



Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

Creating a Village Community

village residential district

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village residential district

Creating a Village Community

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Introduction

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, people who lived close to each other outside of cities lived in towns and villages. These towns and villages had a true sense of place and feeling of community. Nowadays, many people yearn for this small-town character but can't find new homes in small towns or similar settings. That's because they're not being built. Instead of encouraging new small towns and villages, current zoning encourages disconnected and suburbanized developments, even if the development is high-density.

This booklet describes a model zoning ordinance, called the Village Residential (VR) District, which will help create small-town character for new high-density residential development. It also allows for the integration of different types of homes, such as single-family detached homes, townhouses, and multifamily condominiums or apartments. This publication provides background materials for municipalities.

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

Village Residential Development is: Development that contains a mix of higher-density residential types organized and designed in a way that facilitates a small-town sense of community.

Encourage this:



Instead of this:



*the village residential
development concept*

Part

1

Part 1 of this publication discusses the concept of village residential zoning, including:

- The benefits of a village residential development
- What a village residential development might look like
- Local and regional examples of existing village residential developments

What is the Village Residential District?

The Village Residential District is similar to other high-density residential districts. It permits a relatively high density of five dwelling units per acre and a wide range of housing types, including singles, twins, townhouses, and apartments. However, the VR District also includes additional design and open space regulations that go beyond the standard approach - such as a requirement for central open space, so the neighborhood has a village green and active recreation land, like small towns often do - and a requirement controlling the location of garages and parking lots, so cars don't dominate the streetscape - plus a requirement for a mix of housing types, so the neighborhood reflects the diversity of buildings found in small towns. All of these regulations, and more, are used to create a small-town sense of community in new residential developments. These regulations make the VR District unique from most zoning districts.



Village Residential homes approach the street and emphasize the pedestrian experience...



... while de-emphasizing the automobile, such as this relegation of the garage to a rear alley access design.

Why Have a Village Residential District?

All municipalities in Pennsylvania are required to provide their fair share of all housing types, including twins, townhouses, and apartments. Many communities don't like this requirement. They don't like high-density development, which often seems very different than their current housing stock. They don't like the way it fits into their historic landscape. It almost never looks like the old villages and towns that may exist within the community. And it generates additional traffic because everyone in the new high-density development needs to drive to get anywhere.

The VR District, on the other hand, requires high-density development to have a village or small-town character. This development must fit in with the existing historic character of the community. If it is next to a village or town, it should look like a natural extension of the town. If it is next to farms or large-lot single-family homes, it should match the character of these areas, looking like a village that belongs in the community. And it should impose as little change onto the community as possible. Although VR developments will generate traffic, they should generate less than conventional high-density developments because they will be designed to encourage walking. In addition, VR developments are required to provide central open space, giving future residents the option of using active recreation land within the development itself instead of depending on facilities provided by the municipality.



Typical development.



Village residential alternative.

In addition, many homebuyers want to live in old-style neighborhoods but also want the convenience of up-to-date housing. An Urban Land article in 2011, summarizing the results of three consumer surveys, noted that walkable communities with smart growth characteristics appear to be growing in popularity with the general public, but especially among the newest generation of first-time homebuyers. One developer of traditional neighborhood housing says, “People who live in our walkable communities feel they have more friends than in previous communities where they have lived, and they also feel safer, because the neighborhood is friendlier and more active, with more people on the streets and in the parks and open spaces.” The VR District is one piece of the puzzle that can be used to create this hometown character.

All across suburbia, new places and new towns are being created. Unfortunately, many of these places have no sense of place, there is no “there” there, and the communities that are created are fragmented. Municipalities, however, have the power and ability to guide growth and create places that feel like the old towns of yesteryear. They only need to adopt good zoning standards in their ordinances and require good design at the plan review stage. The VR model ordinance in this booklet provides a means of doing this.



Single-family detached homes also can fit into the village model district

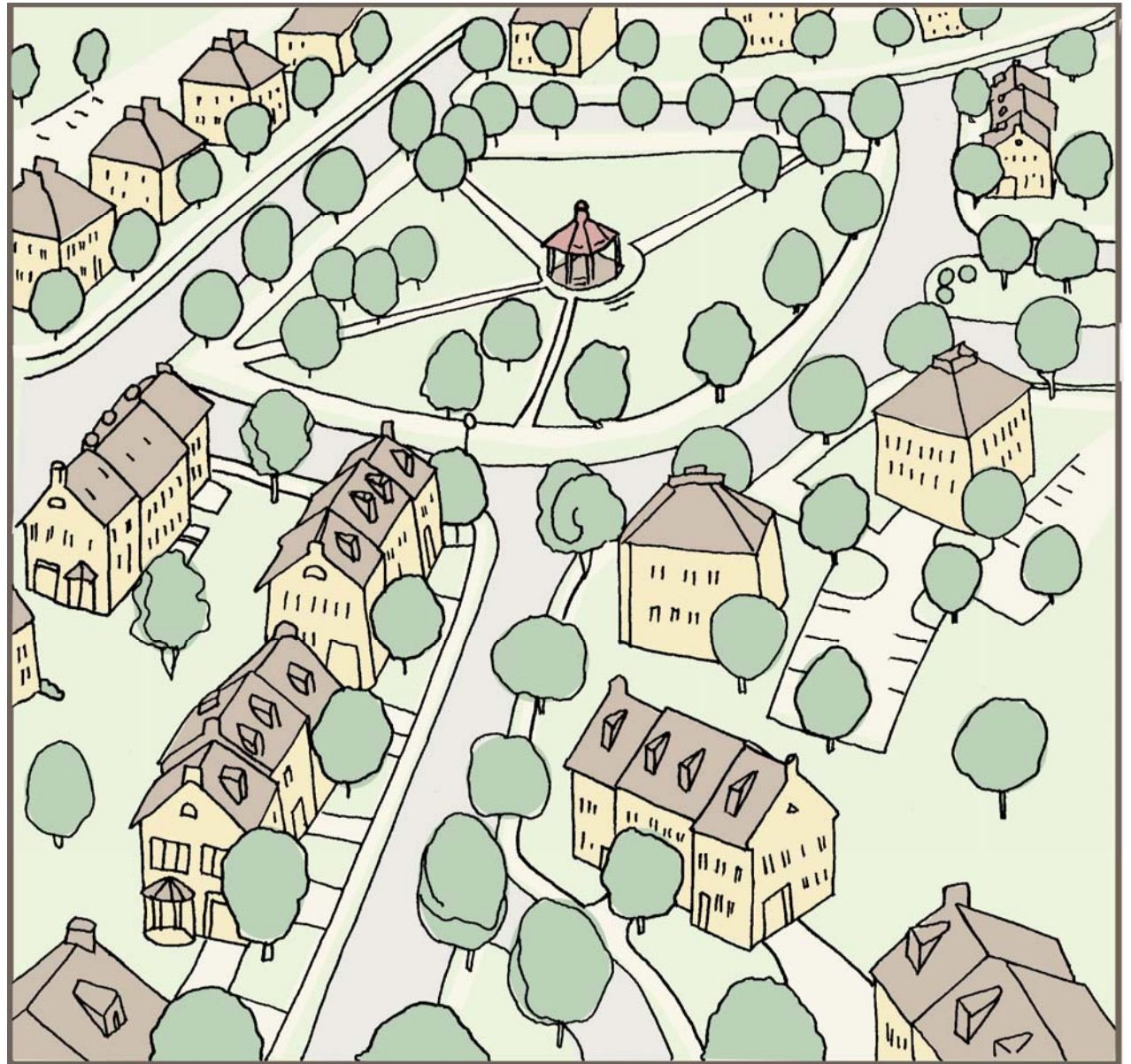


Central greens and open space allow denser housing types to still provide plenty of room for play and exercise

What Will a Village Residential Development Look Like?

Village residential developments will look new when they are first constructed, but they will look different than other typical new developments. They will be more attractive, more pleasant to walk, more like existing villages and towns, and more interesting places to live. Over time, they will be able to age gracefully, like so many of Montgomery County's local towns and villages.

The drawing to the right illustrates how the VR District could look on an example tract of land.



Local Examples

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

Smith's Corner Lower Salford, Montgomery Co., PA

This small traditional neighborhood development in the village of Vernfield provides well-designed twin homes and a multifamily building along Sumneytown Pike with larger lot single-family detached homes behind the village setting.

- 22 acre tract
- 9 single-family detached homes (lower density outside the village district)
- 14 attached twin homes
- 10 multifamily condominiums



The Village at Gwynedd Upper Gwynedd, Montgomery Co., PA

This New England-style development was built over twenty years ago with a diverse range of housing types.

- 65 acre tract
- 66 single-family detached homes
- 64 attached twin homes
- 71 townhomes
- 68 quadraplex homes



The Villages at Trewellyn Lower Gwynedd, Montgomery Co., PA

This site at the junction of two state roads, Rts. 63 and 309, combines a diverse housing selection with common open spaces and a pedestrian trail network that connects to adjacent developments.

- 65 acre tract with 24 acres of open space
- 39 single-family detached homes (21 estate lots and 18 village lots)
- 32 attached twin homes
- 35 townhouses



Local Examples (Continued)

Kissel Hill Manheim, Lancaster Co., PA

This large property has over 400 homes with large buffers and significant open space. There are also five commercial lots around the central green.

- 95 acre tract
- 81 single-family detached homes
- 202 townhouses and twins
- 34 acres of open space

Summerfield at Elverson Elverson, Chester Co., PA

This suburban-style mixed use development with over 300 homes follows a creek on an environmentally-constrained property.

- 138 acre tract
- 64 single-family detached homes
- 254 townhomes and twins
- In addition to common open space, includes a private horse pasture

Eagleview Uwchlan, Chester Co., PA

This neo-traditional development is in the middle of an office park near an interchange of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. It also includes commercial and office development to form a more comprehensive mixed-use village.

- 169 acre tract
- 106 single-family detached homes
- 233 townhouses
- 144 apartments



*planning for village
residential development*

Part

2

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

- General location guidelines
- Specific location guidelines for Montgomery County
- Discussion of the legal framework for this zoning

Where Should the Village Residential District Be Used?

The Village Residential District should be used any place that is appropriate for high-density multifamily development. In particular, the VR District should be located near existing villages, shopping areas, schools, offices, institutions, parks, and any other destination points that are accessible by walking. These destination points should be clustered together to create a new town or village - a place that people can identify, where it is possible to walk or drive a short distance from one destination to another, where sewers, water, and roads can be provided economically.

Three situations where VR zoning might be applied:



Infill within a village



Extension of a village



Creation of a new village

POTENTIAL INFILL SITES IN AN EXISTING VILLAGE



Suitable Location - Infill Within a Village

Across Montgomery County, there are many boroughs and villages that have a large concentration of older housing. Within these areas, there are often larger lots or vacant lots that can be developed. Unfortunately, in the past, these areas have often been developed with “parachute” housing - housing that looks like it was dropped in from the air and does not belong. This “parachute” housing is often set back further from the street than the existing housing stock and often has parking or a garage directly facing the street. It clearly does not belong. The VR District, on the other hand, would encourage housing that more closely matches the character of the village or borough.

DEVELOPABLE LAND ON EDGE OF VILLAGE



Suitable Location - Extension of a Village

Many communities in Montgomery County have concentrated their higher-density residential and retail commercial zoning near existing villages or other concentrations of development. This is a good way to plan. By concentrating new higher-intensity development around cores of existing development, the community makes it easier to economically provide sewers and water lines, matches up new development with the most compatible form of existing development, creates a walkable environment, and helps create a sense of place.

Unfortunately, in the past, the new high-density residential development built next to existing villages has not always matched the character of the existing village. The VR District would require development to have more of an “old-fashioned” village character that would fit in with the existing historic character found in Montgomery County’s villages and boroughs.

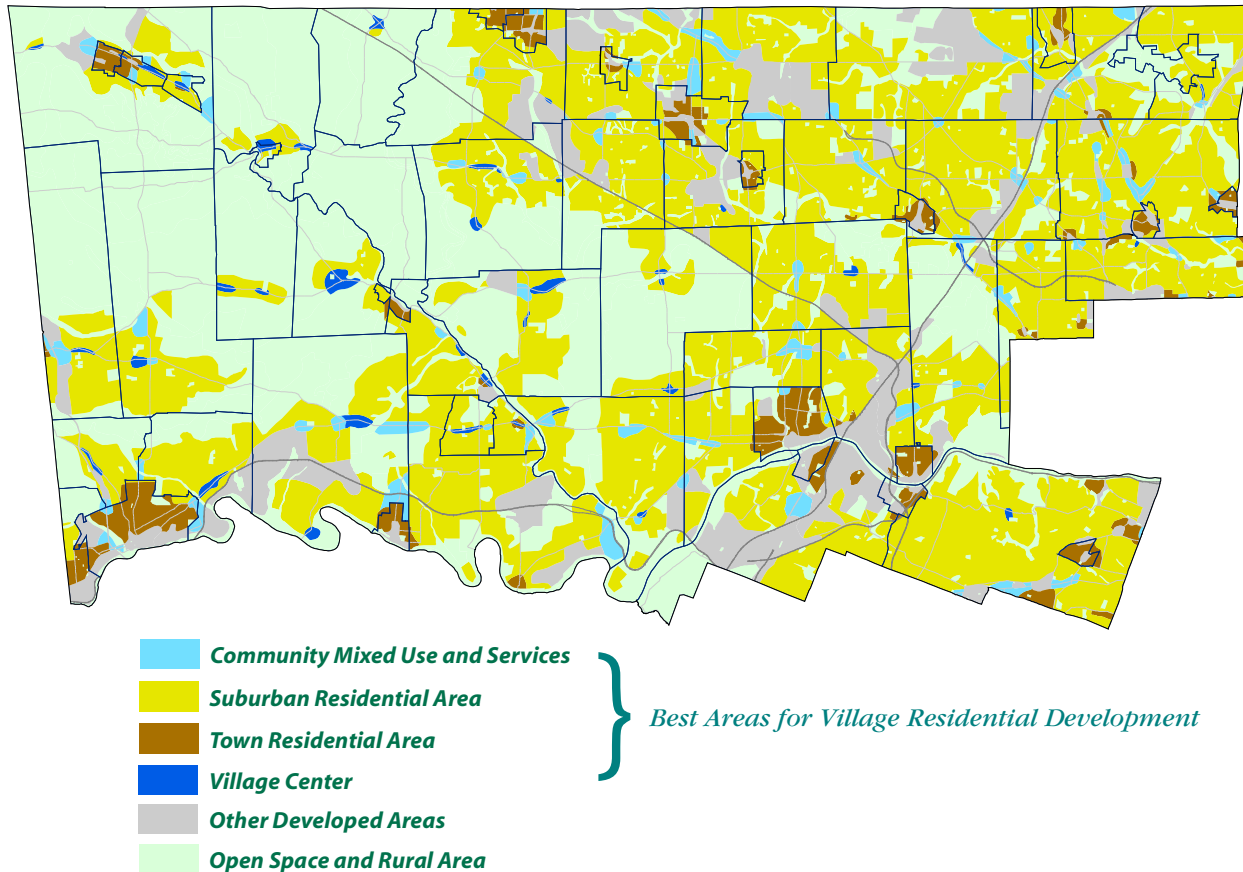
Suitable Location - Creation of a New Village

Some communities do not have existing developed areas that can be extended. Or they want to preserve their existing villages and hamlets within their historic context, with a greenbelt around these villages, and do not want new high-density residential development next to the villages. In these cases, it is necessary to put the high-density housing somewhere else. When high-density housing is outside of an existing core, this housing should be designed to create a new, identifiable core. It should probably encompass a total of 150 to 200 acres, preferably on more than one parcel, and should also be near new commercial or institutional zoning so there are destination points nearby.



VACANT LAND (INCLUDING A FORMER AIR STRIP)

Future Land Use Plan - Highlighting Best VR District Locations



Village Residential Development is most appropriate for Suburban Residential areas and Community Mixed Use and Services areas. It can also be appropriate as infill development in a Village Center area or Town Residential area

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 residential zoning.

The land use map in this plan groups land uses by the intensity, function, and characteristics of an area. This map shows two land use categories - the Community Mixed Use and Services and Suburban Residential land uses - that are the most appropriate location for Village Residential zoning.

Two other land use categories - Village Centers and Town Residential areas - can also be good locations for village-style mixed residential development, especially as infill for areas that already have a village-like character.

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

Three Legal Approaches for the Village Residential District

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) establishes zoning ordinance provisions that allow municipalities to regulate land use, size of buildings, location of buildings, and open space areas. The following are three potential structures under the MPC for implementing a village residential district.

Standard Zoning Powers - Article VI

The Village Residential District as written in Part 4, could be adopted as a geographically defined district just as any other residential district, high density or otherwise. While it has some strong design-oriented controls built into it, the municipality can strengthen the legal basis for these standards through clearly stated objectives and consistency with other municipal documents, such as the comprehensive plan.

Excerpt from *Section 604. Zoning Purposes*. “To provide for the use of land within the municipality for residential housing of various dwelling types encompassing all basic forms of housing, including single-family and two-family dwellings, and a reasonable range of multifamily dwellings in various arrangements...”

Planned Residential Development - Article VII

The MPC also has a specific outlet available to communities for the express purposes of allowing innovative development that includes a variety of housing types with more flexibility in site and lot design. A PRD District combines both zoning and subdivision processes so that common open space, street layout, infrastructure, and other public services are regulated under the district provisions.

While PRDs are worth considering for large undeveloped areas, either adjacent to existing villages or as a new village, we feel that the benefits under a PRD District can also be achieved as a standard zoning district. A PRD ordinance supersedes a municipality’s underlying zoning and subdivision code, so the PRD standards must be extensively written to consider all aspects of development. Applications under a PRD district also do not go through the traditional zoning approval process, and instead require a public hearing. There may be considerably more time devoted to the implementation and administration of a PRD.

Traditional Neighborhood Development - Article VIIA

The goals and objectives of the Village Residential District model ordinance are very similar to the powers granted under the MPC’s Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) option. Both address the provision of small-town or village type character in a close-knit community with ample public amenities and a focus on the pedestrian. However, there is one significant difference. The TND statutes include mixed use and nonresidential development, where the VR ordinance addresses only the residential side. MCPC does offer another model ordinance, the *Village Mixed Use District*, which resembles the residential standards in the VR District, but includes nonresidential uses for a more complete village center development.

Nevertheless, the language used in the TND section of the MPC is still very consistent with the VR District in terms of neighborhood character, common open space, and pedestrian amenities. It could be possible to integrate the VR District model as a TND ordinance, especially as an extension to an existing village or commercial area.

Legal Framework

The Village Residential District should create no legal problems or concerns for municipalities. In fact, because the district allows a wide range of housing types, it should help communities meet some of their housing fair share needs, which are required by Pennsylvania law. While the district could be adopted as an overlay, we recommend implementing it as an outright designation.

The Village Residential District does contain more design and layout requirements than a typical high-density zoning district, but these requirements are intended to accomplish specific goals, such as creating walkable environments, fitting in with historic villages and landscapes, and creating a sense of community and place. The municipality should include clear statements of intent within the ordinance to back up the rationale for the design standards in the ordinance. The comprehensive plan should also be consistent with the goals of the district.

If a particular landowner does not want to develop under the mixed residential standards of the Village Residential District, the model ordinance does have an option for landowners to develop single-family detached homes, but only when the land cannot realistically be developed under the VR standards and when the developer receives conditional-use approval.

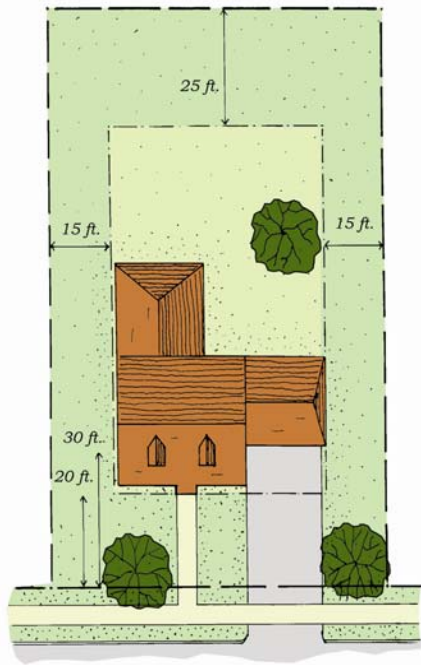
design elements

Part

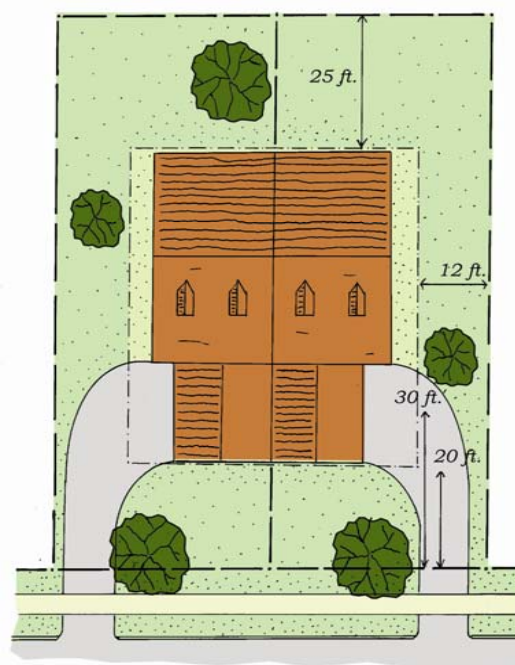
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Part 3 of the Village Residential District explains a variety of dimensional and design standards in the model ordinance that will create development with small-town character and a strong sense of community, including:

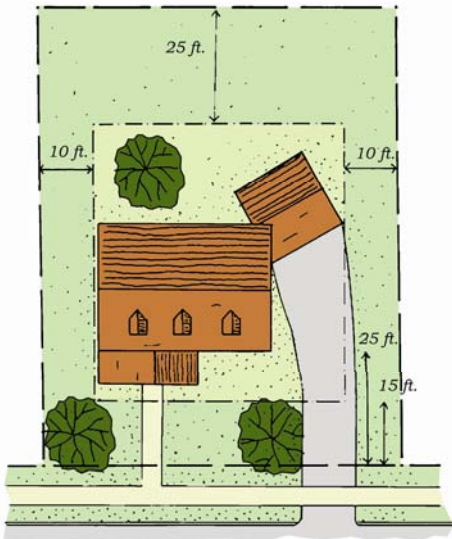
- Housing Types and Lot Size
- Dimensional Standards
 - Mixing Requirements
- Residential Design Standards
 - Street Layout
 - Streetscape
 - Garages and Parking
 - Open Space



Single-Family Detached Homes



Twin Homes



Village Houses



Neo-traditional Village House

Housing Types and Lot Size

The VR District allows five housing types: single-family detached homes, village homes, twins, townhouses, and apartments. Although village homes are really a subset of single-family detached homes, they are included as a separate type because these homes, with their required front porches and other design features, help create small-town character.

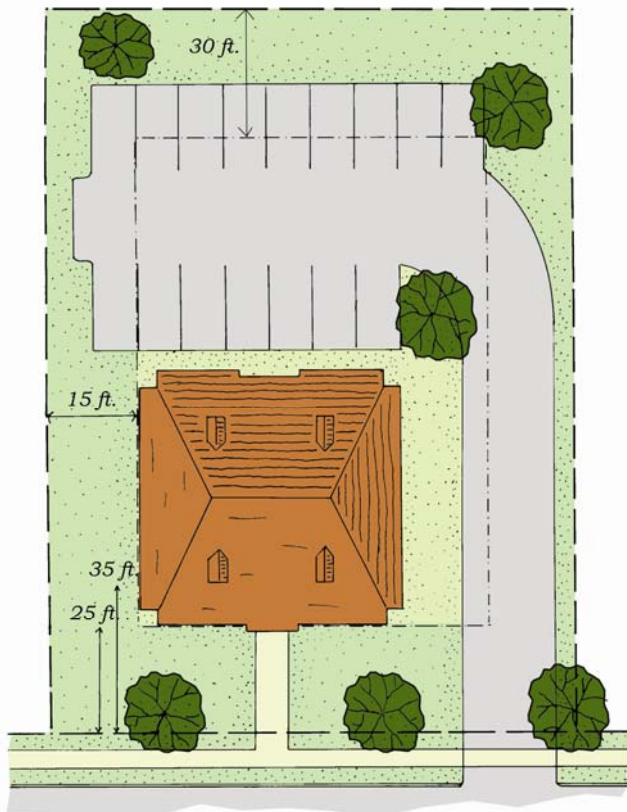
Single-family detached homes are permitted on 10,000-square-foot lots and have no special design requirements, except that they must have a pitched roof and the garage must be set back at least 10 feet from the front façade or have side or rear entry.

Village houses are permitted on 7,000-square-foot lots and must meet a variety of design requirements. To help create a sense of community and to match historic development in the county, village homes must have a front porch, garages that are set back at least 20 feet behind the front facade, and front yards that are separated from the street by a fence or grading changes.

Twins are permitted on 5,000-square-foot lots. Unlike the other housing types, where every dwelling must have a primary entrance facing the street, one of the dwellings in a twin can have a front door that faces the side, so the twin as a whole looks like a single-family detached home.



Townhouses



Apartment Building

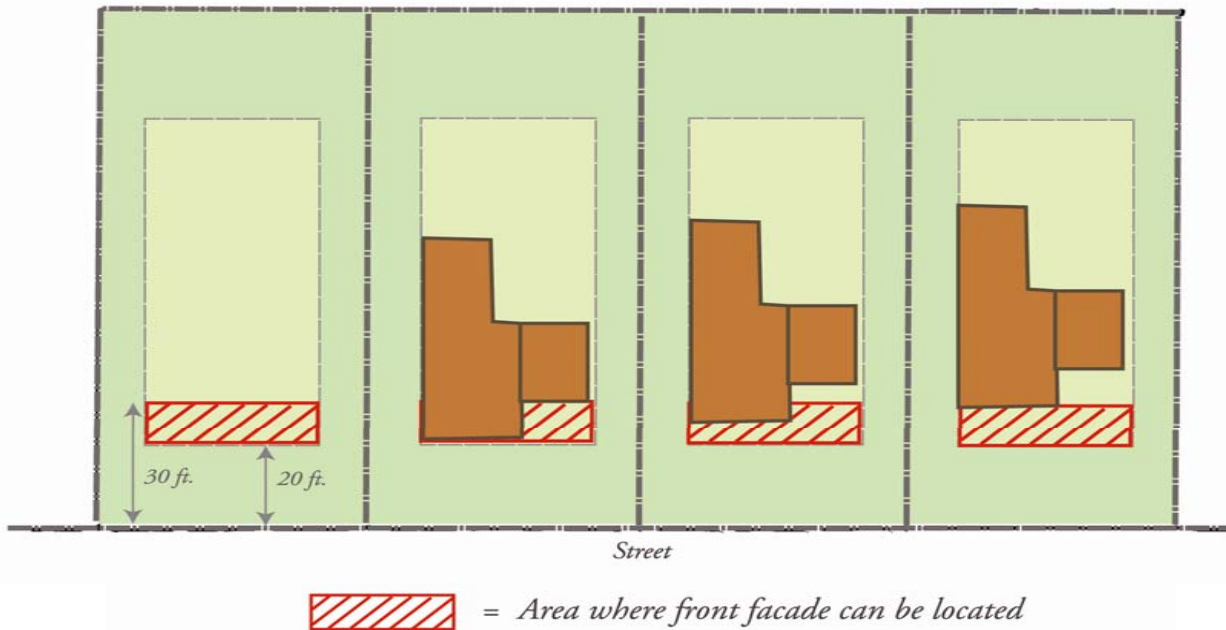
Housing Types and Lot Sizes

(continued)

Townhouses are permitted on 2,400-square-foot lots and must also have pitched roofs, which is typical for townhouses today. To keep the buildings in scale with the singles and twins and to avoid long monotonous rows of buildings, no more than four townhouse dwellings are permitted to be attached to each other.

Apartment buildings, containing up to eight apartments, are permitted on 10,000-square-foot lots. These buildings cannot exceed 80 feet in length or depth and must have pitched roofs.

Illustration of Front Yard Setback Range



Instead of just a minimum front yard setback like many residential districts, the VR District also has a maximum setback in order to maintain a consistent environment where homes and family life are never too far away from the street, sidewalks, and their neighbors.

Dimensional Standards

In addition to lot area, the VR District contains other dimensional characteristics intended to control the intensity of development, protect privacy within the development, and enhance neighborhood character.

Front Yard Setback

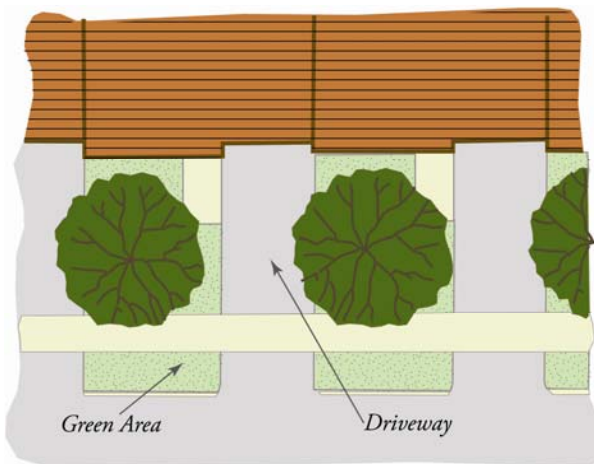
The front yard setback in the VR District is a little different than the usual. Instead of a minimum front yard setback, which allows the home to be placed anywhere behind this setback, the VR District has a required front facade location that requires the fronts of homes to be placed within a certain area on a lot as determined by a minimum and maximum setback. This keeps homes close enough to the street to encourage a sense of community. Meanwhile, side and rear yard setbacks are large enough to maintain privacy and comfortable distances between buildings.

Tract Boundary Setback

All Village Residential buildings have to meet a larger setback from existing residential tract boundary lines than from internal property lines. For single-family detached homes and village homes, this setback is 35 feet. For twins, townhouses, and apartments, this setback is 40 feet. VR developments must also respect neighboring properties by trying to match the housing types on the properties or, when this isn't possible, by providing landscape buffers.

Maximum Density Standards

Total Tract Area	Housing Type	Maximum Overall Density
Less than 5 Acres	Single-Family Detached	3 Dwelling Units per Acre
	Village Single	3.5 Dwelling Units per Acre
	Single-Family Semi-Detached	4 Dwelling Units per Acre
	Single-Family Attached	5 Dwelling Units per Acre
	Multifamily	5 Dwelling Units per Acre
More than 5 Acres	At Least 2 Housing Types (5-10 Acres Total Tract Area) Or At Least 3 Housing Types (Over 10 Acres Total Tract Area)	5 Dwelling Units per Acre



Homes in the VR District must include a minimum amount of green space in the front yard

Dimensional Standards

(continued)

Density

The maximum overall density is 5 dwelling units per acre, spread across the whole tract. This density allows a full range of housing types to be built, including apartments at relatively high densities and single-family homes at much lower densities. This range of housing and densities within the VR District mimics the variety of housing found in older towns and villages.

Other Coverage Requirements

The Village Residential District also includes maximum building and impervious coverage ratios that allow a good-sized two-story home on each lot but don't allow the lots to become overbuilt where homes are towering over their neighbors. In addition, the VR District requires a minimum percent of the front yard that must be kept green with lawns, trees, and other plantings, ranging from 45 percent for townhouses to 70 percent for single-family detached homes.



Fully Mixed Village Residential Development

VS.

Typical High Density Development



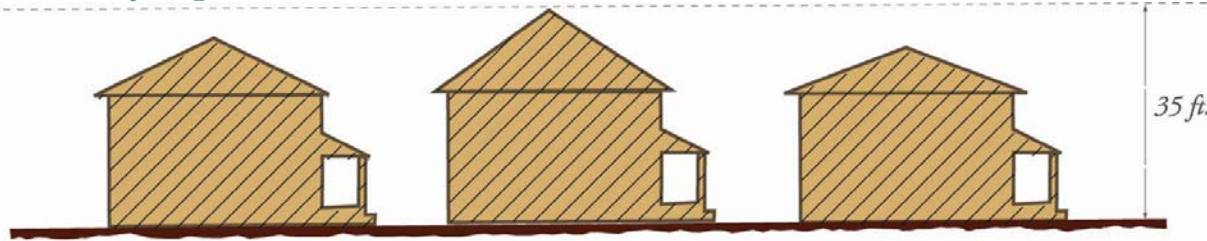
Mixing Requirements

One of the most visible features of older towns and villages is the mix of homes that exist in these communities. These places don't consist of one identical box after another, like so much suburban housing that has been built over the last 40 years. Instead, they contain a variety of housing types and sizes, mixed together, providing a range of housing choices for people with different incomes, ages, or lifestyles.

In the VR District, village residential developments between 5 and 10 acres must have at least two of the permitted housing types, while those with 10 or more acres must have at least three housing types, with no one type comprising less than 15% of the total. Furthermore, to guarantee more of a mixture from block to block, the village residential district also sets limits on the number of homes of any one type that can be located in a row along a street.

Although village residential developments must be mixed, the ordinance does not mandate the type of mix and lets the various housing types be driven by the market. A developer could choose to go relatively low-density, with singles, village homes, and twins, or a developer could choose to go relatively high-density, with apartments, townhouses, and twins.

Pitched Roof Requirement



6 to 12 pitch

ACCEPTABLE

8 to 12 pitch

ACCEPTABLE

4 to 12 pitch

UNACCEPTABLE



Driveways and garages can dominate some facades. This townhome row could be improved by locating the front door entry on the front façade of the end unit and moving the garage to the side.

Residential Design Standards

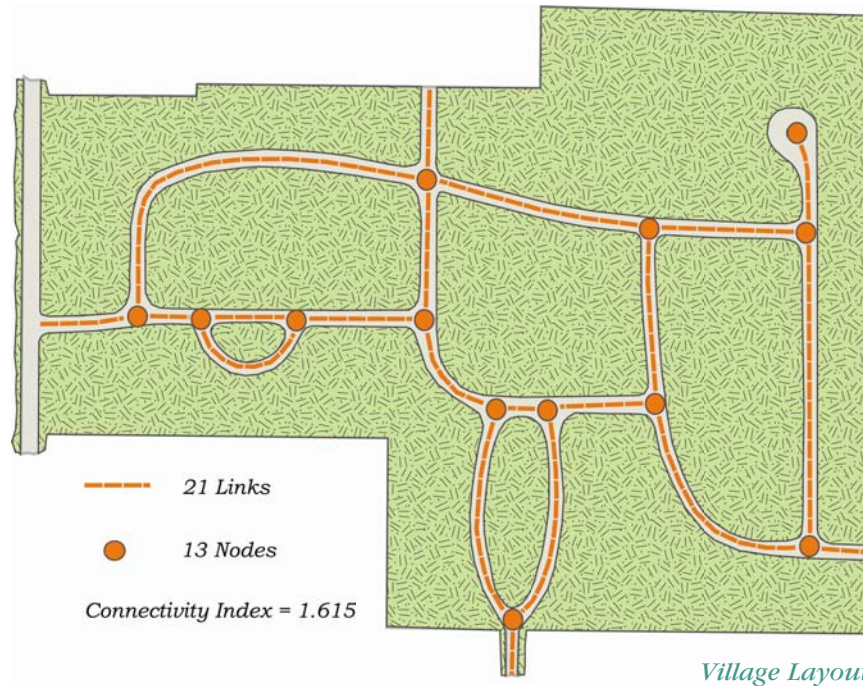
All dwelling units in the Village Residential District should have a small town, old-fashioned character. Several general regulations can help insure that the form of development fits into this aesthetic:

- Roofs must be pitched with at least 6 vertical inches to every 12 horizontal inches.
- Primary entrances are required to be along the front façade. Some homes, especially attached units, move the front door to the side in order to provide space for the garage and driveway. This goes against the neighborhood perspective.

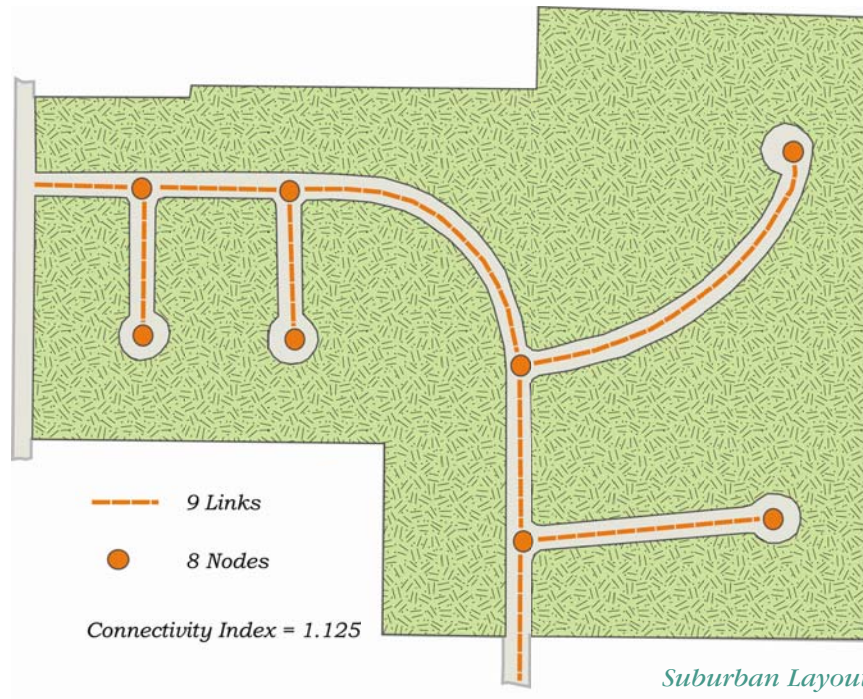
In addition, village single homes have more extensive design requirements:

- Front porches are required across half of the front façade.
- Front facing garages must be set back at least 20 feet behind the front façade.
- Other design options include raised front lawns, ornamental fence or shrubs, and an elevated first floor.

**BUILD STREETS
LIKE THIS**



INSTEAD OF THIS

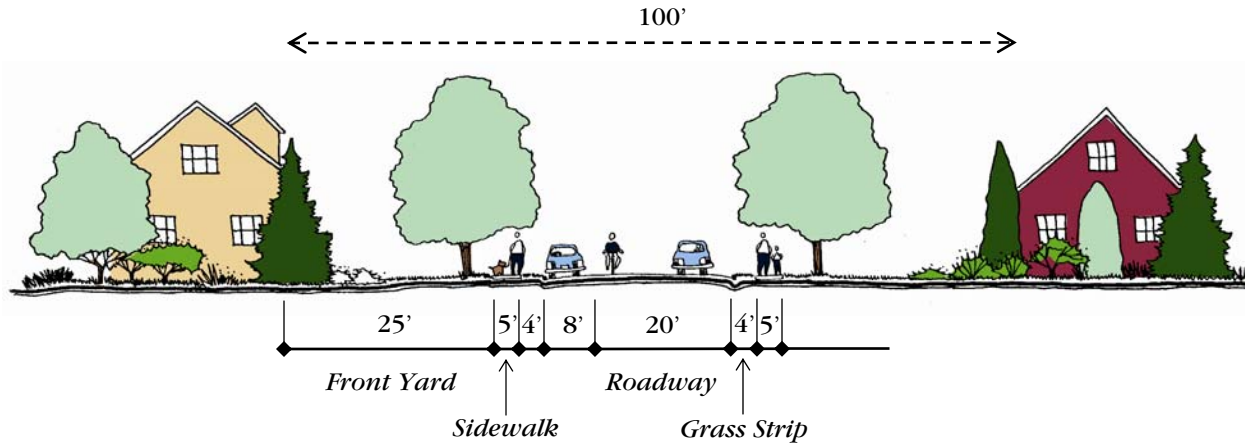


Street Layout

Streets within VR developments should 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 streets, and these connections helped create a sense of community.

The Village Residential District requires streets to be interconnected and the number of cul-de-sacs to be minimized. On tracts of 20 acres or more, the VR District requires developments to meet a measurable standard of street interconnections, called a street connectivity index. For VR developments, this index must be 1.40 or more. An old traditional town might have an index of 1.60 or 1.70 while newer developments might have an index of 1.20.

Cross-Section View of Typical VR Street Improvements



Street Trees

Narrow Roadway
(on-street parking)

Grass Verge

5' Sidewalk

Streetscape

Many of the design standards mentioned previously are intended to improve the appearance and function of streetscapes within VR developments, so walking is both feasible and appealing. But no development will have a good walking environment if there are no sidewalks, if the streets are too wide and car speeds increase, or if no street trees exist to provide pedestrians with a sense of security and comfort. All of these elements must be present to make walkable streets.

To keep pedestrians and children as safe as possible, residential streets in VR developments should be designed to keep traffic speeds as low as possible by keeping streets widths relatively narrow and by designing streets to discourage any through traffic. Narrow streets not only improve safety, they also reduce housing costs, save energy, and reduce environmental impacts of development. A width of 26 to 30 feet should be more than adequate for two directions of traffic and parking on one or both sides of the street.

Street trees also improve the appearance of the streetscape and make walking more comfortable by providing shade cover and protection from cars. Street trees should always be provided on both sides of all streets and should never be waived during the plan review process.



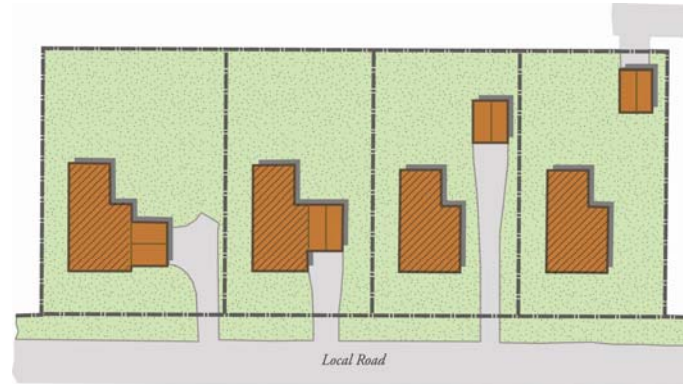
Garage dominating a single-family home



Garage set back on a single-family home



Townhomes with garages in back



Garage options for Single-Family Detached homes



Garage options for Townhomes

Garages and Parking

One of the major characteristics of typical suburban development is the dominance of garages, so that the main feature of the house from the street is the garage door. This creates an unfriendly, unneighborly, and unattractive walking environment.

The VR District requires garages to be designed in a way that minimizes their visual impact, so the development is more walkable and safer. For single-family detached and twin homes, garages must be side-loaded, located to the rear of the home, or set back at least 10 feet from the front facade of the home.

For the end units of townhouses, garages must be side-loaded or located to the rear of the home. For interior townhouse units, garage doors may face the front, provided they comprise no more than 30% of the front facade area, so the garage doors don't dominate the facade. If this isn't feasible in a particular townhouse design, then the garages must be located to the rear of the townhouse.

For apartment buildings, garages and surface parking must be located to the rear or, when the parking spaces are screened, to the side of the building.

Primary Park Improvements



Arbor and fountain in Sunnybrook Village



Gazebo at Weatherstone



Pond at Eagleview



Fountain in Brighton

Open Space

To provide active recreation areas, create a focal point for the community, and save environmental features, the Village Residential District requires at least 20% of VR developments to be preserved as open space. Half of this required open space must consist of central open space, while the other half can be used as a developer deems appropriate. In one case, a developer may want to provide ball fields or active recreation facilities, while in another case a developer may want to preserve a stream corridor or stand of trees.

Some of the central open space, at least 15,000 square feet, must be concentrated in one primary park to give the neighborhood a focal point and central gathering place. The VR District requires the primary park to be improved with a gazebo, pavilion, or fountain and benches.



Village Green



Village Green at Brighton



Landscaped Median in Kissel Hill



Eyebrow in Woodmont



Landscaped Median



Eyebrow

Open Space

(continued)

The remaining central open space must consist of one of four types of open space: village green, landscaped median, eyebrow, or cul-de-sac island.

Village greens are relatively large (at least 10,000 square feet) and must be visible from the street, with at least half of their perimeter surrounded by roads.

Landscaped medians create parkways and entryways for the development. They must have an average width of 10 feet, a minimum length of 150 feet, and be surrounded by roads on all sides.

Eyebrows create open space courtyards on the sides of roads and must generally be configured as a semicircle.

Cul-de-sac islands create a focal point for cul-de-sac bulbs, improve the appearance of these areas, and make it easier for maintenance and emergency vehicles to get around the bulb.

model ordinance

Part

4

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

The ordinance contains the following sections:

- Section 1. Intent
- Section 2. Permitted Uses and Maximum Density
- Section 3. Dimensional Requirements
- Section 4. General Requirements
- Section 5. Design Standards
- Section 6. Open Space Standards
- Section 7. Ownership and Maintenance of Common Open Space and Facilities
- Section 8. Conditional Use Standards

The Village Residential District is intended to be adopted as a freestanding separate zoning district. The district permits a variety of residential uses with mixed housing type requirements that promote diverse and traditional neighborhoods that are walkable and integrate usable open space.

Village Residential District

Section 1. INTENT

The primary purpose of the Village Residential (VR) District is to permit a range of housing types in a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood with a sense of community and place. Specifically, the Village Residential District is intended to:

- A. Create a mixed residential village character that complements existing village development.
- B. Accommodate a variety of housing types and discourage one housing type from dominating the streetscape.
- C. Promote pedestrian orientation of streets and buildings.
- D. Develop streets and homes that promote social interaction as well as privacy.
- E. Alleviate the perceived impact of high-density developments, such as apartments and townhouses, by requiring them to be of a pedestrian scale, bulk, and orientation.
- F. Give priority to pedestrian movement and access to buildings, open spaces, and streets; and discourage design that gives priority to vehicular convenience only.
- G. Create a street circulation system that provides safe and convenient access but discourages fast or heavy traffic that is incompatible with a residential neighborhood.
- H. Use scale, building orientation, and landscaping to establish community identity.
- I. Use open and recreational spaces as a community focal point.
- J. Provide recreational opportunities.
- K. Ensure that new development is compatible with existing neighborhoods.

Section 2. PERMITTED USES AND MAXIMUM DENSITY

The following uses are permitted on tracts in the VR District:

- A. On tracts of less than 5 acres, existing as of the date of adoption of this ordinance:
 - 1. Single-family detached dwellings at a maximum density of three (3) dwelling units per developable acre.

COMMENTARY

Legislative Intent:

The legislative intent should be tailored to reflect each municipality's own specific goals and characteristics. These goals might involve preserving a residential village, creating an extension to a village, or creating a new village area. The goals listed to the left in the model ordinance reflect elements of the ordinance that are intended to accomplish specific public benefits.

Permitted Uses:

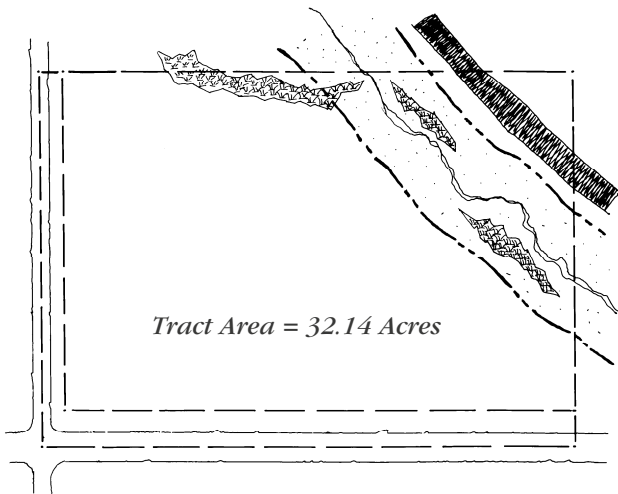
The VR District is designed as a mapped district that allows a choice of housing types on existing tracts under 5 acres but requires a mix of housing on tracts over 5 acres. However, applicants who demonstrate that development under the VR standards is not feasible are permitted to develop single-family detached lots at a relatively low density.

2. Village single dwellings at a maximum density of three and a half (3.5) dwelling units per developable acre.
3. Single-family semi-detached dwellings at a maximum density of four (4) dwelling units per developable acre.
4. Single-family attached dwellings at a maximum density of five (5) dwelling units per developable acre.
5. Multifamily buildings at a maximum density of five (5) dwelling units per developable acre.
6. Park and open space uses.
7. Mixed residential developments that comply with the mixing requirements outlined in section 4.C.

B. On tracts of 5 acres or more:

1. Mixed residential developments that comply with the mixing requirements outlined in section 4.C, with a maximum overall density of five (5) dwelling units per developable acre.
2. As a conditional use, in compliance with the conditional use standards in section 8 of this article, single-family detached dwelling units at a maximum density of two (2) dwelling units per developable acre, provided all dimensional requirements in section 3 of the VR District are met.

Illustration of Developable Area



	GROSS AREA	32.14 acres
	Road R.O.W.	- 3.83 acres
	Steep Slopes	- .70 acres
	Floodplain	- 4.70 acres
	Wetlands	- .40 acres
	Net Developable Area	= 22.51 acres

Housing Types for Infill Locations:
The model ordinance allows a full variety of housing types on tracts under 5 acres. However, if the VR District is applied to an existing village, local municipalities may want to tailor these housing types to the conditions in the village. If only singles and twins exist in the village, townhouses or apartments could be taken off the list. If the village has a full mix of housing types but these types are grouped together, then the ordinance could be written to only allow a certain housing type, such as apartments, when a lot being developed abuts a lot with the same housing type, which in this example would have to be apartments.

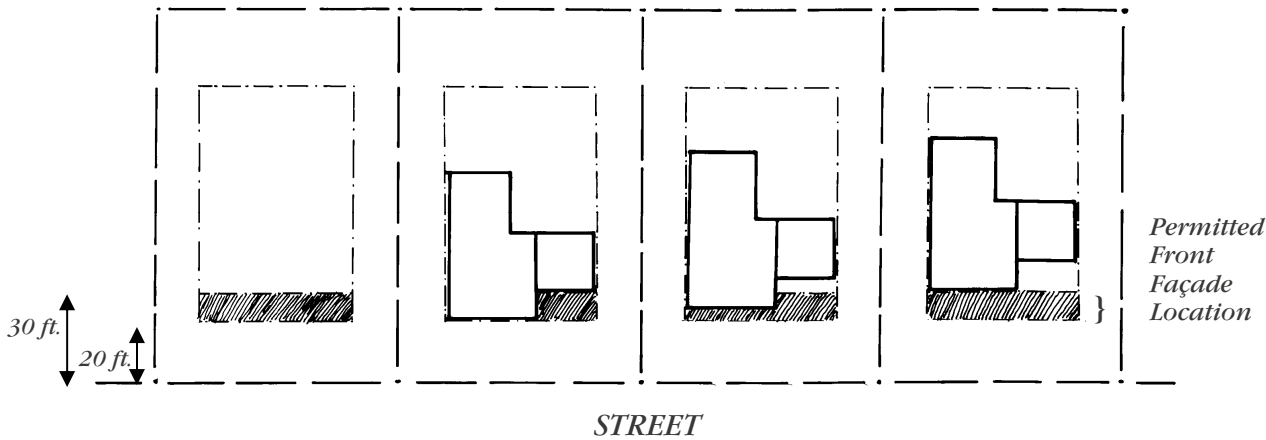
Institutional Use Option
Institutional uses, such as churches or schools, may also be included in this district, as in other residential districts.

Developable Area
The use standards list maximum density, based on developable acres. The municipality's ordinance should include a definition of developable acreage that excludes land within floodplains, under water, under wetlands, steeply sloped, within street ultimate rights-of-way, or within utility rights-of-way or easements.

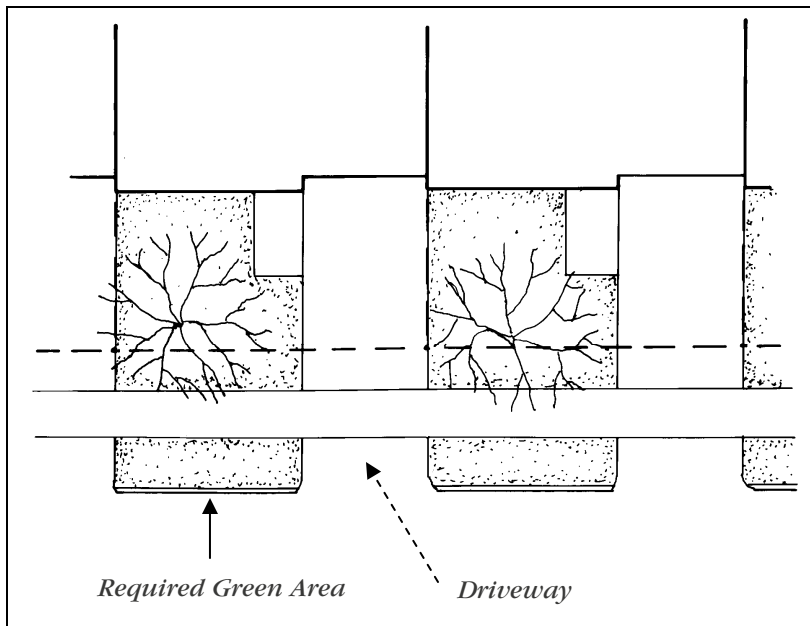
Section 3. Dimensional Requirements

	Single-Family Detached (one unit per lot)	Village Single (one unit per lot)	Single-Family Semi-Detached (one unit per lot)	Single-Family Attached (one unit per lot)	Multifamily Structures
Min. Lot Area	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., with at least 2,500 sq. ft. provided per du
Min. Lot Width	80 feet	60 feet	40 feet	45 feet for end units 24 feet for interior units	100 feet
Required front facade location, when front 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
Required front facade location, when front facade faces any other street classification	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 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
Min. Side Yard	15 feet	10 feet	12 feet	12 feet per end unit	15 feet
Min. Rear Yard	25 feet	25 feet	25 feet	30 feet	30 feet
Min. Building Setback from Residential Tract Boundaries	35 feet	35 feet	40 feet	40 feet	40 feet
Min. Parking Setback from Residential Tract Boundaries	10 feet	10 feet	10 feet	15 feet	20 feet
Max. Building Coverage	20%	20%	25%	45%	25%
Max. Impervious Coverage	30%	35%	40%	65%	60%
Min. Percent Green Space in Front Yard	70%	65%	55%	45%	60%
Max. Building Height	35 feet	35 feet	35 feet	35 feet	35 feet
Max. Units per Building	NA	NA	NA	4	8
Min. Distance Between Buildings on the Same Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	30 feet
Max. Building Length	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	80 feet

Alternative Front Façade Locations



Townhouse Lots



Dimensional Requirements

The dimensional requirements in Section 3 of the model are recommendations based on traditional village zoning. Like most standards in the model, these may be adjusted to better match the character of existing village development when the district is being adopted as an extension of a village or for infill development.

Front Yard Location:

Unlike most zoning ordinances, the VR District does not have a standard front yard setback. Instead, the VR District has a required front yard location, where the front facade of homes must be placed within a certain range. This requirement stops homes from being too close to streets, which is the goal of a standard front yard setback, and also stops homes from being too far back on a lot, so that privacy in rear yards is maintained and homes create an attractive streetscape.

Front Yards on Townhouse Lots:

In many townhouse and twin developments, the front yards are paved to provide extra parking. To avoid this problem, the VR District limits the amount of the front yard that may be paved by requiring a minimum amount of green space in this area.

Section 4. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- A. All developments must provide open space in compliance with Section 6, herein.
- B. All developments shall be served by public sewer and public water.
- C. All mixed residential developments shall meet the following mixing requirements:
 - 1. On tracts of less than 10 acres, the development shall include at least two 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 two required housing types, a housing type must comprise at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the total housing units in a mixed residential development.
 - 2. On tracts of ten (10) acres or more, the following requirements shall be met:
 - a. 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 a mixed residential development.
 - b. No housing type shall exceed the following maximum percentage of the total number of housing units:

Housing Types	Maximum Percentage of Mix
Single-Family Detached	30 percent
Village House	30 percent
Single-Family Semi-Detached	45 percent
Single-Family Attached	50 percent
Multifamily	60 percent

D. 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 Neighborhood Mixed Residential District.

Housing Mix and Overall Density:
The mixing requirements in the VR District allow up to 60% of developments to consist of single-family detached and village homes, with the remaining homes possibly consisting of twins. If a community is using the VR District to meet its fair share needs, the community may want to adjust the mixing requirements so that some townhouses and apartments must be built. In this case, where a community is altering the mix to guarantee higher-density housing types, the overall permitted density in the VR District should probably be raised from 5 dwelling units per developable acre to 7, 8, or 9 dwelling units per developable acre.

Section 5. DESIGN STANDARDS

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

A. General Layout of Mixed Residential Developments

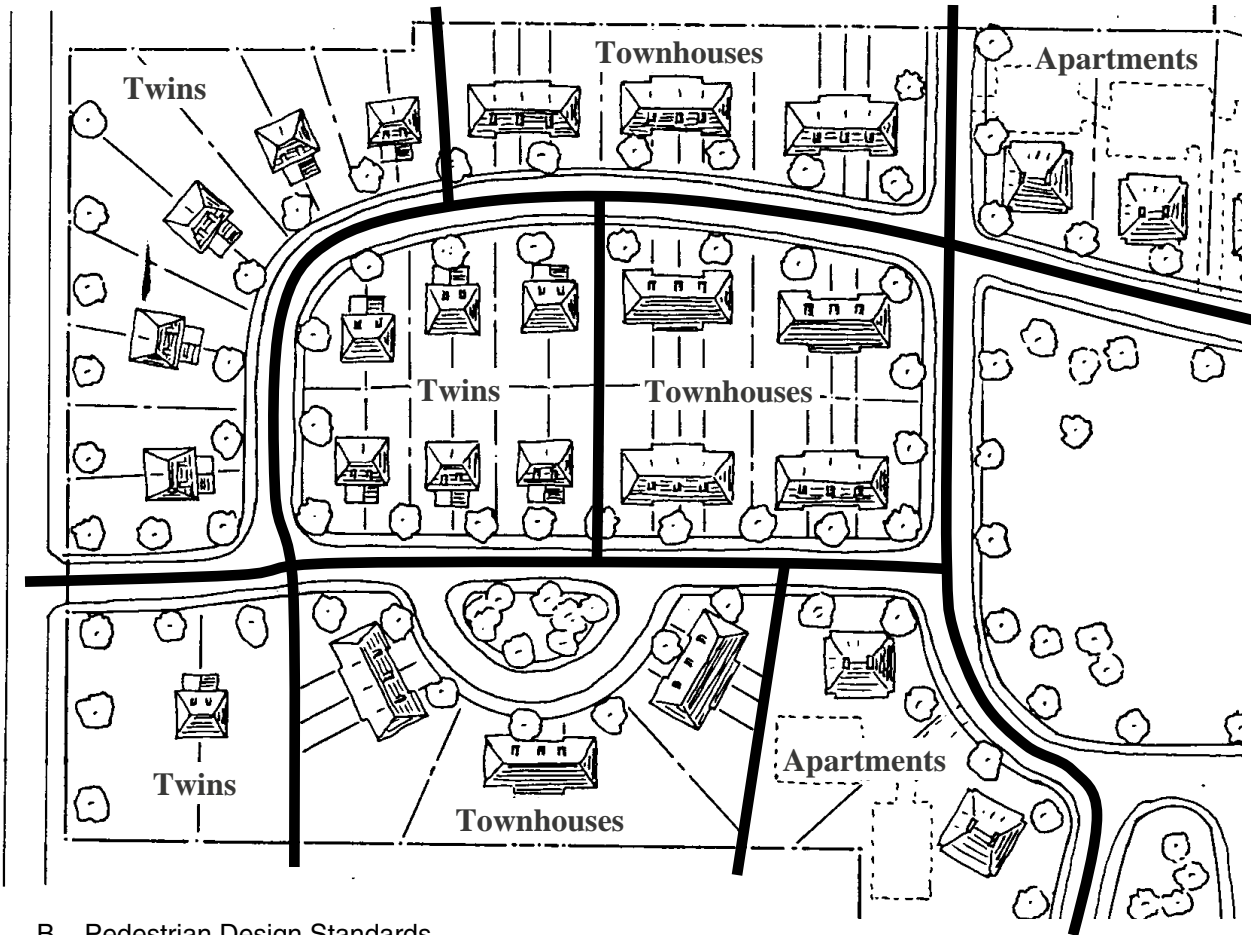
1. Mixed residential neighborhoods should be designed so that the different housing types are well integrated, similar to patterns found in traditional villages.
2. In general, mixed developments should be laid out so the townhouses and apartments are located close to an adjoining village center (where one exists), close to similar townhouses or apartments on abutting tracts, close to major roads, close to train stations, close to bus stops, or close to the large required primary park.
3. At least fifty percent (50%) of proposed multifamily lots shall directly abut central open space, as defined in section 6, along at least one hundred (100) feet of boundary or shall face central open space across a street for at least one hundred (100) feet of street length.
4. At least forty percent (40%) of the total proposed units should have front facades facing central open space, as defined in section 6.
5. 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 on the same street. In addition to an intersection created by a perpendicular street, breaks may also be created by at least four dwelling units of a different housing type or by open space with at least one hundred and fifty (150) feet of frontage on the street.

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

Housing Mix Along Streets

The VR District requires homes within developments to be mixed with each other, so housing types are not segregated into different areas of a large development. To provide a measurable means of judging this mix, the VR 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.

Illustration of Mixed Housing Types Along Streets



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.

Pedestrian Accessways

Sidewalks within relatively narrow rights-of-way of 25 feet or less should be fenced, screened, or buffered from abutting residential lots. Fencing designed to direct people should be at least 3 1/2 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 bushes such as dogwoods, hawthorns, flowering cherries, arborvitae, eastern cedars, and upright junipers.

C. Building Design Standards

1. Existing Historic Buildings. Any proposed mixed residential development in the VR District, as permitted in Section 2.B, shall retain and use any principal buildings on the property that were constructed before 1940.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Village houses must meet all of the following criteria:
 - a. 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.
 - b. 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 or unenclosed parking spaces, must be located behind the building's front facade.
 - c. All village houses shall contain at least one of the following features:
 - i. A front yard raised above sidewalk grade by at least two (2) feet.
 - ii. A front yard enclosed by a permanent ornamental wall or wooden 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.
 - iii. 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 Design Standards

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

Existing Historic Buildings

The VM District requires reuse of existing historic buildings. The municipality and its solicitor should be sure they are comfortable with this tough standard. The pre-1940 distinction could be substituted with any historic resources inventory or other categorization that the municipality has implemented.

A less stringent alternative to mandatory preservation in the ordinance would be to allow density bonuses when preserving a historic buildings.

Front Façade Definition:

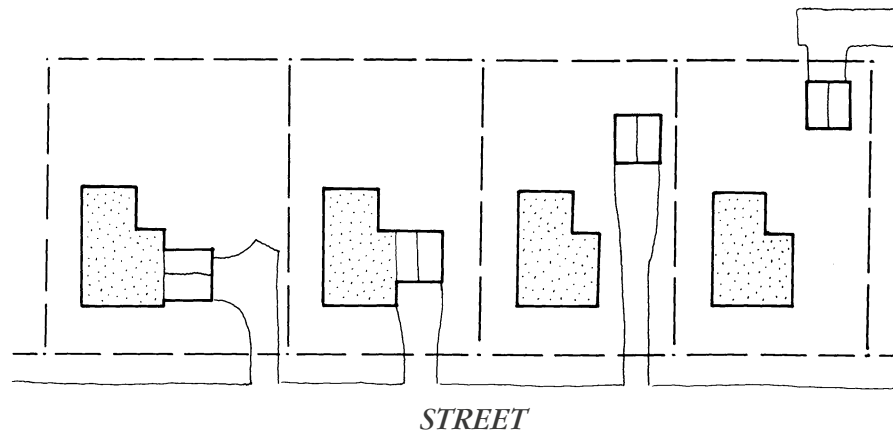
Front facade should be defined in the municipality's definition section. One possible definition is:

Front Façade - The facade of a building that is closest to a street and contains the front door or other features identifying this facade as the primary facade of the building.

Private / Public Space Separation

In older villages, most homes have a front yard that is separated from the street by a grade change or fence. This creates a semi-public space between the street and the home. In addition, the first floor of most of these homes is higher than ground level, further defining the home as private space. The VR ordinance requires one of these features to be incorporated into every village house; however, some municipalities may not want the same fence or hedge to be planted in front of every house. To avoid this problem, the ordinance could be changed to require these features to be varied along a street.

Alternative Garage Locations - Singles



3. Single-Family Detached and Single-Family Semi-Detached Units. 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 Units
 - 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 5.D.2.
 - 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.

Garages and Off-Street Parking

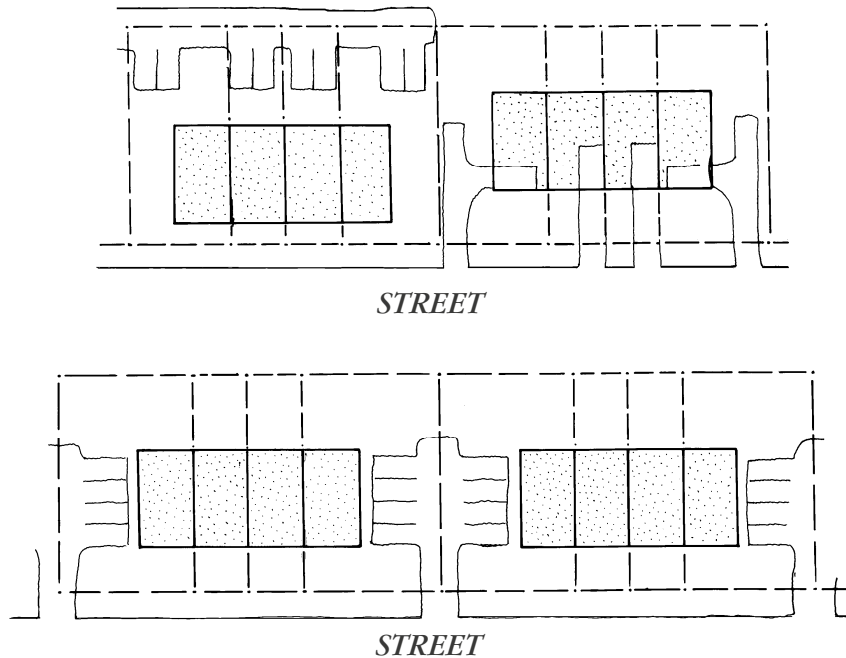
Controlling the location, orientation, and appearance of garages and off-street parking spaces is critical for creating a sense of community and a walkable neighborhood. The VR District requires the various housing types to meet specific garage and off-street parking requirements.

Garage Type Mixing

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 facade, garages in the rear of homes, and garages that get their access from alleys. Municipalities that want to require a mix of garage types within the single-family and twin homes in a development may want to reword section 5.D.3 to require this, perhaps by stating that "Within a VR development, at least three of the following garage types shall be used, with no single type comprising less than twenty percent (20%) of the total."

- 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.

Alternative Parking Locations - Townhouses



Townhouse Parking Location
 Parking within townhouses can be arranged a variety of ways, depending on whether a townhouse is an interior unit or an end unit.

- 5. Multi-Family Units. Parking areas and/or garages for all multifamily buildings may not be located between the front facade of the building and the street; instead, parking areas and/or garages shall meet one of the following 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.

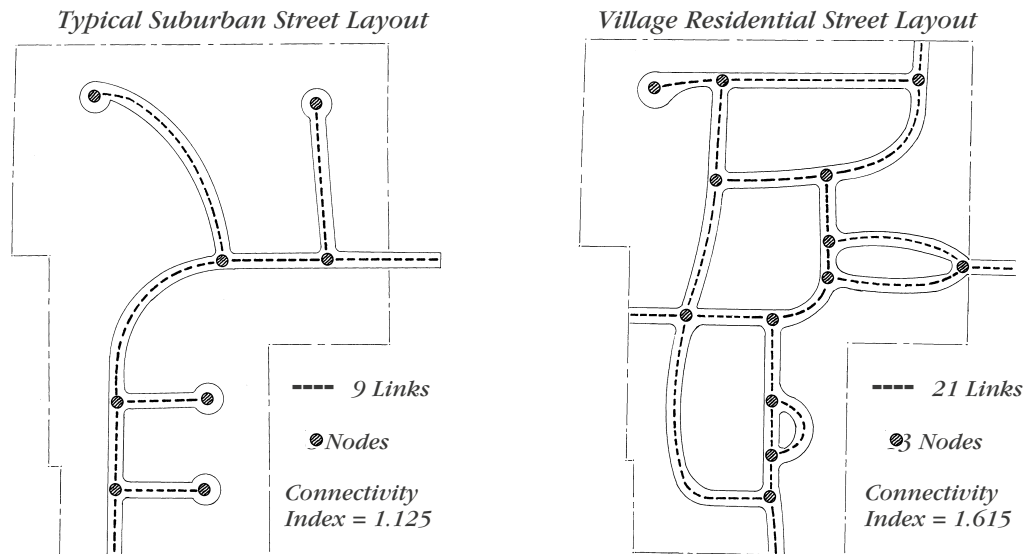
Multi-Family Parking Location
 For apartment buildings, off-street parking must be located to the side or rear of the building. If located to the side as surface parking, the parking area must be screened with a wall or landscaping.

- c. Surface parking may be located to the side of the multifamily buildings provided the side of the parking lot facing the street frontage(s) is screened by both 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.

E. Street and Driveway Design Standards

1. Streets within VR developments shall be interconnected with each other and with streets on abutting properties in a grid or modified grid pattern.
2. Cul-de-sacs shall be minimized within a VR district. In no case shall a cul-de-sac exceed a length of three hundred and fifty (350) feet.
3. On tracts of twenty (20) acres or more, new streets within an VR 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.

Examples of Street Connectivity Index



4. For mixed residential developments on tracts of five (5) acres or more, no lot or dwelling unit shall take driveway access from an existing collector or higher classification road.

Street Connectivity Index
 The street connectivity 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 on the left show a typical suburban street layout that does not meet the street connectivity index of 1.40 and a Village Residential layout that does meet this connectivity ratio.

Driveway Access on Larger Roads
 The VR District requires lots on larger roads to get driveway access from internal streets. However, if the VR District is applied to an existing village where the homes have driveway access from a major road and the municipality wants to continue this character, section 5.E.4 should be eliminated. In addition, the terminology for street classifications in the VR District should correspond with terms already used in the municipality.

Section 6. OPEN SPACE STANDARDS

- A. The following quantities of open space shall be provided by all developments containing ten (10) or more dwelling units:

Type of Open Space	Minimum Amount to be Provided
Total Open Space	20% of gross tract area. Total open space includes central open space and the primary park.
Central Open Space	10% of gross tract area. Central open space includes the primary park.
Primary Park	15,000 square feet.

- B. Total Open Space

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

- Central Open Space Design Options. All central open space shall meet one of the following design options:
 - VILLAGE GREEN.** Each village green shall be at least ten thousand (10,000) square feet in size, shall be surrounded along at least twenty-five percent (25%) of its perimeter by roads, and shall be configured so that a circle with a radius of thirty (30) feet can fit within the confines of the green. All sides of village greens shall be surrounded by either roads or the front facades of buildings.
 - 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.
 - EYEBROW.** Each eyebrow shall be surrounded by streets on all sides, shall be generally configured as a semi-circle, and shall be configured so that a circle with a radius of fifteen (15) feet can fit within the confines of the eyebrow.
 - CUL-DE-SAC ISLAND.** Each cul-de-sac island shall be located in the bulb of a cul-de-sac, shall have a radius of at least fifteen (15) feet, and shall be surrounded by streets on all sides.

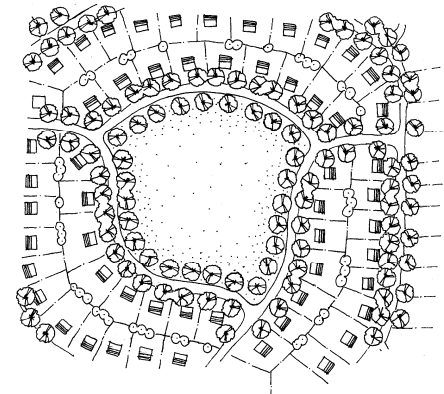
Open Space Requirement Options

The Village Residential District requires 20% open space, with half of this required open space consisting of central open space. The ordinance does not contain any standards for the remaining half; however, if a municipality has or wants design standards for the leftover open space, it may want to reference these standards in section 6.B or add new standards to this section.

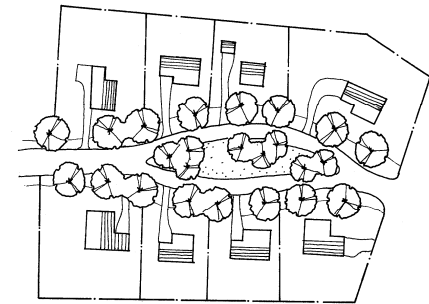
Central Open Space Types

The central open space may consist of four types:

Village Green



Landscaped Median



2. Additional Central Open Space Standards

- a. All units within a village residential development shall be located within 800 feet of some type of central open space.
- b. At least 40 percent of all lots (rounded up to the nearest whole number) in the development must border or be directly across the street from central open space with the front facades of homes facing the central open space.
- c. Street trees shall be provided along the perimeter of central open space areas that border streets.
- d. All portions of central open space areas, except for those areas under sidewalks, water, furnishings, and recreational structures, shall be landscaped with trees, shrubs, ground cover, or grass.
- e. 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.

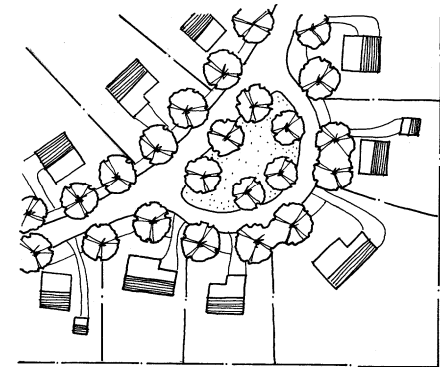
D. Primary Park Requirements

- 1. A primary park shall be located near the middle of the development and shall be easily and conveniently accessible from all lots and dwelling units in the development.
- 2. The primary park shall be accessible by sidewalk or paved trail from every home in the development.
- 3. On tracts of ten (10) acres or more, the primary park shall be configured as a village green, in accordance with section 6.C.1. On tracts under ten (10) acres, the park may be configured as a village green, parkway, eyebrow, or cul-de-sac island in accordance with section 6.C.1.
- 4. The primary park shall be improved with either a gazebo, pavilion, pond, or paved patio 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.

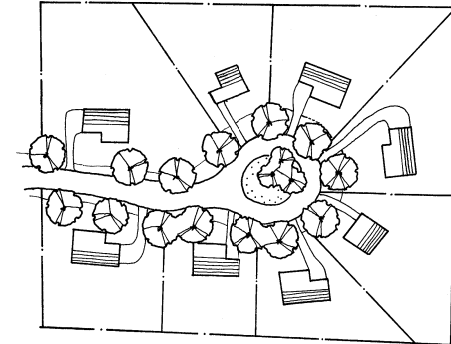
Section 7. OWNERSHIP AND MAINTENANCE OF COMMON OPEN SPACE AND FACILITIES

- A. The following methods of ownership may be used for common open land and facilities, either individually or in combination:
 - 1. Fee simple dedication to the municipality, although the municipality need not accept the offer of dedication.

Eyebrow



Cul-De-Sac Island



Central Open Space Landscaping

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 6.C.

2. Homeowners or Condominium Association. Open space and associated facilities may be held by a homeowners or condominium association.
 3. Transfer of Title to a Private Conservation Organization. With the permission of the Municipality, an owner may transfer title to a private, nonprofit organization whose purpose is to conserve open space and/or natural resources, provided access to and use of the open space for all homeowners in the development is guaranteed.
 4. Private Landowner. If this form of ownership is used, then a deed restriction and a conservation easement permanently restricting the land from further subdivision or development is required. Access to and use of the open space for all homeowners in the development must be guaranteed before private ownership of the open space will be permitted.
- B. Conservation of Open Land. All common open land shall be permanently deed restricted from further subdivision and development. The deed restriction shall be reviewed and approved as part of the subdivision and land development process.

Section 8. CONDITIONAL USE STANDARDS

As stated in section 2.B.2, 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 Village Residential (VR) 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 VR 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.)

*Alternative to Mixed Housing Development
Tracts of land that cannot feasibly be developed under the VR standards may be developed with single-family detached homes only, provided the tract of land has unique characteristics that make VR 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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