

# AGRITOURISM

## STUDY



### 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. At the same time, the study reinforces the need to continue to preserve 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, and their relationship 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 by implementing agencies 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.<sup>1</sup>

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—primarily agricultural education and tourism—that increase the public's 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 functions and rural character of the Agricultural Reserve.

### Overview of Goals and Potential Solutions

Overarching goals for the Agritourism Study include:

- 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 through education of agricultural practices and better wayfinding.
- Provide inclusive and equitable access to the Agricultural Reserve.

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 actively promoting and marketing agritourism and heritage tourism.

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<sup>1</sup> Zoning 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 became effective in October 2018. The amendment promotes new wineries, breweries, distilleries and cideries through clarification of regulatory processes and provision 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 at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DPS/Process/zspe/Agricultural-Breweries.html>





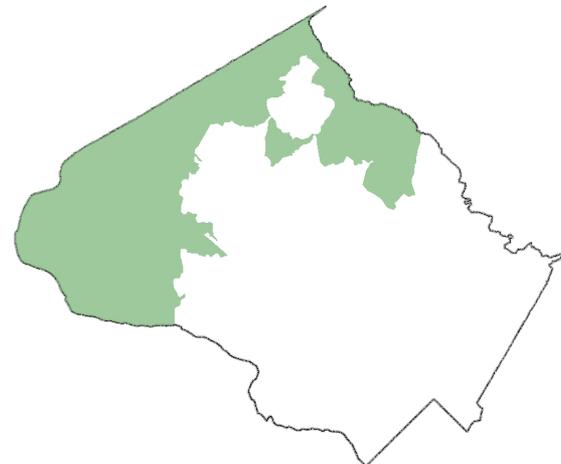
## INTRODUCTION

### Study Background

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 comprises 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.”

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 effort to preserve farmland and open space in the county.



■ Agricultural Reserve

Figure 1: Montgomery County’s Agricultural Reserve





Increased interest in agricultural education, tourism and entertainment has prompted discussion about opportunities to enhance the economic viability of the Ag Reserve. These opportunities include 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, DC 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. Additional 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* establishes 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 focuses on the preservation of farmland, but also establishes a policy framework to contribute to the continuation of farming in Montgomery County, through the separation of development rights from farmland.

The plan identifies 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. The TDR program is a mechanism designed to compensate landowners 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 horticultural businesses that 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 constant.

### *Montgomery County Heritage Area Management Plan*

The *Montgomery County Heritage Area (Heritage Montgomery) Management Plan*, completed in 2002 for the State of Maryland Heritage Area Program, seeks to elevate the prominence of the county’s heritage for residents and visitors and strengthen the connection between the county’s past and future. The plan focuses 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 recognizes the value of tourism and economic development to sustain the county's agricultural and cultural heritage and establishes 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, Scenic Byways and Rustic Roads, as well as the natural landscape and cultural histories. The Agricultural Reserve Heritage Theme honors the county's vistas and view sheds, rural roads, historic buildings and farming heritage.

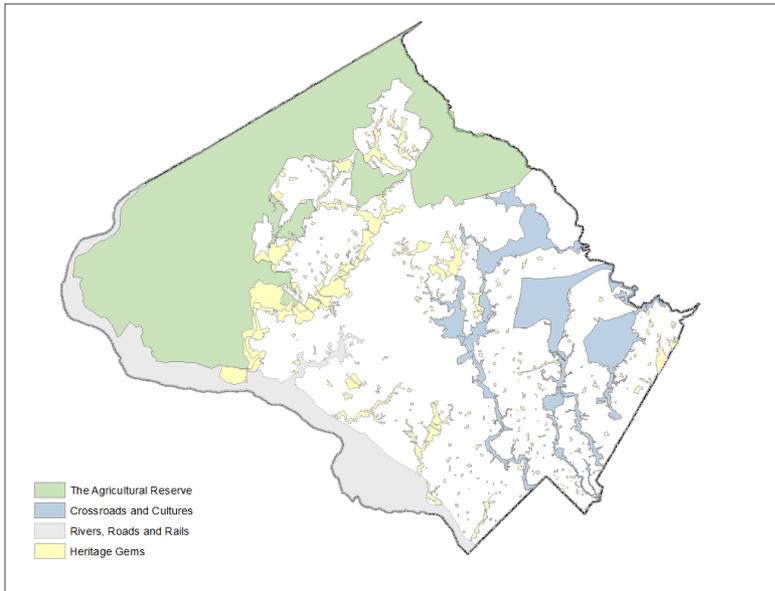


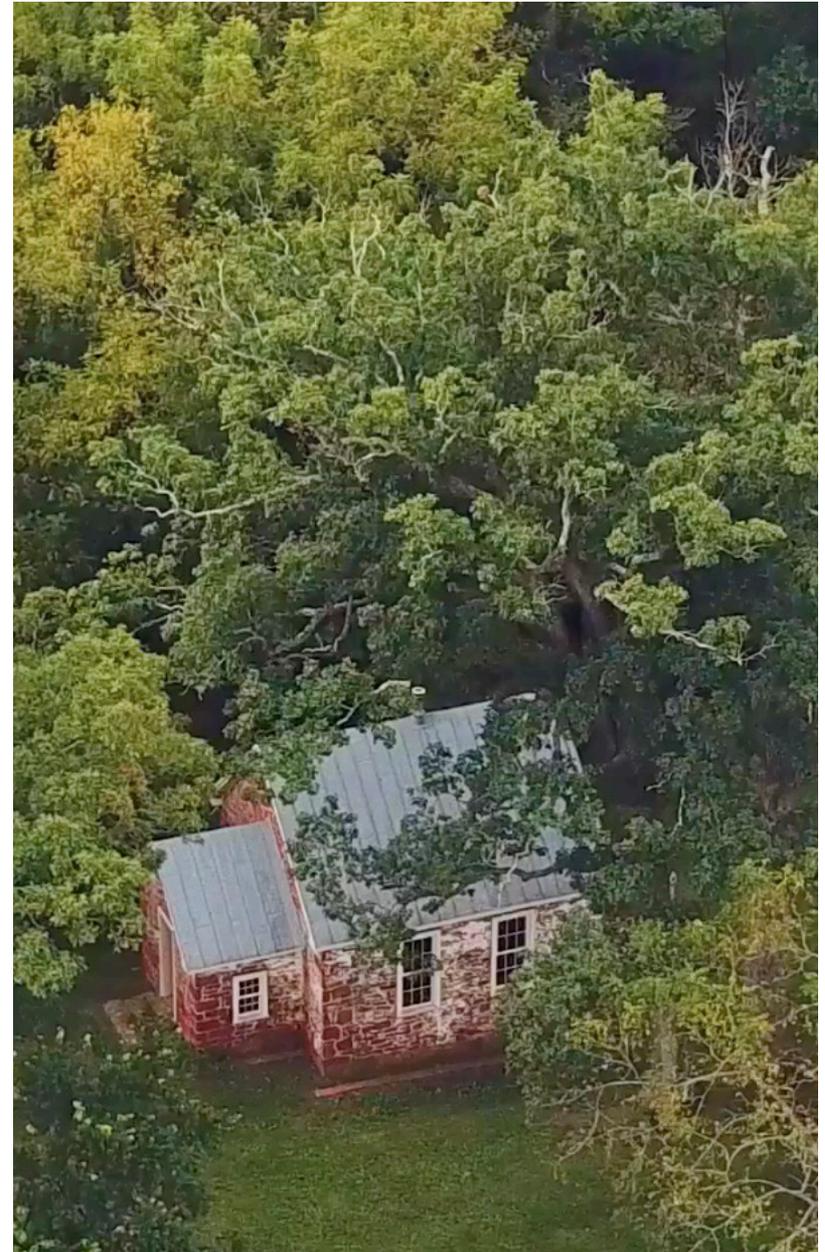
Figure 2: Montgomery County Heritage Themes

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 in the marketing of 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 all work to 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 3, 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 over the past 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 4. Traditional agricultural activities, including grain farms and livestock operations, have been sustained, while tabletop food production as well as the horticultural and equestrian industries have increased. 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. <sup>2</sup>

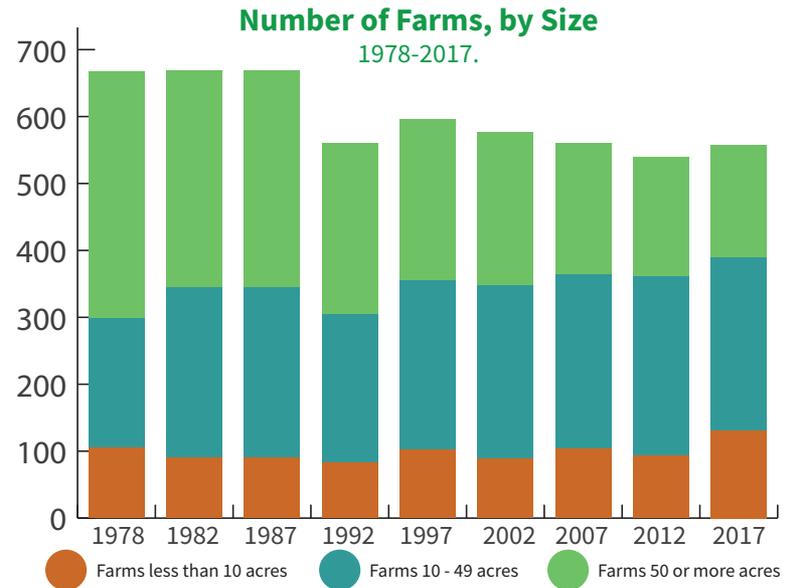


Figure 3: Number of Farms, by Size (Census of Agriculture, 1978-2017)

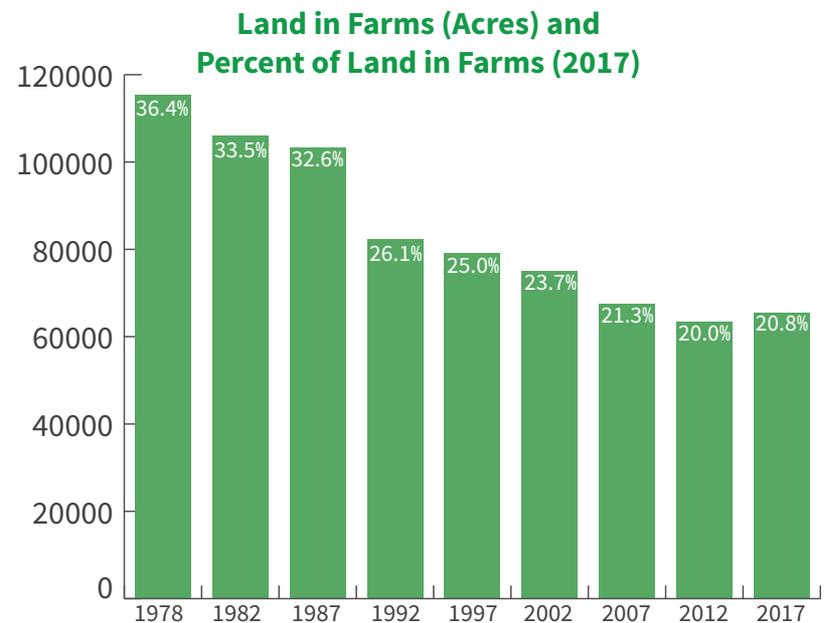


Figure 4: Land in Farms (Acres) and Percent of Land in Farms (2017) (Census of Agriculture, 1978-2017)

<sup>2</sup>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.

In addition, interest in agricultural and cultural education and tourism experiences is on the rise. Recognizing the evolution of farmland and farming, the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance was updated in 2014 to permit agricultural education and tourism activities as accessory uses 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 5.

*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.”*

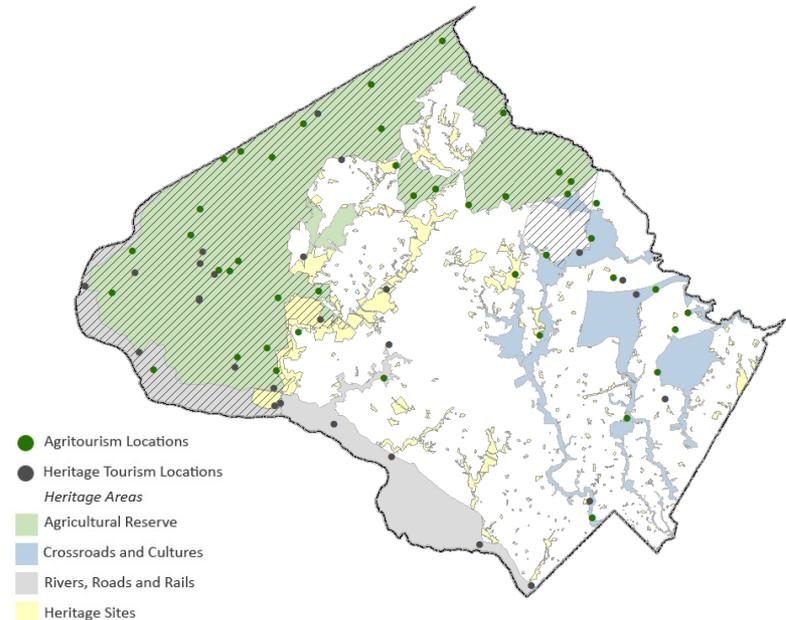
*Agricultural education and tourism, are permitted as an accessory use to farming and are “conducted as part of a farm’s regular operations, with emphasis on hands-on experiences and events that foster increased knowledge of agriculture, including cultivation methods, animal care, water conservation, 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.

*Figure 5: Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance definition of Farming, Agriculture and Agricultural Education and Tourism*

As shown in Appendix B, there are nearly 40 agricultural education and tourism activities in Montgomery County, including farmers markets, pick-your-own operations, community-supported agriculture (CSA) farms, animal sanctuaries, breweries, wineries and other enterprises, as well as several equestrian operations that offer lessons, summer camps and horse shows. In addition, there are more than 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 sites 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 Darby Store, Seneca Schoolhouse, Warren Historic Site 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 view sheds and sites.



*Figure 6: Montgomery County Agritourism and Heritage Tourism Locations*

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 fruits and vegetables, 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. While these stakeholders are most directly affected by agritourism, all of the public 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, become aware 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 businesses, 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 addressed individually by implementing agencies 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—primarily agricultural education and tourism—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

### Agritourism Study Advisory Committee

The Montgomery County 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 to participate. The role of the ASAC is 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 is 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 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.

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

Over the past several years, agritourism has grown significantly in many areas across the United States – including in the Washington, DC 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 7.

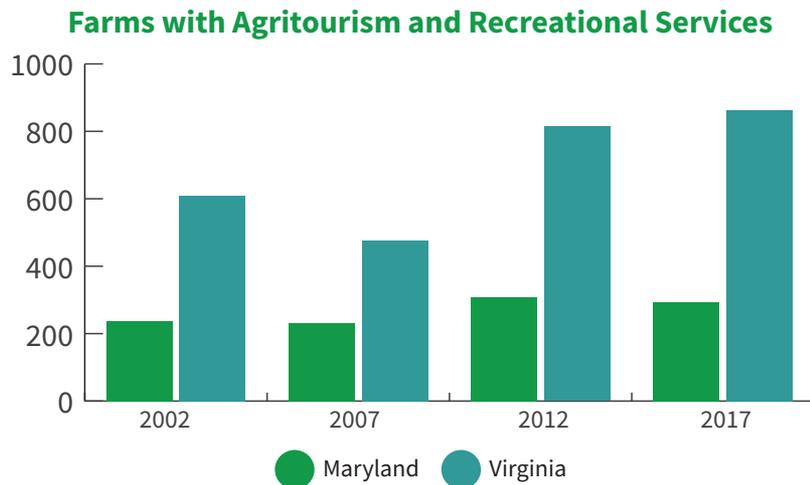


Figure 7: Farms with Agritourism and Recreational Services (Census of Agriculture, 2002-2017)

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 region. Loudoun County, Virginia, for example, shows significantly more growth in agritourism than Montgomery County, as shown in Figure 8.

However, between 2012 and 2017, the number of farms participating in agritourism and recreational services doubled in Montgomery County, from 10 to 20 farms.<sup>3</sup>

### Farms with Agritourism and Recreational Services

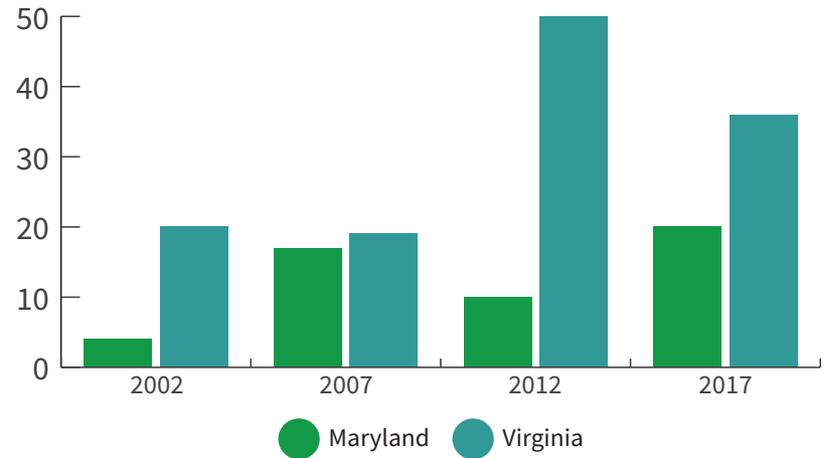


Figure 8: Farms with Agritourism and Recreational Services (Census of Agriculture, 2002-2017)

Montgomery Planning engaged a consultant team to conduct a study of agritourism policies and regulations in Montgomery County and comparable jurisdictions within the Washington, DC 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 10 jurisdictions, based on criteria such as 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 10 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.





## AGRITOURISM STUDY GOALS

The Agritourism Study Advisory Committee established the following goals to guide the Agritourism Study:

- 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 through education of agricultural practices and better wayfinding.
- Provide inclusive and equitable access to the Agricultural Reserve.

## 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.

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:**

Montgomery County Office of Agriculture

- 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:**

Montgomery County Office of Agriculture

Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation

University of Maryland Extension

Montgomery Countryside Alliance

**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:**

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:**

Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services

Montgomery County Office of Agriculture

- Agricultural Advisory Committee
- Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board



**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.

**2c. Prospective Partners:**

- Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services
- Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery
- Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation
- Montgomery County Office of Agriculture
- Agricultural Advisory Committee
- Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board
- Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC)
  - Montgomery Planning
- Montgomery County Department of Health & Human Services
- Montgomery Soil Conservation District
- Montgomery County Revenue Authority
- Rustic Roads Advisory Committee



**Potential Solution:**

Complete a feasibility study to identify appropriate county-owned land to accommodate visitor-serving uses limited to restrooms, parking and other supporting facilities in the Agricultural Reserve that support agricultural education and tourism activities as well as historic and cultural resources.

**Potential Mechanism:**

Feasibility study.

**2d. Prospective Partners:**

- Montgomery County Department of General Services
- M-NCPPC
  - Montgomery Parks
  - Montgomery Planning
- Visit Montgomery
- Montgomery Countryside Alliance
- Montgomery County Revenue Authority
- Rustic Roads Advisory Committee

**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.

**2e.**

**Potential Mechanism:**

- Montgomery County Council
- Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services
- Montgomery Planning (M-NCPPC)
- 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 an interagency working group.

**Prospective Partners:**

Montgomery County Office of Agriculture  
Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection  
Montgomery County Department of Health & Human Services  
Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services  
Montgomery Planning (M-NCPPC)  
Montgomery Soil Conservation District  
Rustic Roads Advisory Committee

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:**

Prepare a study to identify alternatives.

**Prospective Partners:**

Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection  
Montgomery County Department of Health & Human Services  
Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services  
Montgomery County Office of Agriculture

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 & 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, DC 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



- 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 (M-NCPPC)  
Montgomery County Regional Services Center Directors & Citizen Advisory Boards  
Heritage Montgomery  
Montgomery Countryside Alliance  
Montgomery County Revenue Authority

- 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 & Human Services  
Montgomery County Revenue Authority  
University of Maryland Extension



- Potential Solution:**  
Develop and promote a Montgomery County Agritourism website to provide resources and information for visitors.
- Potential Mechanism:**  
Online resources.
- 2l. Prospective Partners:**  
Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery  
Montgomery County Office of Agriculture  
Montgomery Countryside Alliance  
Heritage Montgomery  
Montgomery County Revenue Authority
- Potential Solution:**  
Maintain and improve rustic roads pursuant to the maintenance and improvement requirements in the Montgomery County Code.
- Potential Mechanism:**  
Enforcement.
- 2m. Prospective Partners:**  
Montgomery County Department of Transportation  
Montgomery County Office of Agriculture  
Rustic Roads Advisory Committee
- Potential Solution:**  
Provide funding and staff resources to support the expedited review of new and evolving agritourism businesses.
- Potential Mechanism:**  
Identify funding source.
- 2n. 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.

**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.

3a.

**Potential Mechanism:**

Online resources.

**Prospective Partners:**

Montgomery County Office of Agriculture  
Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services  
Agricultural Advisory Committee

**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.

3b.

**Prospective Partners:**

Montgomery County Office of Agriculture

- Agricultural Advisory Committee
- Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board

Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services

**Potential Solution:**

Define agritourism in the definitions section of the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance (Section 1.4.2) as: “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 but are not limited to corn mazes, hayrides, 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.<sup>4</sup> The property must have DPS approved sanitation facilities for this accessory use.

3c.

**Potential Mechanism:**

Zoning Text Amendment.

**Prospective Partners:**

Montgomery Planning (M-NCPPC)  
Montgomery County Office of Agriculture

- Agricultural Advisory Committee
- Agricultural Preservation and Advisory Board

Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services  
Montgomery Countryside Alliance

**Potential Solution:**

Periodically review evolving agritourism activities and assess cumulative impacts (positive and negative) of agritourism.

**Potential Mechanism:**

Meetings, annual monitoring report.

3d.

**Prospective Partners:**

Montgomery County Office of Agriculture

- Agricultural Advisory Committee
- Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board

Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services  
Montgomery Planning (M-NCPPC)

<sup>4</sup>The Agritourism Study Advisory Committee agreed that an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance is necessary to clearly define “agritourism.” The Committee also agreed that the definition of agritourism should be generally consistent with the current definition but amended to provide flexibility on the types of activities allowed and the limitation specified for the maximum and total footprint of structures used for agricultural education or tourism.



**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.

3e.

**Potential Mechanism:**

Analysis of publicly owned rural open space.

**Prospective Partners:**

M-NCPPC

- Montgomery Parks

- Montgomery Planning



**Goal:** Increase awareness of the Agricultural Reserve's assets through education of agricultural practices and better wayfinding.

**Potential Solution:**

Provide funding and support, including staff resources, to expand the Food, Fiber and You Mobile Science Lab.

**Potential Mechanism:**

Identify funding source.

4a.

**Prospective Partners:**

Montgomery County Public Schools

Montgomery County Office of Agriculture

Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation, Inc.

Montgomery County Farm Bureau

Montgomery Countryside Alliance

**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:**

Identify funding source.

4b.

**Prospective Partners:**

Montgomery County Public Schools

Montgomery County Office of Agriculture

Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation, Inc.

Montgomery County Farm Bureau

Montgomery Countryside Alliance

**Potential Solution:**

Develop a series of agritourism and heritage tourism “trails” (e.g. winery, brewery or ice cream “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.

4c.

**Potential Mechanism:**

Online resources and web-based applications.

**Prospective Partners:**

Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery  
Heritage Montgomery  
Montgomery Planning (M-NCPPC)  
Montgomery County Revenue Authority

**Potential Solution:**

Create a consolidated online calendar of offerings and events throughout the Agricultural Reserve.

**Potential Mechanism:**

Online resources.

4d.

**Prospective Partners:**

Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery  
Montgomery County Office of Agriculture  
Montgomery Countryside Alliance  
Heritage Montgomery  
Montgomery County Revenue Authority

**Potential Solution:**

Continue to highlight and promote stories of farmers working in the Agricultural Reserve through video narratives.

4e.

**Potential Mechanism:**

Online resources, media, publicity, press coverage.

**Prospective Partners:**

Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery  
Montgomery County Office of Agriculture  
Montgomery Planning (M-NCPPC)  
Montgomery Countryside Alliance

**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.

4f.

**Potential Mechanism:**

Wayfinding study.

**Prospective Partners:**

Montgomery County Office of Agriculture  
Montgomery Planning (M-NCPPC)  
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, determine their reasons. Are agritourism and heritage tourism activities, events and sites known and accessible?

**Potential Mechanism:**  
Online survey.

**Prospective Partners:**  
Montgomery County Office of Agriculture  
Montgomery Planning (M-NCPPC)  
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



**Potential Solution:**

Bring the Agricultural Reserve to other portions of the county through farmers markets, community-supported agriculture or direct marketing to consumers through programs such as Imperfect Produce or Misfits Market.

**5c. Potential Mechanism:**  
Farmers markets and online resources.

**Prospective Partners:**

Montgomery County Office of Agriculture  
Montgomery County Regional Services Centers  
Montgomery County Department of Health & Human Services  
Montgomery County Food Council

**Potential Solution:**

Initiate, promote and market celebrations and festivals in the Agricultural Reserve that are representative of Montgomery County's increasingly diverse population.

**5d. Potential Mechanism:**  
Celebrations, festivals and online resources.

**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



**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:**

Traffic analysis.

**Prospective Partners:**

5e.

- Montgomery Planning (M-NCPPC)
- Montgomery County Department of Transportation
- Montgomery County Office of Agriculture
  - Agricultural Advisory Committee
  - Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board
- Rustic Roads Advisory Committee
- Montgomery Agricultural Producers
- Montgomery County Police Department

**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

5f.

**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
- Montgomery Countryside Alliance

5g.



## IMPLEMENTATION

The Agritourism Study provides a foundation to advance support for agritourism and heritage tourism. The study identifies existing opportunities and challenges, common goals and a comprehensive, consistent menu of potential solutions that promote tourism while maintaining the integrity of the 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.

In addition to leadership and investment from the public sector, successful implementation also requires partnerships among public and private agencies, institutions, advocacy organizations, advisory committees and residents. The menu of potential solutions identifies prospective partners for the implementation of each solution. The identification of these initial prospective partners demonstrates that successful implementation will require partnerships characterized by coordination and collaboration.

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 partnerships among private sector partners, advocacy organizations and residents are also critical to fully support 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.





CASE LA 104.4

WE DO!

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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