research institutions, government agencies, and the private sector on projects that promote agricultural diversity.
- Provide resources to help farmers remain competitive by transitioning and adapting to new markets and opportunities.

MUNICIPAL EXAMPLE

- Support agriculture to continue to be a viable primary industry and an enhanced or expanded industry in the township.

  Franklin Township Comprehensive Plan, 2022; p. 2-3. ▶

Toolbox

Controlled-Environment Agriculture ▶

LAND USE PATTERNS

Supplemental farm businesses and farm stands

Supplemental farm businesses help expand a farmers' income, diversify risk, and bring the next generation into the current operation. Allowing these uses enables farm operations to contribute even more to the local economy directly and through pass-through spending.

Farms , such as this example from Honey Brook Township, often have a variety of uses and business.

Example Policies

- Allow for small on-farm businesses while keeping agricultural production the primary use.
- Facilitate the growth of farmers' markets and farm stands for the sale of locally-grown food.
- Permit the creation of accessory businesses and occupations as a means of accommodating a proper scale of commerce and industry that is consistent with the Township's rural character and lack of infrastructure.
- Permit through zoning: home businesses and rural occupations within the Township's agricultural areas as an economic development tool for farm income.

MUNICIPAL EXAMPLE

- In the zoning ordinance, define agritourism and agritainment, examples of which include corn mazes, farm tours, wine tastings, hayrides, public horse riding stables, or 'pick-your-own' pumpkins.

  Franklin Township Comprehensive Plan Update, 2022; p. 3-4. ▶

Toolbox

Secondary Farm Business ▶
Farmers' Markets ▶
Wineries ▶

LAND USE PATTERNS

Housing that primarily meets the needs of farm labor and farm family growth

Adequate housing for farm laborers and farm families is essential for maintaining a stable agricultural workforce and supporting the growth of farm families. The unique housing needs of these groups should be addressed with affordable and accessible housing solutions.

Housing is a key aspect of the agricultural economy and landscape.

Example Policies

- Consider designating specific agricultural housing zones within agricultural areas for the development of farm labor and farm family housing.
- Consider implementing zoning regulations that require new residential developments to include a percentage of units dedicated to farm labor housing.
- Encourage mixed-use developments, where appropriate, that combine residential housing with agricultural and community facilities.
- Support community facilities such as childcare centers, healthcare clinics, and recreational areas to support farm labor families.

MUNICIPAL EXAMPLE

- Create workforce housing within the township to allow quality housing opportunities for agricultural workers.

  London Grove Township Comprehensive Plan, 2011; p. 3-2-9. ▶

Toolbox

Farmworker Housing ▶

LAND USE PATTERNS

Very low density residential development

Balancing residential development with agricultural land preservation is essential for maintaining the viability and sustainability of agricultural areas. Very low-density residential development complements agricultural activities and minimizes negative impacts on the Agricultural landscape.

Residential development, like this example from East Marlborough, should be very low density and should respect agricultural uses.

Example Policies

- Encourage creative and innovative site planning using conservation design principles that maximize the protection of prime agricultural soils.
- Identify specific areas within agricultural zones where very low-density residential development is permitted, ensuring these areas do not compromise prime agricultural land.
- Establish very low density for residential development to reduce the fragmentation of agricultural land.
- Encourage cluster development practices where homes are grouped together on smaller lots, preserving larger contiguous areas of agricultural land.

MUNICIPAL EXAMPLE

- Agricultural resource objective. Minimize scattered suburbanization, which causes conflicts with farming.

  London Grove Township Comprehensive Plan, 2011, page 3-2-10 ▶

Toolbox

Cluster Development ▶
Conservation Subdivision Guide ▶
Transferable Development Rights (TDR) ▶

LAND USE PATTERNS

Low intensity institutional uses

Agricultural areas can benefit from the inclusion of low-intensity institutional uses, such as educational facilities, religious buildings, and community services, which support and complement rural lifestyles. While these uses can enhance the quality of life for rural residents they should not compromise the agricultural productivity or integrity of the land.

The New Bolton center is an important agricultural research center in Chester County.

Example Policies

- Identify and designate specific areas within agricultural zones where low-intensity institutional uses are permitted. These areas should be strategically located to minimize disruption to agricultural activities.
- Limit the building and impervious coverage of institutional buildings to maintain the rural character of the area and ensure compatibility with agricultural uses.
- Establish criteria for site selection that prioritize locations with minimal impact on prime agricultural land and existing farming operations.
- Allow community support services and institutional uses that directly support agricultural activities, such as agricultural research centers, extension services, and educational institutions focusing on agriculture.

MUNICIPAL EXAMPLE

- Guide non-agricultural development to targeted growth areas and encourage the location of compatible land uses and support facilities adjacent to agricultural areas.

  Oxford Region Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan, 2012, page 11-2 ▶

INFRASTRUCTURE

Roads and bridges conducive to agricultural transportation needs and use by non-motorized modes, such as horses and buggies

Agricultural areas require transportation infrastructure that supports the efficient movement of agricultural goods and equipment while also accommodating non-motorized modes of transportation, such as horses and buggies. Safety is paramount for all road users, including farmers, non-motorized travelers, and motor vehicle operators.

Rural roads, like this one in Newlin Township, must accommodate a variety of agricultural and other uses.

Example Policies

- Ease the movement of agricultural vehicles from farm-to-farm along roads within the Township.
- Explore the possibility of providing motorist warning concerning agricultural activities.
- Look to improve "rural" road conditions that create traffic safety problems (e.g. inadequate sight distance, overgrown bushes, excessive speeds and dangerous intersections).
- Coordinate closely with the Chester County Planning Commission and utilize their Transportation Improvement Inventory, and the PENNDOT/ Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission Transportation Improvement Program process.

MUNICIPAL EXAMPLE

- Communicate with farmers and the rest of the agricultural community to identify transportation needs for the movement of farm vehicles and buggies.

  Oxford Region Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan, 2012, page 9-31 ▶

Toolbox

Chester County Transportation Policies ▶
Complete Streets Policy ▶
Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities: Policy ▶
Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities: Design ▶
Multimodal Circulation Handbook for Chester County, PA ▶

INFRASTRUCTURE

Streambank stabilization and other methods to protect stream water quality and soil health

Clean water and productive soils are dependent on natural processes. To maintain the quality of these natural processes, policies and sustainable conservation management practices must be in place to prevent erosion, stabilize streambanks, improve stream water quality, and enhance soil health.

Planting trees in riparian corridors enhances streambank stabilization and improves water quality and stream base flows.

Example Policies

- Support financial incentives, such as grants, cost-sharing programs, and tax credits, to farmers who establish and maintain riparian buffer zones on their property.
- Encourage the planting of riparian buffers that can reduce erosion, filter pollutants, and provide habitat for wildlife.
- Encourage the use of farming practices that minimize soil disturbance, reduce erosion, and improve soil organic matter, and improve water infiltration.

MUNICIPAL EXAMPLE

- Increase voluntary participation by farmers and other landowners in forested riparian buffer protection and restoration measures through education and helping to secure available funding support.

  Honey Brook Township and Borough Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan, 2015; p. 27. ▶

Toolbox

Woodlands Conservation ▶
Riparian Buffers ▶

INFRASTRUCTURE

On-lot sewage disposal and individual wells, except where public health requires alternatives

On-lot sewage disposal systems and individual wells are commonly used in agricultural areas due to the dispersed nature of rural settlements. These systems should continue to be supported while ensuring public health and environmental protection continues.

Most rural and agricultural properties use on-lot sewage disposal and wells.

Example Policies

- Establish and enforce standards for the design and installation of on-lot sewage disposal systems to ensure they function effectively and do not contaminate groundwater or surface water. This includes requirements for system sizing, soil percolation tests, and setback distances from water bodies and wells.
- Implement standards for the construction of individual wells to ensure they are properly designed, located, and constructed to prevent contamination. This includes requirements for casing, well caps, and setback distances from potential contamination sources.
- Provide guidelines and resources for proper maintenance practices.

MUNICIPAL EXAMPLE

- Strongly encourage the sustainable use of on-lot water and wastewater disposal systems with any change in land use.

  London Britain Comprehensive Plan, 2019; p. 53. ▶

INFRASTRUCTURE

Broadband access and modern communications infrastructure

Reliable and affordable high-speed internet improves quality of life, such as access to telemedicine service and education opportunities. Reliable communication connections also enhance the economic opportunities and competitiveness of agricultural operations.

Modern information and communications technology, including 5G, can enable multiple services that were previously lacking in agricultural landscapes.

Example Policies

- Support comprehensive assessments that identify current gaps in broadband and communication infrastructure in agricultural areas. Prioritize areas with the most significant connectivity deficits.
- Encourage public-private partnerships to leverage resources and expertise for the development of broadband infrastructure.
- Adapt zoning and land use policies to support the construction and maintenance of broadband infrastructure, including the placement of towers, antennas, and other necessary facilities.
- Promote the use of existing infrastructure, such as utility poles and public rights-of-way, to reduce the costs and complexities associated with broadband deployment.

MUNICIPAL EXAMPLE

- Support the provision of communication infrastructure that meets residential, business, and institutional needs in a manner that protects residents' interests.

  South Coventry Township Comprehensive Plan Update, 2016; p. 2-4.

Toolbox

Cellular Communications Facilities ▶

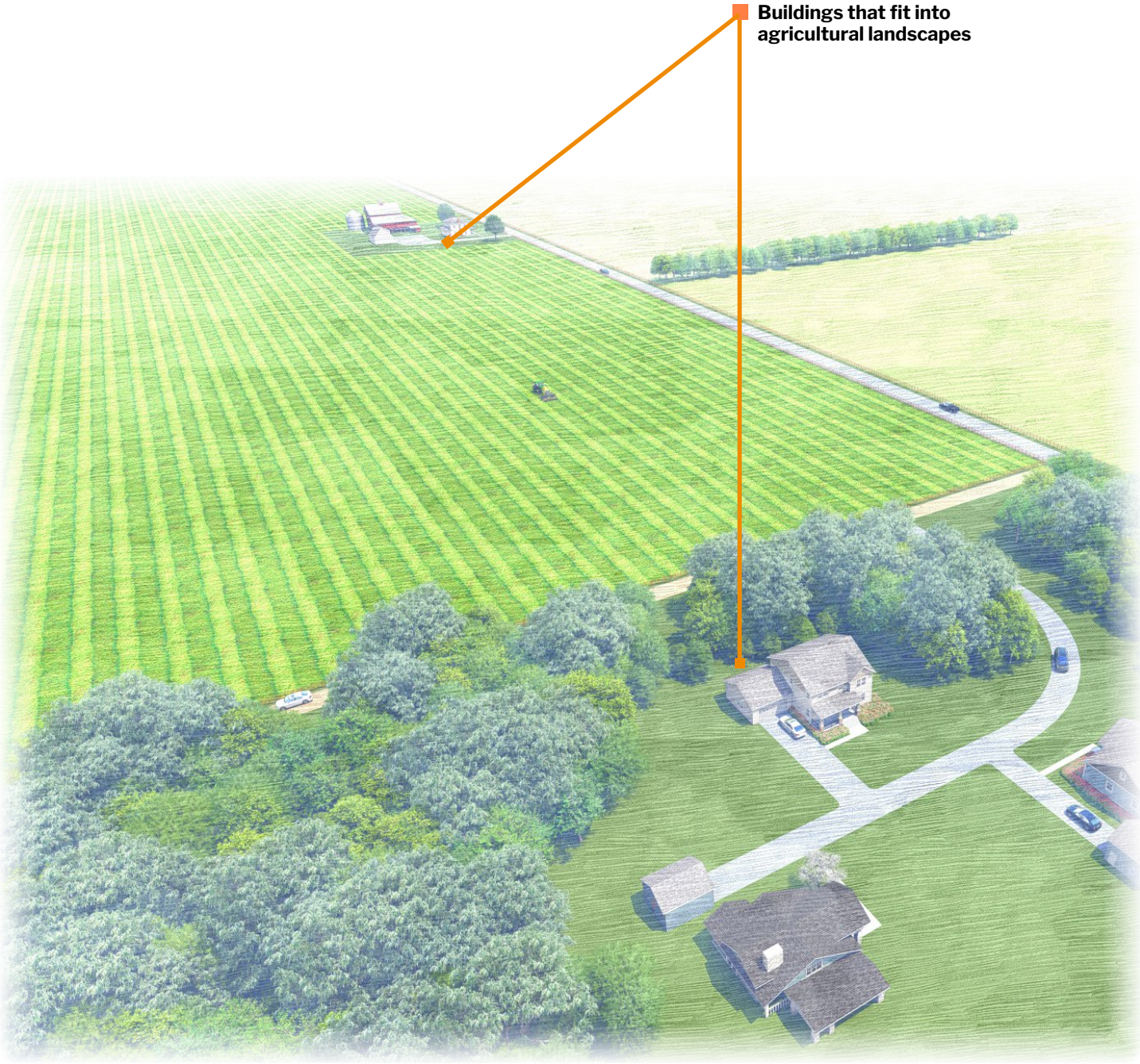
Design Elements

Guidelines for the treatment of development and related features based on well-established patterns of building and quality design

BUILDING CHARACTER

SITE AMENITIES

TRANSPORTATION


Buildings that fit into agricultural landscapes

BUILDING CHARACTER

Architecture should respect and respond to the environment and local built heritage. This section provides guidance on how the design of new buildings should relate to their surrounding context and contribute to rural characteristics.

BUILDING CHARACTER

Buildings that fit into agricultural landscapes

Designing buildings to harmoniously fit into Agricultural landscapes requires a blend of aesthetics, functionality, and environmental sensitivity. Generally, new buildings should be built on areas not suited for cultivation, should not exceed two stories, should have an agrarian character, and should be grouped in farm-like clusters. New buildings should also reflect local building traditions and styles to maintain cultural heritage and aesthetic consistency.

Tuck development into existing features
Cluster new buildings close together near existing trees and shrubs and at the edges of fields and at changes in grade.

Buffer new development
Create buffer zones with native vegetation around buildings to transition between built and agricultural areas.

Flexible Rural Development Regulations

Views of dwellings from exterior roads and abutting properties should be minimized by the use of changes in topography, existing vegetation or additional landscaping.

Newlin Township, Zoning Ordinance, Section 240-16, C. ▶

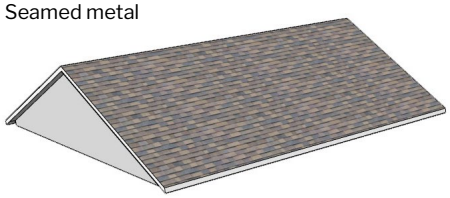
Toolbox
Cluster Development ▶
Conservation Subdivision Guide ▶
Agricultural Zoning ▶

Recommendations for structures

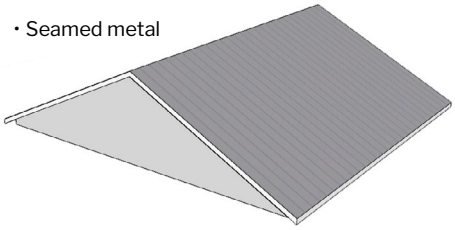
Roofs

Preferred roof materials

- Wood, slate, fiber-cement, or composition shingles
- Seamed metal

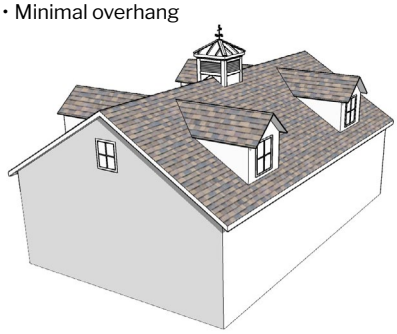


- Seamed metal



Preferred roof elements

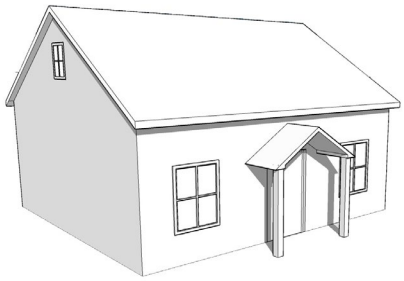
- Gable roof
- Cupola for roof venting
- Simple gable dormers
- Minimal overhang



Buildings

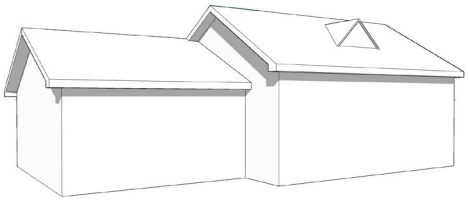
Preferred building materials

- Use durable, natural, local materials such as stone, wood, and clapboard.
- Use metal or vinyl siding for low-maintenance



Preferred massing and scale

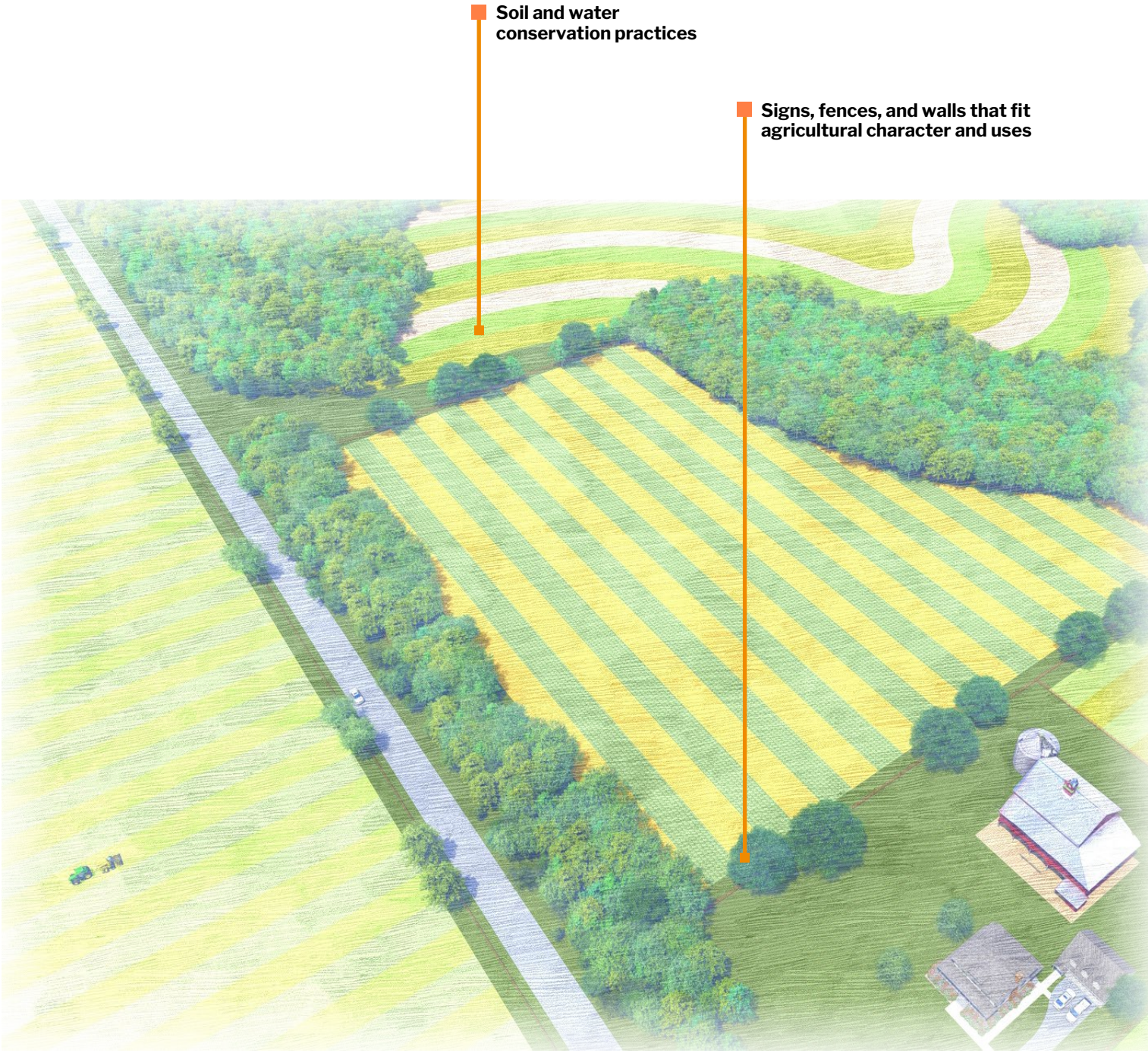
- Use and repeat simple forms
- Make buildings appear to have grown organically through additions over time.
- Break functions into smaller building wings as opposed to using one big building.



Building design standards along scenic roads

New buildings shall use architecture, construction materials, and colors which are consistent with desirable characteristics of existing buildings on the site..

West Sadsbury Township, Zoning Ordinance, Section 861.4.F ▶


Soil and water conservation practices
Signs, fences, and walls that fit agricultural character and uses

SITE AMENITIES

Site amenities enable social interaction, create inviting, equitable, and accessible public spaces, and promote environmental sustainability. This section provides guidance on the site amenities that add to the function and vitality of the human environment.

SITE AMENITIES

Preservation and restoration of riparian corridors

It is essential to preserve intact riparian corridors and restore degraded ones to maintain healthy watercourses and the Agricultural landscape. Healthy riparian corridors improve water quality throughout an entire catchment area, benefiting landholders and downstream users. On a farm, healthy riparian corridors benefit agricultural operations and farmers by improving water quality, minimizing land lost to erosion, limiting flood damage, increasing water retention, and increasing property values.

Manage water quality
Develop and implement nutrient management plans to minimize the runoff of fertilizers and pesticides into waterways.

Stabilize streambanks
Use bioengineering techniques such as live staking, coir logs, and riprap to prevent erosion and protect streambanks.

Establish riparian buffer zones
Create vegetative buffer zones along waterways, typically 50-100 feet wide, depending on the size of the stream and the surrounding land use.

Enhance wildlife habitat
Incorporate logs, boulders, and other structures in and around streams to create diverse habitats for aquatic and terrestrial species.

Plant native vegetation
Plant native trees, shrubs, and grasses within the buffer zones to stabilize banks, filter runoff, and provide habitat for wildlife.

Riparian Buffer Protection

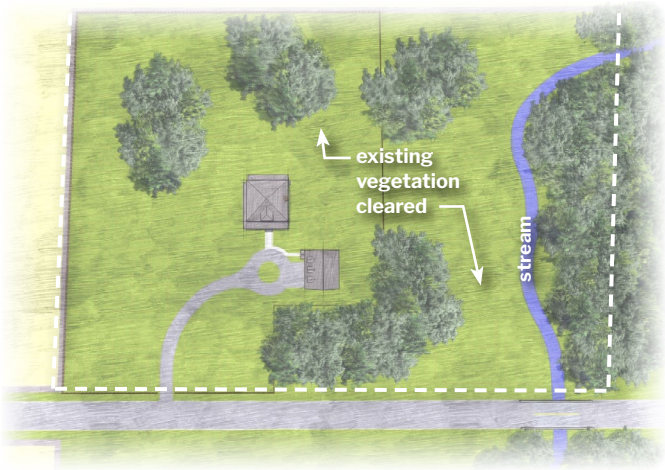
Purpose. The following riparian buffer protection standards have been designed to promote the public health, safety and welfare of the township residents by conserving protecting, and restoring natural riparian resources through scientifically supported processes.

Upper Oxford Township, Zoning Ordinance, Section 1432.A.

Minimize clearing of vegetation

Clear only as much vegetation as necessary to create a driveway entrance with adequate sight distance. Use curves in the driveway to increase the screening of new buildings. Open up views by selectively cutting small trees and lower branches of large trees, rather than by clearing large areas or removing mature trees.

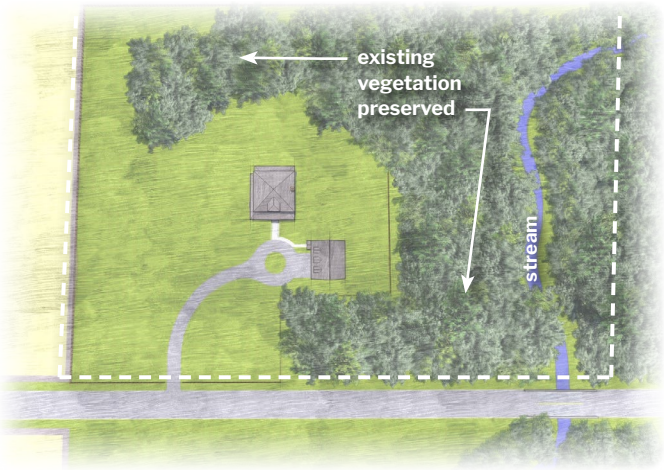
NOT RECOMMENDED



Preserve and enhance riparian corridors

Riparian areas, including buffer areas along delineated wetlands, should be preserved or restored with plantings of native vegetation to slow the flow of runoff, help remove sediment and pollutants, and decrease downstream erosion during major storms.

RECOMMENDED

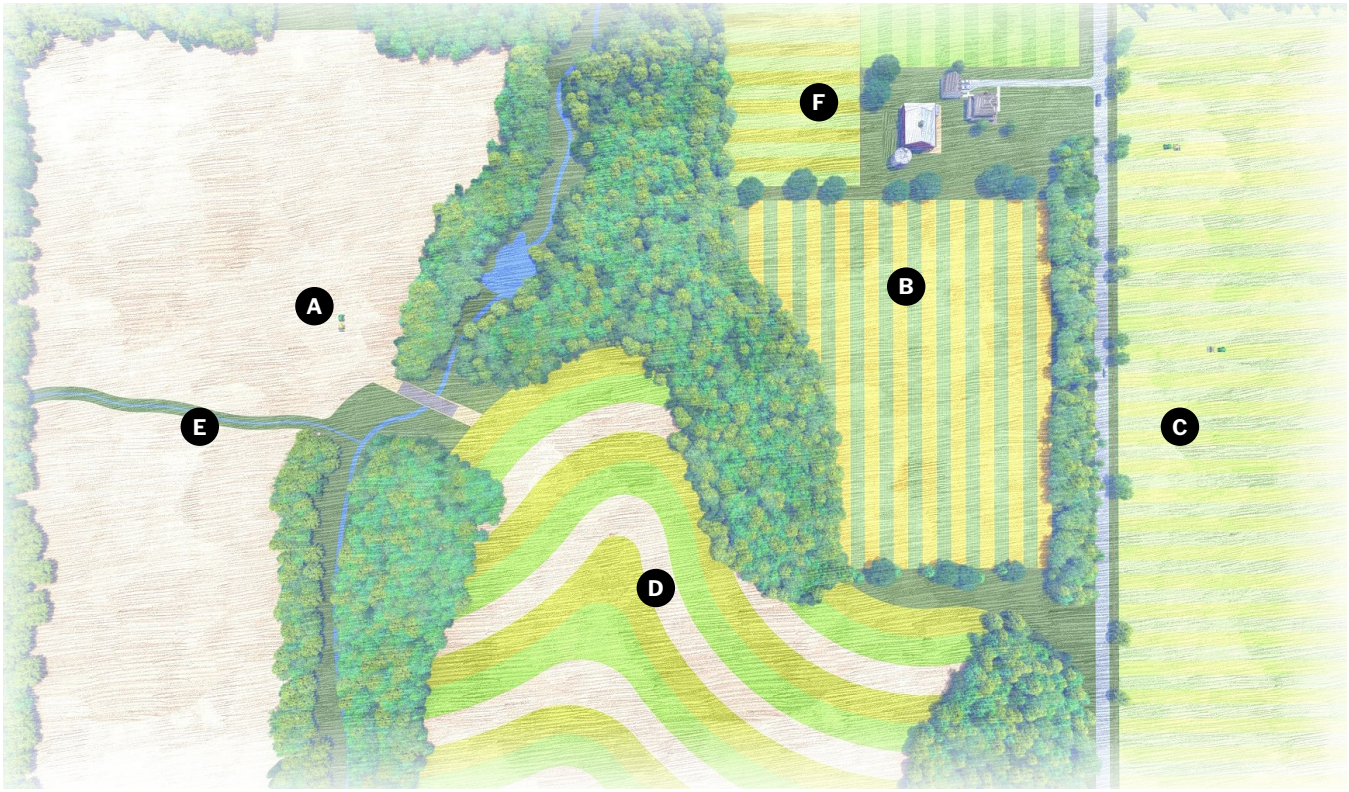


Toolbox
Riparian Buffers ▶
Conservation Easements ▶
Greenways ▶

SITE AMENITIES

Soil and water conservation practices

Soil conservation practices help protect soil from erosion by water or wind, reduce runoff from land into surface water, and maintain or improve soil quality. Soil quality is an integral part of water conservation. Well-developed soil allows irrigation water and rain to infiltrate rather than run off; it also has the capacity to retain the water that soaks in. Plant roots penetrate easily and deeply in quality soil and can reach water reserves held low in the soil profile. All of these attributes result in a reduced need for landscape irrigation. In addition, properly managed soil means fewer fertilizer and pesticide inputs, and less chance of chemical runoff - all of which contribute to cleaner, healthier water resources.



Soil Conservation Practices

A. **No-till or conservation tillage**
Minimize soil disturbance by reducing or eliminating plowing to enhance soil structure, increase water retention, and reduce erosion.

B. **Crop rotation**
Alternate different crops in a sequence over several growing seasons to improves soil fertility, reduce pest and disease buildup, and enhance soil structure.

C. **Cover crops**
Plant crops such as clover, rye, or legumes during off-seasons to reduce soil erosion, improve soil fertility, and enhances organic matter content.

D. **Contour farming**
Plow and plant across the slope of the land, following its natural contours to reduce soil erosion, improves water infiltration, and decreases runoff.

Toolbox
Steep Slope Protection ▶

Water Conservation Practices

E. **Grassed waterways**
Plant grass in natural drainage ways to slow down water flow and filter sediments to reduce erosion, improve water quality, and provide habitat for wildlife.

F. **Irrigation scheduling**
Plan irrigation based on crop water needs, soil moisture levels, and weather conditions to optimize water use, reduce waste, and improve crop yields.

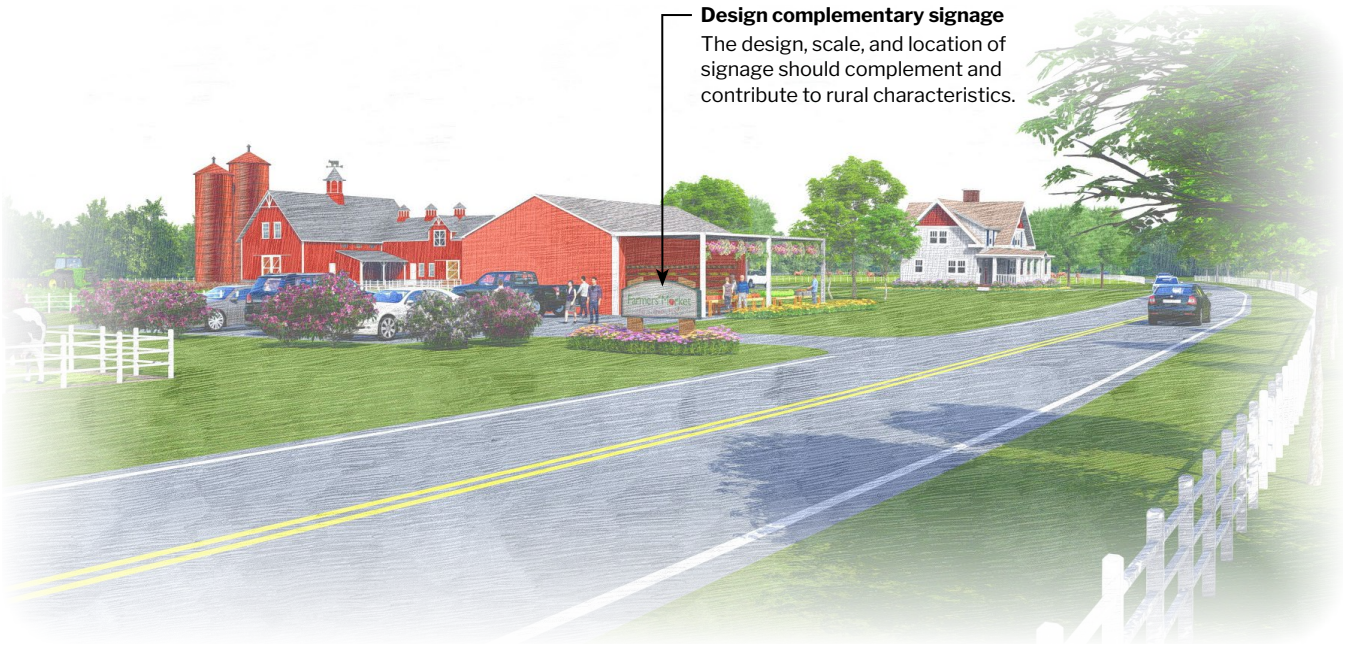
Conservation of Agriculturally Suited Soils

In subdivisions and land developments where, permanent open space is to be retained, the applicant shall, in conformance with other applicable ordinances, include in such open space those agriculturally suited soils whose acreage, location, and configuration offer continued or future opportunity for agriculture use.

Honey Brook Township, Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, 22-628.2 Section 22-628.2 ▶

Signs, fences, and walls that fit agricultural character and uses

Fitting signs, fences, and walls to the character and uses of the Agricultural landscape is crucial for maintaining aesthetic harmony, achieving economic benefits, and preserving cultural heritage. Signs, fences, and walls that blend with the natural and rustic charm of agricultural areas enhances the visual appeal of the landscape. Maintaining the agricultural character can preserve property values and the economic viability of farming and related activities, which are often closely tied to the land's appearance and functionality. Maintaining traditional styles and practices in the design of signs, fences, and walls helps preserve this heritage for future generations.



Signs

Use natural materials
Use wood, stone, or metal that blends with the rural environment.

Place strategically
Place signs at natural entry points, intersections, or areas where information is needed, but avoid blocking views or interfering with farming activities.

Size and scale appropriately
Keep signs proportionate to their surroundings and avoid tall or oversized signs that can dominate the landscape or obstruct views.

Minimize light pollution
Use low-intensity, downward-facing lights if illumination is necessary to minimize light pollution.

Use traditional forms

Consider hanging or monument signs with limited heights.

Sign Illumination

No sign in the A-Agricultural, RC-Resource Conservation, NR- Neighborhood Residential, or MUR-Mixed Use Residential zoning districts shall be indirectly and or internally illuminated.

Honey Brook Township, Zoning Ordinance, Section 27-914.H(2) ▶

Fences and Walls

Use local materials
Use locally sourced materials like wood or stone to blend with the landscape.

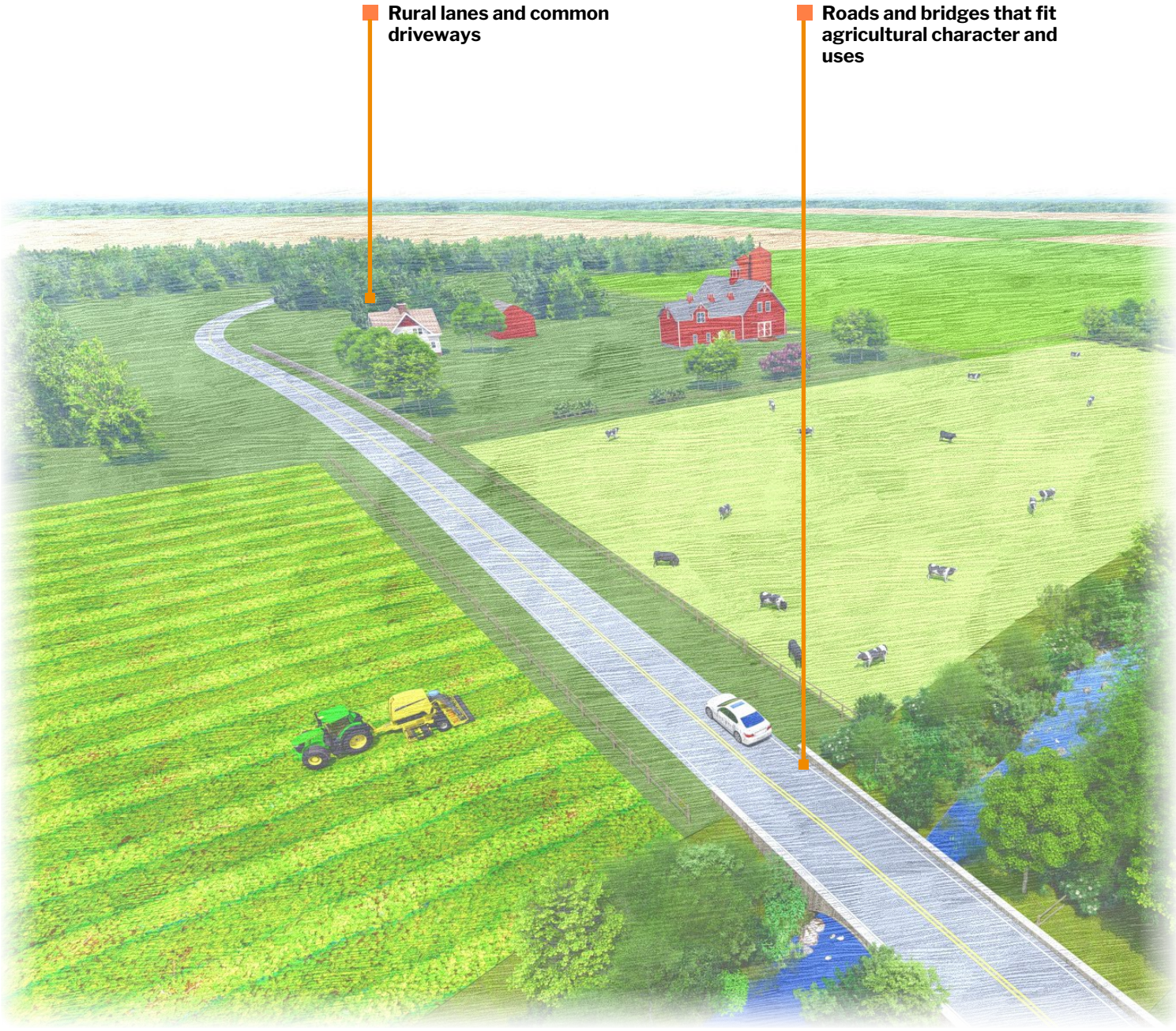
Utilize traditional styles
Choose designs that reflect local agricultural heritage, such as split rail fences or stone walls.

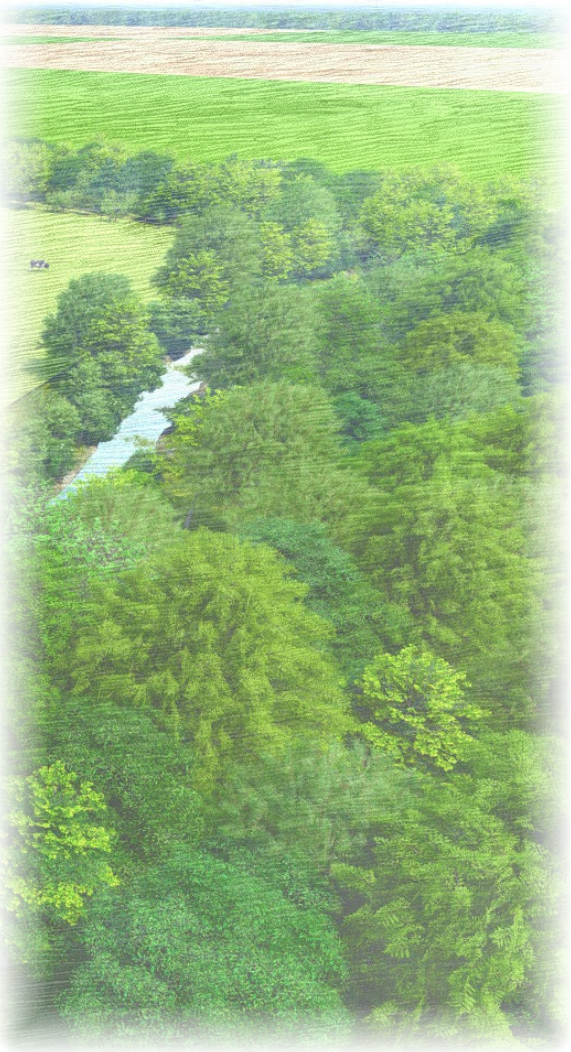
Integrate with the natural landscape
Integrate fences with hedgerows or other natural elements to create a seamless appearance.

Create a natural look with walls
Create a natural look with irregular stones or a mix of sizes and shapes and follow the natural contours of the land to minimize disruption and enhance stability.

Toolbox

Sign Regulations ▶
Retaining Wall Design Standards ▶


Rural lanes and common driveways
Roads and bridges that fit agricultural character and uses



TRANSPORTATION

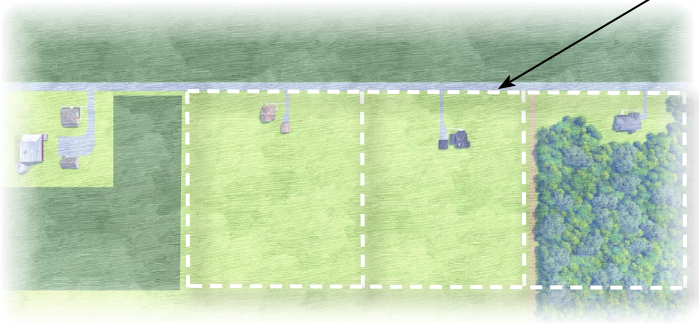
A safe, comfortable, and efficient transportation network incorporates design that reinforces walkability, enhances connectivity, and improves the quality of life for users. This section provides guidance on the design of elements supporting pedestrian safety and multimodal accessibility.

TRANSPORTATION

Rural lanes and common driveways

Access to residential development should preserve views and open space. New access should follow the natural topography of the land to reduce the impact of clearing, cut, and fill. Ideally, new access to small subdivisions should follow existing lanes or mimic rural lanes with a narrow width and drainage to open swales. Clustering new homes minimizes the length of new accessways and accommodates common driveways.

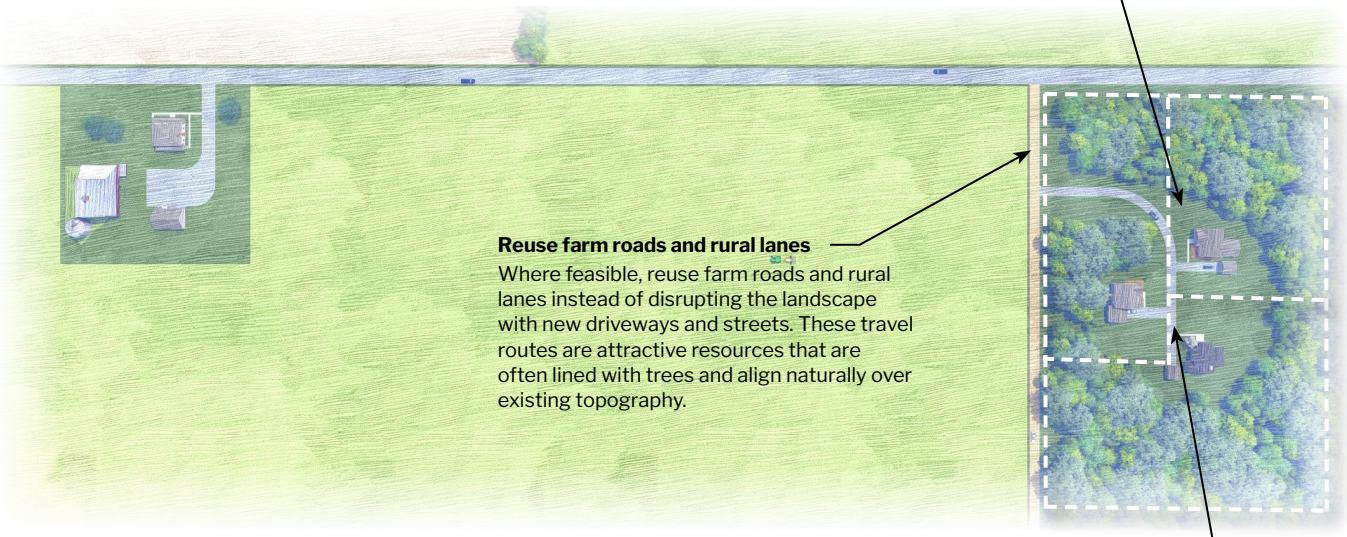
NOT RECOMMENDED



Avoid roadside sprawl
A conventional subdivision with lots along road frontage disrupts views of the Agricultural landscape with houses and driveways. When subdividing lots with long stretches of roadside frontage, tuck building sites into woodlands or hedgerows to maintain rural corridor characteristics.

Cluster small subdivisions
Cluster home sites to avoid fragmentation of the Agricultural landscape and minimize the length and intrusiveness of roads and utilities.

RECOMMENDED



Reuse farm roads and rural lanes
Where feasible, reuse farm roads and rural lanes instead of disrupting the landscape with new driveways and streets. These travel routes are attractive resources that are often lined with trees and align naturally over existing topography.

Design narrow common driveways
Narrow driveway widths and uncurbed edges blend with the landscape and are less costly to build and maintain and minimize stormwater runoff.

Local Access Roads

Roads designed to provide access to all abutting lots. Not intended for through trips, although may be used as such, particularly in rural areas.

Cartway width for local access roads: 20 feet

West Vincent Township, Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, Sections 315-43.B(1)(f) and (2)(a ▶

Toolbox

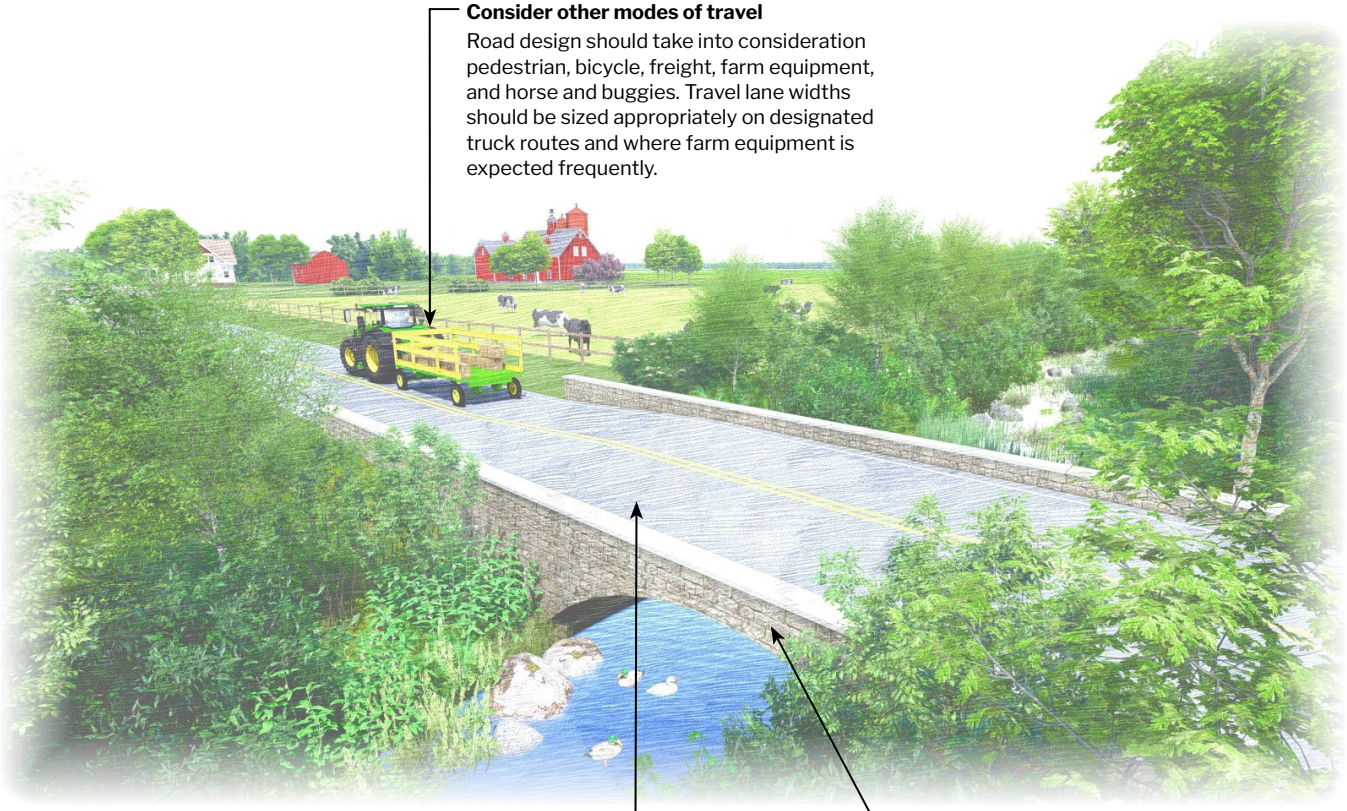
Chester County Transportation Policies ▶
Complete Streets Policy ▶
Multimodal Circulation Handbook for Chester County, PA ▶

TRANSPORTATION

Roads and bridges that fit agricultural character and uses

Roads and bridges should respect local character and fit into the Agricultural landscape, rather than dominate it. Roads mostly consist of two lanes and a shoulder or swale without curbs or sidewalks. Bridges have a rustic appearance that blend in with the Agricultural landscape.

Consider other modes of travel
Road design should take into consideration pedestrian, bicycle, freight, farm equipment, and horse and buggies. Travel lane widths should be sized appropriately on designated truck routes and where farm equipment is expected frequently.



Follow natural contours and minimize land disturbance
Design roads to follow the natural contours of the landscape to minimize grading and reduce erosion. Avoid prime agricultural land and sensitive habitats when planning road routes.

Integrate stone into new bridges and culverts
Natural stone was used as a primary building material for bridges and culverts up until the early twentieth century and the character of these features reflects the agricultural heritage of the county.

Scenic protection standards

Improvements such as buildings, structures, parking areas, and loading areas shall be located to minimize the impact on scenic views, minimize the disturbance of desirable natural vegetation, and maintain open views.

Highland Township, Zoning Ordinance, Section 401.2.A.3. ▶

Toolbox
Chester County Multimodal Handbook ▶

Essential Smart Growth Fixes for Rural Planning, Zoning, and Development Codes

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