

Part 7 CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

Section 700. Declaration of Legislative Intent. The following is an expansion of the Statement of Community Development Objectives contained in Section 101.1 of this chapter. The intent of this Part is to establish standards and criteria which permit Cluster Development of lands in the R-1 and R-1A Agriculture-Residential Districts and the R-2 Residential District. In addition, the Open Space Regulations of this Part also govern the preservation and use of Common Open Space in the R-3 and R-4 Residential Districts, Parts 5 and 6 of this Chapter. Furthermore, it is the intent of this Part to:

1. Preserve open land, including those areas containing unique and sensitive natural features such as woodlands, steep slopes, streams, floodplains, and wetlands, by setting them aside from development.
2. Reduce erosion and sedimentation by the retention of existing vegetation, and the minimization of development on steep slopes.
3. Preserve scenic views and elements of the Township's rural character, and to minimize perceived density, by minimizing views of new development from existing roads.
4. Provide greater design flexibility and efficiency in the siting of services and infrastructure, by reducing the road length, utility runs, and the amount of paving required for residential development.
5. Create compact neighborhoods with direct visual access to open land, with amenities in the form of neighborhood open space, and with a strong neighborhood identity.
6. Implement the goals of the Douglass Township Open Space Plan and the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Comprehensive Plan.
7. To provide for the preservation and maintenance of open land within Douglass Township to achieve the above-mentioned goals and for active or passive recreational use by residents.

Section 702. Applicability. Lots proposed for residential development within the R-1 and R-1A Agriculture - Residential Districts or the R-2 Residential District which meet the following criteria must be submitted as a Residential Cluster Development subject to the provisions of this Part.

1. Tract Location – When the land is located in the R-1, R-1A, or R-2 Districts;
2. Tract Size. When the gross area of the tract is equal to or greater than 20 acres at the time of the passage of this ordinance amendment;
3. Proposed Use. When the proposed use of a tract is for the development of single-family detached homes; and
4. Public Sewer Proximity. When any portion of the tract is within 1/3 of a mile from the nearest existing sewer line or a proposed sewer line as illustrated in the Township's Act 537 Plan.

Section 703. Permitted Uses. Any proposed development on a tract that conforms to the RCD Overlay applicability requirements as stated in Section 702 may be developed under the permitted uses of the underlying zoning district with the exception of a single-family detached housing residential use. A residential development within the RCD Overlay must be proposed as a residential cluster development meeting the following use requirements:

1. Single-family detached housing units subject to the provisions in Section 706, Density, Dimensional, and Design Standards.
2. Common Open Space as defined in Section 707, Open Space Standards, comprising a minimum of:
 - A. 60% of the gross lot acreage in the R-1 District.
 - B. 45% of the gross lot acreage in the R-1A District.
 - C. 15% of the gross lot acreage in the R-2 District.
3. Accessory uses on the same lot with and customarily incidental to any permitted use.

Section 704. Conditional Use Standards. As a conditional use, Country Residences may be allowed within the portion of the RCD that lies on top of the R-1 and R-1A Agriculture-Residential Districts, pursuant to the Dimensional Standards in Section 706.2D. In order to develop Country Residences, the applicant must demonstrate to the Township's satisfaction that all the following conditions are met, where applicable:

1. It is infeasible to develop the tract in question for cluster development under the Residential Cluster District due to factors such as the size or shape of the tract or the location of natural features.
2. The proposed development will not have a disruptive effect on the existing topography, floodplains, wetlands, mature woodlands or other natural features on the site.
3. The proposed development shall be consistent with good design principles and land development practices. Specifically, it shall be designed to minimize views of dwellings from exterior roads, and to avoid "stripping out" of lots along those roads.
4. The tract in question can be developed in a manner consistent with community goals as expressed in the Douglass Township Open Space Plan.

Section 705. Optional Preservation Site Plan and Establishment of Open Space Goals.

Prior to submittal of preliminary plans or sketch plans showing the location of proposed lots or roads, the applicant may request that the Township provide a Preservation Site Plan and list of Open Space Goals pursuant to the following requirements:

1. The applicant will prepare a map(s) on a sheet(s) of at least 24" x 36", of a scale no greater than one inch equals one hundred feet indicating the general location of salient natural and built features. These features should include the following where applicable: 100-year floodplains, wetland areas or hydric soils, steep slopes, ponds and streams, riparian areas, woodlands, significant specimen trees, existing structures, scenic views into and from the subject tract, topography, hedgerows, abutting trails, preserved open space historic sites.

2. After submittal of the site inventory and analysis the Township will respond to the applicant with a Preservation Site Plan accompanied by a list of Open Space Goals. The plan shall show the general location of open space, and the key resources that should be preserved.

Section 706. Density, Dimensional, and Design Standards. Homes proposed under the RCD Overlay must meet the specific density and dimensional standards set forth in the following subsections:

1. Density. The following two steps shall be used to calculate density for clustered houses:
 - A. A yield plan, showing the maximum number of homes that could be developed in accordance with the area, width, and yard requirements of the underlying zoning district, shall be prepared for the tract proposed for subdivision. This yield plan shall be equivalent to a plan submitted for regular subdivision approval; shall meet all requirements for standard single-family detached homes as outlined in the underlying zoning district, the lot area calculation and all other applicable standards of the Township's Zoning and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances; and must be deemed acceptable by the Township Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission, in consultation with the Township Engineer.
 - B. The number of single-family detached homes permitted under the RCD Overlay, shall not exceed the number of residential homes permitted under the yield plan.
2. Dimensional Standards. All lots created as part of a Residential Cluster Subdivision must meet the average lot size standard below. However an individual lot may be as small as the minimum lot size in order to provide flexibility to the applicant.
 - A. Residential Cluster Subdivisions within the R-1 District:
 - 1) Average lot size: 22, 000 square feet.
 - 2) Minimum lot size: 15,000 square feet.
 - 3) Minimum lot width: 100 feet.
 - 4) Minimum front yard: 30 feet.
 - 5) Minimum side yard: 20 feet.
 - 6) Minimum rear yard: 30 feet.
 - 7) Maximum building height: 35 feet.
 - 8) Maximum building coverage: 20% of gross lot area.
 - B. Residential Cluster Subdivisions within the R-1A District:
 - 1) Average lot size: 15,000 square feet.
 - 2) Minimum lot size: 12,000 square feet.
 - 3) Minimum lot width: 90 feet.
 - 4) Minimum front yard: 30 feet.
 - 5) Minimum side yard: 15 feet, 35 feet aggregate.
 - 6) Minimum rear yard: 30 feet.
 - 7) Maximum building height: 35 feet.
 - 8) Maximum building coverage: 20% of gross lot area.

C. Residential Cluster Subdivisions within the R-2 District:

- 1) Average lot size: 12, 000 square feet.
- 2) Minimum lot size: 10,000 square feet.
- 3) Minimum lot width: 80 feet.
- 4) Minimum front yard: 30 feet.
- 5) Minimum side yard: 15 feet, 35 feet aggregate.
- 6) Minimum rear yard: 30 feet.
- 7) Maximum building height: 35 feet.
- 8) Maximum building coverage: 18% of gross lot area.

D. Country Residence Subdivisions, as a Conditional Use:

- 1) Country Residences shall be deed restricted from further subdivision or uses not prescribed in this ordinance. This restriction shall be conveyed to all future property owners.
- 2) Minimum lot size: 4 acres where the underlying district is the R-1 District. 2 acres where the underlying district is the R-1A District.
- 3) Minimum lot width: 200 feet.
- 4) Minimum front yard: 40 feet.
- 5) Minimum side yard: 25 feet, 60 feet aggregate.
- 6) Minimum rear yard: 40 feet.
- 7) Maximum building height: 35 feet.
- 8) Maximum building coverage: 10% of gross lot area.

E. Building setbacks:

- 1) Minimum from external semi-controlled access or scenic roads ultimate right of way: 200 feet.
- 2) Minimum from all other external road ultimate right of ways: 100feet.
- 3) Minimum from external tract boundaries: 60 feet.
- 4) Minimum from wetlands, floodplains, or watercourses: 25 feet.

3. Design Standards.

- A. All lots in Residential Cluster Developments shall take access from interior roads rather than roads exterior to the tract.
- B. Views of homes from exterior roads shall be minimized by the use of changes in topography, existing vegetation, or additional landscaping pursuant to Section 420 of Chapter 22, Subdivision and Land Development.

Section 707. Common Open Space Standards. Under the standards of Section 703.2, 60 percent of the gross lot area for tracts in the R-1 District, 45 percent of the gross lot area for tracts in the R-1A District, and 15 percent of the gross lot area for tracts in the R-2 District is required to be set aside as common open space. The open space shall be deed restricted from further subdivision or uses not prescribed by this ordinance. This restriction shall be conveyed to all future property owners. The open space shall meet all of the following standards in addition to the standards as set forth in Part 1 of this Ordinance (where there is a conflict the stricter standard shall apply):

1. Permitted Uses.

- A. Central open space according to the standards in Section 707.3.
- B. Passive open space.
- C. Parks and active recreation, including trails.
- D. Stormwater management facilities including naturalized basins, ponds and other best management practices.

2. Open Space Design Requirements.

- A. Open space areas will generally conform to the areas outlined in the Preservation Site Plan as detailed in Section 705, if applicable. If a Preservation Site Plan has not been created, then the applicant shall maximize the preservation of high priority natural and built features identified by the township. These areas may include features such as 100-year floodplains, wetland areas or hydric soils, steep slopes, ponds and streams, riparian areas, woodlands, significant specimen trees, existing structures, scenic views into and from the subject tract, topography, hedgerows, abutting trails, preserved open space, or historic sites.
- B. Open space areas will maximize common boundaries with open space on neighboring tracts as part of an effort to implement the municipal and county open space and comprehensive plans.
- C. Natural features such as woodlands, meadows and streams shall remain in their natural state, but may be modified to improve the health of the ecosystem, as recommended by experts in the particular area being modified. Permitted modifications may include:
 - 1) Reforestation.
 - 2) Woodland management.
 - 3) Meadow management.
 - 4) Buffer area landscaping.
 - 5) Stream bank protection.
 - 6) Wetlands management
- D. Open space areas must be designed to maximize bulk and impact. Every open space shall generally have a length-to-width ratio of no greater than 4:1, and be at least 100 feet in width, except for such lands specifically designed as central open space or as trail links with a maximum length of 200 feet.
- E. All open space areas must be easily and conveniently accessible by sidewalk or trail from every home in the development.
- F. All open space lots shall have at least 100 feet of continuous frontage on an internal public street.

G. At least 8 percent of the total open space must be in central open space, in accordance with Section 707.3.

3. Central Open Space Requirements.

A. All central open space shall meet one or both of the following design options:

1) Village Green. Each village green shall:

- a) be at least 20,000 square feet in size;
- b) be configured so that a circle with a radius of 50 feet can fit within the confines of the green; and,
- c) be surrounded along at least 75 percent of its perimeter by roads.

2) Parkway. Each parkway shall:

- a) have a minimum average width of 20 feet and a length of at least 150 feet and shall be surrounded by streets on all sides.

B. Additional central open space standards

1) All developments with 25 or more dwelling units shall contain a primary park that meets the following criteria:

- a) it is configured as a village green
- b) it is improved with either a gazebo, pavilions, or paved patio area with a fountain to help identify this park as the central gathering place for the development. This improvement shall be a minimum of 300 square feet in size.
- c) it is located near the middle of the development
- d) it is easily and conveniently accessible by sidewalk or trail from all dwelling units in the development

2) At least 30 percent of all lots (rounded up to the nearest whole number) in the development must border central open space with the homes facing the central open space, and all dwelling units shall be located within 800 feet of some type of central open space.

4. Public Trail Option.

A. Residential Cluster Developments may include a publicly accessible trail, paved or unpaved, as a substitution for the required recreational facilities specified in Section 137 at the discretion of the township's Board of Supervisors.

- 1) The trail must be accessible to each residence in the development by either trail extension or sidewalk.
- 2) Trails must be constructed of macadam or cinder bases.
- 3) If applicable, trails should link to county trails, municipal trails or abutting neighborhood trails.