

## II-A MINOR AND MAJOR SUBDIVISION DESIGN GUIDELINES

This section provides guidance for configuring lots in conjunction with major and minor subdivisions.

### Contact Persons:

For subdivision of land in Clarke County:

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For subdivision of land in the Berryville Annexation Area portion of the County and in the Town of Berryville:

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### **Design Guidelines for Subdivisions in the Agricultural-Open Space-Conservation (AOC) and Forestal-Open Space-Conservation (FOC) Zoning Districts**

The [Zoning Ordinance \(Article I\)](#) and [Subdivision Ordinance \(Article II\)](#) contain specific requirements for creating new lots in the AOC and FOC Zoning Districts. In both Districts, vegetated buffers are required to be retained along all property lines as follows:

- AOC District – 25-foot buffer along all property lines of new lots less than 20 acres recorded after February 21, 2003. See [Zoning Ordinance Section 7.4.1](#).
- FOC District – 25-foot buffer along all property lines of new lots of four acres or more recorded on or before February 18, 2003 (exemption for lots containing houses that were built on or before February 18, 2003). There are also requirements for retention of vegetation on slopes, tree protection during construction, and other clearing limitations. See [Zoning Ordinance Section 7.4.2](#) and [Subdivision Ordinance Section 4.4.2](#).

The arrangement of lots in the AOC and FOC Districts should also be consistent with the design concepts listed below. These concepts are intended as guidelines to be used to preserve the rural character of these zoning districts. These design concepts are primarily intended to ensure that new residential lots are optimally situated to limit impacts on the agricultural and open space value of residual lots and surrounding properties. The concepts also help to mitigate adverse environmental impacts and limit proliferation of conflict points on public roads. Site specific circumstances may not allow application of all concepts, but, to the extent practical, these

concepts should be followed when designing and locating new lots:

- Lots should not be arranged in a row along public roads. Each new driveway on a public road creates a new “conflict point” which can degrade the safety and efficiency of the road in conveying traffic. This can result in the need for tree removal, installation of sight and drainage improvements, or road widening or re-alignment in the most serious situations. Where possible, lots should make use of shared driveways to limit the number of new conflict points added to a public road.
- Lots should not be located as individual “islands” in the middle of larger lots or the residual lot. “Island lots” can limit the productivity of the larger lot for agricultural production especially when located in the middle of areas best suited for farming. Island lots also require longer driveways which can consume additional farmland and be costly for the homeowner to maintain over time.
- Lots should not be located immediately adjacent to property under permanent open space easement. Conservation easements benefit the County by preserving farmland and scenic open spaces, protecting critical environmental areas, and limiting future development activity and potential for suburban sprawl. Owners of eased land voluntarily accept development restrictions on their properties to preserve the conservation value, however adjacent residential development can adversely impact the eased property’s conservation value as well. Where feasible, new residential lots should avoid being placed adjacent to eased properties or should be situated in a manner so that development on the lots does not impact viewsheds or natural areas associated with the eased property.
- Lots should not be located so that the most likely house location is on the top of an exposed or prominent ridge or hill. Residential lots ideally should be situated so that houses and other structures blend within the land’s natural features and tree coverage. Placement on hilltops or ridges without significant tree coverage can adversely impact scenic viewsheds. Hilltop or ridgeline development in the FOC District in particular can facilitate soil erosion and require excessive tree removal for home sites to access public roads.
- Lots should be located in or adjacent to wooded areas. In addition to providing visual screening from surrounding properties, development in wooded areas allowed cleared areas to remain with the residual lot and most likely would remain available for agricultural production.
- Lot lines should follow natural features, fence lines, or hedgerows. Aligning boundary lines of new lots with existing natural and man-made features helps to integrate lots for residential use more efficiently with surrounding lots. This can result in less potential adverse impacts to the continuity of farmland, natural drainage-ways, and viewsheds.
- Lots should be located to minimize road length and maximize ease of emergency access, particularly in areas of steep slopes. Excessively long public roads, private access easements, and driveways add long-term maintenance costs and have a greater impact on

sensitive environmental features such as streams and slopes. Long private access easements and driveways – in particular in mountain areas where switchbacks are necessary – can impede response times for fire, emergency medical services, and law enforcement.

- Large residual lots should contain areas of steeper slopes and other environmentally sensitive features. Retention of critical environmental areas on the residual lot allows for greater separation from residential development on the new lots and minimizes the potential for soil erosion and tree loss.

### **Design Guidelines for Subdivisions Outside of the Rural Areas**

The quality of design of a community is dependent on the quality of design of the individual subdivisions that are included in it. Good community design requires the coordination of the efforts of each subdivider and developer of land within the County. The design of each subdivision shall be prepared in accordance with the principles and recommendations established by the Comprehensive Plan for land use circulation, community facilities and public services, and in accordance with the following general principles:

- The size of lots and blocks and other areas for residential, commercial, and public uses shall be designed to provide adequate light, air, open space, landscaping, and off-street parking and loading facilities.
- The arrangements of lots and blocks and the street system shall be designed to protect solar access and to make the most advantageous use of topography and natural physical features.
- Tree masses and large individual trees shall be preserved, wherever possible and when consistent with the provisions of this Ordinance.
- Any system of sidewalks and roadways and the lot layout shall be designed to take advantage of the visual qualities of the area.

### **Subdivision of Land in the Berryville Annexation Area and the Town of Berryville**

Proposed subdivisions within the County portion of the Berryville Annexation Area fall under the jurisdiction of the Town of Berryville per agreement between the Town and County. Questions regarding the Town's Subdivision Ordinance regulations and design requirements, including subdivision of land within the limits of the Town, should be directed to the Town of Berryville Staff as noted above.