

Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve — Four Decades of Transferable Development Rights to Save Maryland Farmland

PES & Nature-Based Solutions · Good practice · United States of America

Quality score: 47/100

Evidence strength: Observational / pre–post

Summary

In 1980 Montgomery County, Maryland downzoned 93,000 acres to create its Agricultural Reserve, letting farmers sell Transferable Development Rights to builders elsewhere; the county has preserved 71,594 acres of farmland, ~48,000 via TDR sales alone.

Key dimensions

Dimension	Score
Carbon — sequestration / storage, evidenced	1/3
Biodiversity — conservation / improvement, evidenced	1/3
Water & soil — retention, infiltration, erosion control	2/3
Fire resilience — risk reduction, evidenced	0/3
Governance, certification & transferability	3/3

Evaluated by C-NAPSE

Data sources

[C-NAPSE web research](#) — accessed 2026-09-17

[Montgomery County Planning Department \(Montgomery County Government\)](#) — accessed 2026-09-17

[Montgomery County — Agricultural Land Preservation](#) — accessed 2026-09-17

[Resources for the Future — Transfer of Development Rights in U.S. Communities \(Walls & McConnell, 2007\)](#) — accessed 2026-09-17

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