Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

Creating a Small Town Character

# village mixed use district

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# village mixed use district

## Creating a Small Town Character

Prepared by the Montgomery County Planning Commission
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# Table of Contents


## Introduction ..... v

## The Village Mixed Use Concept

Key Elements of the Village Mixed Use Concept ..... 3

Local Examples ..... 5

Benefits of Village Mixed Use Development ..... 8

## Planning for Small-Scale Mixed Use Development

Suitable Locations for Mixed Use Development ..... 13

Relationship to County Comprehensive Plan ..... 18

Legal Framework ..... 19

Preserving Historic Character ..... 20

## Design Elements

Permitted Uses ..... 23

Mixed Use Buildings ..... 24

Tract Size and Use ..... 25

Overall Mix Requirements ..... 26

Residential Mix Requirements ..... 27

Residential Density ..... 28

Dimensional Standards ..... 29

General Layout ..... 30

Street Layout ..... 31

Non-Residential Building Design Standards ..... 32

Residential Building Design Standards....33
Parking Standards....34
Open Space....36
Primary Park....37
Signs....38

## Model Ordinance

Section 1. Intent....41
Section 2. Permitted Uses and Tract Size....42
Section 3. Density and Mix Requirements....43
Section 4. Dimensional Requirements....45
Section 5. General Requirements....46
Section 6. Design Standards....46
Section 7. Open Space Standards....53
Section 8. Conditional Use Standards....55

# Introduction

Many residents of Montgomery County are very satisfied with their suburban communities and the ensuing lifestyle. Other residents, however, find themselves dissatisfied, not liking the traffic congestion, the dependence on the automobile, the appearance of buildings, and the lack of community identity. These people yearn for the small-town character of yesteryear, where neighbors could meet on Main Street while walking to the post office or local store.

Unfortunately, most new developments don't really resemble the county's small towns, yet surveys have consistently shown that twenty-five percent or more of potential home buyers would like to live in mixed use development that creates a small-town atmosphere.

To provide guidance to municipalities and developers who are interested in this type of development, the Montgomery County Planning Commission has written a model zoning ordinance called the Village Mixed-Use District (VMU), which requires new development to have a mix of uses with a small-town character. This publication provides background materials for municipalities, including:

- Part 1 provides an overview of the this type of zoning, including a list of the benefits and a few local examples.
- Part 2 focuses on critical planning issues, including where to apply village mixed use zoning.
- Part 3 illustrates important design elements for appropriate mixed use development.
- Part 4 contains the model village mixed use ordinance, which incorporates the design elements described in Part 3.

**Village Mixed Use Development is:** Development that contains a variety of residential uses and a variety of commercial and institutional uses in small traditional-style buildings.

*Skippack Village*

*Lantern Hill, Doylestown*

# *the village mixed use concept*

# *Part 1*

Part 1 of this publication provides an overview of the Village Mixed Use Concept and includes:

- A summary of key ordinance provisions
- Local Examples
- Benefits of Village Mixed Use zoning

# Key Elements of the Village Mixed Use District

The Village Mixed Use District is designed for places where small-scale, walkable, livable, and attractive development is appropriate. These might be within existing villages, on the outskirts of towns or villages, or as a new village center for a developing township. A few key elements of this zoning are listed below.

**Key Element 1. A Mix of Uses.** One of the most prominent features of Montgomery County's older villages and towns is the diversity and mix of uses found in them. These places have banks, churches, large single homes, apartment buildings, small retail stores, firehouses, offices, and other uses right next to each other, and often mixed within the same building.

To match the character of these existing historic places and to provide the transportation, fiscal, and land use benefits of mixed uses, new mixed use developments must contain a true mix of uses located in close proximity to one another. The VMU District accomplishes this by requiring a minimum percent of residential and non-residential development, requiring a full mix of residential housing types, and requiring different housing types to be integrated with each other.

*Mixed uses at Eagleview*

**Key Element 2. Walkable Streetscape.** In most newer suburbs, it is often difficult or uninviting to walk anywhere.

In strip commercial areas, for example, it is impossible or, at best, a chore to walk from one retail use to another. Pedestrians who are brave enough to walk often have no sidewalks to use. When sidewalks do exist, the walking environment is unfriendly, with pedestrians forced to cross numerous driveways, endure the fumes and noise of nearby traffic, and dodge cars while walking through parking lots to buildings.

Across the suburbs, the car has come to dominate the landscape, with large parking areas in front of commercial buildings, streets designed to move cars as fast and freely as possible, and homes looking like places to park a car rather than places to live.

To create a friendlier, more attractive, and more walkable landscape, the VMU district requires small-scale, attractive commercial buildings that have doors and windows facing streets and parking areas. In addition, garages and parking areas for all uses must be located to the side and rear of houses and commercial buildings.

*Walkable streetscape in Skippack*

**Key Element 3. Central Open Space.** Many suburban developments lack common open space and any defining features for the community as a whole. Those that do have open space often use this open space for detention basins, drainage swales, and buffer strips.

To provide active recreation areas, create a focal point for the community, and save environmental features, the VMU District requires at least 20% open space, with half of this required open space located centrally, in village greens and other types of central open space.

*Central green in Weatherstone*

**Key Element 4. Interconnected Street and Sidewalk Systems.** Unfortunately, traffic congestion is getting worse in the suburbs. One reason is the design of local streets, where many developments consist of cul-de-sacs leading to a major road. All traffic must got out onto this major road, even local traffic, which adds to the congestion on the road.

The VMU District requires streets to be interconnected with each other and with streets on abutting properties. Interconnected streets disperse traffic, reduce trip length, encourage walking by providing direct routes, and connect neighborhoods. Traditional towns and villages always had interconnected, walkable streets, and these connections helped create a sense of community.

*Interconnected streets in Richmond Square*

# Local Examples

Within Montgomery County and the region, there are many new mixed use, walkable developments. A few of these examples are highlighted here.

### Woodmont
### Lower Moreland, Montgomery Co., PA

This small traditional neighborhood development is comprised primarily of single family detached homes in a suburban area.

- 49 acre tract
- 120 single-family detached homes
- 10,000 square feet retail/office
- 17 acres of open space

★ = *Site Location*

*Single-family homes at Woodmont*

### Sunnybrook Village
### Lower Pottsgrove, Montgomery Co., PA

This suburban-style mixed use development follows a creek on an environmentally-constrained property.

- 52 acre tract
- 151 single-family attached homes
- 17,000 square feet retail/restaurant
- 110,000 square feet offce

★ = *Site Location*

*Office building at Sunnybrook Village*

### Lantern Hill
### Doylestown, Montgomery Co., PA

This former brownfield industrial property has been redeveloped as a walkable mixed use development.

- 19 acre tract
- 108 single-family attached homes
- 9 single-family detached homes
- 72,000 square feet office/retail space
- central greens and natural open space

★ = *Site Location*

*Bank in Lantern Hill*

# Local Examples

## Weatherstone
## West Vincent, Chester Co., PA

This partially built development, which includes a county library, is in a scenic part of Chester County called Ludwig's Corner.

- 300 acre tract
- 206 single-family detached homes
- 68 townhouses and 100 apartments
- 120,000 square feet retail and a 45,000 gym
- 111,000 square feet office
- 190 acres of open space

★ = *Site Location*

*County library in Weatherstone*

## Eagleview
## Uwchlan, Chester Co., PA

This neo-traditional development, the first in the Philadelphia region, is in the middle of an office park near an interchange of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. It is still under construction.

- 169 acre tract
- 106 single-family detached homes
- 233 townhouses and 144 apartments
- 47,000 square feet retail/restaurant/bank, including 10,000 square feet in live/work units
- 55,000 square feet office and a hotel
- 41,000 square foot gym

★ = *Site Location*

*Restaurant at Eagleview*

## Washington Town Center
## Robbinsville, Mercer County, NJ

This large development was designed as a new town and includes the transfer of development rights from nearby farmland.

- 146 acre tract acre tract
- 704 homes of various types
- 95,000 square feet of retail and office space
- 38 acres of open space

★ = *Site Location*

*Singles in Washington Town Center*

## Kissel Hill
## Manhein, Lancaster Co., PA

This large property has large buffers and significant open space.

- 95 acre tract
- 81 single-family detached homes
- 202 townhouses and twins
- commercial buildings around central green
- 34 acres of open space

★ = *Site Location*

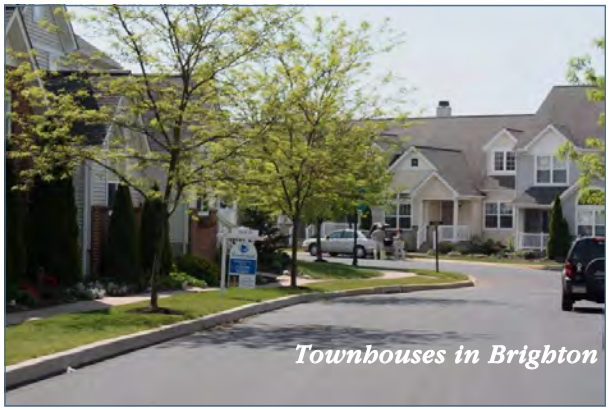
*Kissel Hill entryway*

## Brighton
## Manheim, Lancaster Co., PA

This mixed use development, which struggled initially, was one of the first traditional neighborhood developments in Pennsylvania

- 53 acre tract
- 101 single-family detached homes
- 55 townhouses
- 23,400 square feet retail
- 16 acres of open space

★ = *Site Location*



*Townhouses in Brighton*

## Richmond Square/Wetherburn Commons
## Manheim, Lancaster Co., PA

This development has been designed with a town center that includes apartments over retail space. It is still under construction.

- 81 acre tract
- 107 single-family detached homes
- 60 townhouses
- 116 apartments, with 36 over commercial
- 79,500 square feet of commercial, including a gas station
- 38 acres of open space

★ = *Site Location*

*Street scene in Richmond Square*

# Benefits of Village Mixed Use Development

Small-scale mixed use development offers many benefits, including:

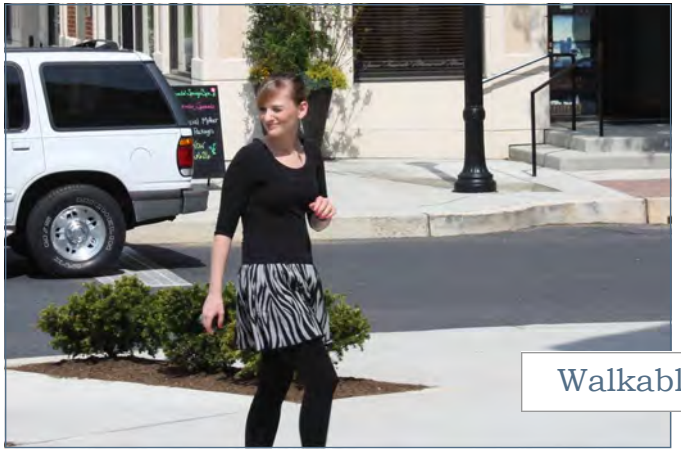
**Ability to walk to destinations**. Because mixed use developments contain a variety of alternative destinations near each other, it is easier to walk from one use to another This gives the option of walking to people who don't want to drive and to those who can't drive, such as children, some elderly, and some people with disabilities.

**Fewer vehicles on external roads**. Since drivers can reach various destinations within the same development, such as stores or offices, there will be fewer vehicle trips on roads external to the mixed use development.

**Positive fiscal impact**. Because mixed use developments contain uses, such as offices and apartments, that generally have a positive fiscal impact on municipal and school budgets, these developments will usually have a better fiscal impact than a typical residential subdivision.

**Greater sense of community**. Mixed use developments typically create a better sense of community than standard suburban development by providing gathering places and walkable streets where neighbors can meet. Around the country, many suburban towns, such as Schaumburg in Illinois or Towamencin Township here in Montgomery County, have decided they want to create a town center and sense of place for their community. They have done this through mixed use development. Other places with derelict shopping centers, have decided these centers should become mixed use developments, such as Mashpee Commons on Cape Cod or the proposed Vorhees Town Center in Vorhees, New Jersey.

**Positive impact on residential property values**. Residences that are near, but not directly adjacent to, civic, commercial, and office uses usually have a higher property value than they normally would, according to a variety of economic and statistical studies.



Walkable

Attractive

**Greater street security.** In mixed use developments, because residences are near non-residential uses, they provide “eyes on the street” and improve security.

**More attractive non-residential development.** When residential and non-residential uses are mixed, developers must make the stores, offices, and institutions relatively attractive; otherwise, if unattractive non-residential uses were built, it would be more difficult to sell the homes in the development.

**Less impact on existing residences**. Generally, mixed use developments will have less impact on existing residences than non-residential development because the homes in the mixed use development can act as a buffer between existing homes and proposed non-residential development.

**Protection from housing fair share challenges.** Mixed use zoning that allows apartments, townhouses, and twins can be used to help meet a municipality’s housing fair share needs.

**More recreational opportunities.** When they have various types of open space, as the VMU District requires, mixed use developments provide places where on-site recreational facilities can be provided, thereby lowering the potential demand for these services within the community as a whole.

**Better public transit access.** Higher density mixed use developments, with their alternative destinations and pool of potential riders, provide a logical location for a train or bus stop.

Social

Economical

# *planning for small-scale mixed use development*

# *Part 2*

Part 2 of this publication discusses important planning issues for village mixed use zoning, including:

- General location guidelines
- The use of village mixed use zoning for historic preservation
- Specific location guidelines for Montgomery County
- Discussion of the legal framework for this zoning

## Suitable Locations for Mixed Use Development

There are many suitable locations in the county for mixed use development. In fact, Montgomery County already contains hundreds of mixed use areas – the county's old villages, towns, and places, like Harleysville, Bryn Mawr, Glenside, Hatboro, North Wales, Collegeville, and Pennsburg.

These older mixed use areas developed in a variety of ways. Some grew up around smaller villages, some developed along major roads, others sprang up around train stations, and still others followed major employers. These kinds of locations, and the ones listed on the following pages, are still excellent sites for new mixed use development.

*Existing village*

*Typical zoning*

*Village Mixed Use zoning*

*DEVELOPABLE INFILL LAND IN VILLAGE*

*EXISTING TOWN/VILLAGE AREA*

## Suitable Location - within existing mixed use villages and towns

In Montgomery County, there are many existing villages and towns with an attractive historic character the community wants to preserve, yet the zoning in these areas often allows standard strip commercial development, which frequently leads to the razing of historic buildings that are replaced with inappropriate structures, such as gas stations and fast food restaurants.

To address these potential problems, the VMU District controls the types of uses that can be built, contains a variety of design standards, and has a historic preservation requirement. If a municipality wants to apply VMU zoning in built-up historic areas, the VMU ordinance should be amended to reflect any historic resource surveys or studies the community has cond ucted.

## Suitable Location - on the outskirts of existing villages and towns

One of the best locations for VMU zoning is on the edge of existing historic villages and towns. These locations make it easier to economically provide sewer and water lines, create a walkable environment with destinations in the town, and create a sense of place. In addition, they help preserve the character of the town or village by requiring compatible development.

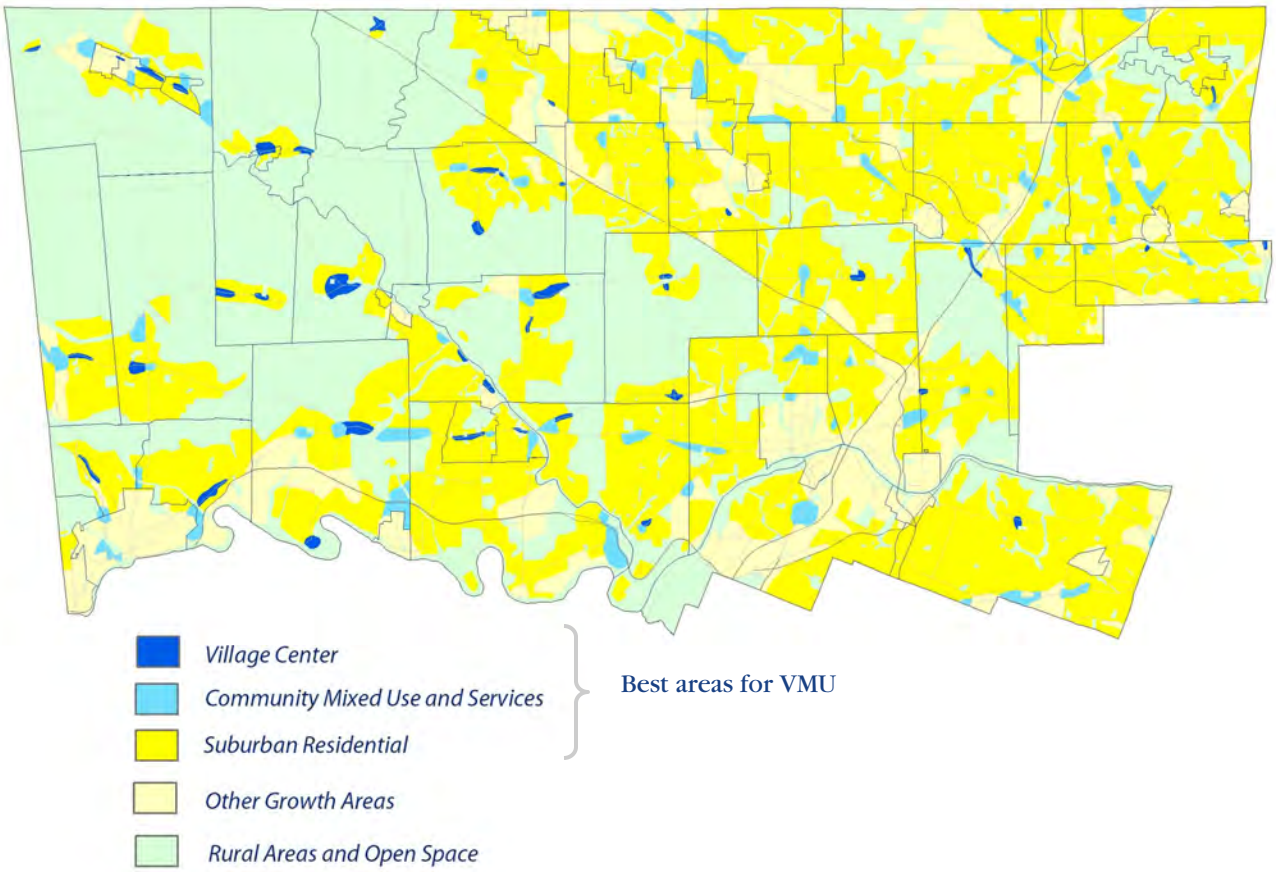
## Suitable Location - in transition areas

The VMU District is an ideal transitional zoning district, able to create a gradual transition from intense uses, such as shopping centers, offices, and highways, to less intense uses, such as homes and farms. When a VMU development is laid out, its non-residential uses can be located next to nearby intense uses while its single-family homes can be located next to abutting residential lots.

## Suitable Location - as a new town

Some communities have no existing town or village they can extend. Yet they need to provide their fair share of housing and commercial development and must zone areas for these uses. In these cases, the VMU District can be used to create a new town while meeting some of a municipality's fair share needs. However, because the VMU District does not allow shopping centers or strip commercial uses, the district is not able to meet all of a community's commercial fair share needs unless these types of uses are added to the district.

## Future Land Use Plan - Highlighting Best VMU Locations




*Village Mixed Use Development is most appropriate for Village Centers. It can also be appropriate for Community Mixed Use and Services and Suburban Residential areas.*

## Relationship to the County Comprehensive Plan

Montgomery County's 2005 comprehensive plan - *Shaping Our Future: A Comprehensive Plan for Montgomery County* - provides guidance on land use policy to local municipalities. It can be used to determine the most appropriate places for village mixed use zoning.

The land use map in this plan groups land uses by the intensity, function, and characteristics of an area. This map shows one land use category - the Village Center land use - that is the most appropriate location for Village Mixed Use zoning. These areas are historic, small-scale focal points for communities where mixed use development is very appropriate.

Two other land use categories - Community Mixed Use and Services and Suburban Residential- can also be good locations for small-scale mixed use development, particularly as a transition from commercial centers and busy roads to quieter residential neighborhoods.

Areas chosen for Village Mixed Use zoning should be consistent with the county and municipal comprehensive plans.

# Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code

## Summary of a Few Provisions of Article VII-A, Traditional Neighborhood Development

| | Highlighted Provision (only most relevant ones are included) |
|---|---|
| **Power granted ...** | "… to allow for the development of fully integrated, mixed-use pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods…" |
| **Objectives are ...** | "… to establish a community which is pedestrian-oriented with a number of parks, a centrally located public commons, square, plaza …" |
| | "... to minimize traffic congestion … by reducing the number and length of automobile trips required to access everyday needs…" |
| | "… to provide the elderly and young independence of movement by locating most daily activities within walking distance…" |
| | "… to foster a sense of place and community by providing a setting that encourages the natural intermingling of everyday uses and activities within a recognized neighborhood …" |
| **Mapping alternatives are ...** | "… for new development, TND shall be in the form of an overlay …" |
| | "… for an outgrowth or extension of existing development or urban infill, TND designation may be either in the form of an overlay zone, or as an outright designation …" |
| **Ordinances can regulate ...** | "… the amount, location, and proposed use of common open space … as well as the establishment of a centrally located public commons …" |
| | "… the location and physical characteristics of the site of the proposed TND so that it will develop out of the location of squares, parks, and other neighborhood centers …" |
| | "… the location, design, type, and use of structures proposed, with most structures being placed close to the street …" |
| | "… the location, design, type and use of streets, sidewalks and other public rights-of-way with a hierarchy of streets laid out in a rectilinear or grid pattern of interconnecting streets and blocks …" |
| | "… the location for vehicular parking with the street plan providing for on street parking for most streets … all parking lots … should be located either behind or to the side of buildings and, in most cases, should be located towards the center of blocks …" |

## Legal Framework

Although not a planning issue, per se, Pennsylvania's legal framework must be taken into account when planning for Village Mixed Use development. Because this type of zoning includes extensive design standards, local municipalities need to back up the rationale for any standards in the ordinance. The standards should be related to specific goals that impact the general health, safety, and welfare of the municipality.

The community should:

- Prepare or already have a comprehensive plan that identifies the proposed area as appropriate for mixed use development. This plan should also explain why these areas are appropriate for this development.
- Include a legislative intent in the ordinance that is tailored to the community's unique situation.

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code has broad zoning ordinance provisions that allow municipalities to regulate land use, size of buildings, location of buildings, and open space areas. These standards can be used to support Village Mixed Use Zoning.

In addition, the MPC has an article devoted to Traditional Neighborhood Development that focuses directly on creating walkable, mixed use developments.

*Preserved inn now used as offices in Audubon*

*Historic home converted to offices in Lansdale*

*Gift shop in Gilbertsville*

*Convenience store in Chestnut Hill*

## Preserving Historic Character

An important aspect of village planning is preserving historic buildings and character. There are two primary approaches for accomplishing this.

The first, and strongest approach, is to create an official historic district with an Historical Architectural Review Board. These Boards review building changes, additions, and new buildings for consistency with the overall historic character.

The second approach is to use the zoning ordinance. This can be done broadly, through a historic preservation overlay district that applies to historic properties throughout a community, or it can be done in specific zoning districts.

The Village Mixed Use District, for example, requires the reuse of historic buildings for all proposed developments except single-family detached homes. If the historic building is razed, only single-family homes may be built on the property. This is pretty tough. Alternative approaches include bonuses for preserving historic buildings and encouragement of preservation. Some municipalities might want to make all uses other than single-family homes conditional uses, with preservation of historic buildings one of the conditions.

# *design elements*

# *Part 3*

Part 3 of this publication introduces design elements that are featured in the Village Mixed Use District. This section illustrates the following concepts:

- Permitted Uses and Tract Size
- Mixing Requirements
- Dimensional Standards
- Layout and Street Pattern
- Building and Parking Design
- Open Space and Plazas
- Signage

*Single-family detached home*

*Library*

*Multifamily (apartments)*

*Retail store*

## Permitted Uses

A mixed use district should permit a wide variety of uses that can complement each other and mimic the character of a traditional village.

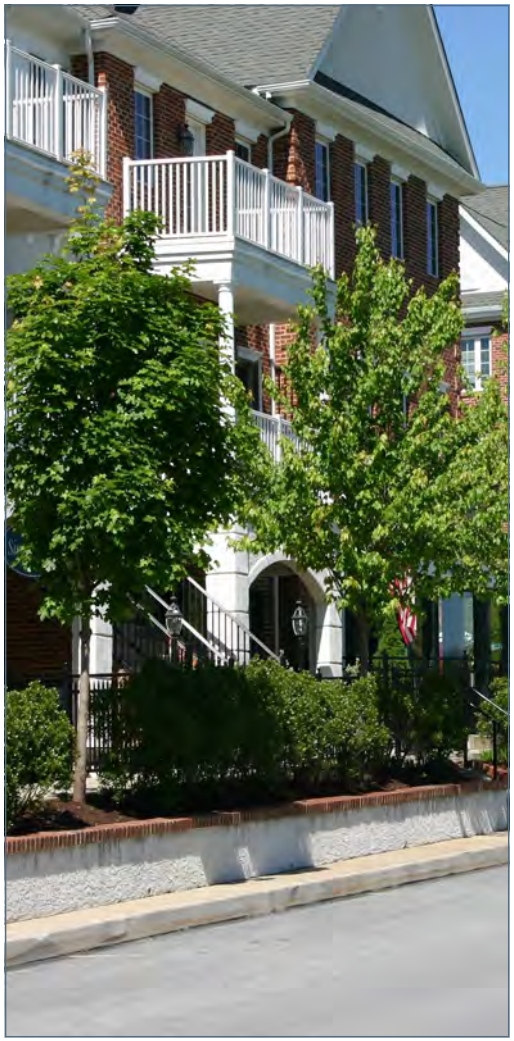
The following uses are permitted in the VMU District:

- Single-family detached homes
- Single-family semi-detached (twins)
- Single-family attached (townhouses)
- Multifamily (apartments)
- Stores and restaurants
- Hotels and bed and breakfast places
- Offices
- Schools, libraries, churches, etc.

Automobile-oriented uses should be prohibited. These uses detract from the pedestrian environment and conflict with residential uses.

*Mixed use  street scene at Richmond Square*

*Mixed use building at Richmond Square*



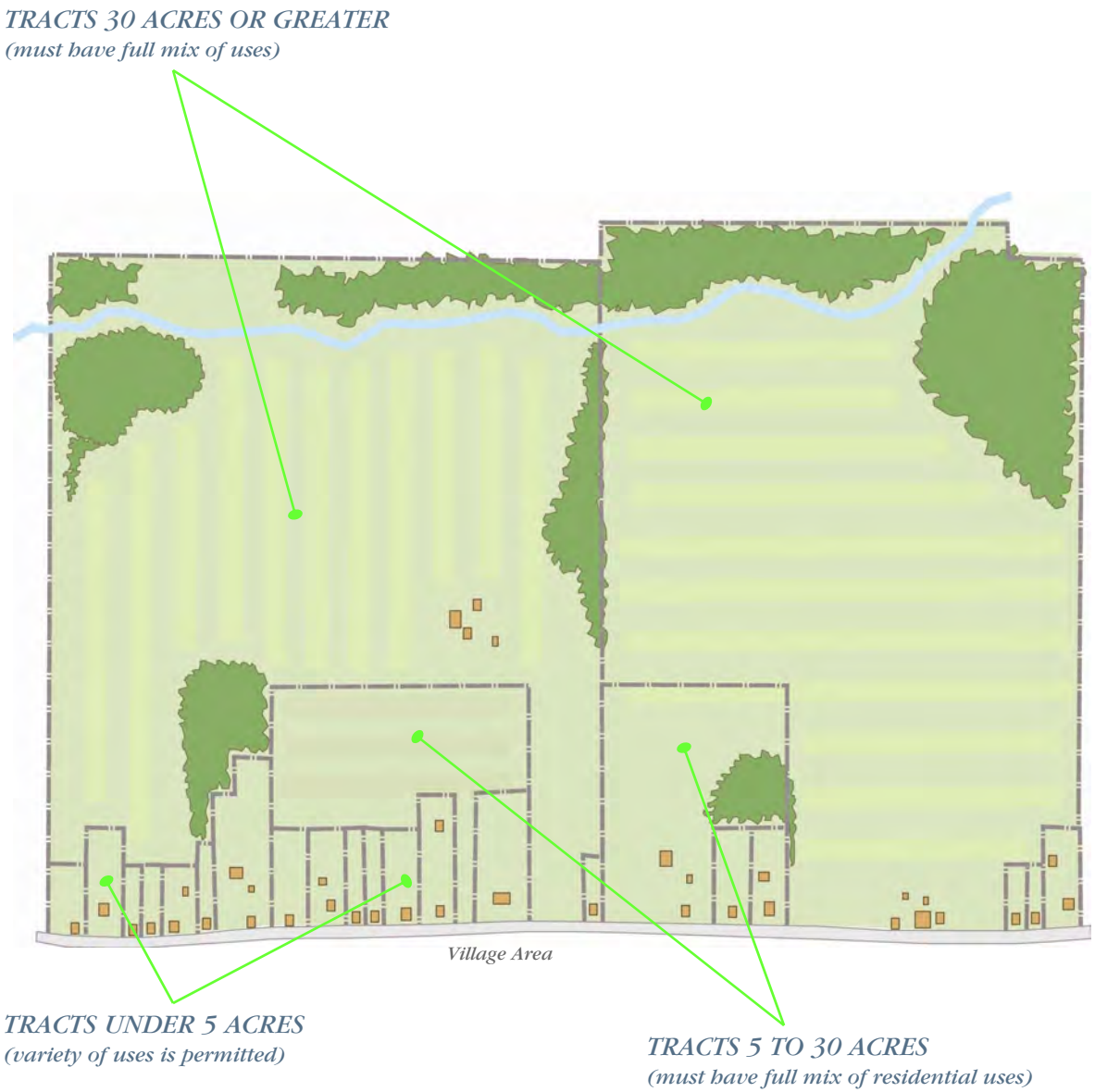
*Live/work units in Eagleview*

## Mixed Use Buildings

In addition to allowing individual land uses, the VMU District allows uses to be mixed within buildings.  For example, offices can be located above a restaurant, or apartments can be over stores.

The VMU District defines a Mixed Use Building, which is listed as a separate use, as a building with non-residential uses on the ground floor and multifamily residential uses on one or more upper levels.

Non-residential uses can always be mixed within a single building, which is often done in commercial areas, such as a shopping center that has stores, restaurants, offices, and banks.




## Tract Size and Use

The VMU District is designed for village areas with a variety of tract sizes, ranging from smaller village lots to large farms adjoining the village. Larger properties are required to have a mix of uses.

**Tracts under 5 acres**

For tracts of 5 acres or less, the VMU District allows a range of uses, including residential and non-residential ones. Any of these uses is permitted, provided the use meets the requirements of the VMU District, including preservation of existing historic buildings.

**Tract of 5 to 30 acres**

For tracts of 5 to 30 acres, the VMU District allows either mixed residential or mixed use development that contains residential and non-residential uses. This tract size is large enough to support a mix of uses, like existing villages, but probably too small to require the mix to always include residential and non-residential uses.

**Tracts 30 acres or larger**

For tracts that are 30 acres or larger in size, the VMU District requires mixed use development that includes residential and non-residential uses. This tract size is large enough to allow a reasonable amount of each type of development to occur, making it easier for developers to create a well-functioning community.

## Overall Mix Requirements

To create a more diverse, walkable, and historically-compatible community, the VMU District contains extensive mixing requirements for tracts over 30 acres.

The table below shows the requirements in the model ordinance as well as the results from the example layout. Each broad use is allowed to consume some of the overall tract's acreage, with a minimum required amount and a maximum required amount. The mix of uses is measured by the land area consumed by these uses.

Example Property

| Use | Zoning Minimum % | Zoning Maximum % | Example Acres | Example of Total % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Non-Residential | 5% | 25% | 6.6 | 17% |
| Residential | 20% | 65% | 18.5 | 46% |
| Open Space | 20% | —— | 9.0 | 23% |
| Streets | —— | —— | 5.9 | 15% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 40.0 | 100% |

*Residential Mix in a Mixed Use Development on Example Property*

## Residential Mix Requirements

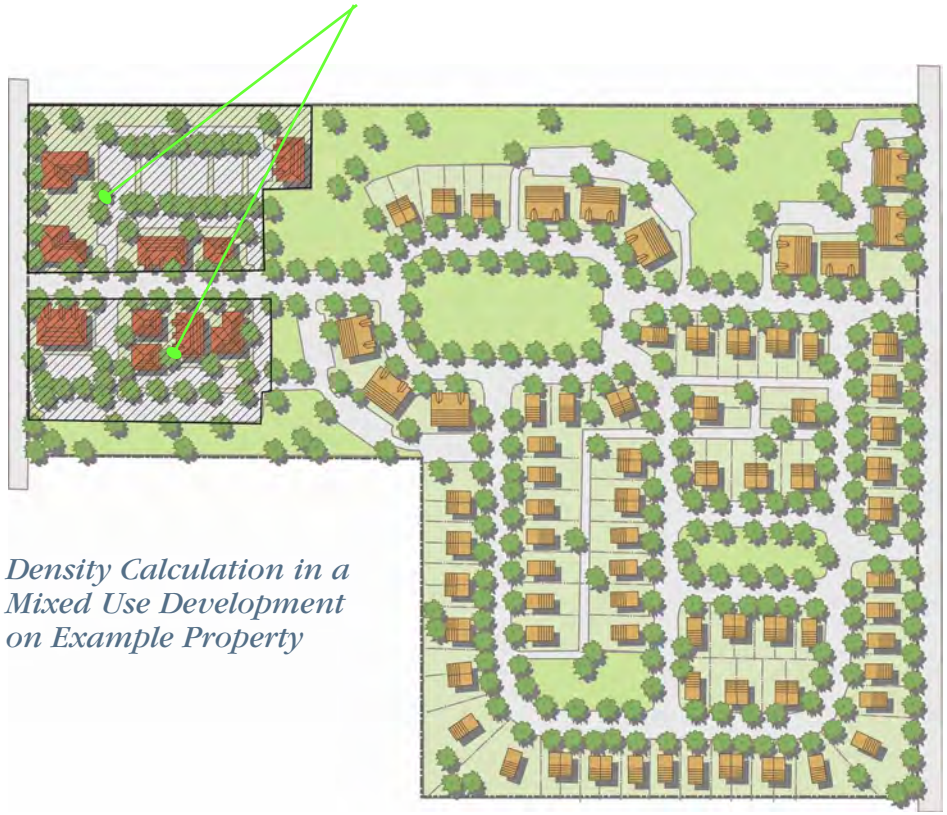
Residential portions of Mixed Use Developments (on tracts of 30 acres or more) and Mixed Residential Developments (on tracts of 5 to 30 acres) must contain a variety of housing types. This creates a more varied community and mimics the variety found in traditional towns and villages.

The mix of residential housing types is measured by percent of the total number of housing units in a development.

### Example Property

| Residential Type | Zoning Minimum % | Zoning Maximum % | Example # of Units | Example % of Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Village Home | 15% | 50% | 30 | 17% |
| Twin | 15% | 50% | 64 | 37% |
| Apartment | 15% | 50% | 80 | 46% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 174 | 100% |

*NON-RESIDENTIAL LOTS (these are not included in the density calculation)*



*Density Calculation in a Mixed Use Development on Example Property*

*Overall Density of 6 Dwelling Units Per Acre (includes apartments, townhouses, and singles)*

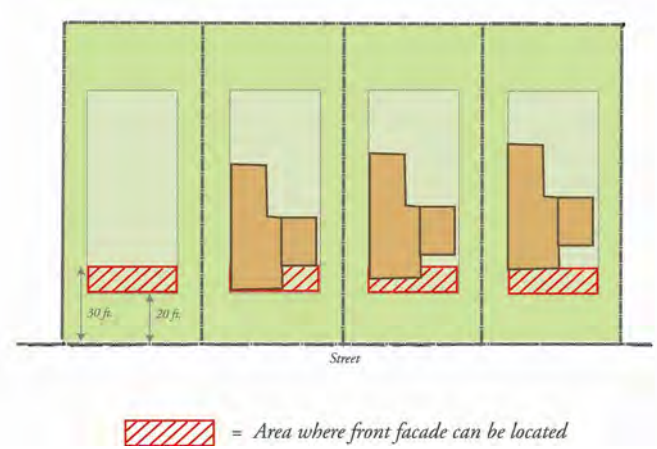
## Residential Density

Village-style developments should have relatively small lots with buildings close to each other. They should also have plenty of green areas and yards. A density of about 6 dwelling units per acre provides this balance between a walkable, mixed use development and a green, small town character.

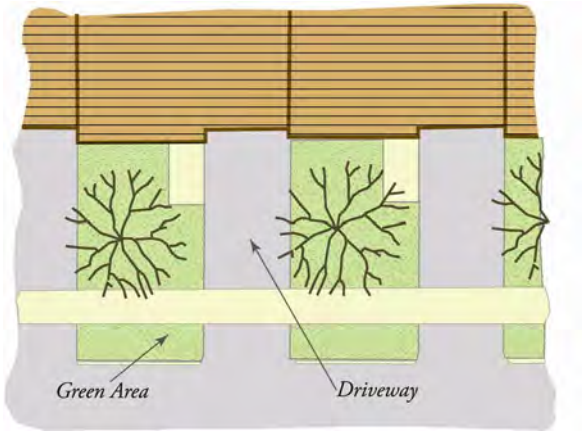
**Density on Example Property**

| | |
|---|---|
| Total Gross Area | 40 Acres |
| - Non-Residential Lot Area | 6.6 Acres |
| = Residential Acreage | 33.4 Acres |

| | |
|---|---|
| Total Dwelling Units | 174 Units |
| ÷ Residential Acreage | 33.4 Acres |
| = Density (dwellings per acre) | 5.2 |



*Historic village buildings are close to the street*




*Green area in front yard*

*Half or more of front yards should be green area*

## Dimensional Standards

Villages have traditional layouts and should have zoning standards that fit this traditional layout, including appropriate lot size, lot width, yard setback, height, and coverage regulations. Communities will need to tailor these dimensional regulations to their specific village situation.

- Instead of a front yard setback, the VMU District has a front façade location where the front façade of buildings must be placed. This requirement limits buildings from being too close or too far from the street.
- Because buildings should be further from high-volume, high-speed roads, the ordinance requires front facades to be further back from these roads. However, if the VMU district is being applied to an existing village, the setback from the main street will probably move new buildings too far back. In this case, a regulation requiring buildings to match the existing building street line should be added.
- In many new small lot and townhouse developments, the front yards are dominated by driveways or completely paved over. To minimize this problem, the VMU district requires green space in the front yard.

*Variety of uses along street*

*Village green in center*

*Commercial next to village*

*Walkable streetsacpe*

*Interconnected streets*

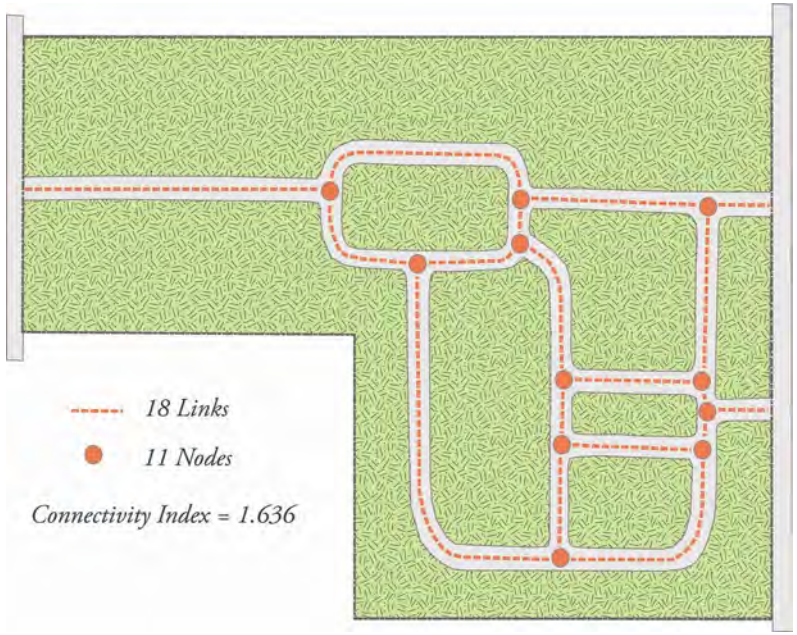
*Mixture of housing types*

## General Layout

Mixed use developments should be laid out to encourage walking, biking, and use of public transportation, in addition to use of the car.

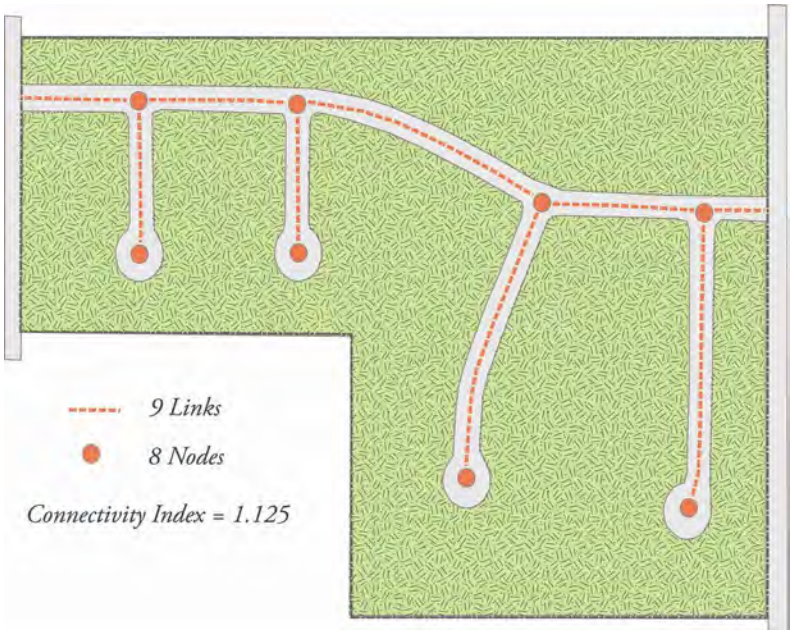
- Commercial uses should be located near existing retail areas, historic villages, existing collector or higher classification streets, and proposed primary parks and central greens.
- Commercial buildings should be close to the street, grouped together, and connected to residential areas.
- Residential housing types should be mixed within developments rather than segregated into different areas. To provide a measurable means of judging this mix, the VMU District limits the number of homes of the same type that may be located along the same side of a street without a break created by open space or different types of homes.

BUILD STREETS LIKE THIS




*Village Layout*

INSTEAD OF THIS




*Suburban Layout*

## Street Layout

The VMU District requires interconnected streets laid out as a grid or modified grid. This type of street system moves traffic relatively equitably among all the streets, gives drivers alternative routes to reach their destinations, and establishes a sense of community by allowing all streets to lead to community focal points.

The model ordinance also includes a unique regulation, called the street connectivity index. This index is derived by dividing the number of new street links by the number of new street intersections/permanent cul-de-sac heads. The two examples to the left show a village style layout, which exceeds the minimum ordinance street connectivity index of 1.40, and a typical suburban layout, which does not meet the index.

**Street Connectivity in Village Layout**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | New street sections | 18 Links |
| ÷ | New intersections/cul-de-sacs | 11 Nodes |
| = | Connectivity Index | 1.636 |

**Street Connectivity in Suburban Layout**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | New street sections | 9 Links |
| ÷ | New intersections/cul-de-sacs | 8 Nodes |
| = | Connectivity Index | 1.125 |

*PITCHED ROOF*
*(dormers, steeple, and gable provide variation)*

*FRONT DOORS*
*(front doors are easy to see and enter)*

*FRONT FAÇADE CLOSE TO STREET*
*(building is 18 feet from curbline)*

*LARGE WINDOWS*
*(40% to 75% window area along façade)*

*SMALL BUILDING FOOTPRINT*
*(approximately 7,000 square foot footprint with four stores)*

## Non-Residential Building Design Standards

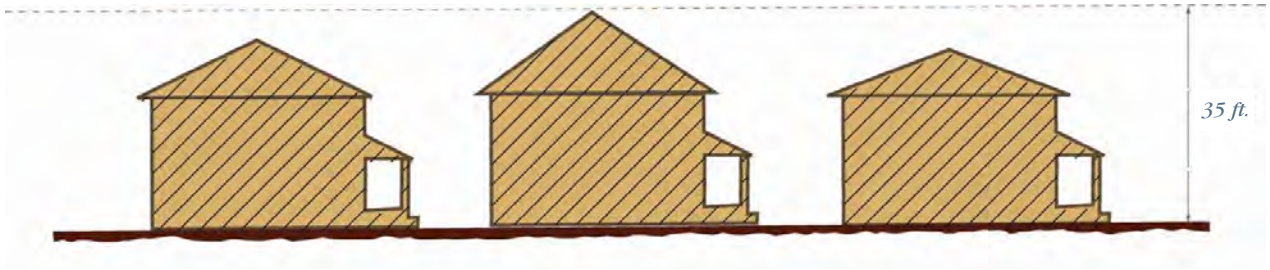
Commercial and other non-residential buildings should have a size, scale, design, and character that has a village character, encourages walking, and fits in with the residences in the rest of the development.

- **Building Footprint.** To keep buildings smaller, the building footprint may not exceed 7,000 square feet. (Nowadays, grocery stores are over 50,000 square feet, fast food restaurants are about 4,000 square feet, and large drug stores are over 10,000 square feet.)
- **Building Orientation and Entrance.** In many communities, most of the commercial buildings are surrounded by parking lots. The VMU District requires these buildings to be close to the street, with public doors facing the street.
- **Windows.** To create an interesting walking environment and small-town character, commercial buildings must have windows along their facades facing streets.
- **Walls.** Attractive and varied walls should be located along streets, walkways, and parking areas to create a more hospitable walking environment.
- **Roofs.** To create a village character, pitched roofs are required. Flat roofs will work as well, but they are less “village” like.

*Apartments at Wetherburn Commons*

*Village house in Lantern Hill*

*Roof Pitch*




*6 to 12 pitch* *8 to 12 pitch* *4 to 12 pitch*

## Residential Building Design Standards

Residential buildings should also have a small town, old-fashioned character.

- Village homes must have unenclosed porches, garages behind the house, and raised first floor levels or front yards.
- All homes should have pitched roofs. The roof pitch in many older homes is 8 vertical inches to every 12 horizontal inches, or more. However, because some housing types and modern builders use a softer slope, the VMU District allows a slope of 6 vertical inches to 12 horizontal inches.
- Apartment buildings are allowed a maximum of 8 units per building, with no side of the building exceeding 80 feet. This makes the scale of apartments similar to single-family detached homes.

Non-Residential Parking

*Commercial with on-street and rear parking*

*Apartments with on-street and rear parking*

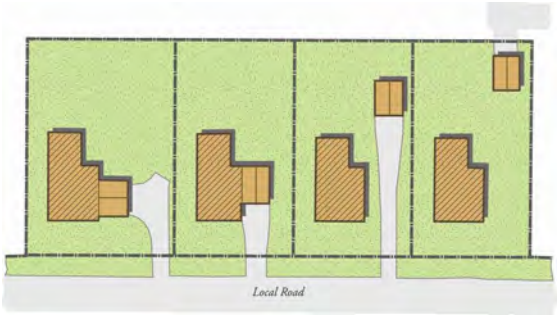
## Parking Standards

Controlling the location, orientation, and appearance of garages, parking lots, and off-street parking spaces is critical for creating a sense of community and a walkable neighborhood. The VMU District requires different land uses to meet specific garage, parking lot, and off-street parking requirements:

- **Non-Residential Parking.**
  Non-residential parking lots must be located to the side and rear of non-residential buildings to make access to the buildings easier for pedestrians walking along streets.

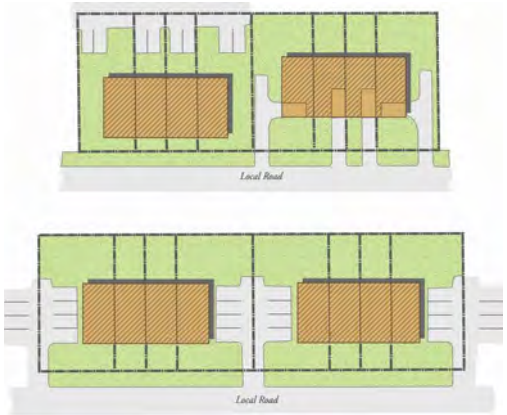
  To reduce congestion on the street and to create a safer street environment, all non-residential uses are required to connect their parking areas, thereby allowing traffic to move from one parking lot to the next instead of traveling back onto the street.

- **Multifamily (apartment) Parking.**
  For apartment buildings, off-street parking must be located to the side or rear of the building. If located to the side as surface parking, the parking area should be screened with a wall and landscaping.




*Alternative garage locations for single homes*

*Alley and garages for single homes*




*Alternative townhouse parking arrangements*

*Townhouses with parking in rear*

## Parking Standards

To retain a historic village character, garages should not be dominant features from the street.

- **Single-Family Detached and Twin Parking.** Single-family detached and twin homes are allowed to have side-loaded garages, front-loaded garages set back at least 10 feet from the front façade, garages in the rear of homes, and garages that get their access from alleys. Municipalities may want to limit the percent of homes that can have attached, front-facing garages or may to prohibit this style of garage altogether.

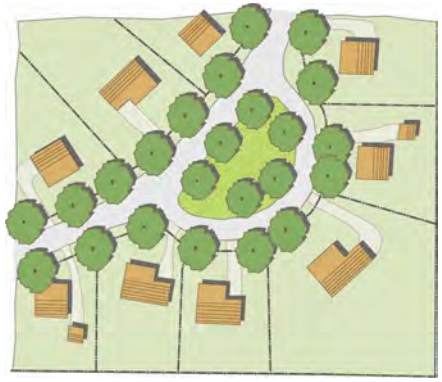
- **Single-Family Attached (Townhouse) Parking.** Parking for townhouses can be arranged a variety of ways, depending on whether a townhouse is an interior unit or an end unit. On end units, the parking must be to the side or rear. Side loaded garages are permitted. For interior units, parking garages may face the street but may comprise no more than 30% of the total area of the front façade elevation.

*Village Green*

*Village Green at Brighton*

*Landscaped Median*

*Landscaped Median in Kissel Hill*



*Eyebrow*

*Eyebrow in Woodmont*

## Open Space

Although mixed use village areas are densely-developed places, they also have extensive greenery. They are not cities.

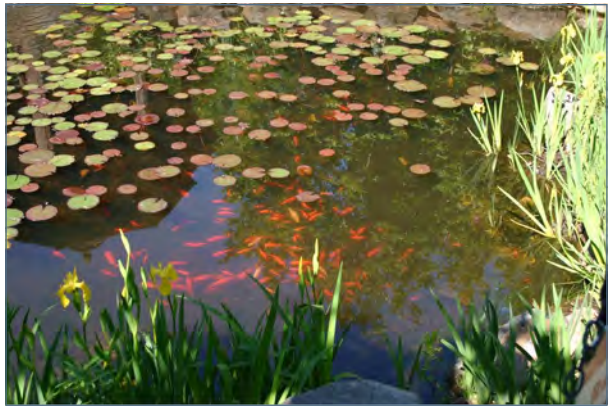
To create more open space and green areas, the VMU District requires 20% open space for larger developments. Half of the required open space, or 10% of the total, must be prominent open space, inserted in the middle of the development. This central open space can have four basic designs:

- **Village Greens.** Village greens are focal points for the community, with buildings facing the green. Greens are relatively large, 10,000 square feet or bigger, and designed for frequent use.
- **Landscaped Medians.** Landscaped medians provide landscaping and tree cover in streets. They are often used as entranceways.
- **Eyebrows.** Eyebrows are small parks, surrounded by roads. They are shifted to the side of a through road. Homes face the eyebrow.
- **Cul-de-Sac Islands.** Cul-de-sac islands provide landscaping and greenery in the bulbs of cul-de-sacs.

## Primary Park Improvements

*Arbor and fountain in Sunnybrook Village*

*Gazebo at Weatherstone*



*Pond at Eagleview*

*Fountain in Brighton*

## Primary Park

Each development with central open space must have a primary park, in the form of a village green, that is located near the center of the development. This park must be walkable from all parts of the development and must have unique improvements designed to attract people, such as gazebos, pavilions, ponds, fountains, etc.

## Signs

To support a village character, signs should be relatively small and minimally lit.

Because signs are normally regulated in a separate sign ordinance, the Village Mixed Use District model ordinance does not include sign regulations. Nevertheless, communities may want to put standards for village signage into their sign ordinance. The following standards provide a rough guide to the type of regulations that might be appropriate.

- Freestanding signs should not be taller than 8 feet or larger than 10 to 15 square feet.
- Walls signs should be designed for a pedestrian scale only.
- Pole signs should be prohibited or limited to materials and design that have a historic character. Monument signs are more appropriate.
- Signs should be externally lit or not lit at all.

# model ordinance

# Part 4

Part 4 of this publication presents the model ordinance, with comments included in the right hand sidebar.

The ordinance contains the following sections:

Section 1. Intent
Section 2. Permitted Uses and Tract Size
Section 3. Density and Mix Requirements
Section 4. Dimensional Requirements
Section 5. General Requirements
Section 6. Design Standards
Section 7. Open Space Standards
Section 8. Conditional Use Standards

The Village Mixed Use District is intended to be adopted as a freestanding separate zoning district. The district permits a variety of office, commercial, and residential uses but does not permit industrial uses, which are incompatible with the goal of creating walkable mixed use and residential areas. Village mixed use zoning could also be structured as an overlay district. If a municipality wants to have overlay zoning, the model ordinance should be changed to reflect this approach.

# VILLAGE MIXED USE DISTRICT

## Section 1. INTENT

The primary purpose of the Village Mixed Use (VMU) District is to permit a mix of various housing types, commercial businesses, and institutional buildings in a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood with a sense of community and place. Specifically, the Village Mixed Use District is intended to:

A. Create a mixed use, small town character that complements existing town and village development.

B. Allow a range of small scale commercial and institutional uses within easy walking distance of adjoining residential homes.

C. Accommodate a variety of housing types and discourage one housing type from dominating the streetscape.

D. Ensure that commercial and institutional uses have a character that is compatible with existing historic villages and towns, as well as future residences within the development.

E. Promote pedestrian orientation of streets and buildings.

F. Develop businesses, institutions, streets, parks, and homes that promote social interaction as well as privacy.

G. Alleviate the perceived impact of high-intensity developments by requiring them to be of a pedestrian scale, bulk, and orientation.

H. Give priority to pedestrian movement and access to buildings, open spaces, and streets; and discourage design that gives priority to vehicular convenience only.

I. Create a street circulation system that provides safe and convenient access but discourages fast or heavy traffic that is incompatible with a residential neighborhood.

J. Use scale, building orientation, and landscaping to establish community identity.

K. Use open and recreational spaces as a community focal point.

L. Provide recreational opportunities.

M. Ensure that new development is compatible with existing neighborhoods.

### *COMMENTARY*

*Legislative Intent:*

*The legislative intent should be tailored to reflect each municipality's own specific goals and characteristics.*

*The physical characteristics of an area greatly impact the intent and the design of the ordinance. If a village area is primarily developed and has few large tracts adjoining the village, the intent should reflect this fact, noting that preservation of the existing village is a key goal.*

*Traditional Village*

## Section 2. PERMITTED USES AND TRACT SIZE

The following uses are permitted in the VMU District according to existing tract size and in accordance with the historic building requirements of section 6.C.1:

### A. Existing Tracts of Less Than 5 Acres.

1. The following residential uses:

    a. Single-family detached dwellings.

    b. Village single dwellings.

    c. Single-family semi-detached.

    d. Single-family attached.

    e. Multifamily buildings, including the conversion of existing single-family detached dwellings into multifamily buildings.

2. Park and open space uses, including central open space, passive open space, and active recreation uses.

3. The following non-residential uses, individually or combined within a building:

    a. Retail commercial uses, personal service businesses, restaurants, and financial establishments, provided no drive-through facilities are provided for any of these uses.

    b. Hotels, and bed and breakfast establishments.

    c. Offices.

    d. Schools, day care centers, churches and other religious establishments, municipal offices, community centers, and post offices.

4. Mixed use buildings with non-residential on the first floor of the building and multifamily dwelling unit(s) on higher floor(s). These buildings shall comply with all standards for non-residential buildings.

5. Train stations and bus stops.

*Permitted Uses:*

*To mimic the walkability and overall character of historic villages and small towns, the VMU District allows a variety of uses. On larger tracts, a mix of residential and non-residential is required.*

*Terminology:*

*This model uses the term single-family semi-detached for a twin home and multifamily for an apartment. Municipalities should change the terms in the VMU District to match the terminology they use elsewhere in their zoning ordinance.*

*Auto-Oriented Uses:*

*Uses that are designed to service automobiles or for easy in-and-out access by automobiles are not permitted. The VMU District is designed to maximize pedestrian activity, which auto-oriented uses do not do.*

*Mixed Use Buildings:*

*In addition to a variety of residential and non-residential uses, the VMU District allows these uses to be mixed within a building. Many historic villages and towns contain buildings with a non-residential use on the first floor and apartments on higher levels.*

**B. Existing Tracts of 5 to 30 Acres.**

1. Mixed Residential Development, which includes a mix of residential uses listed above in Section 2.A.1 and at least 20% open space, provided the development meets the residential mixing requirements in section 3.C.

2. Mixed Use Development, which includes a mix of uses listed above in Section 2.A and at least 20% open space, provided the development meets the mixed use requirements in section 3.B.

3. Single-family detached homes, as a conditional use, at a maximum density of two (2) dwelling units per developable acre, provided all dimensional requirements in section 4 of the VMU District are met, as well as the conditional use standards in section 8 of this article.

**C. Existing Tracts of More Than 30 Acres.**

1. Mixed Use Development, which includes a mix of uses listed above in Section 2.A and at least 20% open space, provided the development meets the mixed use requirements in section 3.B.

2. Single-family detached homes, as a conditional use, at a maximum density of two (2) dwelling units per developable acre, provided all dimensional requirements in section 4 of the VMU District are met, as well as the conditional use standards in section 8 of this article.

## Section 3. DENSITY AND MIX REQUIREMENTS

**A. Residential Density.**

1. Residential portions of developments shall have a maximum overall density of six (6) dwelling units per acre.

2. The residential portion of developments shall include the entire net tract area minus the area of any non-residential lots or areas. The residential acreage may include residential lots, residential portions of mixed use lots, existing and proposed streets, and open space lots. Mixed Use Buildings containing non-residential uses and multifamily dwellings shall be considered non-residential.

**B. Mixing Requirements for Mixed Residential Developments.** All Mixed Residential Developments shall meet the following mixing requirements:

1. The development shall include at least three of the following housing types: single-family

*Mixed Residential Development and Mixed Use Development:*

*Because the terms Mixed Residential Development and Mixed Use Development are used throughout the VMU District, these terms should be defined in the definition's section of the municipal zoning ordinance.*

*Conditional Use Alternative:*

*For situations where mixed development is not feasible, the VMU District allows properties over 5 acres to be developed with medium density single-family detached development as a conditional use. Legally, this also provides an option for property owners who do not want to meet the design standards of the VMU District.*

*Density Calculation:*

*Most communities are comfortable using a density calculation to determine the number of permitted homes, but it is challenging to calculate density when a development has a mix of uses. The VMU District calculates density by excluding non-residential lots and areas from the calculation.*

*The density calculation is based on net acreage, which usually excludes existing road rights-of-way. Some net acreage definitions also take out environmental constraints and utility rights-of-way.*

detached, village house, single-family semi-detached, single-family attached, or multifamily. To qualify as one of the three required housing types, a housing type must comprise at least fifteen percent (15%) of the total housing units in the development. No housing type may exceed fifty percent (50%) of the total housing units in the development.

2. At least twenty percent (20%) of the net tract area shall consist of open space, in accordance with the requirements of Section 7.

**C. Mixing Requirements for Mixed Use Developments.** Within Mixed Use Developments, all land shall be divided into lots and streets, with the tract divided into residential lots, non-residential lots, open space lots, existing streets, and/or proposed streets.

1. All Mixed Use Developments shall meet the following mix requirements:

| Type of Lot | Minimum % of Net Tract Area | Maximum % of Net Tract Area |
|---|---|---|
| Residential Lot | 20% | 65% |
| Non-Residential Lot | 5% | 25% |
| Open Space Lot | 20% | --- |

2. For determining the mix requirements, when residential and non-residential uses are located on a lot but these uses are in separate buildings, each building with a different use shall be given an equivalent lot area that meets all regulations that would be required for the building and use on a fee-simple lot.

3. Mixed Use Buildings with a mix of non-residential and multifamily uses shall be considered non-residential for purposes of calculating the mix requirements.

4. Areas of tracts within the street ultimate rights-of-way of existing or proposed streets shall not be considered as part of a residential, non-residential, or open space lot.

5. The development shall include at least three of the following housing types: single-family detached, village house, single-family semi-detached, single-family attached, or multifamily. To qualify as one of the three required housing types, a housing type must comprise at least fifteen percent (15%) of the total housing units in the development. No housing type may exceed fifty percent (50%) of the total housing units in the development.

6. When Mixed Use Developments are first subdivided, each proposed lot within the development shall be designated as a non-residential, mixed use, single-family detached, village single, single-family semi-detached, single-family attached, multifamily, or open space lot. Any future development on an individual lot shall conform to this initial use designation for that particular lot.

*Mix Requirements:*

*A mixed use environment helps create a walkable community character. As the size of properties increases, the potential for sterile one-use developments also increases. To avoid this problem, the VMU district requires greater mixes of uses as property sizes increase.*

*Communities that want a fuller mix, with a guarantee that the development will contain more specific uses, such as institutional, retail, and offices, should amend the table by adding percentages for specific uses.*

*Change of Use:*

*To protect property owners within mixed use developments, the VMU District requires subdivision plans to designate each lot for a specific use, such as non-residential or single-family detached. Some municipalities may want to go further and require lots to be deed restricted to specific uses. Other municipalities may want to eliminate this regulation altogether, allowing changes in uses over time, as often occurs in older villages and towns.*

**Section 4. DIMENSIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

| | Non-Residential Buildings, including those with Multifamily Units | Single- Family Detached (one dwelling unit per lot) | Village Single (one dwelling unit per lot) | Single-Family Semi-Detached (one dwelling unit per lot) | Single-Family Attached (one dwelling unit per lot) | Multifamily Buildings |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Min. Net Lot Area** | 10,000 sq. ft. | 10,000 sq. ft. per du | 7,000 sq. ft. per du | 5,000 sq. ft. per du | 2,400 sq. ft. per du | 10,000 sq. ft. per bldg |
| **Min. Lot Width** | 70 feet | 80 feet | 60 feet | 40 feet | 45 feet for end units<br>24 feet for interior units | 100 feet |
| **Required front facade location, unless front facade faces collector or higher classification street** | not less than 0 or more than 20 feet from ultimate ROW line<br>additional buildings on a lot do not have to meet this requirement when the additional building is smaller than and behind a building meeting the façade location requirement | not less than 20 or more than 30 feet from ultimate ROW line | not less than 15 or more than 25 feet from ultimate ROW line | not less than 20 or more than 30 feet from ultimate ROW line | not less than 20 or more than 30 feet from UROW line if a parking space is located in front yard<br>not less than 10 or more than 20 feet from UROW line if no parking in front yard | not less than 20 or more than 35 feet from ultimate ROW line<br>additional buildings on a lot do not have to meet this requirement when the additional building is no bigger than and behind a building meeting the façade location requirement |
| **Required front facade location, when building facade faces collector or higher classification streets** | not less than 30 or more than 40 feet from ultimate ROW line | not less than 30 or more than 40 feet from ultimate ROW line | not less than 30 or more than 40 feet from ultimate ROW line | not less than 30 or more than 40 feet from ultimate ROW line | not less than 30 or more than 40 feet from ultimate ROW line | not less than 30 or more than 40 feet from ultimate ROW line |
| **Min. Side Yard** | 15 feet | 15 feet | 10 feet | 12 feet | 12 feet per end unit | 15 feet |
| **Min. Rear Yard** | 30 feet | 25 feet | 25 feet | 25 feet | 30 feet | 30 feet |
| **On Tracts of 5 Acres or More, Min. Building Setback from Tract Boundary Abutting a Residential Lot** | 60 feet | 35 feet | 35 feet | 40 feet | 40 feet | 40 feet |
| **On Tracts of 5 Acres or More, Min. Parking Setback from Tract Boundary Abutting a Residential Lot** | 30 feet | 10 feet | 10 feet | 10 feet | 15 feet | 20 feet |
| **Max. Building Coverage on a lot** | 35% | 20% | 20% | 25% | 45% | 25% |
| **Max. Impervious Coverage on a lot** | 85% | 30% | 35% | 40% | 65% | 60% |
| **Min. Percent Green Space in Front Yard** | 0% | 70% | 65% | 55% | 45% | 60% |
| **Max. Building Height** | 45 feet | 35 feet | 35 feet | 35 feet | 35 feet | 35 feet |
| **Max. Dwelling Units per Building** | 8 | Not applicable | Not applicable | Not applicable | 4 | 8 |
| **Min. Distance Between Buildings on Same Lot** | 20 feet | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 30 feet |
| **Max. Building Length** | 100 feet for facades facing a street | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 80 feet |

### *Dimensional Standards:*

*When VMU zoning is being applied to an existing village area, the dimensional standards should be adjusted to fit the unique characteristics of the village.*

### *Front Façade Location:*

*To create a walkable village-like character, buildings need to be close to the street. The VMU district requires buildings to be within a range of setbacks close to the street.*

*However, in older villages, there is often more than one building on a lot, with some buildings in the back. For non-residential and multifamily buildings, the VMU district allows additional buildings on a lot to be behind a building that meets the front façade location requirements.*

### *Green Space:*

*A green space definition should be added to the zoning. This could be - Green Space: all landscaped areas of a lot including planters, planted islands, landscaped buffers and screens, lawns, woods, and any area that is not covered by buildings, paving, etc..*

### *Dwelling Units per Building:*

*To keep the scale of buildings village-like, the VMU district limits the number of dwelling units in a building, with a building defined as a structure with walls and a roof.*

*A townhouse building can have no more than 4 units. These might be on separate lots or condominium units. Multifamily buildings can have no more than 8 units.*

## Section 5. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

**A.** All developments must provide open space in compliance with Section 7, herein.

**B. Utilities.** All developments shall be served by public sewer and public water.

**C. Ownership**

Any land area proposed for development shall be in one ownership or shall be subject to a joint application filed by every owner of the land area proposed for development, under single direction, using one overall plan and complying with all requirements of the Village Mixed Use District.

**D. Ownership and Maintenance of Common Open Space and Facilities**

Ownership and maintenance of common open space and other common facilities shall be provided in accordance with the regulations in Section__. All open space shall be permanently deed restricted from future subdivision and development.

## Section 6. DESIGN STANDARDS

All development in the VMU District shall comply with the following design standards:

**A. General Layout of Mixed Use Developments and Mixed Residential Developments**

1. In general, Mixed Use Developments shall be laid out so the non-residential buildings are located close to an adjoining village center (where one exists), close to major roads, close to train stations, close to bus stops, or close to the required primary park.

2. Non-residential uses shall be clustered together into one or two groupings.

3. Non-residential buildings shall be grouped together along streets so it is a short walking distance from one building to the next.

4. Non-residential buildings shall be placed to make walking to the primary park and residential areas a short walking distance.

5. Townhouses and multifamily apartments should be located near the non-residential uses and primary park.

6. Mixed residential neighborhoods should be designed so different housing types are well integrated, similar to patterns found in traditional villages.

7. To create variety along the streetscape, housing types shall be mixed along a street. The following chart lists the maximum number of dwelling units that may be located in a row on the same side of a street without a break. Breaks may be created by at least four dwelling units of a different housing type, a nonresidential lot, a street intersection, or by open space with at least one hundred and fifty (150) feet of frontage on the street.

*Utilities:*

*Because of the small lot sizes, all VMU developments must be served by public water and sewer. There is no room for on-lot systems.*

*Common Open Space and Facilities:*

*The VMU District requires the creation of common open space for larger developments. If the local municipality will not own the open space, then the ordinance should contain regulations for the ownership and maintenance of these facilities so that the municipality does not become responsible for the maintenance. The standards can be added to the VMU District or a general regulations section.*

*Design Guidelines:*

*As an alternative to specific design standards in the zoning ordinance, municipalities might want to create design guidelines in a separate document that can be referenced by the zoning ordinance.*

*General Layout:*

*Although it is difficult to regulate layout and design, it is also critical that VMU developments have good layouts, with uses in logical places, open space centrally located, and streets interconnected.*

| Housing Type | Maximum number of dwelling units in a row along one side of a street |
|---|---|
| Single-Family Detached | 10 units |
| Village House | 10 units |
| Single-Family Semi-Detached | 12 units |
| Single-Family Attached | 16 units |
| Multifamily | 24 units |

8. Streets

   a. Streets within VMU developments shall be interconnected with each other and with streets on abutting properties in a grid or modified grid pattern.

   b. Cul-de-sacs shall be minimized within a VMU district. In no case shall a permanent cul-de-sac exceed a length of three hundred and fifty (350) feet.

   c. On tracts of fifteen (15) acres or more, new streets within a VMU development shall have a street connectivity index of 1.40 or more. The street connectivity index shall be computed by dividing the number of new street links (defined as street segments between intersections and/or cul-de-sac heads) by the number of new street intersections/ permanent cul-de-sac heads.

## B. Pedestrian Design Standards

1. Sidewalks are required along all road frontages.

2. Sidewalks are required to connect the road frontage sidewalks to all front building entrances, parking areas, central open space, and any other destination that generates pedestrian traffic.

3. Where cul-de-sac streets are permitted by the governing body, sidewalk connections shall be required to connect the bulb of the cul-de-sac with the nearest through-road. These sidewalks shall be located in a right-of-way with a width of at least twenty-five (25) feet which is fenced, physically defined as a public walkway, and/or contains softening buffers.

4. Sidewalks shall connect to existing sidewalks on abutting tracts and other nearby pedestrian destination points and transit stops.

## C. Building Design Standards

1. Existing Historic Buildings. Any proposed development in the VMU District, except

*Streets:*

*VMU developments are designed to encourage easy access and interaction. To accomplish this, all streets must be interconnected.*

*Although the street connectivity index sounds complex, it is really pretty straightforward to calculate. A development with 21 street links/ segments and 13 street intersections/cul-de-sac heads will have a ratio of 1.615.*

*Pedestrian Design Standards:*

*Sidewalks should be provided everywhere within VMU Districts to make walking as easy and safe as possible.*

*Sidewalk shortcuts going between homes should be fenced, screened, or buffered from abutting residential lots. Fencing should be 3 to 4 feet in height. Plantings should be designed to fit in a 10-foot wide area and might include, in addition to large shade trees, smaller screening trees and shrubs such as dogwoods, hawthorns, flowering cherries, arborvitae, eastern cedars, and upright junipers.*

development of single-family detached homes, shall retain and use any principal buildings on the property that were constructed before 1940. If any such principal buildings are demolished or altered in a manner that is incompatible with the building's historic character, then no use other than single-family detached homes shall be permitted on the property.

2. Non-Residential Building Design Standards. All non-residential buildings shall meet the following requirements:

   a. Building Footprint. The maximum building footprint of non-residential buildings shall not exceed seven thousand (7,000) square feet.

   b. Building Orientation and Entrance. Front facades of non-residential buildings shall be oriented towards commercial/main streets within the mixed use tract, with an everyday public entrance in this front facade. When buildings are located on corners, the entrance may be located on the corner with an appropriate building articulation, such as a chamfered corner, turret, canopy, or other similar building feature. The municipal governing body may allow front facades to face existing streets rather than proposed streets, when these facades will extend an existing commercial district located along this existing street.

   c. Walls and Windows. Blank walls shall not be permitted along any exterior wall facing a street. Exterior walls in these locations shall meet the following criteria:

      i. Such walls shall have architectural treatments that are the same as the front facade, including consistent style, materials, colors, and details.

      ii. Windows. The ground floor of any wall facing a street shall contain windows in accordance with the following requirements:

         (a) The ground floor front facades of retail commercial uses, personal service businesses, and restaurants shall consist of at least 35% window area, but not more than 75% window area, with views provided through these windows into the business.

         (b) Except for institutional uses, all other ground floor walls facing a street shall contain at least 25% window area but not more than 75% window area, with views provided through these windows into the business.

         (c) For institutional uses, ground floor walls facing a street, parking area, or walking area shall not consist of more than 75% window area.

      iii. Dark tinted glass or reflective glass in windows is prohibited.

      iv. Walls or portions of walls where windows are not provided shall have architectural treatments designed to break up the bulk of the wall, including at least four of the

*Existing Historic Buildings*

*The VMU District requires reuse of existing historic buildings. This is a tough standard. The municipality and its solicitor should be comfortable with this standard. Alternative historic preservation approaches are discussed in Part 2.*

*If a community has conducted a historic resources inventory or has some other means of categorizing its important historic buildings, this alternative approach should be substituted in the ordinance.*

*Building Footprint:*

*The maximum size of buildings is limited to 7,000 square feet. Although this is larger than the typical building size found in historic villages, it does allow new-style development while being small enough to easily mimic historic buildings. Municipalities that want a more authentic village character might want to reduce this footprint to 3,000 or 4,000 square feet.*

*Windows:*

*Some businesses, such as drug stores, do not want to have clear windows along the ground floor. Municipalities may want to allow blank walls with architectural treatments for these uses in certain locations..*

following treatments: masonry but not flat block; concrete or masonry plinth at the base of the wall; belt courses of a different texture or color; projecting metal canopy; decorative tilework; trellis containing plantings; medallions; opaque or translucent glass; artwork, vertical visual articulation, horizontal visual articulation; lighting fixtures; or a similar architectural element not listed above, as approved by the municipal governing body.

d. Roofs.

i. All non-residential buildings shall have pitched roofs covering at least 80 percent of the building with a pitch of at least 6 vertical inches to every 12 horizontal.

ii. Pitched roofs shall provide overhanging eaves that extend a minimum of one foot beyond the building wall.

e. Non-residential buildings must have at least a 3-foot off-set in all facades or roofs for every 40 feet of continuous facade. Such off-sets may be met through the use of bay windows, porches, porticos, building extensions, towers, bays, gables, dormers, steeples, and other architectural treatments.

f. Non-residential buildings shall contain materials, windows, doors, architectural details, massing, floor heights, and roofs that are compatible with proposed residential buildings within the development and adjoining historic village buildings.

3. Residential Building Design Standards

a. All dwelling units must have at least one primary entrance in the front facade. For single-family semi-detached units, this requirement may be met if at least one of the units has its primary entrance in the front facade.

b. No more than four single-family attached homes may be attached in a building.

c. Residential buildings shall be designed to be compatible with the appearance of historic buildings found in the community.

d. All residential buildings shall have pitched roofs covering at least eighty percent (80%) of the building with a pitch of at least six (6) vertical inches to every twelve (12) horizontal inches.

e. Village houses must meet all of the following criteria:

i. They shall contain a roofed but unenclosed porch extending across at least half of the front of the dwelling and being at least seven (7) feet in depth.

ii. All front facing garages for village houses must be located at least twenty (20) feet behind the building's front facade. All other off-street parking, including other garages

*Roof Pitch:*

*Because villages in Montgomery County have pitched roofs, the VMU District required pitched roofs. Many village buildings have relatively steeply pitched roofs. Municipalities that want to match a steeper pitch should change the ratio to 8 vertical inches for every 12 horizontal inches.*

*Front Facade:*

*Front façade should be defined in the zoning ordinance's definition section. One possible definition is - Front Façade: The façade of a building that is closest to a street and contains the front door or other features identifying this façade as the primary façade of the building.*

*Village House*

or unenclosed parking spaces, must be located behind the building's front facade.

iii. All village houses shall contain at least one of the following features:

(a) A front yard raised above sidewalk grade by at least two (2) feet.

(b) A front yard enclosed by a permanent ornamental wall or decorative fence between two (2) and three (3) feet in height or enclosed by a hedge of shrubs planted 18 inches apart across the width of the front yard.

(c) A first floor level of the house, including the front porch, that is raised at least two (2) feet above ground level at the front facade of the building.

## D. Parking Standards

1. Garages, parking lots, and/or driveways should not be the dominant aspect of the building design, as seen from the street.

   a. When residential garage doors face a street, the garage shall comprise no more than thirty percent (30%) of the total area of the front facade elevation of a dwelling unit, measured from ground level to the lower edge of the roof. A garage door facing a street shall not exceed a width of ten (10) feet. No more than two (2) garage doors facing a street may be located in a row, and such rows of garage doors must be separated from any other garage door facing a street by at least ten (10) feet.

2. Non-Residential Parking Design Standards. Off-street parking for non-residential buildings shall comply with the following requirements.

   a. Off street parking areas shall be located to the side and/or rear of non-residential buildings, unless there is an additional and larger building on the lot between the proposed parking/building and the street.

   b. Off-street parking areas may not be located between buildings and streets, unless there is an additional and larger building on the lot between the proposed parking/building and the street.

   c. Off-street parking shall be visually screened from existing and proposed streets by hedges, walls, buffer plantings, or similar site elements.

   d. Parking areas on abutting non-residential lots shall be interconnected by access driveways.

   e. Each non-residential lot shall provide easements for its parking areas and access driveways guaranteeing access and use to all other non-residential lots within the tract.

   f. Garage doors in non-residential buildings shall not face any existing or proposed street.

*Off-Street Parking*

*Nowadays, off-street parking can dominate developments. The VMU district minimizes the impact of off-street parking garages and lots.*

*Front Facing Garages*

*The VMU District does allow front facing garages that are attached to residences. Communities that want to strongly control the appearance of garage doors along a street might want to prohibit attached garages facing the street, unless they set back at least 20 feet from the front façade.*

g. Non-residential parking lots shall be set back at least ten (10) feet from residential lots within the mixed use development and at least (10) feet from street ultimate rights-of-way.

3. Single-Family Detached and Single-Family Semi-Detached Parking Design Standards. Garages for single-family detached and single-family semi-detached units shall meet one of the following design options:

   a. The garage is side entry, so garage doors are perpendicular or radial to the street which the front facade faces.

   b. The garage is front-entry and set back at least ten (10) feet from the front facade of the house.

   c. The garage is located behind the rear facade of the house. This garage may be detached from or attached to the house, and the garage doors may face any direction.

   d. The garage is rear entry, so garage doors are on the opposite side of the house from the front facade.

4. Single-Family Attached Parking Design Standards

   a. Interior Units. Single-family attached units located in the interior or middle of single-family attached buildings shall meet the following requirements:

      i. Garages may be located behind the unit or may be located in the front, with the garage door facing the street, provided the garage complies with section 6.D.1.a.

      ii. One off-street unenclosed parking space may be located in the front yard. All other unenclosed off-street parking spaces must be located to the rear of the unit or in common parking to the side of the townhouse building.

   b. End Units. Single-family attached units located at the end of single-family attached buildings shall meet the following requirements:

      i. Garages may be located behind the rear facade of the dwelling unit or may be side entry so the garage doors are perpendicular or radial to the street which the front facade faces.

      ii. Off-street unenclosed parking spaces may be located to the side or rear yards. They may not be located in front yard areas.

5. Multi-Family Parking Design Standards. Parking areas and/or garages for all multifamily buildings may not be located between the front facade of the building and the street, unless an additional and equally-sized or larger building on the lot is between the proposed parking/ building and the street; instead, parking areas and/or garages shall meet one of the following

*Single-Family Detached Garage in Rear Yard*

*Single-Family Attached Alley and Garages*

requirements:

a. The parking, whether consisting of surface spaces or garages, is located behind the rear facade of the building or buildings.

b. The parking is in garages located to the side of multifamily buildings and the garage doors are side-entry, so garage doors are perpendicular or radial to the street which the front facade faces.

c. The parking is located to the side of the multifamily buildings and screened by one of the following mechanisms:

   i. A low architectural wall, no less than three (3) feet and no more than four (4) feet in height (made of brick, stone, or other materials deemed appropriate by the governing body)

   ii. Screen planting in the form of 1 canopy tree, 2 ornamental trees, 2 evergreen trees, and 5 shrubs per 100 linear feet of road frontage.

6. Amount of Required Parking. All uses shall comply with the minimum parking requirements required by section__of the municipal zoning ordinance, except as adjusted below:

   a. For any non-residential use, the amount of parking that is provided shall not exceed 120% of the minimum parking that is required by section__.

   b. On-street parking along the front property line of a lot may be used to meet the minimum parking requirement for non-residential or multifamily uses on that lot.

   c. Required parking for a non-residential use may be located in a common parking facility or on an abutting lot, provided such spaces are located within 200 feet of the non-residential use.

   d. When different non-residential uses or multi-family uses share common parking, the total number of spaces required for all uses may be reduced when the (municipal governing body) determines that the peak parking demand between two or more uses will be different enough to allow an overall reduction. The amount of required shared parking will depend on the amount and type of each use but may never be less than 75% of the total amount of parking required when shared parking is not used.

### E. Driveway Design Standards

1. For Mixed Use or Mixed Residential Developments on tracts of five (5) acres or more, no lot , non-residential use, or dwelling unit shall take driveway access from an existing collector or existing higher classification road.

2. On existing tracts of land less than 5 acres, existing as of the date of adoption of this

*Amount of Parking:*

*The VMU District allows on-street parking and shared parking to count towards the amount of required parking. Municipalities should be sure these standards coincide with their other parking standards.*

*Maximum Parking:*

*Often, non-residential uses provide more parking than they need, with many extra spaces that are never uses. To avoid this problem, the VMU District allows no more than 20% extra parking above the minimum required amount of parking.*

ordinance, and on lots created from such tracts of land, each lot shall have not more than one driveway access point per existing street on which the lot fronts. When feasible, abutting lots must share a common driveway.

### F. Off-Street Loading Areas, Outdoor Storage, and Trash Disposal Areas

1. All loading areas and loading docks shall be located to the sides and rears of buildings. Loading docks shall not be visible from public streets. All loading areas and loading docks shall be set back at least twenty-five (25) feet from residential property lines.

2. Outdoor storage or display of materials shall not be permitted overnight.

3. Trash disposal areas shall be located within buildings or within an opaque screened area that completely hides the trash and is located to the side or rear of a building. All outdoor trash disposal areas shall be set back at least twenty-five (25) feet from residential property lines.

**G. Landscaping**. Street trees, buffers, parking lot landscaping, detention basin landscaping, and landscaping around non-residential buildings shall be provided, in accordance with section__ of ___'s Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.

**H. Signs.** All signs shall comply with the requirements of section___ of ___'s Zoning Ordinance.

## Section 7. OPEN SPACE STANDARDS

A. The following quantities of open space shall be provided for Mixed Residential Developments and Mixed Use Developments:

| Type of Open Space | Minimum Amount to be Provided |
|---|---|
| Total Open Space | 20% of gross tract area. Total open space includes central open. |
| Central Open Space | 10% of gross tract area. |

### B. Total Open Space

1. Open space may consist of central open space, a primary park, active recreation facilities, passive open space, and other similar types of open space.

*Off-Street Loading Areas and Trash Disposal Areas:*

*To protect property values and mitigate potential nuisances, the VMU District requires loading areas and dumpsters to be adequately screened from view and set back from residential properties.*

*Landscaping:*

*Proper landscaping and street furnishings are very important for the non-residential areas of VMU developments. If the municipality does not have up-to-date landscaping standards, these should be added.*

*Signs:*

*Signs in VMU areas should be smaller and lower than typical commercial signs. Lighting should also be limited. These special design standards should be added to the municipality's sign ordinance.*

*Village Green at Kissel Hill*

2. No portion of any building lot or road right-of-way area may be used for meeting the minimum required amount of total open space.

## C. Central Open Space Requirements

1. Central Open Space Design Alternatives. All central open space shall meet one of the following design alternatives and shall include at least one village green meeting the primary park requirements.
   a. Village Green. Each village green shall:

      i. Be at least ten thousand (10,000) square feet in size;

      ii. Be configured so that a circle with a radius of thirty (30) feet can fit within the confines of the green; and,

      iii. Be surrounded along at least twenty-five percent (25%) of its perimeter by roads. All sides of village greens shall be surrounded by either roads or the front facades of buildings.

   b. *Landscaped Median*. Each landscaped median shall have a minimum average width of ten (10) feet and a length of at least one-hundred fifty (150) feet, and shall be surrounded by streets on all sides.

   c. *Eyebrow*. Each eyebrow shall be surrounded by streets on all sides, generally configured as a semi-circle, located on the side of a through street, and configured so that a circle with a radius of fifteen (15) feet can fit within the confines of the eyebrow.

   d. *Cul-de-Sac Island*. Each cul-de-sac island shall be located in the bulb of a cul-de-sac, have a radius of at least fifteen (15) feet, and be surrounded by streets on all sides.

2. Additional Central Open Space Standards

   a. All dwelling units within a VMU development shall be located within 800 feet of some type of central open space.

   b. Detention basins and other stormwater impounding areas, except for permanent wet ponds, may not be located in central open space areas used to meet the minimum amount of required central open space.

   c. Primary Park Requirements

      i. A primary park, which meets the village green requirements, shall be located near the middle of the development and shall be easily and conveniently accessible by sidewalk or paved trail from all dwelling units and non-residential buildings in the development.

      ii. The primary park shall be improved with either a gazebo, pavilion, pond, or paved patio

*Landscaping of Open Space:*

*All landscaping within central open space should comply with municipal landscaping requirements. Communities that have detailed landscaping standards may want to add a reference to these standards in section 7.C.2.*

*Village Green at Eagleview*

area with a fountain, along with appropriate seating, to help identify this park as the central gathering place for the development. These improvements shall be a minimum of 300 square feet in size.

iii. The primary park shall be at least fifteen thousand (15,000) square feet in size.

iv. When streets abut a primary park, the opposite side of the street from the primary park shall have building front facades facing the park rather than parking lots or detention basins.

## Section 8. CONDITIONAL USE STANDARDS

As stated in section 2.B and 2.C, applicants may develop single-family detached homes as the sole use when the applicant meets all dimensional and density standards, receives conditional use approval, and demonstrates to the municipal governing body's satisfaction that all of the following conditions are met:

A. The tract in question cannot be developed as a Mixed Residential or Mixed Use Development because of the size or shape of the tract or the location of natural features. Any tract five (5) or more gross acres in size that will involve the construction of new streets should be developed under the VMU standards.

B. The proposed development will be served by public sewage and water facilities. Any development not served by either public sewage facilities or public water facilities must meet the requirements (insert name of zoning district where the minimum lot size is large enough to support on-lot sewage and water.)

*Conditional Uses:*

*Tracts of land that cannot feasibly be developed under the VMU standards may be developed with single-family detached homes only, provided the tract of land has unique characteristics that make VMU development difficult. This might include tracts that are full of wetlands, comprised of floodplain, steeply sloped, or oddly shaped, so only a few dwelling units can realistically be built on the land.*

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