

Purpose of Agricultural Districts

The Agricultural and Forestal District Program was formed in 1979 under State enabling legislation. The State Code of Virginia characterizes the purpose of an Agricultural District Program as a means to "conserve, protect, and encourage the

development and improvement of agricultural and forestal lands for the production of food



and other agricultural and forestal products, and conserve and protect agricultural and forestal lands as valued natural and ecological resources which provide essential open spaces for clean air sheds, as well as for aesthetic purposes". Loudoun County supports these goals and is committed to working with district landowners to preserve the rural and agricultural character of the County.

Other Programs and Services

Farmland for Lease Program

Keep your land in agricultural production. The Department of Economic Development (703-777-0426) maintains a database to assist matching farmers with land available to rent. Participants are responsible for all contacts and lease arrangements.

Technical Assistance

The following organizations have staff available to provide technical assistance in a variety of topics.

Economic Development 703-777-0426

Cooperative Extension 703-777-0373

Dept of Forestry 703-777-0457

Soils & Water Conservation District 703-777-2075

Use Value Program

Qualified land is eligible for land use taxation. Contact the Department of Financial Services at 703-777-0290 to obtain an application form or to find out more about the program.

Agricultural and Forestal District Program

Conserve, Protect, and Encourage Agricultural and Forestal Lands for Production of Food and Other Products



Loudoun County
Dept of Economic Development
1 Harrison Street, SE, 5TH Floor
PO Box 7000
Leesburg, VA 20177



Phone: 703-777-0426
Fax: 703-777-5363

www.rural-loudoun.state.va.us

The Agricultural District Program—The Benefits

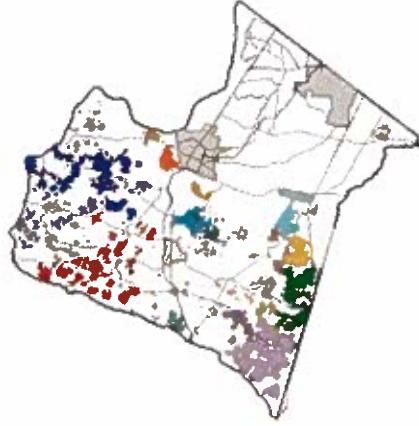
How Do I Benefit by Belonging to an Agricultural District?

First, belonging to an Agricultural District guarantees you will have land use value taxation, provided you meet the land use eligibility requirements, even if the County rescinds its land use program.

Second, the district safeguards the rural character of the community by preserving agricultural and forestal land. It helps to continue rural uses of the land by strengthening the community with common goals and concerns.

Besides these benefits, districts offer some protection from eminent domain. Acquisition of land for power lines, roadways, and other infrastructure within a District is subject to a special public review process. And the expenditure of public funds for non-farm related purposes in a District is also subject to special public review process.

Finally, local governments may not enact laws within a district that would unreasonably restrict farm structures, farming, or forestry practices unless the restrictions are directly related to health, safety and welfare.



Loudoun County Has 24 Agricultural & Forestal Districts

Frequently Asked Questions About the Agricultural Districts

When can I join a District?

While it is easiest to join a district during its renewal time, eligible landowners may apply to join a district during the interim enrollment period which starts each November. The process is lengthy, involving public hearings through the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

What makes my land eligible to join a District?

Land is eligible if it is within 1 mile of the nearest boundary of the "core" of a district, or if it is adjacent to land in the district.

What are the restrictions on participating in a District?

Each district has its own ordinance, its own appointed renewal time, and its own minimum subdivision lot acreage. There is no minimum lot size.

Are there any limitations on the size of a District?

Yes. The district must contain a "core" of at least 200 acres of land. That core can be one large parcel or several small ones, as long as they are contiguous and amount to 200 acres or more.

Does a landowner have to put the entire property into a District?

No. A landowner may leave some of the land out of the district.

Does having land in an Agricultural District constitute a rezoning?

No. The land's zoning stays the same. The district's ordinance acts as an "overlay" zoning for the duration of participation in the district.

When I sell my property, does that automatically cancel my participation in a district?

No. Participation in a district runs with the land, not the owner. Since there is no "certificate" issued at the time of enrollment, the landowner needs to tell his buyer that the land is in an Agricultural District.

Can I withdraw my land?

Yes, land may be withdrawn from a district at the owner's discretion by filing written notice with the County at the time of the District review period (within 90 days of District term expiration). Landowners may also petition the Board of Supervisors to withdraw land at other times; however, this is a lengthy process requiring recommendations by the Agricultural District Advisory Committee and Planning Commission, as well as Public Hearings by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.