

Agritourism Study – WORKING DRAFT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Study Vision

The Agritourism Study seeks to ~~celebrate-support~~ the evolving nature of farming and farmland in Montgomery County through the promotion of agricultural education and tourism activities as well as historic and cultural resources while reinforcing the need for the continued preservation of farming, farmland and rural open space in the county's Agricultural Reserve.

Commented [MJ1]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Consider buoy, support or sustain in lieu of celebrate.

STAFF RESPONSE: Replaced celebrate with support.

Abbreviated Purpose and Need

Agricultural education and tourism activities create new opportunities to preserve farming, farmland and rural open space as well as enhance the economic viability of agriculture. With new opportunities, there are also new challenges, including defining education and tourism activities, the ~~nexus-relationship~~ processes for regulating tourism activities.

Commented [MJ2]: STAFF EDIT: Staff edited this sentence to reflect the discussion during the September 16 meeting.

Existing agricultural education and tourism activities, including farm-to-table activities, small-scale wineries and breweries, events and festivals have been largely considered on an inconsistent and individual basis to date. The lack of a comprehensive, consistent and transparent approach to agritourism has resulted in uncertainty for farmers, business owners, entrepreneurs, residents and county staff.¹

This study attempts to identify and assess opportunities and constraints for the evolution of the Agricultural Reserve, including agricultural activities that have expanded beyond traditional farming, to preserve and sustain agriculture in Montgomery County. The study's underlying aim is to encourage activities—agricultural education and tourism activities—that increase residents' knowledge and understanding of the county's Agricultural Reserve, enhance its attractiveness and economic viability as a destination and support its farms and the families that operate them, while preserving agricultural culture and heritage.

This study seeks to develop a comprehensive, consistent menu of potential solutions for the promotion of agricultural education and tourism activities, while maintaining the integrity of the agricultural and rural character of the Agricultural Reserve.

Overview of Goals and Potential Solutions

Overarching goals for the Agritourism Study include:

¹Zoning Text Amendment Number 18-03 (ZTA No. 18-03) concerning Farm Alcohol Production Standards, was initiated concurrently with, but independent of, the Agritourism Study. It was adopted and effective in October 2018 and sought to promote new wineries, breweries, distilleries and cideries through clarification of regulatory processes and promotion of economic development incentives. The Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services and Office of Agriculture developed an Agricultural Producer Certificate for Farm Alcohol Production for new applications. The certificate is available:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DPS/Process/zspe/Agricultural-Breweries.html>

- Protect and preserve farming, farmland and rural open space in the Agricultural Reserve.
- Support existing and future agritourism activities through improved processes for agritourism businesses and promotional tools.
- Support agritourism activities with a direct ~~nexus-relationship~~ to agriculture, to facilitate preservation of farming, farmland and rural open space.
- Increase awareness of the Agricultural Reserve’s assets, including education of agricultural practices and better wayfinding.
- Provide inclusive and equitable access to the Agricultural Reserve.
- Anticipate and seek to avoid possible harms of agritourism.

Commented [MJ3]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Provide additional context (farm heritage, landscape – natural and man-made, viewsheds, structures and transportation routes such as the C&O Canal, Rustic Roads, Scenic Byway, etc).

STAFF RESPONSE: Additional context was added to the description of the Heritage Montgomery Management Plan in the Introduction Section.

Commented [MJ4]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Add this language as an additional goal.

STAFF RESPONSE: Discuss the addition of this goal during the October 29 meeting.

As there is no single solution to advance attainment of the study goals, the study identifies several potential solutions to promote, support and facilitate agritourism in Montgomery County. Each of the potential solutions recognizes the importance of maintaining the integrity of the natural, cultural and historic character of the Agricultural Reserve, as well as sustaining the economic viability of farming. Potential solutions range from developing an agritourism application process to provide consistency, predictability and transparency, to actively promoting and marketing agritourism and heritage tourism to Montgomery County residents, residents of the Washington Metropolitan Region and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

Study Background - (History and Context)

The Agricultural Reserve, established in 1980 with the adoption of the *Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan*, is a land conservation policy designed to protect farmland, agriculture and rural open space. The result of decades of planning and policy development, beginning with the 1964 *General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties*, the “Ag Reserve” enables preservation of agricultural and rural open space by concentrating growth and development along defined corridors and population centers. It includes approximately 93,000 acres – nearly a third of the county’s land – and extends along the county’s northern, eastern and western borders – from the Patuxent River to the Potomac River.

The intent of the ~~Agricultural Ag~~ Reserve, as defined by the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance (Section 4.2.1.A) is to “promote agriculture as the primary land use in areas of the county designated for agricultural preservation in the general plan, the Functional Master Plan for Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space, and other current or future master plans.”

INSERT MAP OF THE AG RESERVE HERE

While the *Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan* enabled preservation of agriculture, farmland and rural open space, it did not anticipate the changes in the farming industry, with decline in the traditional farming industry, the increase of table crops, or the growing demand for agricultural tourism and its impact on the ongoing preservation effort.

Increased interest in agricultural education, tourism and entertainment has prompted discussion about opportunities to enhance the economic viability of the Ag Reserve including mechanisms to support and diversify existing farms, promote new farms and celebrate the economic, environmental and social

value that the Ag Reserve provides to the residents of Montgomery County and the Washington Metropolitan Region.

The increased interest in agricultural education and tourism activities creates new opportunities to preserve farming and farmland as well as reinforce the agricultural economy. With these new opportunities, there are also new challenges, including defining the breadth of what constitutes “agritourism,” how to maintain the integrity of farming, farmland and rural open space and how to limit potential negative impacts of agritourism on the rural residential communities of the Ag Reserve. Further challenges include an inconsistent, undocumented process for the review and approval of agricultural education and tourism activities and the extent to which these activities should be regulated.

Relevant Plans and Studies

Existing plans and studies, including the 1980 *Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan* and the 2002 *Montgomery County Heritage Area Management Plan* establish a framework for the preservation of agriculture, rural open space and cultural heritage, and seek to celebrate the county’s farming history. As these plans represent the initiation of agricultural preservation and the recognition of an evolving Ag Reserve, they are important resources for the Agritourism Study.

Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan

The 1980 *Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan* established specific agricultural and rural open space preservation recommendations, including incentives and regulations designed to mitigate development pressure and promote the preservation of agriculture and rural open space. The 1980 Plan focused on the preservation of farmland, but also established a policy framework to contribute to the continuation of farming in Montgomery County, through the separation of development rights from farmland.

The Plan identified several tools to preserve agriculture and rural open space, including the Ag Reserve, a zoning district created for the primary agricultural preservation areas, rural residential zones and the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program, a mechanism designed to compensate land owners in the Ag Reserve for transferring residential development potential from the farmland preservation areas into areas of the county better suited for growth.

The TDR program, paired with a sustained commitment to agricultural tourism and preservation of farmland by Montgomery County’s Office of Agriculture, has helped retain more than 500 farms, nearly 1,500 horse farms and stables and 350 horticulture businesses which significantly contribute to the county’s economy. The retention of these farms and their economic contributions to the county, are particularly notable in a metropolitan region where development pressures remain perpetual and intense.

Montgomery County Heritage Area Management Plan

The *Montgomery County Heritage Area (Heritage Montgomery) Management Plan*, completed in 2002 for the Montgomery County Heritage Area Advisory Committee, sought to elevate the prominence of the county’s heritage for residents and visitors and strengthen the connection between the county’s

Commented [MJ5]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Expand this section to address existing and proposed regulations.

STAFF RESPONSE: This section was intended to provide an overview of the existing approved plans that form the foundation of our policy guidance for the study. The existing regulations are discussed in greater detail in the Consultant’s Code Assessment (Appendix D).

Commented [MJ6]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Edit study language for context and clarification.

STAFF RESPONSE: Edits incorporated and additional text added to provide context.

history and future. The Plan focused on three themes of the county's heritage: Farming History; Quakers and the Underground Railroad; and Technological Innovation. These three themes were expanded to include an additional theme in the 2018 Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Boundary Amendment and were also renamed to increase marketability, inclusion and appeal. The heritage themes are now: Rivers, Roads and Rails; Crossroads and Cultures; The Agricultural Reserve; and Heritage Gems.

The Heritage Montgomery Management The Plan recognized the value of tourism and economic development to sustain the county's agricultural and cultural heritage and established a strategic direction, action items and a framework for implementation to celebrate the county's heritage. The plan highlights and fosters stewardship and appreciation of Montgomery County's built infrastructure, including resources such as the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, the Scenic Byways and the Rustic Roads, as well as the natural landscape and cultural histories. The Agricultural Reserve Heritage Theme honors the county's vistas and viewsheds, rural roads, historic buildings, and farming heritage.

The Heritage Area provides grant funding, connection to local, state and federal agencies and their funding, legislative representation, technical assistance, marketing, destination development and guidance in the development of programs and attractions which serve residents, visitors and promote stewardship while supporting economic development.

Existing Agritourism Resources

The Montgomery County Office of Agriculture, in cooperation with several state and local agencies as well as nonprofit organizations, provides support to the county's agricultural community. This support includes technical assistance to farmers and agritourism entrepreneurs to navigate regulatory and legislative processes as well as assistance to market agricultural products. Initiatives such as the annual Farm Tour and Harvest Sale, farmer's markets, community supported agriculture, connections to regional wholesale buyers and a farm directory, support farmers and agritourism entrepreneurs in marketing their products to improve the economic viability of agriculture in Montgomery County.

The Office of Agriculture also serves as a liaison between the agricultural community and the Maryland Rural Enterprise Development Center, an initiative of the University of Maryland Extension within the college of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The Rural Enterprise Development Center provides a variety of technical assistance to farmers and property owners, including farm business planning, production and management techniques, selection of special crops and support for trending agricultural enterprises in Maryland, including agritourism.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Farming and farmland have evolved since the establishment of the Ag Reserve nearly four decades ago. In 1978, just prior to the establishment of the Ag Reserve, Montgomery County had 667 farms. This number remained relatively stable until 1992, when the number of farms decreased to 561. As shown in Figure 1, the number of farms has remained stable since the 1990s, with 558 farms identified in the 2017 Census of Agriculture produced by the United States Department of Agriculture.

While the number of farms has remained stable in the last 25 years, the average size of each farm has decreased from 178 acres in 1978 to 117 acres in 2017. During that same period, the amount of land devoted to farming decreased by nearly half, from 115,316 acres of farmland to 65,537 acres of farmland in 2017, as shown in Figure 2. Traditional agricultural activities, including grain farms and

Commented [MJ7]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Confirm if table crops are increasing or decreasing.

STAFF RESPONSE: The number of farms producing table crops – according to the Census of Ag, is increasing. This sentence, as well as the next paragraph have been edited to include table crops.

livestock operations have sustained, with an increase in [tabletop food production as well as](#) the horticulture and equestrian industries. The equestrian industry, including breeders, stables and facilities devoted to lessons, rentals, competitions and summer camps represent a significant component of the county's agricultural industry, with approximately 10,000 horses in the county in 2017.²

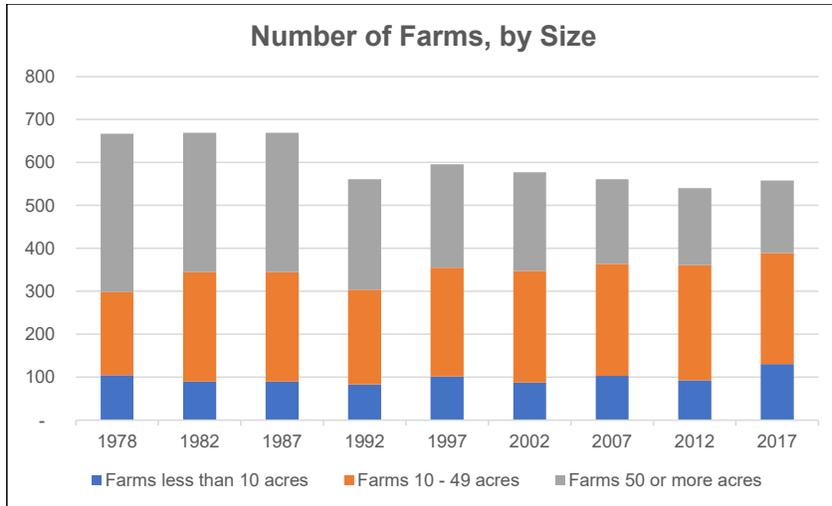


Figure 1: Number of Farms, by Size (Census of Agriculture, 1978-2017)

² In 2004, the definition of farming in Chapter 59 of the Montgomery County Code, the Zoning Ordinance, was amended to include horses and equestrian facilities. This amendment reflected a recognition of the growing demand for agritourism, with individuals seeking equestrian lessons, rentals, competitions and events.

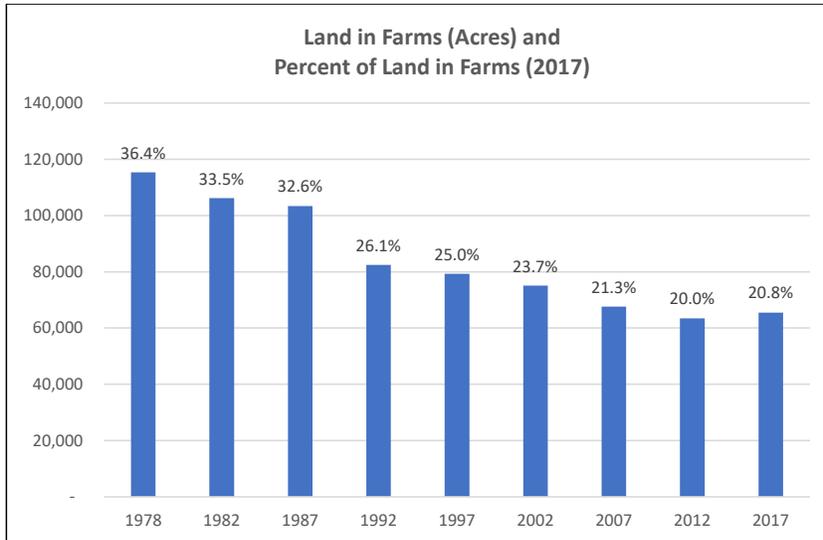


Figure 2: Land in Farms (Acres) and Percent of Land in Farms (2017) (Census of Agriculture, 1978-2017)

In addition to the growing prevalence of [tabletop food production](#), nurseries, sod farms, landscape companies, horse farms and equestrian facilities, there is also growing interest in [agricultural and cultural education and tourism activities/experiences](#). Recognizing the evolution of farmland and farming, the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance was updated in 2014 to permit agricultural education and tourism activities as an accessory use to farming. While the Zoning Ordinance does not explicitly define “agritourism,” it defines [farming](#), [agriculture](#) and [agricultural education and tourism](#) activities as shown in Figure 3:

FIGURE 3:

Farming: “the practice of agriculture on a property, and any associated buildings.”

Agriculture: “the business, science, and art of cultivating and managing the soil; composting, growing, harvesting and selling crops, and the products of forestry, horticulture, and hydroponics; breeding, raising, managing or selling livestock, including horses, poultry, fish, game, and fur-bearing animals; dairying, beekeeping, and similar activities; and equestrian events and activities.” Agriculture also “includes processing on the farm of an agricultural product to prepare the product for market and may cause a change in the natural form or state of the product.”

Agricultural education and tourism, are permitted as an accessory use to farming and are “conducted as part of a farm’s regular operations, with emphasis on hands-on experiences and events that foster increased knowledge of agriculture, including cultivation methods, animal care, water conservation, Maryland’s farming history, the importance of eating healthy, and locally grown foods. Allowed activities include corn mazes, hayrides, and educational tours, classes and workshops.” The Zoning

Commented [MJ8]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Suggested edits.

STAFF RESPONSE: Edits incorporated.

Commented [MJ9]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: The Zoning Ordinance definition of farming should be incorporated into the Agritourism Study process.

STAFF RESPONSE: The draft study includes the definition of farming, as shown in Figure 3. Potential Solutions 3b and 3c also specifically suggest defining “agritourism” consistent with the Zoning Ordinance’s definition of agricultural education and tourism.

Ordinance limits the maximum size of structures for agricultural education and tourism activities as well as requires approved sanitation facilities for the accessory use.

As shown in Appendix B, there are nearly 40 agricultural education and tourism activities as well as heritage tourism sites in Montgomery County, including farm markets, pick-your-own operations, community-supported agriculture (CSA) farms, animal sanctuaries, equestrian operations, breweries, wineries and other enterprises. In addition, there are also over 20 heritage sites and several physical features, trails, roads and historical and cultural resources that are supported by the preservation of the Ag Reserve. These include two National Register Districts, the Seneca Historic District and the C&O Canal Historic District as well as locally designated districts, sites and resources such as the Pleasant View Historic Site, Sandy Spring Slave Museum and African Art Gallery, Smithville Colored School, Audubon Naturalist Society Woodend Sanctuary, Seneca Creek State Park, and Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission parks. These historical and cultural resources represent Montgomery County's early agricultural, cultural and industrial heritage and provide opportunities to experience historic African American communities and Native American viewsheds and sites.

Commented [MJ10]: ASAC member stated: this is not an accurate number; it is much higher.

STAFF RESPONSE: This section has been edited to reflect the significant number of heritage sites and provide additional information on these sites. Appendix B has also been updated to reflect these resources.

Commented [MJ11]: ASAC member suggested addition of National and Montgomery County Historic Register structures, Montgomery County Parks, heritage sites, and Native American view sheds and sites.

STAFF RESPONSE: This section was edited to better reflect the heritage resources.

The existing agritourism and heritage tourism enterprises are largely oriented toward educational entertainment and outdoor activities, offering opportunities for visitors to directly connect with agriculture and history through activities such as pick-your-own, hayrides and corn mazes, as well as hiking, biking, canoeing and kayaking. The agricultural education and tourism activities, paired with the historical and cultural resources, provide a unique opportunity to promote, market and appreciate activate the Ag Reserve as well as reinforce the need for its continued preservation.

Commented [MJ12]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Suggested edits.

STAFF RESPONSE: Edits incorporated.

Commented [MJ13]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Consider a different word for "activate." What does it mean to "activate" the Ag Reserve?

STAFF RESPONSE: Revised activate to appreciate.

Relevant Stakeholders

Agritourism involves a range of stakeholders, including farmers, business owners, landowners, artisans, equestrian operations operators, farm alcohol producers, event hosts, environmentalists, preservationists, tourists and residents in the Ag Reserve to residents of Montgomery County and the Washington Metropolitan Region. While these stakeholders are most directly affected by agritourism, the general public all County residents benefit from the existence of and the ability to visit the Ag Reserve. The Ag Reserve provides an opportunity for the public to directly experience an agrarian landscape, increase awareness of locally grown agricultural products and develop an understanding of and appreciation for Montgomery County's past.

Commented [MJ14]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Suggested edits.

STAFF RESPONSE: Edits incorporated.

Commented [MJ15]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Suggested edits.

STAFF RESPONSE: Edits incorporated.

Commented [MJ16]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Suggest explaining how.

STAFF RESPONSE: This section was edited to explain how the public benefits from the Ag Reserve – from the perspective of agritourism / heritage tourism.

Commented [MJ17]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Suggested edits.

STAFF RESPONSE: Edits incorporated.

Study Purpose and Need

Increased interest in agricultural education, tourism, and entertainment and eating locally have allowed farmers to diversify their business, while preserving farming and farmland. Apart from equestrian events and the recently adopted farm alcohol production standards, governing wineries, breweries, distilleries and cideries, agritourism venues and events have been discussed and addressed individually as these initiatives have emerged. The Agritourism Study seeks to develop a comprehensive, countywide approach to promote agricultural tourism, while preserving the agricultural and rural character as well as the intent of the Ag Reserve.

This study attempts to identify and assess opportunities and constraints for the evolution of the Ag Reserve, including agricultural activities that have expanded beyond traditional farming, to preserve and sustain agriculture in Montgomery County. The study's underlying aim is to encourage activities—agricultural education and tourism activities—that increase residents' knowledge and understanding of

the county's Ag Reserve, enhance its attractiveness and economic viability as a destination and support its farms and the families that operate them, while preserving agricultural culture and heritage.

STUDY PROCESS / OUTREACH

Agritourism Study Advisory Committee

The Planning Department formed the Agritourism Study Advisory Committee (ASAC) in October 2017 and formally invited members of the agricultural community, industry experts, governmental representatives and community members. The role of the ASAC was to review the progress of the study and provide guidance at key intervals or decision points during the development of the study. The representation on the ASAC was intended to provide a balanced discourse on the current issues, impacts and status of agritourism in Montgomery County.

The ASAC met regularly over two years and discussions focused on the following themes:

- The Ag Reserve and its natural resources should be protected and preserved, but also evolve to enhance economic viability of farming and agricultural land, including agricultural economic development through tourism.
 - As agritourism evolves, the Ag Reserve's unique ability to produce agricultural products for the region must be preserved.
- The Ag Reserve has evolved since its establishment.
 - ~~Traditional farming~~ Farming activities continue to have evolved to maintain improve economic viability and to reflect diverse interests.
 - Increased education and awareness are necessary to convey how and why we have the Ag Reserve.
 - Ongoing agritourism activities and events are increasing and evolving, with an increased interest in and demand for access to the Ag Reserve countywide.
- Challenges to supporting agritourism today, as well as in the future, include:
 - An inconsistent, undocumented process for agritourism businesses.
 - Providing a clear definition of what is allowed under the agritourism definition.
 - Adequate facilities and infrastructure to accommodate events.
 - Balancing the need for flexibility ~~with~~ while applying clear regulations.
 - Inconsistent enforcement.
 - A strong bias against preserving and stewarding historic and heritage assets which provide the context and fabric for the visitor experience.

The themes, supported by a majority of the Committee members, provided the foundation for the goals of the study and guided the potential solutions identified to advance achievement of the study goals.

Comparative Review of Agritourism Policies and Code Assessment

In the last several years, agritourism has grown significantly in many areas across the United States – including in the Washington Metropolitan Region. According to the Census of Agriculture produced by the United States Department of Agriculture, the number of farms participating in agritourism and recreational services – including activities such as hunting and fishing- significantly increased in the last

Commented [MJ18]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Noted disagreement with the word change (from maintain to improve) during the September ASAC Meeting.

STAFF RESPONSE: Discuss during the 10/29 Meeting, if necessary.

Commented [MJ19]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Change from "evolving" to "changing."

STAFF RESPONSE: Discuss during the 10/29 Meeting, if necessary.

Commented [MJ20]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Suggested an additional challenge.

STAFF RESPONSE: This "challenge" appears to be more of a solution than a challenge – and is included in the menu of potential solutions. This can be discussed during the 10/29 Meeting, if necessary.

Commented [MJ21]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Improve the grammar of this challenge.

STAFF RESPONSE: Discuss during the 10/29 Meeting. Potential language: "Balancing the need for flexibility with application of clear regulations."

Commented [MJ22]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Suggested an additional challenge.

STAFF RESPONSE: Discuss during the 10/29 Meeting.

several years, with nearly 30,000 farms in 2017. Farms with agritourism and recreational services have also grown significantly in both Maryland and Virginia, as shown in Figure 4.

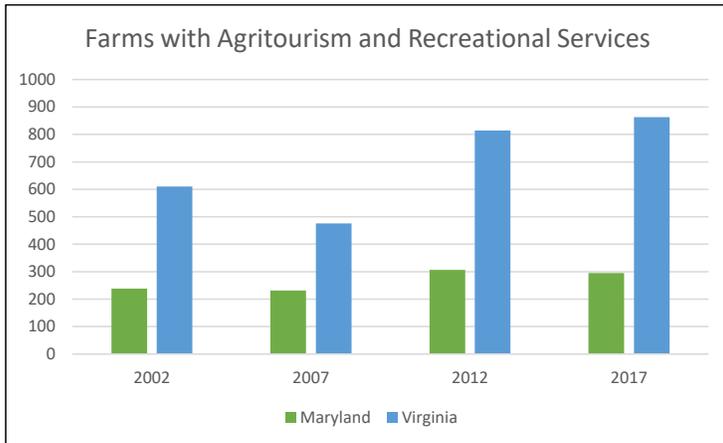


Figure 4: Farms with Agritourism and Recreational Services (Census of Agriculture, 2002-2017)

According to the Census of Agriculture, Montgomery County has experienced an increase in farms participating in agritourism and recreational services since 2002, but the growth of agritourism in Montgomery County ~~has not kept pace with other locations~~ ~~has been slower than other locations~~ in the Washington Metropolitan Region. Loudoun County, Virginia, for example, ~~has significantly outpaced Montgomery County in the number of agritourism operations~~ ~~shows significantly more growth in agritourism than Montgomery County~~, as shown in Figure 5.

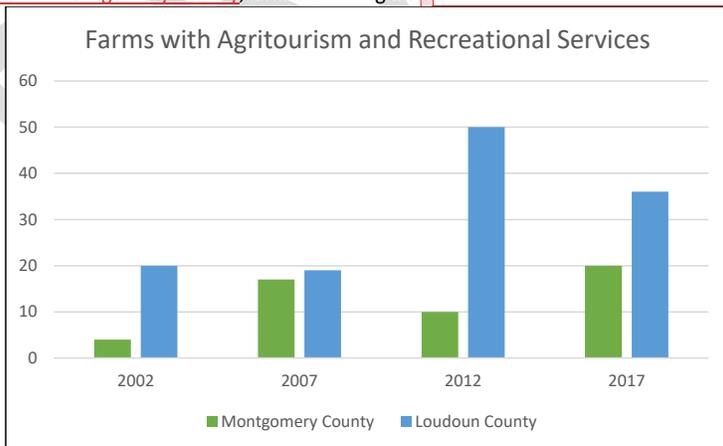


Figure 5: Farms with Agritourism and Recreational Services (Census of Agriculture, 2002-2017)

Commented [MJ23]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Clarify the range of activities in recreational services.

STAFF RESPONSE: The Census of Agriculture groups Agritourism and "Recreational Services" and defines this as "hunting, fishing farm or wine tours, hay rides, etc." The preceding paragraph includes hunting and fishing as examples to define recreational services.

Commented [MJ24]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Objects to draft language because it infers that Montgomery County is lagging and inadequate, but the reality is that Montgomery County is more cautious and conservative in advancing agritourism because of well-founded fears of harm to the Reserve. ASAC Member suggested edits to the language are shown in track changes.

STAFF RESPONSE: Suggested edits are shown in track changes.

Commented [MJ25]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Questions the continued comparison to Loudoun County, as it does not provide a true comparable - it does not have a designated Ag Reserve. Has the rapid expansion of on farm event facilities in Loudoun County created issues? What nexus to agriculture is maintained?

STAFF RESPONSE: Suggested edits are shown in track changes.

However, between 2012 and 2017 the number of farms participating in agritourism and recreational services doubled in Montgomery County, from ten to twenty farms.³

Montgomery Planning engaged a consultant team to conduct a study of agritourism policies and regulations in Montgomery County and comparable jurisdictions within the Washington Metropolitan Region and across the United States to identify strategies for managing, regulating and promoting agritourism. The consultant team conducted initial research to understand regulatory issues and best practices in agritourism as well as identify national and regional leaders in agritourism. The consultant team then selected ten jurisdictions, based on criteria including development patterns and demographics, for further research to better understand how other locations are addressing a changing agricultural economy. The Comparative Review of Agritourism Policies and Code Assessment, prepared by Rhoadside & Harwell and EPR, PC, are included in Appendix D.

The review of ten comparable jurisdictions and the assessment of Montgomery County's Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance and Building Code were used as a technical input to inform this study. The comparative review and code assessment provided an increased awareness of potential challenges with promoting agritourism as well as potential solutions for successfully promoting, marketing and advancing agritourism in Montgomery County.

AGRITOURISM STUDY GOALS

During their June 26, 2019 meeting, the ASAC established the following goals to guide the Agritourism Study:

- Protect and preserve farming, farmland, culture and rural open space in the Agricultural Reserve.
- Support existing and future agritourism activities through improved processes for agritourism businesses and promotional tools.
- Support agritourism activities with a direct nexus-relationship to agriculture, to facilitate preservation of farming, farmland and rural open space.
- Increase awareness of the Ag Reserve's assets, including education of agricultural practices and better wayfinding.
- Provide inclusive and equitable access to the Ag Reserve.
- Provide protection and support to existing heritage communities and sites.

MENU OF POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

There is no single solution to advance attainment of the study goals. For this reason, the study identifies several potential solutions to promote, support and facilitate agritourism in Montgomery County. Each of the potential solutions recognizes the importance of maintaining the integrity of the natural, cultural and historic character of the Ag Reserve, as well as sustaining the economic viability of farming.

³ The United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service Census of Agriculture includes data related to the inventory and sale of horses, but does not include boarding, training, and riding facilities. Therefore, the growth in agritourism and recreational services in Montgomery County between 2012 and 2017 does not include potential growth in equestrian operations.

Commented [MJ26]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: What is the source of this data?

STAFF RESPONSE: This data (10 to 20 farms) is from the 2012 and 2017 Census of Agriculture.

Commented [MJ27]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Does the term farms, in this context, include equestrian operations?

STAFF RESPONSE: As this is data from the Census of Ag, it likely does not include equestrian operations. Staff has included a footnote to clarify that this does not include equestrian operations.

Commented [MJ28]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Please note very clearly that these areas were chosen only because they have developed agritourism. The tourism element is literally separate from context and does not integrate. In most cases, they do not reflect areas that have developed agritourism derived from assets other than tourism friendly farms. Our area differs substantially in that we have excellent existing plants for heritage, farm, cultural and natural resources from which a strong tourism and branding plan can be written which supports all visitor and educational assets.

STAFF RESPONSE: This section was edited to clarify how the jurisdictions were selected.

Commented [MJ29]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Please add culture to the first goal.

STAFF RESPONSE: Discuss during the 10/29 Meeting.

Commented [MJ30]: ASAC MEMBER REQUEST: Suggested an additional edit to the goals.

STAFF RESPONSE: Discuss during the 10/29 Meeting.

The potential solutions are organized by the study goal that each solution supports. Prospective partners in the implementation of each solution are also identified.

Goal: *Protect and preserve farming, farmland and rural open space in the Agricultural Reserve.*

1a.	Potential Solution:	Establish criteria to confirm that agriculture is the primary use of the property for new agritourism initiatives, consistent with the intent of the Agricultural Reserve zone.
	Potential Mechanism:	Document criteria in interdepartmental memoranda to provide consistent staff guidance. Publish memoranda on Montgomery County website to provide clarity and transparency for staff, applicants and residents.
	Prospective Partners:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Montgomery County Office of Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services

Commented [MJ31]: TWO ASAC MEMBERS REQUEST: Define primary.

STAFF RESPONSE: The Agritourism Study will not define “primary” or “principal” uses but does include several potential solutions (3a, 3b, 3c and 3d) to define agritourism as an accessory use to the primary - or principal - use of agriculture in the future. The Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services and the Office of Agriculture currently request a site plan and a business plan to confirm that agricultural education and tourism activities are an accessory use. Accessory uses are currently determined through the percentage of farmland used, frequency of events and activities, and the footprint of structures for agricultural education and tourism activities. Several potential solutions suggest formally developing, documenting and publishing this process in consultation with many prospective partners to provide clarity, transparency and consistency for staff, applicants and residents.

1b.	Potential Solution:	Continue to provide funding and support, including staff resources and marketing, to sustain and grow the Office of Agriculture’s New Farmer Project to provide mentoring and specialized business training to new farmers interested in agritourism.
	Potential Mechanism:	Identify funding source
	Prospective Partners:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation University of Maryland Extension Montgomery Countryside Alliance

Commented [MJ32]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Why not promulgate regulations with criteria? If interdepartmental memo, would this document be publicly available to anyone? Besides general public, seems like criteria for review by staff would be useful to applicants.

STAFF RESPONSE: Staff suggested edit shown in tracked changes. Discuss during the 10/29 meeting.

1c.	<u>Potential Solution:</u>	Establish a monitoring and enforcement program for agritourism initiatives to ensure that agritourism activities are permitted and accessory to agriculture.
	<u>Potential Mechanism:</u>	Identify funding source and staff resources
	<u>Prospective Partners:</u>	Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services

Commented [MJ33]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: This is a critical item as most would like to avoid large-scale loss of farming to businesses that acquire affordable acreage for land use that has no connection to agriculture being conducted on the site. It was an issue raised with regard to ZTA-18-03 where provision was made for some businesses to import much of their inputs from off farm and process and provide for large-scale accessory uses.

STAFF RESPONSE: Acknowledged. Please confirm if this potential solution is adequate in addressing this item.

Goal: *Support existing and future agritourism activities through improved processes for agritourism businesses and promotional tools.*

2a.	Potential Solution:	Coordinate with the University of Maryland Extension to support agritourism, including the development of a Beginning Agritourism Guidebook, like the “Beginning Farmer Guidebook,” assistance with strategic diversification and business and marketing plans.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Maryland Extension Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation

	Montgomery County Revenue Authority
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2b.	Potential Solution:	Develop an agritourism application with checklists, instructions, general standards and links to applicable resources to provide consistency, predictability and transparency for agritourism businesses and entrepreneurs, similar to the Agricultural Producer Certificate for Farm Alcohol Production (Refer to Appendix E).
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Montgomery County Office of Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board

2c.	Potential Solution:	Develop and document a process for the review and approval of agritourism applications, including review by the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services , Montgomery County Office of Agriculture and either the Agricultural Advisory Committee, or the Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board, if the venue is subject to an agricultural easement. Publish memoranda on Montgomery County website to provide clarity and transparency for staff, applicants and residents.
	Potential Mechanism:	Distribute interdepartmental memoranda to document the review and approval process.
	Prospective Partners:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation Montgomery County Office of Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board Montgomery Planning Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Montgomery Soil Conservation District Montgomery County Revenue Authority Rustic Roads Advisory Committee

Commented [MJ34]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Who does this?
 STAFF RESPONSE: The agencies, organizations and committees identified as “prospective partners” could be involved in developing and documenting a process.

Commented [MJ35]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Enforcement mechanisms and resources need to be discussed.
 STAFF RESPONSE: Staff has included a new potential solution (1c) to address monitoring and enforcement.

Commented [MJ36]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: This potential solution concedes too much control to a single entity.
 STAFF RESPONSE: Staff has included the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services as a reviewer in the potential solution. In addition, several agencies and organizations are listed as “prospective partners” in the development of this potential solution.

2d.	Potential Solution:	Complete a feasibility study to identify appropriate county-owned land to accommodate visitor serving uses and facilities, including restrooms and parking, in the Agricultural Reserve which support agricultural education and tourism activities as well as historic and cultural resources.
	Potential Mechanism:	Feasibility study

	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Department of General Services Montgomery Parks Montgomery Planning Visit Montgomery Montgomery Countryside Alliance Montgomery County Revenue Authority Rustic Roads Advisory Committee
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2e.	Potential Solution:	Exempt agricultural buildings used for agritourism from certain permit requirements, pursuant to the Maryland Public Safety Code Section 12-508.
	Potential Mechanism:	Montgomery County Council approves application of Maryland Public Safety Code Section 12-508 to Montgomery County.
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Council Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Montgomery Planning Montgomery County Office of Agriculture

2f.	Potential Solution:	Establish an Interagency Working Group to review relevant Chapters of the Montgomery County Code to identify opportunities for refinement, enhancement and modifications to support agritourism. Topics of discussion may include use permits, historic area work permits, building permits, occupancy permits, on-site sewage facilities, parking, access and signage.
	Potential Mechanism:	Distribute interagency memoranda to form the Interagency Working Group
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Montgomery Planning Montgomery Soil Conservation District Rustic Roads Advisory Committee

Commented [MJ37]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: More than other aspects, this needs to be crafted extremely carefully. Sewage constrains are an important mechanism for controlling growth in the Ag Reserve, so it's extremely important that in trying to help agritourism potty woes, the solution cannot be misused in other circumstances than for which it is intended.

STAFF RESPONSE: Acknowledged. Please clarify if revisions to the potential solution or an additional potential solution are necessary.

2g.	Potential Solution:	Identify suitable alternatives to portable toilets, such as bathroom trailers or on-site holding tanks. Determine procedure to pursue suitable alternatives.
	Potential Mechanism:	Study
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services

Commented [MJ38]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: More than other aspects, this needs to be crafted extremely carefully. Sewage constrains are an important mechanism for controlling growth in the Ag Reserve, so it's extremely important that in trying to help agritourism potty woes, the solution cannot be misused in other circumstances than for which it is intended.

STAFF RESPONSE: Acknowledged. Please clarify if revisions to the potential solution or an additional potential solution are necessary.

	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture
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2h.	Potential Solution:	Develop a program within the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Licensure and Regulatory Services Division, to specifically serve agritourism businesses and assist with applications, plans, <u>review and approval processes</u> , fees, permitting and licenses for the county and state. Consider waiving or reducing fees for new agritourism businesses.
	Potential Mechanism:	Identify funding source
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

Commented [MJ39]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Additional language recommended in potential solutions.
STAFF RESPONSE: Language added in tracked changes.

2i.	Potential Solution:	Identify funding and staff resources to promote and market the Agricultural Reserve, agritourism and heritage tourism to Montgomery County residents, residents of the Washington Metropolitan Region and tourists.
	Potential Mechanism:	Identify funding source, websites, printed materials, social media and web-based applications
	Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation Heritage Montgomery <u>Montgomery Countryside Alliance</u> <u>Montgomery County Revenue Authority</u>

2j.	Potential Solution:	Develop a resident awareness program to educate and inform Montgomery County residents about the Agricultural Reserve.
	Potential Mechanism:	Meetings, Tours and Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Planning Montgomery County Regional Services Center Directors and Citizen Advisory Boards Heritage Montgomery <u>Montgomery Countryside Alliance</u> <u>Montgomery County Revenue Authority</u>

2k.	Potential Solution:	Develop and promote a Montgomery County Agritourism website to provide resources and a single point of contact for questions related to <u>agritourism</u> <u>by farmers and agritourism entrepreneurs</u> .
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services <u>Montgomery County Revenue Authority</u>

Commented [MJ40]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: We might consider a website that is a resource for farmers and a separate website that promotes the AR and is a tool / resource for visitors.
STAFF RESPONSE: Staff added “by farmers and agritourism entrepreneurs” to the potential solution and also added a new potential solution.

	University of Maryland Extension
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2l.	<u>Potential Solution:</u>	<u>Develop and promote a Montgomery County Agritourism website to provide resources and information for visitors.</u>
	<u>Potential Mechanism:</u>	<u>Online Resources</u>
	<u>Prospective Partners:</u>	<u>Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery</u> <u>Montgomery County Office of Agriculture</u> <u>Montgomery Countryside Alliance</u> <u>Heritage Montgomery</u> <u>Montgomery County Revenue Authority</u>

2l2m.	Potential Solution:	Maintain <u>and improve</u> rustic roads pursuant to the maintenance and improvement requirements in the Montgomery County Code.
	<u>Potential Mechanism:</u>	<u>StudyEnforcement</u>
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Department of Transportation Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Planning Rustic Roads Advisory Committee

2n.	<u>Potential Solution:</u>	<u>Provide funding and staff resources to support the expedited review of new and evolving agritourism businesses.</u>
	<u>Potential Mechanism:</u>	<u>Identify funding source</u>
	<u>Prospective Partners:</u>	<u>Montgomery County Office of Agriculture</u> <u>Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services</u>

Goal: *Support agritourism activities with a direct nexus-relationship to agriculture, to facilitate preservation of farming, farmland and rural open space.*

3a.	Potential Solution:	Develop, document and publish an agritourism policy and administrative review process to provide guidance on the types of agritourism activities permitted, their <u> nexus relationship</u> to agriculture and the process for review and approval of agritourism activities.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Agricultural Advisory Committee

3b.	<u>Potential Solution:</u>	<u>Establish criteria to define the required relationship to agriculture for agritourism activities.</u>
	<u>Potential Mechanism:</u>	<u>Document criteria in interdepartmental memoranda to provide consistent staff guidance. Publish memoranda on Montgomery County website to provide clarity and transparency for staff, applicants and residents.</u>

Commented [MJ41]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Stress that the rustic road regulations do not prohibit road improvements, Chapter 49 Article 8, Section 49-79.

STAFF RESPONSE: Staff included an edit – shown in track changes – to reiterate that road improvements are not prohibited.

Commented [MJ42]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: This potential solution aligns better with Goal 2. Recommend moving to Goal 2.

STAFF RESPONSE: Staff concurs that this aligns with Goal 2 and has relocated the potential solution.

Commented [MJ43]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: It is necessary to define "relationship."

STAFF RESPONSE: Staff added a new potential solution to define "relationship."

Commented [MJ44]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Add a potential solution about pre-event ticketing to limit size of events.

STAFF RESPONSE: Staff included an additional potential solution under Goal 4 related to pre-event ticketing.

<u>Prospective Partners:</u>	<u>Montgomery County Office of Agriculture</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Agricultural Advisory Committee</u> ▪ <u>Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board</u> <u>Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services</u>
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<u>3b3c.</u>	Potential Solution:	Define agritourism <u>in the definitions section of the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance (Section 1.4.2) as: Agritourism includes: "Agritourism" includes: Accessory agricultural education and tourism activities conducted as a part of a farm's regular operations, with emphasis on hands-on experiences and events that foster increased knowledge of agriculture, including cultivation methods, animal care, water conservation, Maryland's farming history, the importance of eating healthy, and locally grown foods. Allowed activities include corn mazes, hay rides, and educational tours, classes, and workshops. The maximum footprint for any structure and the total footprint of all structures primarily used for education or tourism is limited to 10% of the total footprint square footage of all structures on the site used for agriculture. The property must have DPS approved sanitation facilities for this accessory use.</u> an accessory use to farming. Establish standards and a tiered approach for agricultural education and tourism activities, <u>similar to the standards established for Equestrian Events in the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance (Section 3.2.4), that distinguishes those that can occur as a matter of right from those that require discretionary approval (including administrative limited or conditional use).</u>
	Potential Mechanism:	Zoning Text Amendment
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery Planning Montgomery County Office of Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation and Advisory Board Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services <u>Montgomery Countryside Alliance</u>

<u>3e3d.</u>	Potential Solution:	Define agritourism <u>in the definitions section of the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance (Section 1.4.2) as: Agritourism includes: "Agritourism" includes: Accessory agricultural education and tourism activities conducted as a part of a farm's regular operations, with emphasis on hands-on experiences and events that foster increased knowledge of agriculture, including cultivation methods, animal care, water conservation, Maryland's farming history, the importance of eating healthy, and locally</u>
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Commented [MJ45]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Add equestrian facilities as tiered events serves as an example.

STAFF RESPONSE: Suggested language included as track change.

Commented [MJ46]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: The discretionary approval – including a conditional use – is extremely important.

STAFF RESPONSE: The potential solution, as drafted, refers to the establishment of standards and a tiered approach to define those activities that can occur as a matter of right, versus those that require a limited or conditional use. While this is a potential solution, the standards and tiered approach will not be determined through this study.

Commented [MJ47]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: When are we going to address the conditional use process that could be quite helpful in advancing agritourism businesses that may be able to be supported under certain conditions? When this tool is suggested for more intense proposals, it is rejected as being too onerous. Surely that is not the best answer and not in the public interest.

STAFF RESPONSE: Staff included two potential solutions in the draft study that specifically discuss zoning text amendments to define agritourism and establish a tiered approach to distinguish those uses and standards that are permitted (occur as a matter of right) from those that require discretionary approval (i.e. limited or conditional uses).

This study will include these potential solutions, but is not currently envisioned as the vehicle to define the tiered ...

Commented [MJ48]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Expressed support for using the tiered approach developed for equestrian events.

STAFF RESPONSE: Acknowledged.

Commented [MJ49]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Farm alcohol production is a limited use and there are similarities between farm alcohol production and agritourism therefore it makes sense to consider ag tourism as a limited use.

STAFF RESPONSE: The potential solution, as drafted, refers to the establishment of standards and a tiered approach to define those activities that can occur as a matter of right, versus those that require a limited or conditional use. Wh ...

Commented [MJ50]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Administrative and conditional use signify a more complex process. How does this differ from limited use?

STAFF RESPONSE: As "administrative" is not defined in the Zoning Ordinance, staff recommends revising this to reference "limited" and "conditional" uses rather than administrative.

		<p><u>grown foods. Allowed activities include corn mazes, hay rides, and educational tours, classes, and workshops. The maximum footprint for any structure and the total footprint of all structures primarily used for education or tourism is limited to 10% of the total footprint square footage of all structures on the site used for agriculture. The property must have DPS approved sanitation facilities for this accessory use.</u></p> <p>-an accessory use to farming-</p> <p>Establish an overlay zone for the Agricultural Reserve (AR) Zone to identify permitted agritourism uses and established standards and a tiered approach for <u>new</u> agritourism <u>venues</u> that distinguishes the uses and standards that can occur as a matter of right from those that require discretionary approval (including <u>administrative limited</u> or conditional use).</p>
Potential Mechanism:		Zoning Text Amendment to Establish the Overlay Zone
Prospective Partners:		Montgomery Planning Montgomery County Office of Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services

Commented [MJ51]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Do not support an overlay zone for agritourism.

STAFF RESPONSE: Acknowledge. Discuss at 10/29 meeting.

Commented [MJ52]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Suggested edits.

STAFF RESPONSE: Edits shown in track changes.

Commented [MJ53]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Why would we need an overlay zone if 3b is accomplished? I realize this is a menu of items but I thought the discussion at the last meeting was moving away from establishing an overlay zone.

STAFF RESPONSE: Acknowledge. Discuss at 10/29 meeting.

3e3e.	Potential Solution:	Periodically review evolving agritourism activities, the tiered classification system, if adopted, and assess cumulative impacts (positive and negative) of agritourism.
	Potential Mechanism:	Meetings, Annual Monitoring Report
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Montgomery Planning

Commented [MJ54]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: This needs to be mandatory, not merely suggested.

STAFF RESPONSE: The Agritourism Study can suggest the review of agritourism activities but cannot require this review.

3e3f.	Potential Solution:	Conduct an analysis of publicly owned rural open space and its proximity to agritourism venues to identify opportunities to connect parks and agritourism activities.
	Potential Mechanism:	Study
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery Planning Montgomery Parks

Goal: *Increase awareness of the Ag Reserve's assets, including education of agricultural practices and better wayfinding.*

4a.	Potential Solution:	Provide funding and support, including staff resources, to expand the Food, Fiber and You Mobile Science Lab.
	Potential Mechanism:	Identify funding source

	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Public Schools Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation, Inc. Montgomery County Farm Bureau Montgomery Countryside Alliance
4b.	Potential Solution:	Develop a database of farms and agritourism activities that provide internship opportunities to train students, future farmers, and future agritourism entrepreneurs.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Public Schools Montgomery County Revenue Authority University of Maryland Extension
4c.	Potential Solution:	Develop a series of agritourism and heritage tourism “trails” to connect various agritourism and heritage tourism activities. The “trails” could be grouped by type of activity, area of the Agricultural Reserve, or means of transportation, among other categories.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources and Web-Based Applications
	Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Heritage Montgomery Montgomery Planning Montgomery County Revenue Authority
4d.	Potential Solution:	Create a consolidated online calendar of offerings and events throughout the Agricultural Reserve.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Countryside Alliance Heritage Montgomery Montgomery County Revenue Authority
4e.	<u>Potential Solution:</u>	<u>Identify opportunities for “pre-event” ticketing of agritourism events to maintain appropriate event sizes.</u>
	<u>Potential Mechanism:</u>	<u>Online Resources</u>
	<u>Prospective Partners:</u>	<u>Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery</u> <u>Montgomery County Office of Agriculture</u> <u>Montgomery Countryside Alliance</u> <u>Heritage Montgomery</u> <u>Montgomery County Revenue Authority</u>
4e4f.	Potential Solution:	Continue to highlight and promote stories of farmers working in the Agricultural Reserve through video narratives.

Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources, Media
Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Planning Montgomery Countryside Alliance Montgomery Agricultural Producers Montgomery County Farm Bureau

Potential Solution:	Develop a comprehensive wayfinding signage system to direct patrons to agritourism venues, heritage tourism venues and other resources in the Agricultural Reserve <u>and modify the Montgomery County Code as necessary to permit the implementation of the wayfinding system.</u>
Potential Mechanism:	Wayfinding Study
Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Planning Montgomery Countryside Alliance Heritage Montgomery Montgomery County Department of Transportation Maryland State Highway Administration Rustic Roads Advisory Committee

Commented [MJ55]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT:
Currently, Chapter 59-Zoning of the county code prohibits off site signs. This prohibition will need to be discussed further to implement this potential solution. An offsite sign in the AR is allowed for the purposes of directing patrons to agritourism venues.

STAFF RESPONSE: Staff recommended additional language to acknowledge that amendment would be necessary. Potential solution 2f also suggests an Interagency Working Group to review relevant Chapters of the Montgomery County Code to identify opportunities for refinement, enhancement and modifications to support agritourism – including signage.

Goal: *Provide inclusive and equitable access to the Agricultural Reserve.*

5a.	Potential Solution:	Develop and distribute a countywide survey to understand who participates in agritourism and heritage tourism. If residents do not participate in agritourism or heritage tourism, inquire why. Are residents unfamiliar, unable to access the activities, or feel unwelcome?
	Potential Mechanism:	Online survey
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Planning Heritage Montgomery

5b.	Potential Solution:	Provide shuttles or on-demand buses to significant events in the Agricultural Reserve, such as the Farm Tour and the Harvest Festival, or during peak agritourism season, from Montgomery County’s Equity Emphasis Areas or key destinations.
	Potential Mechanism:	Shuttles or on-demand buses
	Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Department of Transportation Montgomery County Revenue Authority

5c.	Potential Solution:	Bring the Agricultural Reserve to other portions of the County through farmer’s markets, community supported
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		agriculture or direct marketing to consumers through programs such as Imperfect Produce or Misfits Market.
	Potential Mechanism:	Farmer's Markets and Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Regional Services Centers Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Montgomery County Food Council

5d.	Potential Solution:	Initiate promote and market celebrations and festivals in the Agricultural Reserve that are representative of Montgomery County's increasingly diverse population.
	Potential Mechanism:	Celebrations and Festivals
	Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Montgomery County Office of Community Partnerships Montgomery County Regional Services Centers Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Countryside Alliance Montgomery County Revenue Authority

5e.	Potential Solution:	Conduct a comprehensive traffic analysis, including baseline analyses and peak-agritourism season analyses, to understand circulation challenges and opportunities in the Agricultural Reserve.
	Potential Mechanism:	Study
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery Planning Montgomery County Department of Transportation Montgomery County Office of Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board Rustic Roads Advisory Committee Montgomery Agricultural Producers Montgomery County Police Department

Commented [MJ56]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Noted support for this potential solution.
STAFF RESPONSE: Acknowledged.

5f.	Potential Solution:	Expand Land Link Montgomery to connect beginner agritourism entrepreneurs with experienced agritourism operators, available land, farms and resources.
	Potential Mechanism:	Identify funding source.
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery Countryside Alliance Montgomery County Office of Agriculture

Commented [MJ57]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Include a potential solution to support the land link program that aims to connect farmers with affordable farm acreage.
STAFF RESPONSE: A new potential solution is included here.

5g.	Potential Solution:	Provide resources for Montgomery County Public Schools to provide more on-farm field trips and in-class agricultural science related curriculum for all schools.
	Potential Mechanism:	Identify funding source.
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Public Schools Montgomery County Office of Agriculture

Commented [MJ58]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Include a potential solution to provide resources for more on-farm field trips and in-class ag science curriculum for all schools.
STAFF RESPONSE: A new potential solution is included here.

	Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation, Inc. Montgomery County Farm Bureau Montgomery Countryside Alliance
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IMPLEMENTATION

The Agritourism Study provides a foundation to advance support for agritourism and heritage tourism by identifying existing opportunities and challenges, developing common goals and establishing a comprehensive, consistent menu of potential solutions that promote tourism while maintaining the integrity of agriculture and rural character of the Agricultural Reserve.

While this study establishes a framework and identifies several potential solutions, the implementation of the identified solutions requires further coordination and collaboration between public agencies, private entities, advocacy organizations and residents. Successful implementation of the potential solutions requires leadership and investment from the public sector to pursue potential solutions in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders and in a manner consistent with the Agritourism Study goals. Specifically, leadership and investment are critical for development of resources to define agritourism uses; develop or modify any necessary review and approval processes; and to better support, market and promote agritourism and heritage tourism within Montgomery County. While leadership and investment are imperative, transparency and collaboration with private sector partners, advocacy organizations and residents are also critical to fully supporting agritourism and heritage tourism in Montgomery County, as these solutions are implemented and realized.

CONCLUSION

The Agritourism Study seeks to develop a comprehensive, countywide approach to promote agricultural tourism and heritage tourism, while preserving the agricultural and rural character as well as the intent of the Ag Reserve. The study’s underlying aim is to encourage agricultural education and tourism activities that increase residents’ knowledge and understanding of the county’s Ag Reserve, enhance its attractiveness and economic viability as a destination and support its farms and the families that operate them, while preserving agricultural culture and heritage.

As there is no single solution to support agricultural tourism and heritage tourism, the Agritourism Study identifies several potential solutions to promote, support and facilitate agritourism in Montgomery County. Each of the potential solutions recognizes the importance of maintaining the integrity of the natural, cultural and historic character of the Ag Reserve, as well as sustaining the economic viability of farming. Implementation of the potential solutions requires further coordination and collaboration between public agencies, private entities, advocacy organizations and residents, including dedicated leadership and investment from the public sector.

Commented [MJ59]: ASAC MEMBER COMMENT: Better coordination and communication between county agencies is a must. All policies and decisions that affect the Ag Reserve should run through the Office of Ag.

STAFF RESPONSE: Staff has included a draft implementation section for the Committee’s review, which acknowledges the need for better coordination and communication.

APPENDIX A: HISTORY OF THE AGRICULTURAL RESERVE

Formation of the Agricultural Reserve

In 1964 Montgomery County adopted its first General Plan – *The General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties*. This plan was a precursor to the Smart Growth concept, concentrating development in corridors and preserving wedges of open space between the corridors. The plan combined fiscal and social responsibility by avoiding haphazard or “leapfrog” development and established future infrastructure extensions like roads, water, sewer, schools, and emergency services.

The 1969 General Plan Update reiterated the policies of the 1964 plan, but the rural areas of the county were discussed as one large “wedge” without distinguishing between different land uses. The 1969 “Program Open Space,” established by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, provided financial and technical assistance to local subdivisions for the planning, acquisition, and/or development of recreational land or open space areas. This program symbolized Maryland's efforts to conserve natural resources while providing exceptional outdoor opportunities for residents. This program was the first program to implement land preservation and conceived the idea of an Agricultural Reserve in Montgomery County.

Montgomery County adopted its first Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) in 1973. An APFO is an important growth management tool used by rapidly growing counties and municipalities to direct growth in suitable areas where facilities such as roads, sewers, public water, and schools are adequate. The same year, the County Council broadly applied the Rural Zone designation to most of the land in the “Rural Wedge” through a Sectional Map Amendment. The Rural Zone created a lower density cap of one unit per every five acres, setting the foundation for protection of the Rural Wedge.

By the late 1970s, it was increasingly clear that the Rural Zone was ineffective in reducing farmland conversions to non-agricultural uses. The county determined that the existing septic system suitability policy was inadequate to guide future population density and the lack of public water or sewer did not deter development activity, especially given new advances in small scale community sewerage system technology. The county reviewed and evaluated the viability and methods of protection of the low-density Rural Wedge, resulting in the 1979 “Issues and Alternatives Report for the Protection of the Rural Wedge.” This report identified that an economically viable critical mass of farmland still existed in the county and identified alternative methods for the preservation of that land.

Four master plans and studies completed in 1980, including the *Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space (AROS) Functional Master Plan*, the *Olney Master Plan*, the *Sandy Spring / Ashton Special Study Plan*, and the *Poolesville Vicinity Master Plan* initiated and formed the Agricultural Reserve. These plans and studies identified specific agricultural protection areas and techniques, the Rural Cluster zone and the Rural Density Transfer (RDT) zone.

Transfer of Development Rights and Building Lot Terminations

Lands designated as the Agricultural Reserve in the 1980 *AROS Plan* were in the Rural Density Transfer (RDT) zone.⁴ The development density within the RDT zone was one unit per 25 acres, a significant “downzoning” from the one unit per five acres allowed in the rural zone. To compensate landowners for this “downzoning,” the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program was implemented. This program established density “sending areas” and density “receiving areas.” Property owners in the RDT zone could “send” their density to other areas in the county by selling their excess development rights to land developers in those specified receiving areas, who could then use this “bonus density” in their projects in the receiving areas.

The number of development rights available to a landowner was based on the density of the Rural zone at the time: one right per five acres. Thus, an owner who owned 100 acres of land would have 20 development rights. Theoretically, these 100 acres could be further subdivided into four 25-acre lots, using four of those 20 rights, but would leave 16 rights to sell to a developer for a project elsewhere in the county. Or that owner could retain one right for their dwelling unit and sell 19 rights.

The owners of land in the Ag Reserve were able to sell their development rights and still retain the title to their land without the need to carve small residential lots from a farm. The sale of these rights could help finance farm equipment or make other capital improvements to the farm and offered an economic incentive to farmers to resist development pressure.

In 2013 the Building Lot Termination (BLT) Program was created establishing a new land preservation tool for properties in the Agricultural Reserve. The BLT program effectively decreased density in the Agricultural Reserve by extinguishing the right to build a dwelling unit and transferring that density to Commercial-Residential (CR) and Life Sciences Center (LSC) zones. Acquisition of whole or partial BLTs is required for all optional method projects in the Commercial-Residential (CR) and Life Sciences Center (LSC) zones and an option for public benefit points in the Commercial-Residential Town (CRT) and Employment Office (EOF) zones.

While the TDR and BLT Programs are effective tools to preserve farming, farmland and rural open space, there are some unintended challenges with these programs – including a reliance on private development to purchase development rights. Specifically, recent development applications have not elected to maximize density or pursued an alternative combination of public benefits and amenities to support incentive density, and therefore have not pursued purchase of TDRs or BLTs. While the TDR and BLT programs provide an opportunity for landowners to sell their development rights, the market to purchase these rights is not robust. Further, removal of the development rights reduces equity in the property, which can limit the ability for landowners to secure financing for continued capital and operational expenditures. These are important factors in the evolution of agricultural education and tourism activities, as these initiatives provide an opportunity for farmers to diversify their income and enhance the economic viability of continuing farming operations.

⁴ The RDT zone was renamed the AR zone with the 2014 comprehensive zoning code rewrite.

APPENDIX B: EXISTING AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND TOURISM AND HERITAGE TOURISM

Commented [MJ60]: ASAC members noted that the list does not include the heritage tourism assets and also does not include places like Waredaca Farm, which hosts large competitions and has a regular lesson program, activities that are included as agritourism in the preceding discussion.

<u>Agritourism and Heritage Tourism Businesses and Sites</u>	
1	Agricultural History Farm Park and Newmantown
2	Aix La Chapelle Farm
3	Alden Farms
4	Audubon Naturalist Society Woodend Sanctuary
35	Black Ankle Vineyards
46	Blueberry Gardens
7	Boyd's Negro School
58	Brookeville Beer Farm
69	Burnt Hill Project (Pending)
710	Butler's Orchard
811	Calleva Farm
12	Clarksville Schoolhouse
13	Darby Store
914	East Rivendell Farm
1015	Elder Pine Brewing and Blending
1116	FarmAtHome Produce
1217	Fox Hollow Farm
1318	Great Meadows Farm
19	Hyattstown Mill
1420	Heyser Farms
1521	Historic Button Farm
1622	Homestead Farm
23	Jerusalem
1724	King Barn Dairy MOOseum
1825	Kingsbury Orchard
1926	Lewis Orchard
27	Lockhouses and Canal Quarters
2028	Lone Oak Brewing Company (Pending)
2429	Madison Fields
30	Mills and Mill Ruins
3122	Naughty Pine Nursery
2332	Oakley Cabin (The Friends of Oakley Cabin and the Underground Railroad)
2433	Pleasant Valley Farm Produce
34	Pleasant View Historic Site
35	Poole House
36	Poolesville Town Hall Bank

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2537	Poplar Spring Animal Sanctuary
2638	Red Wiggler Community Farm
2739	Rock Hill Orchard & Woodbourne Creamery
2840	Rocklands Farm & Winery
2941	Sandy Spring Museum
3042	Sandy Spring Slave Museum <u>and African Art Gallery</u>
43	<u>Seneca Creek State Park</u>
44	<u>Seneca Quarry Master's House</u>
45	<u>Seneca Quarry Ruin</u>
46	<u>Seneca Schoolhouse</u>
47	<u>Smithfield School Museum and Education Center</u>
3148	Soleado Lavender Farm LLC
49	<u>Sugarland Ethno-History Project</u>
3250	Sugarloaf Mountain Vineyard
3351	Susanna Farm (Pending)
3452	Tusculum Farm
3553	Waredaca Brewing Company
54	<u>Warren Historic Site</u>
3655	Waters Orchard and Doc Waters Cidery
56	<u>White's Ferry</u>
3757	Windridge Vineyards
3858	61 Vineyard (Pending)
<u>Heritage Tourism - Physical Features</u>	
59	<u>Potomac River and tributaries</u>
60	<u>Patuxent River and tributaries</u>
61	<u>Piedmont</u>
62	<u>Historic farm viewsheds</u>
63	<u>Native American viewsheds</u>
64	<u>Woodlands, Meadows and Rolling Hills</u>
<u>Heritage Tourism – Trails and Roads</u>	
65	<u>Potomac River Water Trail</u>
66	<u>C&O Canal towpath</u>
67	<u>Greenway Trail</u>
68	<u>Seneca hike and bike trails</u>
69	<u>Patuxent hike and bike trails</u>
70	<u>MNCPPC hike and bike trails</u>
71	<u>C&O Scenic Byway</u>
72	<u>Rustic Roads</u>
73	<u>Civil War Trails</u>
74	<u>Walking tours of Poolesville and Brookeville</u>

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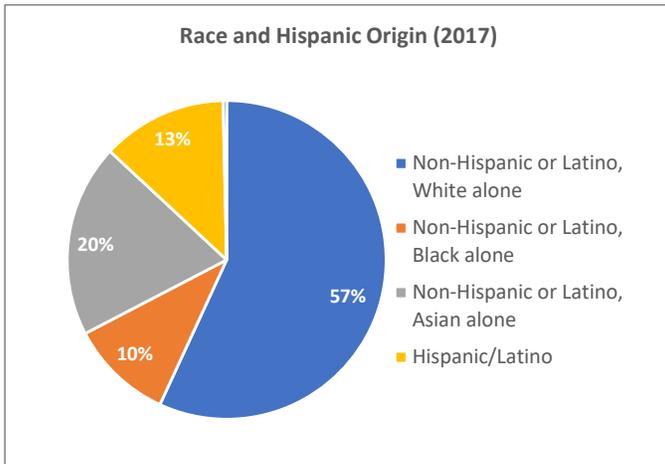
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APPENDIX C: AGRICULTURAL RESERVE – DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

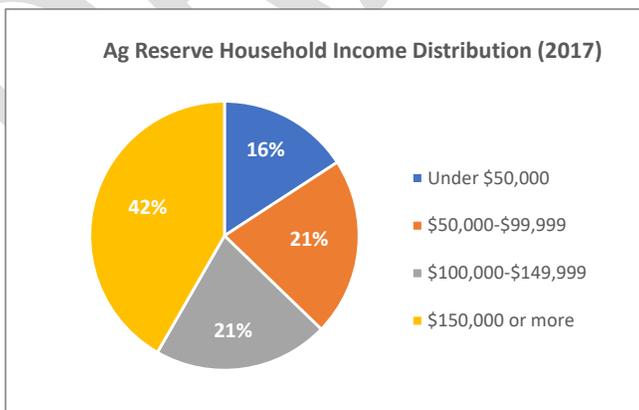
The total population of the Agricultural Reserve was 36,503 in 2017, less than 4 percent of Montgomery County’s total population. The average household size was 2.96, larger than the county’s average household size of 2.63. Though the age distribution of the residents in the Ag Reserve is like the rest of the county, the racial and ethnic makeup of the Ag Reserve is different. The majority of residents in the Ag Reserve are white (55 percent) as compared to the county’s 45 percent. The percentage of black (10 percent) and Hispanic residents (12 percent) are lower in the Ag Reserve, compared to the county (18

percent and 19 percent, respectively), while the percentage of Asian residents is higher (19 percent compared to the county's 15 percent).



Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey, 5-year estimate.

The majority of households (86 percent) in the Ag Reserve own their homes, as compared to 66 percent of the entire county. The average income of households in the Ag Reserve is \$153,271.10, higher than the county average of \$140,141.38. There are also a higher percentage of households (42 percent) earning \$150,000 or more, in comparison to the overall county (32 percent). Most households are families headed by married couples (68 percent), higher than county (54 percent). Most residents commute to work by driving alone (77 percent), as compared to 65 percent of the county residents.



Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey, 5-year estimate.

In 2017, 90 percent of farms in Montgomery County reported access to the internet, compared to 77 percent in 2007. While 90 percent of Montgomery County farms have access to the internet, the service is often satellite-based with limited reliability.

APPENDIX D: COMPARATIVE REVIEW AND CODE ANALYSIS

APPENDIX E: AGRICULTURAL PRODUCER CERTIFICATE FOR FARM ALCOHOL PRODUCTION

APPENDIX F: RESOURCES

Under Development

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Agritourism Study – WORKING DRAFT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Study Vision

The Agritourism Study seeks to support the evolving nature of farming and farmland in Montgomery County through the promotion of agricultural education and tourism activities as well as historic and cultural resources while reinforcing the need for the continued preservation of farming, farmland and rural open space in the county's Agricultural Reserve.

Abbreviated Purpose and Need

Agricultural education and tourism activities create new opportunities to preserve farming, farmland and rural open space as well as enhance the economic viability of agriculture. With new opportunities, there are also new challenges, including defining education and tourism activities, the relationship of these activities to agriculture, the extent to which these activities should be regulated and the processes for regulating tourism activities.

Existing agricultural education and tourism activities, including farm-to-table activities, small-scale wineries and breweries, events and festivals have been largely considered on an inconsistent and individual basis to date. The lack of a comprehensive, consistent and transparent approach to agritourism has resulted in uncertainty for farmers, business owners, entrepreneurs, residents and county staff.¹

This study attempts to identify and assess opportunities and constraints for the evolution of the Agricultural Reserve, including agricultural activities that have expanded beyond traditional farming, to preserve and sustain agriculture in Montgomery County. The study's underlying aim is to encourage activities—agricultural education and tourism activities—that increase residents' knowledge and understanding of the county's Agricultural Reserve, enhance its attractiveness and economic viability as a destination and support its farms and the families that operate them, while preserving agricultural culture and heritage.

This study seeks to develop a comprehensive, consistent menu of potential solutions for the promotion of agricultural education and tourism activities, while maintaining the integrity of the agricultural and rural character of the Agricultural Reserve.

Overview of Goals and Potential Solutions

Overarching goals for the Agritourism Study include:

¹Zoning Text Amendment Number 18-03 (ZTA No. 18-03) concerning Farm Alcohol Production Standards, was initiated concurrently with, but independent of, the Agritourism Study. It was adopted and effective in October 2018 and sought to promote new wineries, breweries, distilleries and cideries through clarification of regulatory processes and promotion of economic development incentives. The Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services and Office of Agriculture developed an Agricultural Producer Certificate for Farm Alcohol Production for new applications. The certificate is available:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DPS/Process/zspe/Agricultural-Breweries.html>

- Protect and preserve farming, farmland and rural open space in the Agricultural Reserve.
- Support existing and future agritourism activities through improved processes for agritourism businesses and promotional tools.
- Support agritourism activities with a direct relationship to agriculture, to facilitate preservation of farming, farmland and rural open space.
- Increase awareness of the Agricultural Reserve’s assets, including education of agricultural practices and better wayfinding.
- Provide inclusive and equitable access to the Agricultural Reserve.
- Anticipate and seek to avoid possible harms of agritourism.

As there is no single solution to advance attainment of the study goals, the study identifies several potential solutions to promote, support and facilitate agritourism in Montgomery County. Each of the potential solutions recognizes the importance of maintaining the integrity of the natural, cultural and historic character of the Agricultural Reserve, as well as sustaining the economic viability of farming. Potential solutions range from developing an agritourism application process to provide consistency, predictability and transparency, to actively promoting and marketing agritourism and heritage tourism to Montgomery County residents, residents of the Washington Metropolitan Region and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

Study Background - (History and Context)

The Agricultural Reserve, established in 1980 with the adoption of the *Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan*, is a land conservation policy designed to protect farmland, agriculture and rural open space. The result of decades of planning and policy development, beginning with the 1964 *General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties*, the “Ag Reserve” enables preservation of agricultural and rural open space by concentrating growth and development along defined corridors and population centers. It includes approximately 93,000 acres – nearly a third of the county’s land – and extends along the county’s northern, eastern and western borders – from the Patuxent River to the Potomac River.

The intent of the Ag Reserve, as defined by the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance (Section 4.2.1.A) is to “promote agriculture as the primary land use in areas of the county designated for agricultural preservation in the general plan, the Functional Master Plan for Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space, and other current or future master plans.”

INSERT MAP OF THE AG RESERVE HERE

While the *Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan* enabled preservation of agriculture, farmland and rural open space, it did not anticipate the changes in the farming industry, with decline in the traditional farming industry, the increase of table crops, or the growing demand for agricultural tourism and its impact on the ongoing preservation effort. Increased interest in agricultural education, tourism and entertainment has prompted discussion about opportunities to enhance the economic viability of the Ag Reserve including mechanisms to support and diversify existing farms, promote new farms and celebrate the economic, environmental and social

value that the Ag Reserve provides to the residents of Montgomery County and the Washington Metropolitan Region.

The increased interest in agricultural education and tourism activities creates new opportunities to preserve farming and farmland as well as reinforce the agricultural economy. With these new opportunities, there are also new challenges, including defining the breadth of what constitutes “agritourism,” how to maintain the integrity of farming, farmland and rural open space and how to limit potential negative impacts of agritourism on the rural residential communities of the Ag Reserve. Further challenges include an inconsistent, undocumented process for the review and approval of agricultural education and tourism activities and the extent to which these activities should be regulated.

Relevant Plans and Studies

Existing plans and studies, including the 1980 *Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan* and the 2002 *Montgomery County Heritage Area Management Plan* establish a framework for the preservation of agriculture, rural open space and cultural heritage, and seek to celebrate the county’s farming history. As these plans represent the initiation of agricultural preservation and the recognition of an evolving Ag Reserve, they are important resources for the Agritourism Study.

Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan

The 1980 *Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan* established specific agricultural and rural open space preservation recommendations, including incentives and regulations designed to mitigate development pressure and promote the preservation of agriculture and rural open space. The 1980 Plan focused on the preservation of farmland, but also established a policy framework to contribute to the continuation of farming in Montgomery County, through the separation of development rights from farmland.

The Plan identified several tools to preserve agriculture and rural open space, including the Ag Reserve, a zoning district created for the primary agricultural preservation areas, rural residential zones and the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program, a mechanism designed to compensate land owners in the Ag Reserve for transferring residential development potential from the farmland preservation areas into areas of the county better suited for growth.

The TDR program, paired with a sustained commitment to agricultural tourism and preservation of farmland by Montgomery County’s Office of Agriculture, has helped retain more than 500 farms, nearly 1,500 horse farms and stables and 350 horticulture businesses which significantly contribute to the county’s economy. The retention of these farms and their economic contributions to the county, are particularly notable in a metropolitan region where development pressures remain perpetual and intense.

Montgomery County Heritage Area Management Plan

The *Montgomery County Heritage Area (Heritage Montgomery) Management Plan*, completed in 2002 for the Montgomery County Heritage Area Advisory Committee, sought to elevate the prominence of the county’s heritage for residents and visitors and strengthen the connection between the county’s

history and future. The Plan focused on three themes of the county's heritage: Farming History; Quakers and the Underground Railroad; and Technological Innovation. These three themes were expanded to include an additional theme in the 2018 Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Boundary Amendment and were also renamed to increase marketability, inclusion and appeal. The heritage themes are now: Rivers, Roads and Rails; Crossroads and Cultures; The Agricultural Reserve; and Heritage Gems.

The Heritage Montgomery Management Plan recognized the value of tourism and economic development to sustain the county's agricultural and cultural heritage and established a strategic direction, action items and a framework for implementation to celebrate the county's heritage. The plan highlights and fosters stewardship and appreciation of Montgomery County's built infrastructure, including resources such as the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, the Scenic Byways and the Rustic Roads, as well as the natural landscape and cultural histories. The Agricultural Reserve Heritage Theme honors the county's vistas and viewsheds, rural roads, historic buildings, and farming heritage.

The Heritage Area provides grant funding, connection to local, state and federal agencies and their funding, legislative representation, technical assistance, marketing, destination development and guidance in the development of programs and attractions which serve residents, visitors and promote stewardship while supporting economic development.

Existing Agritourism Resources

The Montgomery County Office of Agriculture, in cooperation with several state and local agencies as well as nonprofit organizations, provides support to the county's agricultural community. This support includes technical assistance to farmers and agritourism entrepreneurs to navigate regulatory and legislative processes as well as assistance to market agricultural products. Initiatives such as the annual Farm Tour and Harvest Sale, farmer's markets, community supported agriculture, connections to regional wholesale buyers and a farm directory, support farmers and agritourism entrepreneurs in marketing their products to improve the economic viability of agriculture in Montgomery County.

The Office of Agriculture also serves as a liaison between the agricultural community and the Maryland Rural Enterprise Development Center, an initiative of the University of Maryland Extension within the college of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The Rural Enterprise Development Center provides a variety of technical assistance to farmers and property owners, including farm business planning, production and management techniques, selection of special crops and support for trending agricultural enterprises in Maryland, including agritourism.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Farming and farmland have evolved since the establishment of the Ag Reserve nearly four decades ago. In 1978, just prior to the establishment of the Ag Reserve, Montgomery County had 667 farms. This number remained relatively stable until 1992, when the number of farms decreased to 561. As shown in Figure 1, the number of farms has remained stable since the 1990s, with 558 farms identified in the 2017 Census of Agriculture produced by the United States Department of Agriculture.

While the number of farms has remained stable in the last 25 years, the average size of each farm has decreased from 178 acres in 1978 to 117 acres in 2017. During that same period, the amount of land devoted to farming decreased by nearly half, from 115,316 acres of farmland to 65,537 acres of farmland in 2017, as shown in Figure 2. Traditional agricultural activities, including grain farms and

livestock operations have sustained, with an increase in tabletop food production as well as the horticulture and equestrian industries. The equestrian industry, including breeders, stables and facilities devoted to lessons, rentals, competitions and summer camps represent a significant component of the county’s agricultural industry, with approximately 10,000 horses in the county in 2017.²

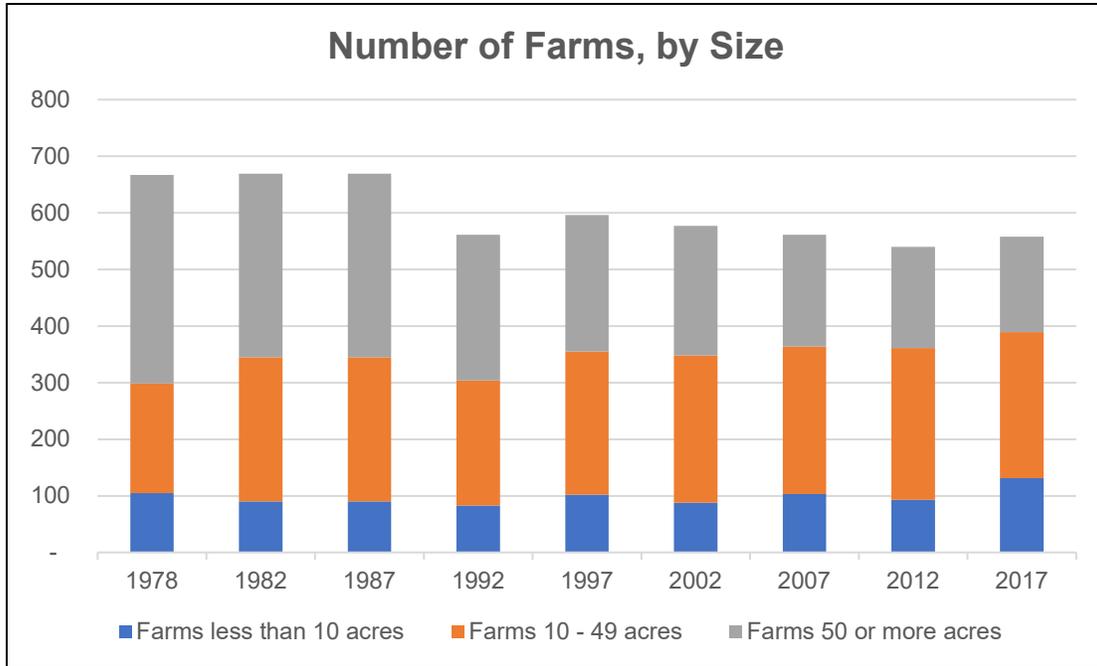


Figure 1: Number of Farms, by Size (Census of Agriculture, 1978-2017)

² In 2004, the definition of farming in Chapter 59 of the Montgomery County Code, the Zoning Ordinance, was amended to include horses and equestrian facilities. This amendment reflected a recognition of the growing demand for agritourism, with individuals seeking equestrian lessons, rentals, competitions and events.

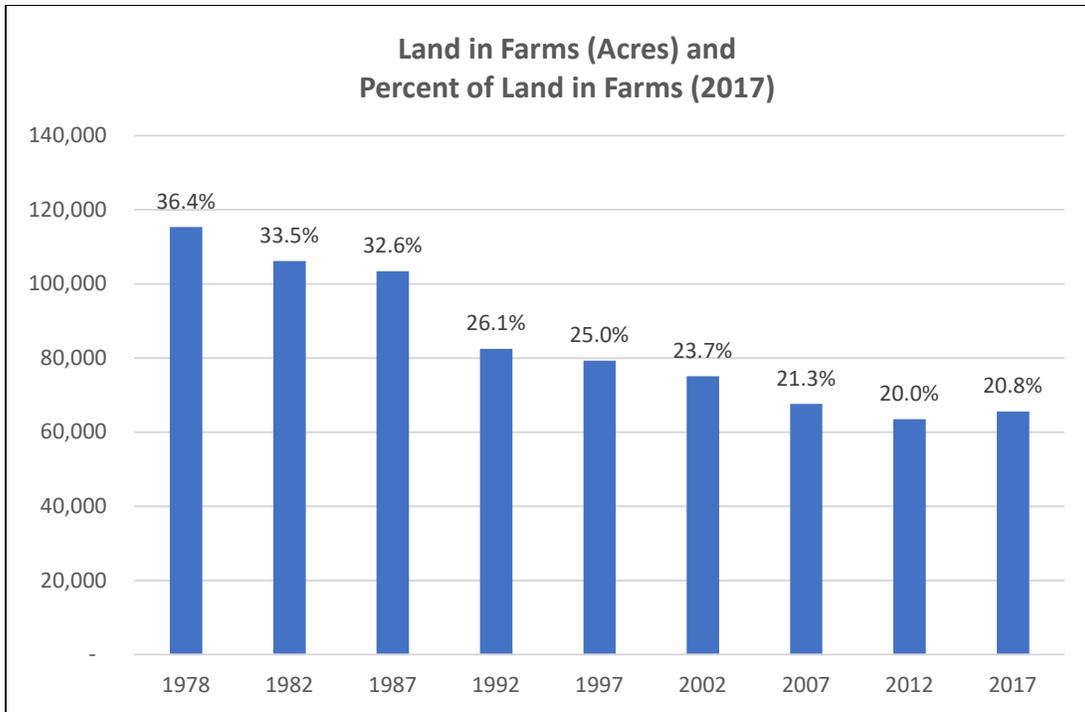


Figure 2: Land in Farms (Acres) and Percent of Land in Farms (2017) (Census of Agriculture, 1978-2017)

In addition to the growing prevalence of tabletop food production, nurseries, sod farms, landscape companies, horse farms and equestrian facilities, there is also growing interest in agricultural and cultural education and tourism experiences. Recognizing the evolution of farmland and farming, the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance was updated in 2014 to permit agricultural education and tourism activities as an accessory use to farming. While the Zoning Ordinance does not explicitly define “agritourism,” it defines farming, agriculture and agricultural education and tourism activities as shown in Figure 3:

FIGURE 3:

Farming: “the practice of agriculture on a property, and any associated buildings.”

Agriculture: “the business, science, and art of cultivating and managing the soil; composting, growing, harvesting and selling crops, and the products of forestry, horticulture, and hydroponics; breeding, raising, managing or selling livestock, including horses, poultry, fish, game, and fur-bearing animals; dairying, beekeeping, and similar activities; and equestrian events and activities.” Agriculture also “includes processing on the farm of an agricultural product to prepare the product for market and may cause a change in the natural form or state of the product.”

Agricultural education and tourism, are permitted as an accessory use to farming and are “conducted as part of a farm’s regular operations, with emphasis on hands-on experiences and events that foster increased knowledge of agriculture, including cultivation methods, animal care, water conservation, Maryland’s farming history, the importance of eating healthy, and locally grown foods. Allowed activities include corn mazes, hayrides, and educational tours, classes and workshops.” The Zoning

Ordinance limits the maximum size of structures for agricultural education and tourism activities as well as requires approved sanitation facilities for the accessory use.

As shown in Appendix B, there are nearly 40 agricultural education and tourism activities in Montgomery County, including farm markets, pick-your-own operations, community-supported agriculture (CSA) farms, animal sanctuaries, equestrian operations, breweries, wineries and other enterprises. In addition, there are also over 20 heritage sites and several physical features, trails, roads and historical and cultural resources that are supported by the preservation of the Ag Reserve. These include two National Register Districts, the Seneca Historic District and the C&O Canal Historic District as well as locally designated districts, sites and resources such as the Pleasant View Historic Site, Sandy Spring Slave Museum and African Art Gallery, Smithville Colored School, Audubon Naturalist Society Woodend Sanctuary, Seneca Creek State Park, and Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission parks. These historical and cultural resources represent Montgomery County's early agricultural, cultural and industrial heritage and provide opportunities to experience historic African American communities and Native American viewsheds and sites.

The existing agritourism and heritage tourism enterprises are largely oriented toward educational entertainment and outdoor activities, offering opportunities for visitors to directly connect with agriculture and history through activities such as pick-your-own, hayrides and corn mazes, as well as hiking, biking, canoeing and kayaking. The agricultural education and tourism activities, paired with the historical and cultural resources, provide a unique opportunity to promote, market and appreciate the Ag Reserve as well as reinforce the need for its continued preservation.

Relevant Stakeholders

Agritourism involves a range of stakeholders, including farmers, business owners, landowners, artisans, equestrian operators, farm alcohol producers, event hosts, environmentalists, preservationists, tourists and residents in the Ag Reserve to residents of Montgomery County and the Washington Metropolitan Region. While these stakeholders are most directly affected by agritourism, the general public all benefit from the existence of and the ability to visit the Ag Reserve. The Ag Reserve provides an opportunity for the public to directly experience an agrarian landscape, increase awareness of locally grown agricultural products and develop an understanding of and appreciation for Montgomery County's past.

Study Purpose and Need

Increased interest in agricultural education, tourism, entertainment and eating locally have allowed farmers to diversify their business, while preserving farming and farmland. Apart from equestrian events and the recently adopted farm alcohol production standards, governing wineries, breweries, distilleries and cideries, agritourism venues and events have been discussed and addressed individually as these initiatives have emerged. The Agritourism Study seeks to develop a comprehensive, countywide approach to promote agricultural tourism, while preserving the agricultural and rural character as well as the intent of the Ag Reserve.

This study attempts to identify and assess opportunities and constraints for the evolution of the Ag Reserve, including agricultural activities that have expanded beyond traditional farming, to preserve and sustain agriculture in Montgomery County. The study's underlying aim is to encourage activities—agricultural education and tourism activities—that increase residents' knowledge and understanding of

the county's Ag Reserve, enhance its attractiveness and economic viability as a destination and support its farms and the families that operate them, while preserving agricultural culture and heritage.

STUDY PROCESS / OUTREACH

Agritourism Study Advisory Committee

The Planning Department formed the Agritourism Study Advisory Committee (ASAC) in October 2017 and formally invited members of the agricultural community, industry experts, governmental representatives and community members. The role of the ASAC was to review the progress of the study and provide guidance at key intervals or decision points during the development of the study. The representation on the ASAC was intended to provide a balanced discourse on the current issues, impacts and status of agritourism in Montgomery County.

The ASAC met regularly over two years and discussions focused on the following themes:

- The Ag Reserve and its natural resources should be protected and preserved, but also evolve to enhance economic viability of farming and agricultural land, including agricultural economic development through tourism.
 - As agritourism evolves, the Ag Reserve's unique ability to produce agricultural products must be preserved.
- The Ag Reserve has evolved since its establishment.
 - Farming activities continue to evolve to improve economic viability and to reflect diverse interests.
 - Increased education and awareness are necessary to convey how and why we have the Ag Reserve.
 - Ongoing agritourism activities and events are increasing and evolving, with an increased interest in and demand for access to the Ag Reserve countywide.
- Challenges to supporting agritourism today, as well as in the future, include:
 - An inconsistent, undocumented process for agritourism businesses.
 - Providing a clear definition of what is allowed under the agritourism definition.
 - Adequate facilities and infrastructure to accommodate events.
 - Balancing the need for flexibility while applying clear regulations.
 - Inconsistent enforcement.
 - A strong bias against preserving and stewarding historic and heritage assets which provide the context and fabric for the visitor experience.

The themes, supported by a majority of the Committee members, provided the foundation for the goals of the study and guided the potential solutions identified to advance achievement of the study goals.

Comparative Review of Agritourism Policies and Code Assessment

In the last several years, agritourism has grown significantly in many areas across the United States – including in the Washington Metropolitan Region. According to the Census of Agriculture produced by the United States Department of Agriculture, the number of farms participating in agritourism and recreational services – including activities such as hunting and fishing- significantly increased in the last

several years, with nearly 30,000 farms in 2017. Farms with agritourism and recreational services have also grown significantly in both Maryland and Virginia, as shown in Figure 4.

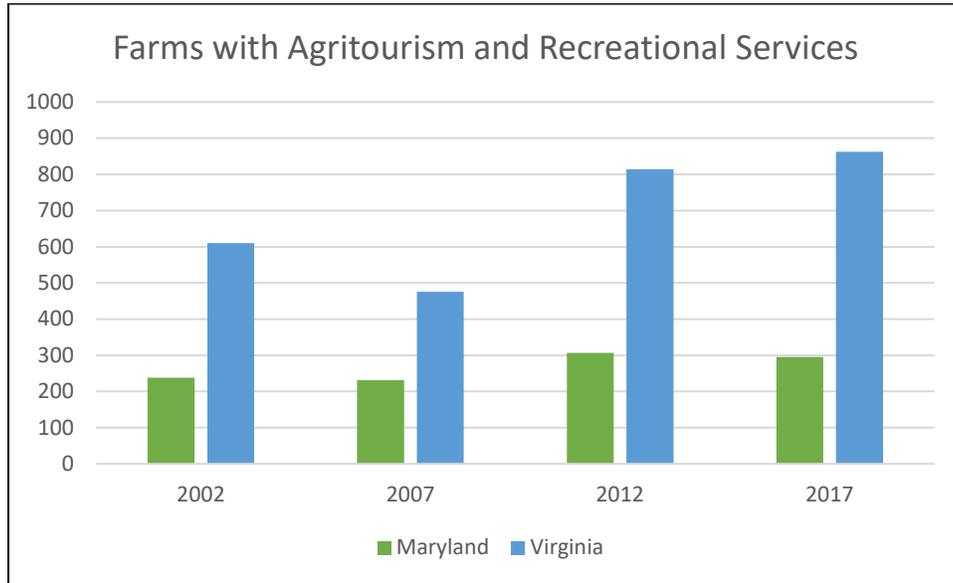


Figure 4: Farms with Agritourism and Recreational Services (Census of Agriculture, 2002-2017)

According to the Census of Agriculture, Montgomery County has experienced an increase in farms participating in agritourism and recreational services since 2002, but the growth of agritourism in Montgomery County has been slower than other locations in the Washington Metropolitan Region. Loudoun County, Virginia, for example, shows significantly more growth in agritourism than Montgomery County, as shown in Figure 5.

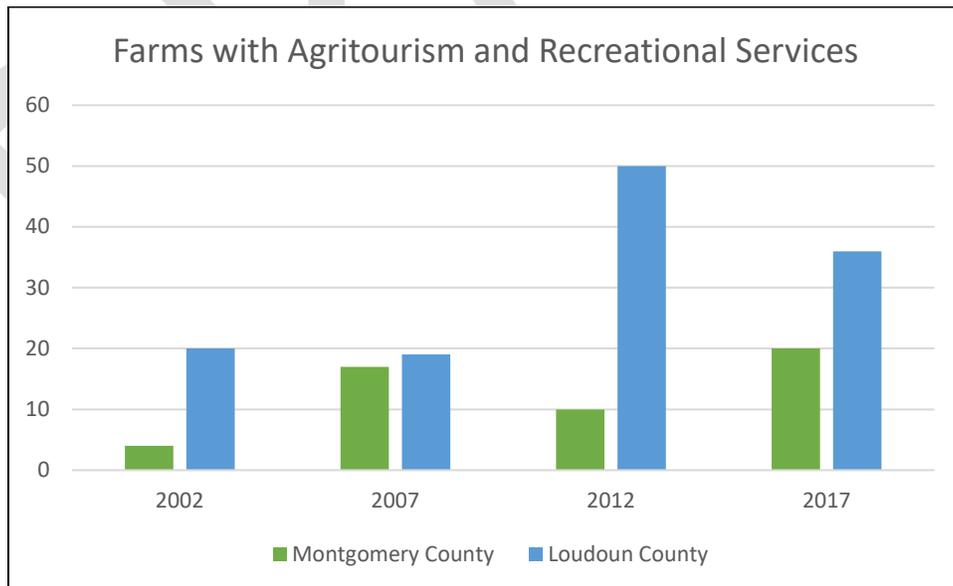


Figure 5: Farms with Agritourism and Recreational Services (Census of Agriculture, 2002-2017)

However, between 2012 and 2017 the number of farms participating in agritourism and recreational services doubled in Montgomery County, from ten to twenty farms.³

Montgomery Planning engaged a consultant team to conduct a study of agritourism policies and regulations in Montgomery County and comparable jurisdictions within the Washington Metropolitan Region and across the United States to identify strategies for managing, regulating and promoting agritourism. The consultant team conducted initial research to understand regulatory issues and best practices in agritourism as well as identify national and regional leaders in agritourism. The consultant team then selected ten jurisdictions, based on criteria including development patterns and demographics, for further research to better understand how other locations are addressing a changing agricultural economy. The Comparative Review of Agritourism Policies and Code Assessment, prepared by Rhodeside & Harwell and EPR, PC, are included in Appendix D.

The review of ten comparable jurisdictions and the assessment of Montgomery County's Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance and Building Code were used as a technical input to inform this study. The comparative review and code assessment provided an increased awareness of potential challenges with promoting agritourism as well as potential solutions for successfully promoting, marketing and advancing agritourism in Montgomery County.

AGRITOURISM STUDY GOALS

During their June 26, 2019 meeting, the ASAC established the following goals to guide the Agritourism Study:

- Protect and preserve farming, farmland, culture and rural open space in the Agricultural Reserve.
- Support existing and future agritourism activities through improved processes for agritourism businesses and promotional tools.
- Support agritourism activities with a direct relationship to agriculture, to facilitate preservation of farming, farmland and rural open space.
- Increase awareness of the Ag Reserve's assets, including education of agricultural practices and better wayfinding.
- Provide inclusive and equitable access to the Ag Reserve.
- Provide protection and support to existing heritage communities and sites.

MENU OF POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

There is no single solution to advance attainment of the study goals. For this reason, the study identifies several potential solutions to promote, support and facilitate agritourism in Montgomery County. Each of the potential solutions recognizes the importance of maintaining the integrity of the natural, cultural and historic character of the Ag Reserve, as well as sustaining the economic viability of farming.

³ The United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service Census of Agriculture includes data related to the inventory and sale of horses, but does not include boarding, training, and riding facilities. Therefore, the growth in agritourism and recreational services in Montgomery County between 2012 and 2017 does not include potential growth in equestrian operations.

The potential solutions are organized by the study goal that each solution supports. Prospective partners in the implementation of each solution are also identified.

Goal: *Protect and preserve farming, farmland and rural open space in the Agricultural Reserve.*

1a.	Potential Solution:	Establish criteria to confirm that agriculture is the primary use of the property for new agritourism initiatives, consistent with the intent of the Agricultural Reserve zone.
	Potential Mechanism:	Document criteria in interdepartmental memoranda to provide consistent staff guidance. Publish memoranda on Montgomery County website to provide clarity and transparency for staff, applicants and residents.
	Prospective Partners:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Montgomery County Office of Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services

1b.	Potential Solution:	Continue to provide funding and support, including staff resources and marketing, to sustain and grow mentoring and specialized business training to farmers interested in agritourism.
	Potential Mechanism:	Identify funding source
	Prospective Partners:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation University of Maryland Extension Montgomery Countryside Alliance

1c.	Potential Solution:	Establish a monitoring and enforcement program for agritourism initiatives to ensure that agritourism activities are permitted and accessory to agriculture.
	Potential Mechanism:	Identify funding source and staff resources
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services

Goal: *Support existing and future agritourism activities through improved processes for agritourism businesses and promotional tools.*

2a.	Potential Solution:	Coordinate with the University of Maryland Extension to support agritourism, including the development of a Beginning Agritourism Guidebook, like the “Beginning Farmer Guidebook,” assistance with strategic diversification and business and marketing plans.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Maryland Extension Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation Montgomery County Revenue Authority

2b.	Potential Solution:	Develop an agritourism application with checklists, instructions, general standards and links to applicable resources to provide consistency, predictability and transparency for agritourism businesses and entrepreneurs, similar to the Agricultural Producer Certificate for Farm Alcohol Production (Refer to Appendix E).
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	<p>Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Montgomery County Office of Agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board

2c.	Potential Solution:	Develop and document a process for the review and approval of agritourism applications, including review by the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services, Montgomery County Office of Agriculture and either the Agricultural Advisory Committee, or the Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board, if the venue is subject to an agricultural easement. Publish memoranda on Montgomery County website to provide clarity and transparency for staff, applicants and residents.
	Potential Mechanism:	Distribute interdepartmental memoranda to document the review and approval process.
	Prospective Partners:	<p>Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation Montgomery County Office of Agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board <p>Montgomery Planning Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Montgomery Soil Conservation District Montgomery County Revenue Authority Rustic Roads Advisory Committee</p>

2d.	Potential Solution:	Complete a feasibility study to identify appropriate county-owned land to accommodate visitor serving uses and facilities, including restrooms and parking, in the Agricultural Reserve which support agricultural education and tourism activities as well as historic and cultural resources.
	Potential Mechanism:	Feasibility study
	Prospective Partners:	<p>Montgomery County Department of General Services Montgomery Parks</p>

		<p>Montgomery Planning Visit Montgomery Montgomery Countryside Alliance Montgomery County Revenue Authority Rustic Roads Advisory Committee</p>
2e.	Potential Solution:	Exempt agricultural buildings used for agritourism from certain permit requirements, pursuant to the Maryland Public Safety Code Section 12-508.
	Potential Mechanism:	Montgomery County Council approves application of Maryland Public Safety Code Section 12-508 to Montgomery County.
	Prospective Partners:	<p>Montgomery County Council Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Montgomery Planning Montgomery County Office of Agriculture</p>
2f.	Potential Solution:	Establish an Interagency Working Group to review relevant Chapters of the Montgomery County Code to identify opportunities for refinement, enhancement and modifications to support agritourism. Topics of discussion may include use permits, historic area work permits, building permits, occupancy permits, on-site sewage facilities, parking, access and signage.
	Potential Mechanism:	Distribute interagency memoranda to form the Interagency Working Group
	Prospective Partners:	<p>Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Montgomery Planning Montgomery Soil Conservation District Rustic Roads Advisory Committee</p>
2g.	Potential Solution:	Identify suitable alternatives to portable toilets, such as bathroom trailers or on-site holding tanks. Determine procedure to pursue suitable alternatives.
	Potential Mechanism:	Study
	Prospective Partners:	<p>Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Montgomery County Office of Agriculture</p>

2h.	Potential Solution:	Develop a program within the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Licensure and Regulatory Services Division, to specifically serve agritourism businesses and assist with applications, plans, review and approval processes, fees, permitting and licenses for the county and state. Consider waiving or reducing fees for new agritourism businesses.
	Potential Mechanism:	Identify funding source
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

2i.	Potential Solution:	Identify funding and staff resources to promote and market the Agricultural Reserve, agritourism and heritage tourism to Montgomery County residents, residents of the Washington Metropolitan Region and tourists.
	Potential Mechanism:	Identify funding source, websites, printed materials, social media and web-based applications
	Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation Heritage Montgomery Montgomery Countryside Alliance Montgomery County Revenue Authority

2j.	Potential Solution:	Develop a resident awareness program to educate and inform Montgomery County residents about the Agricultural Reserve.
	Potential Mechanism:	Meetings, Tours and Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Planning Montgomery County Regional Services Center Directors and Citizen Advisory Boards Heritage Montgomery Montgomery Countryside Alliance Montgomery County Revenue Authority

2k.	Potential Solution:	Develop and promote a Montgomery County Agritourism website to provide resources and a single point of contact for questions related to agritourism by farmers and agritourism entrepreneurs.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Montgomery County Revenue Authority University of Maryland Extension

2l.	Potential Solution:	Develop and promote a Montgomery County Agritourism website to provide resources and information for visitors.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Countryside Alliance Heritage Montgomery Montgomery County Revenue Authority

2m.	Potential Solution:	Maintain and improve rustic roads pursuant to the maintenance and improvement requirements in the Montgomery County Code.
	Potential Mechanism:	Enforcement
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Department of Transportation Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Planning Rustic Roads Advisory Committee

2n.	Potential Solution:	Provide funding and staff resources to support the expedited review of new and evolving agritourism businesses.
	Potential Mechanism:	Identify funding source
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services

Goal: *Support agritourism activities with a direct relationship to agriculture, to facilitate preservation of farming, farmland and rural open space.*

3a.	Potential Solution:	Develop, document and publish an agritourism policy and administrative review process to provide guidance on the types of agritourism activities permitted, their relationship to agriculture and the process for review and approval of agritourism activities.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Agricultural Advisory Committee

3b.	Potential Solution:	Establish criteria to define the required relationship to agriculture for agritourism activities.
	Potential Mechanism:	Document criteria in interdepartmental memoranda to provide consistent staff guidance. Publish memoranda on Montgomery County website to provide clarity and transparency for staff, applicants and residents.
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services
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3c.	Potential Solution:	<p>Define agritourism in the definitions section of the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance (Section 1.4.2) as: Agritourism includes: “Agritourism” includes: Accessory agricultural education and tourism activities conducted as a part of a farm's regular operations, with emphasis on hands-on experiences and events that foster increased knowledge of agriculture, including cultivation methods, animal care, water conservation, Maryland's farming history, the importance of eating healthy, and locally grown foods. Allowed activities include corn mazes, hay rides, and educational tours, classes, and workshops. The maximum footprint for any structure and the total footprint of all structures primarily used for education or tourism is limited to 10% of the total footprint square footage of all structures on the site used for agriculture. The property must have DPS approved sanitation facilities for this accessory use.</p> <p>Establish standards and a tiered approach for agricultural education and tourism activities, similar to the standards established for Equestrian Events in the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance (Section 3.2.4), that distinguishes those that can occur as a matter of right from those that require discretionary approval (including limited or conditional use).</p>
	Potential Mechanism:	Zoning Text Amendment
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery Planning Montgomery County Office of Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation and Advisory Board Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Montgomery Countryside Alliance

3d.	Potential Solution:	<p>Define agritourism in the definitions section of the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance (Section 1.4.2) as: Agritourism includes: “Agritourism” includes: Accessory agricultural education and tourism activities conducted as a part of a farm's regular operations, with emphasis on hands-on experiences and events that foster increased knowledge of agriculture, including cultivation methods, animal care, water conservation, Maryland's farming history, the importance of eating healthy, and locally grown foods. Allowed activities include corn mazes, hay rides, and educational tours, classes, and workshops. The</p>
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		<p>maximum footprint for any structure and the total footprint of all structures primarily used for education or tourism is limited to 10% of the total footprint square footage of all structures on the site used for agriculture. The property must have DPS approved sanitation facilities for this accessory use.</p> <p>Establish an overlay zone for the Agricultural Reserve (AR) Zone to identify permitted agritourism uses and established standards and a tiered approach for new agritourism venues that distinguishes the uses and standards that can occur as a matter of right from those that require discretionary approval (including limited or conditional use).</p>
	Potential Mechanism:	Zoning Text Amendment to Establish the Overlay Zone
	Prospective Partners:	<p>Montgomery Planning</p> <p>Montgomery County Office of Agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board <p>Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services</p>

3e.	Potential Solution:	Periodically review evolving agritourism activities, the tiered classification system, if adopted, and assess cumulative impacts (positive and negative) of agritourism.
	Potential Mechanism:	Meetings, Annual Monitoring Report
	Prospective Partners:	<p>Montgomery County Office of Agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board <p>Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services</p> <p>Montgomery Planning</p>

3f.	Potential Solution:	Conduct an analysis of publicly owned rural open space and its proximity to agritourism venues to identify opportunities to connect parks and agritourism activities.
	Potential Mechanism:	Study
	Prospective Partners:	<p>Montgomery Planning</p> <p>Montgomery Parks</p>

Goal: *Increase awareness of the Ag Reserve’s assets, including education of agricultural practices and better wayfinding.*

4a.	Potential Solution:	Provide funding and support, including staff resources, to expand the Food, Fiber and You Mobile Science Lab.
	Potential Mechanism:	Identify funding source
	Prospective Partners:	<p>Montgomery County Public Schools</p> <p>Montgomery County Office of Agriculture</p> <p>Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation, Inc.</p>

		Montgomery County Farm Bureau Montgomery Countryside Alliance
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4b.	Potential Solution:	Develop a database of farms and agritourism activities that provide internship opportunities to train students, future farmers, and future agritourism entrepreneurs.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Public Schools Montgomery County Revenue Authority University of Maryland Extension

4c.	Potential Solution:	Develop a series of agritourism and heritage tourism “trails” to connect various agritourism and heritage tourism activities. The “trails” could be grouped by type of activity, area of the Agricultural Reserve, or means of transportation, among other categories.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources and Web-Based Applications
	Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Heritage Montgomery Montgomery Planning Montgomery County Revenue Authority

4d.	Potential Solution:	Create a consolidated online calendar of offerings and events throughout the Agricultural Reserve.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Countryside Alliance Heritage Montgomery Montgomery County Revenue Authority

4e.	Potential Solution:	Identify opportunities for “pre-event” ticketing of agritourism events to maintain appropriate event sizes.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Countryside Alliance Heritage Montgomery Montgomery County Revenue Authority

4f.	Potential Solution:	Continue to highlight and promote stories of farmers working in the Agricultural Reserve through video narratives.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources, Media
	Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery

		Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Planning Montgomery Countryside Alliance Montgomery Agricultural Producers Montgomery County Farm Bureau
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4g.	Potential Solution:	Develop a comprehensive wayfinding signage system to direct patrons to agritourism venues, heritage tourism venues and other resources in the Agricultural Reserve and modify the Montgomery County Code as necessary to permit the implementation of the wayfinding system.
	Potential Mechanism:	Wayfinding Study
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Planning Montgomery Countryside Alliance Heritage Montgomery Montgomery County Department of Transportation Maryland State Highway Administration Rustic Roads Advisory Committee

Goal: *Provide inclusive and equitable access to the Agricultural Reserve.*

5a.	Potential Solution:	Develop and distribute a countywide survey to understand who participates in agritourism and heritage tourism. If residents do not participate in agritourism or heritage tourism, inquire why. Are residents unfamiliar, unable to access the activities, or feel unwelcome?
	Potential Mechanism:	Online survey
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Planning Heritage Montgomery

5b.	Potential Solution:	Provide shuttles or on-demand buses to significant events in the Agricultural Reserve, such as the Farm Tour and the Harvest Festival, or during peak agritourism season, from Montgomery County’s Equity Emphasis Areas or key destinations.
	Potential Mechanism:	Shuttles or on-demand buses
	Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Department of Transportation Montgomery County Revenue Authority

5c.	Potential Solution:	Bring the Agricultural Reserve to other portions of the County through farmer’s markets, community supported agriculture or direct marketing to consumers through programs such as Imperfect Produce or Misfits Market.
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	Potential Mechanism:	Farmer’s Markets and Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Regional Services Centers Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Montgomery County Food Council
5d.	Potential Solution:	Initiate promote and market celebrations and festivals in the Agricultural Reserve that are representative of Montgomery County’s increasingly diverse population.
	Potential Mechanism:	Celebrations and Festivals
	Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Montgomery County Office of Community Partnerships Montgomery County Regional Services Centers Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Countryside Alliance Montgomery County Revenue Authority
5e.	Potential Solution:	Conduct a comprehensive traffic analysis, including baseline analyses and peak-agritourism season analyses, to understand circulation challenges and opportunities in the Agricultural Reserve.
	Potential Mechanism:	Study
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery Planning Montgomery County Department of Transportation Montgomery County Office of Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board Rustic Roads Advisory Committee Montgomery Agricultural Producers Montgomery County Police Department
5f.	Potential Solution:	Expand Land Link Montgomery to connect beginner agritourism entrepreneurs with experienced agritourism operators, available land, farms and resources.
	Potential Mechanism:	Identify funding source.
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery Countryside Alliance Montgomery County Office of Agriculture
5g.	Potential Solution:	Provide resources for Montgomery County Public Schools to provide more on-farm field trips and in-class agricultural science related curriculum for all schools.
	Potential Mechanism:	Identify funding source.
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Public Schools Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation, Inc. Montgomery County Farm Bureau

IMPLEMENTATION

The Agritourism Study provides a foundation to advance support for agritourism and heritage tourism by identifying existing opportunities and challenges, developing common goals and establishing a comprehensive, consistent menu of potential solutions that promote tourism while maintaining the integrity of agriculture and rural character of the Agricultural Reserve.

While this study establishes a framework and identifies several potential solutions, the implementation of the identified solutions requires further coordination and collaboration between public agencies, private entities, advocacy organizations and residents. Successful implementation of the potential solutions requires leadership and investment from the public sector to pursue potential solutions in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders and in a manner consistent with the Agritourism Study goals. Specifically, leadership and investment are critical for development of resources to define agritourism uses; develop or modify any necessary review and approval processes; and to better support, market and promote agritourism and heritage tourism within Montgomery County. While leadership and investment are imperative, transparency and collaboration with private sector partners, advocacy organizations and residents are also critical to fully supporting agritourism and heritage tourism in Montgomery County, as these solutions are implemented and realized.

CONCLUSION

The Agritourism Study seeks to develop a comprehensive, countywide approach to promote agricultural tourism and heritage tourism, while preserving the agricultural and rural character as well as the intent of the Ag Reserve. The study's underlying aim is to encourage agricultural education and tourism activities that increase residents' knowledge and understanding of the county's Ag Reserve, enhance its attractiveness and economic viability as a destination and support its farms and the families that operate them, while preserving agricultural culture and heritage.

As there is no single solution to support agricultural tourism and heritage tourism, the Agritourism Study identifies several potential solutions to promote, support and facilitate agritourism in Montgomery County. Each of the potential solutions recognizes the importance of maintaining the integrity of the natural, cultural and historic character of the Ag Reserve, as well as sustaining the economic viability of farming. Implementation of the potential solutions requires further coordination and collaboration between public agencies, private entities, advocacy organizations and residents, including dedicated leadership and investment from the public sector.

APPENDIX A: HISTORY OF THE AGRICULTURAL RESERVE

Formation of the Agricultural Reserve

In 1964 Montgomery County adopted its first General Plan – *The General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties*. This plan was a precursor to the Smart Growth concept, concentrating development in corridors and preserving wedges of open space between the corridors. The plan combined fiscal and social responsibility by avoiding haphazard or “leapfrog” development and established future infrastructure extensions like roads, water, sewer, schools, and emergency services.

The 1969 General Plan Update reiterated the policies of the 1964 plan, but the rural areas of the county were discussed as one large “wedge” without distinguishing between different land uses. The 1969 “Program Open Space,” established by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, provided financial and technical assistance to local subdivisions for the planning, acquisition, and/or development of recreational land or open space areas. This program symbolized Maryland’s efforts to conserve natural resources while providing exceptional outdoor opportunities for residents. This program was the first program to implement land preservation and conceived the idea of an Agricultural Reserve in Montgomery County.

Montgomery County adopted its first Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) in 1973. An APFO is an important growth management tool used by rapidly growing counties and municipalities to direct growth in suitable areas where facilities such as roads, sewers, public water, and schools are adequate. The same year, the County Council broadly applied the Rural Zone designation to most of the land in the “Rural Wedge” thorough a Sectional Map Amendment. The Rural Zone created a lower density cap of one unit per every five acres, setting the foundation for protection of the Rural Wedge.

By the late 1970s, it was increasingly clear that the Rural Zone was ineffective in reducing farmland conversions to non-agricultural uses. The county determined that the existing septic system suitability policy was inadequate to guide future population density and the lack of public water or sewer did not deter development activity, especially given new advances in small scale community sewerage system technology. The county reviewed and evaluated the viability and methods of protection of the low-density Rural Wedge, resulting in the 1979 “Issues and Alternatives Report for the Protection of the Rural Wedge.” This report identified that an economically viable critical mass of farmland still existed in the county and identified alternative methods for the preservation of that land.

Four master plans and studies completed in 1980, including the *Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space (AROS) Functional Master Plan*, the *Olney Master Plan*, the *Sandy Spring / Ashton Special Study Plan*, and the *Poolesville Vicinity Master Plan* initiated and formed the Agricultural Reserve. These plans and studies identified specific agricultural protection areas and techniques, the Rural Cluster zone and the Rural Density Transfer (RDT) zone.

Transfer of Development Rights and Building Lot Terminations

Lands designated as the Agricultural Reserve in the 1980 *AROS Plan* were in the Rural Density Transfer (RDT) zone.⁴ The development density within the RDT zone was one unit per 25 acres, a significant

⁴ The RDT zone was renamed the AR zone with the 2014 comprehensive zoning code rewrite.

“downzoning” from the one unit per five acres allowed in the rural zone. To compensate landowners for this “downzoning,” the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program was implemented. This program established density “sending areas” and density “receiving areas.” Property owners in the RDT zone could “send” their density to other areas in the county by selling their excess development rights to land developers in those specified receiving areas, who could then use this “bonus density” in their projects in the receiving areas.

The number of development rights available to a landowner was based on the density of the Rural zone at the time: one right per five acres. Thus, an owner who owned 100 acres of land would have 20 development rights. Theoretically, these 100 acres could be further subdivided into four 25-acre lots, using four of those 20 rights, but would leave 16 rights to sell to a developer for a project elsewhere in the county. Or that owner could retain one right for their dwelling unit and sell 19 rights.

The owners of land in the Ag Reserve were able to sell their development rights and still retain the title to their land without the need to carve small residential lots from a farm. The sale of these rights could help finance farm equipment or make other capital improvements to the farm and offered an economic incentive to farmers to resist development pressure.

In 2013 the Building Lot Termination (BLT) Program was created establishing a new land preservation tool for properties in the Agricultural Reserve. The BLT program effectively decreased density in the Agricultural Reserve by extinguishing the right to build a dwelling unit and transferring that density to Commercial-Residential (CR) and Life Sciences Center (LSC) zones. Acquisition of whole or partial BLTs is required for all optional method projects in the Commercial-Residential (CR) and Life Sciences Center (LSC) zones and an option for public benefit points in the Commercial-Residential Town (CRT) and Employment Office (EOF) zones.

While the TDR and BLT Programs are effective tools to preserve farming, farmland and rural open space, there are some unintended challenges with these programs – including a reliance on private development to purchase development rights. Specifically, recent development applications have not elected to maximize density or pursued an alternative combination of public benefits and amenities to support incentive density, and therefore have not pursued purchase of TDRs or BLTs. While the TDR and BLT programs provide an opportunity for landowners to sell their development rights, the market to purchase these rights is not robust. Further, removal of the development rights reduces equity in the property, which can limit the ability for landowners to secure financing for continued capital and operational expenditures. These are important factors in the evolution of agricultural education and tourism activities, as these initiatives provide an opportunity for farmers to diversify their income and enhance the economic viability of continuing farming operations.

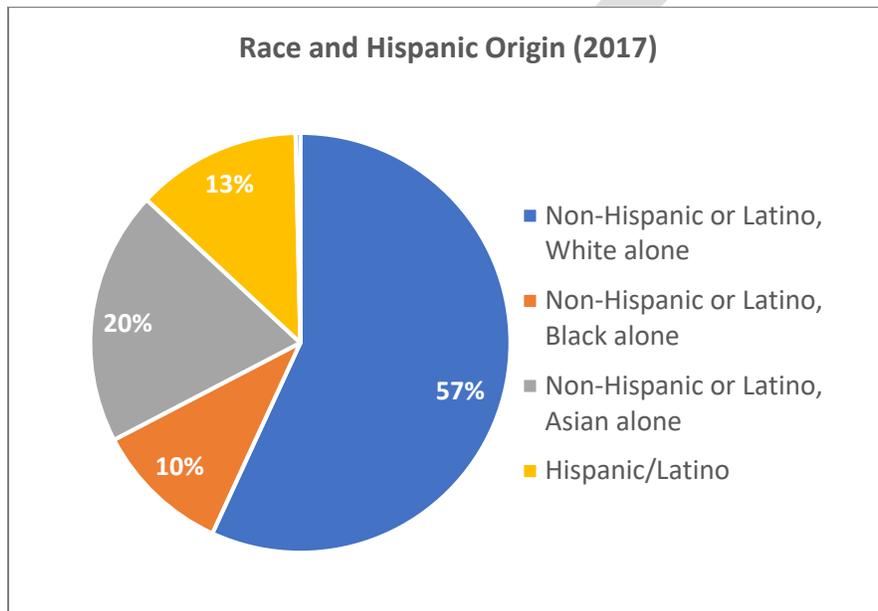
APPENDIX B: EXISTING AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND TOURISM AND HERITAGE TOURISM

Agritourism and Heritage Tourism Businesses and Sites	
1	Agricultural History Farm Park and Newmantown
2	Aix La Chapelle Farm
3	Alden Farms
4	Audubon Naturalist Society Woodend Sanctuary
5	Black Ankle Vineyards
6	Blueberry Gardens
7	Boyd's Negro School
8	Brookeville Beer Farm
9	Burnt Hill Project (Pending)
10	Butler's Orchard
11	Calleva Farm
12	Clarksville Schoolhouse
13	Darby Store
14	East Rivendell Farm
15	Elder Pine Brewing and Blending
16	FarmAtHome Produce
17	Fox Hollow Farm
18	Great Meadows Farm
19	Hyattstown Mill
20	Heyser Farms
21	Historic Button Farm
22	Homestead Farm
23	Jerusalem
24	King Barn Dairy MOOseum
25	Kingsbury Orchard
26	Lewis Orchard
27	Lockhouses and Canal Quarters
28	Lone Oak Brewing Company (Pending)
29	Madison Fields
30	Mills and Mill Ruins
31	Naughty Pine Nursery
32	Oakley Cabin (The Friends of Oakley Cabin and the Underground Railroad)
33	Pleasant Valley Farm Produce
34	Pleasant View Historic Site
35	Poole House
36	Poolesville Town Hall Bank
37	Poplar Spring Animal Sanctuary
38	Red Wiggler Community Farm
39	Rock Hill Orchard & Woodbourne Creamery
40	Rocklands Farm & Winery

41	Sandy Spring Museum
42	Sandy Spring Slave Museum and African Art Gallery
43	Seneca Creek State Park
44	Seneca Quarry Master's House
45	Seneca Quarry Ruin
46	Seneca Schoolhouse
47	Smithfield School Museum and Education Center
48	Soleado Lavender Farm LLC
49	Sugarland Ethno-History Project
50	Sugarloaf Mountain Vineyard
51	Susanna Farm (Pending)
52	Tusculum Farm
53	Waredaca Brewing Company
54	Waredaca Farm
55	Warren Historic Site
56	Waters Orchard and Doc Waters Cidery
57	White's Ferry
58	Windridge Vineyards
59	61 Vineyard (Pending)
<u>Heritage Tourism - Physical Features</u>	
60	Potomac River and tributaries
61	Patuxent River and tributaries
62	Piedmont
63	Historic farm viewsheds
64	Native American viewsheds
65	Woodlands, Meadows and Rolling Hills
<u>Heritage Tourism – Trails and Roads</u>	
66	Potomac River Water Trail
67	C&O Canal towpath
68	Greenway Trail
69	Seneca hike and bike trails
70	Patuxent hike and bike trails
71	MNCPPC hike and bike trails
72	C&O Scenic Byway
73	Rustic Roads
74	Civil War Trails
75	Walking tours of Poolesville and Brookeville

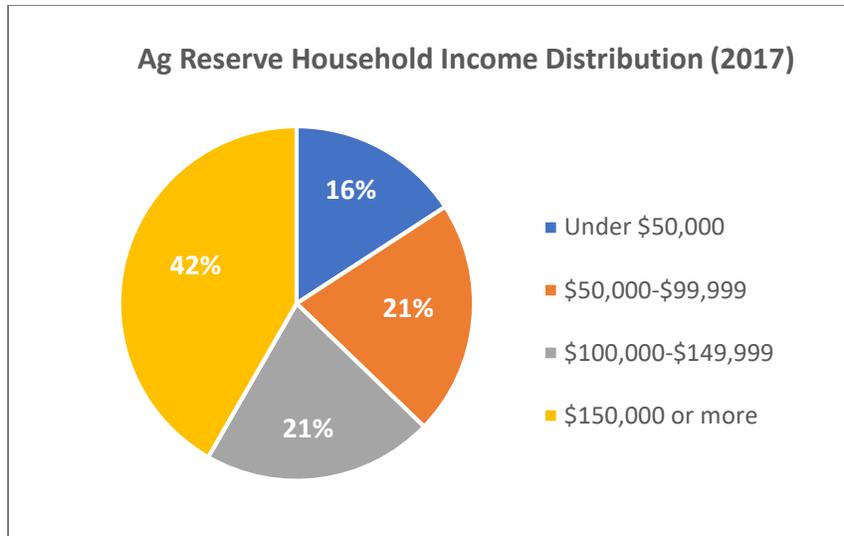
APPENDIX C: AGRICULTURAL RESERVE – DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The total population of the Agricultural Reserve was 36,503 in 2017, less than 4 percent of Montgomery County’s total population. The average household size was 2.96, larger than the county’s average household size of 2.63. Though the age distribution of the residents in the Ag Reserve is like the rest of the county, the racial and ethnic makeup of the Ag Reserve is different. The majority of residents in the Ag Reserve are white (55 percent) as compared to the county’s 45 percent. The percentage of black (10 percent) and Hispanic residents (12 percent) are lower in the Ag Reserve, compared to the county (18 percent and 19 percent, respectively), while the percentage of Asian residents is higher (19 percent compared to the county’s 15 percent).



Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey, 5-year estimate.

The majority of households (86 percent) in the Ag Reserve own their homes, as compared to 66 percent of the entire county. The average income of households in the Ag Reserve is \$153,271.10, higher than the county average of \$140,141.38. There are also a higher percentage of households (42 percent) earning \$150,000 or more, in comparison to the overall county (32 percent). Most households are families headed by married couples (68 percent), higher than county (54 percent). Most residents commute to work by driving alone (77 percent), as compared to 65 percent of the county residents.



Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey, 5-year estimate.

In 2017, 90 percent of farms in Montgomery County reported access to the internet, compared to 77 percent in 2007. While 90 percent of Montgomery County farms have access to the internet, the service is often satellite-based with limited reliability.

APPENDIX D: COMPARATIVE REVIEW AND CODE ANALYSIS

APPENDIX E: AGRICULTURAL PRODUCER CERTIFICATE FOR FARM ALCOHOL PRODUCTION

APPENDIX F: RESOURCES

Under Development

Agritourism Study Advisory Committee (ASAC) Meeting

Date: Tuesday, October 29, 2019

Time: 6:00 pm – 8:30 pm

Location: Agricultural History Farm Park - Large Multi-Purpose Room

- I. Welcome and Introductions**
- II. Draft Agritourism Study – Key Issues for Discussion and Action**
 - a. Suggested Edits to Study Themes – Discussion and Vote
 - b. Suggested Edits to Study Goals – Discussion and Vote
 - c. Suggested Edits to Potential Solutions – Discussion and Vote
- III. Next Steps**
 - a. Document Editing and Processing
 - b. Planning Board Distribution and Review
 - c. County Council Review
- IV. Acknowledgements**
- V. Adjournment**

October 29 ASAC Meeting – Discussion Points

ASAC Member's Suggested Edits to Study Themes

- Challenges to supporting agritourism today, as well as in the future, include:
 - An inconsistent, undocumented process for agritourism businesses.
 - Providing a clear definition of what is allowed under the agritourism definition.
 - Adequate facilities and infrastructure to accommodate events.
 - Balancing the need for flexibility while applying clear regulations.
 - Inconsistent enforcement.
 - A strong bias against preserving and stewarding historic and heritage assets which provide the context and fabric for the visitor experience.

ASAC Member's Suggested Edits to Study Goals

- Protect and preserve farming, farmland, culture and rural open space in the Agricultural Reserve.
- Support existing and future agritourism activities through improved processes for agritourism businesses and promotional tools.
- Support agritourism activities with a direct relationship to agriculture, to facilitate preservation of farming, farmland and rural open space.
- Increase awareness of the Ag Reserve's assets, including education of agricultural practices and better wayfinding.
- Provide inclusive and equitable access to the Ag Reserve.
- Provide protection and support to existing heritage communities and sites.
- Anticipate and seek to avoid possible harms of agritourism.

ASAC Member's Suggested Edits to Potential Solutions or Considerations

- Establish a monitoring and enforcement program for agritourism initiatives to ensure that agritourism activities are permitted and accessory to agriculture.
- Develop and promote a Montgomery County Agritourism website to provide resources and information for visitors.
- Establish criteria to define the required relationship to agriculture for agritourism activities.
- Establishment of an overlay zone for the Agricultural Reserve Zone to identify permitted uses, establish standards and a tiered approach for new agritourism venues.
- Identify opportunities for "pre-event" ticketing of agritourism events to maintain appropriate event sizes.
- Expand Land Link Montgomery to connect beginner agritourism entrepreneurs with experienced agritourism operators, available land, farms and resources.
- Provide resources for Montgomery County Public Schools to provide more on-farm field trips and in-class agricultural science related curriculum for all schools.

*Suggested edits received from ASAC Members are shown in underline and italics.