

An Illustrated Citizen's Guide to Zoning



Accessory Use.....	1	Lot Width.....	8
Articulating Sign.....	1	Multifamily Dwelling.....	8
Building.....	2	On-Premise Signs.....	9
Building Height.....	2	Off Conveyances.....	9
Bulk Requirements.....	3	Open Space.....	10
Contiguous.....	3	Outdoor Advertising.....	10
Corner Front Yard.....	4	Principal Use.....	11
Corner Lot.....	4	Remainder.....	11
Detached Accessory Dwelling.....	5	Remaining Portion.....	12
Floor Area.....	5	Resulting Land.....	12
Frontage	6	Rural Villages.....	13
Grade Plane.....	6	Setback Lines.....	13
Livable Floor Area.....	7	Single-Family Dwelling.....	14
Lot.....	7	Story.....	14
		Structure.....	15
		Temporary Sign.....	15
		Townhouse.....	16
		Two-Family Dwelling.....	16
		Yard.....	17

This is an illustrated guide to zoning definitions intended to accompany the codified definitions. This informational guide was developed so the general citizen can explore zoning definitions in an easy-to-understand illustrated format. These terms were placed in this guide alphabetically, as they are presented in the zoning code. These definitions are not legally binding, and are subject to change.

What is an **Accessory Use?**

Code Definition

"A use of land or all or part of a building which is customarily incidental and secondary to the principal use of the property and which is located on the same lot with the principal use."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

Accessory uses are any use besides the primary use of the property. Common accessory uses in residential areas include storage facilities and home occupations. In commercial areas, accessory uses include equipment storage.

Example



What is an **Articulating Sign?**

Code Definition

"A sign that consists of triangular prisms placed within a nonmoving frame and the prisms rotate 120 degrees within the frame at a time and displays a new message."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

Articulating signs are signs that move. They include billboards that can change to display different messages. Digital signs are not considered articulating, because they have pixels that change color and no part of the sign is actually moving.

Example



What is a Building?

Code Definition

"An enclosed structure, anchored to a permanent foundation and having exterior or party walls and a roof designed for the support, shelter, or enclosure of persons, animals, chatels, or property of any kind."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

A building is a structure, but not all structures are buildings. A house or a barn would both be buildings, but an open livestock shelter or a carport would not be considered buildings.

Example



What is Building Height?

Code Definition

"The vertical distance from grade plane to the average height of the highest roof surface."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

Building height is measured from the ground to the highest roof surface. Facades and other structures other than the roof are not part of building height. The allowable building height varies by zoning district.

Example

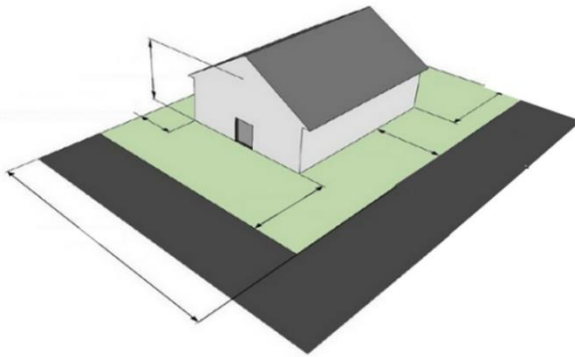


What are Bulk Requirements ?

Code Definition

"The dimensions relating to the size of structures or uses, including lot area, lot width, height, and yard requirements."

Example



- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

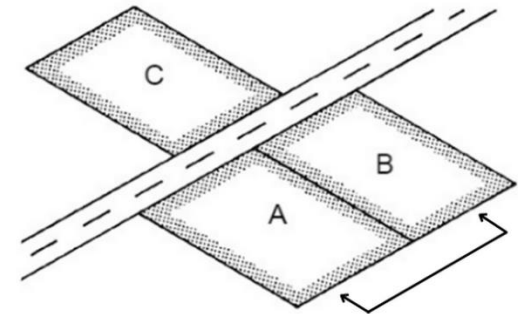
Bulk requirements are required minimum and maximum dimensions on a property.

What is Contiguous?

Code Definition

"The sharing of a common property line other than a corner, except where otherwise provided in this chapter."

Example



- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

Contiguous properties are properties that touch. In the image above, parcels A and B are contiguous, but C is not contiguous with A or B.

What is a **Corner Front Yard?**

Code Definition

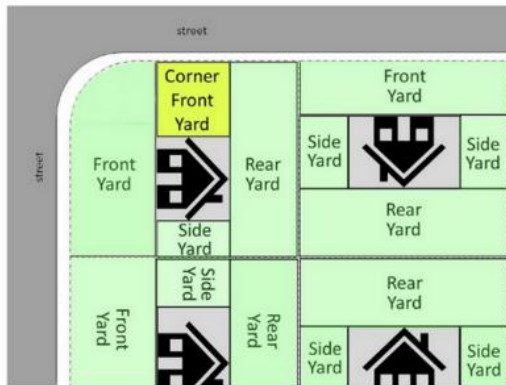
"On corner lots, a yard fronting on a street but where the principal structure fronts on another street. The corner front yard is the area lying between the front yard and the rear yard."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

Corner front yards have houses that face one road, and a side yard along a different road.

Example



What is a **Corner Lot?**

Code Definition

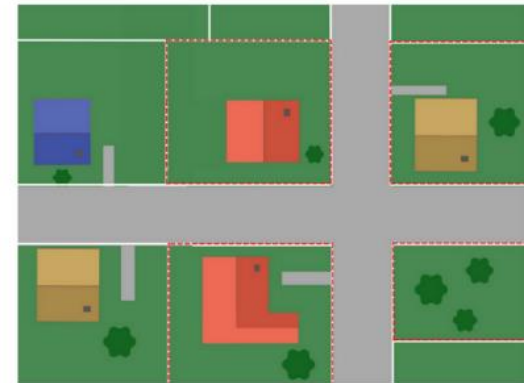
"A lot abutting two or more existing or planned publicly maintained streets at their intersection."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

Corner lots are lots that fall at the intersection of at least two roads. The lots in the image above bordered in the red dashed lines are corner lots.

Example



What is a Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit?

Code Definition

"A dwelling unit, excluding a mobile home, on the same lot as the primary dwelling unit, but physically separated from the primary dwelling unit. A Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit shall provide complete independent living facilities for one or more persons, including permanent facilities for one or more persons, including permanent facilities for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

Detached accessory dwelling units are small living spaces separate from, but on the same lot as the main house. They have their own kitchen and bathroom, and are commonly known as "granny flats." They are meant to house one or two people, but not a separate household.

Example



What is Floor area?

Code Definition

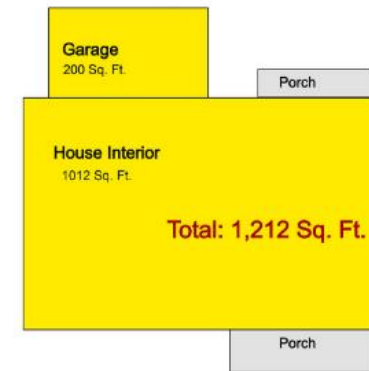
"The total areas of all floors within a building, measured from centerlines of joint partitions and/or exteriors of outside walls."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

Floor area is the combined measurement of all enclosed space, including garages and unfinished areas.

Example



What is a Frontage?

Code Definition

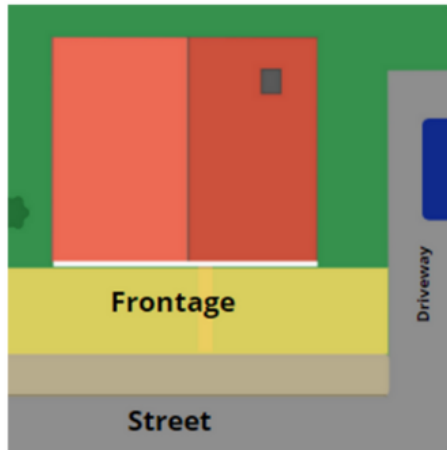
"The front of a lot shall be construed to be the portion nearest the street. For the purpose of determining lot frontage on a lot served by a use-in-common ("UIC") driveway, the line of the UIC driveway may be considered the front."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

Frontages are the pieces of land that separate a building from the street. Frontages vary in size between different zoning districts and uses. In the image above, the yellow box shows the frontage between the house and lot line.

Example



What is Grade Plane?

Code Definition

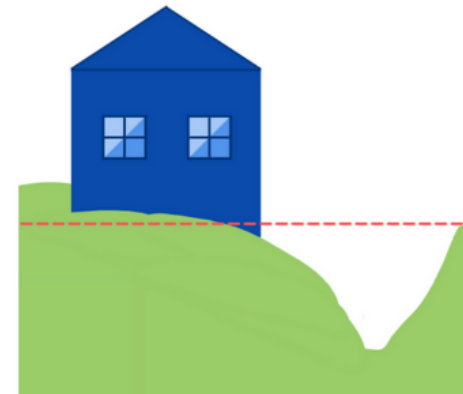
"A reference plane representing the average of finished ground level adjoining the building at exterior walls..."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

If you have ever seen a house built into a hill, you know that the "ground level" in the front door is different from the "ground level" at the back of the house. Grade planes exist as an average baseline for what ground level is. This is used for measurements such as building height. In the image above, the red dotted line represents the grade plane for this particular house.

Example



What is Livable Floor Area?

Code Definition

"The heated space within a dwelling unit utilized for living, sleeping, eating, and sanitation. Garages, unfinished basements, storage or utility spaces, and similar areas are not considered livable floor area."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

Livable floor area refers to the interior of a house minus hallways, porches, garages and unfinished basements. The areas in the image above that are in yellow would count towards livable floor area.

Example



What is a Lot?

Code Definition

"A piece or parcel of land occupied or intended to be occupied by a principal building and its accessory buildings and uses and meeting the minimum size requirements set forth in this chapter."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

A lot is a piece of land of any size that can be sold under one contract. A lot can have a building of any type, but can also be empty. The Code sets minimum size requirements for lots for different types of uses in different zoning districts.

Example



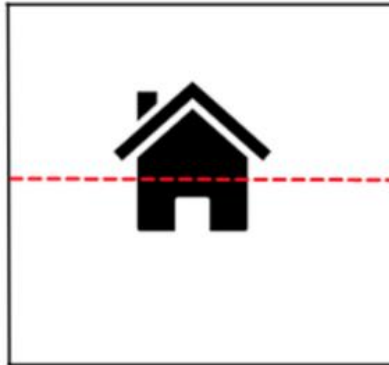
What is a **Lot Width?**

Code Definition

"The horizontal distance between side lot lines measured at the midpoints of the side lot lines."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Example



Explanation

Lot width measures how wide a property is.

What is a **Multifamily Dwelling?**

Code Definition

"More than two separate housing units for residential inhabitants contained within one building or several buildings within one complex. Multifamily Dwelling does not include Townhouse "

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Example



Explanation

Multi-family dwellings include apartments and condos, but they also can include the upper levels of businesses in commercial areas. They are allowed in the higher density residential zoning districts and planned commercial areas.

What is an On Premise Sign?

Code Definition

"A sign which directs attention to a business or profession or to a commodity, service, or entertainment sold or offered upon the premises where the sign is located."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Example



Explanation

On-premise signs identify businesses, government buildings and other uses on a site. The Code regulates the size, height and location of the sign.

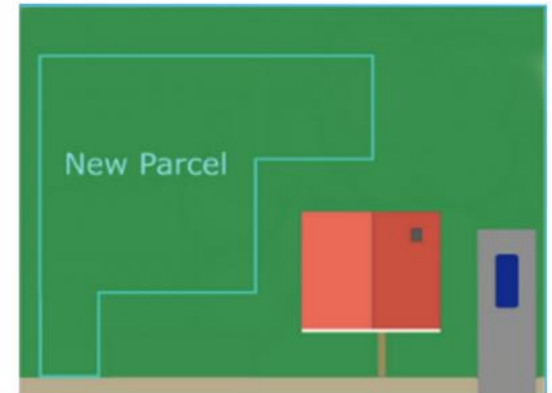
What is an Off Conveyance?

Code Definition

"A buildable lot which was created by a legal division subsequent to April 23, 1963, but created without being described on a lawfully recorded subdivision plat."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [155.005](#)

Example



Explanation

Any property established before 1963 that has not been subdivided is entitled to two divisions of the property. This is to grandfather in properties that existed before the Code of Ordinances.

What is **Open Space?**

Code Definition

"Any parcel or area of land or water set aside, dedicated, designated, or reserved for public or private use or enjoyment, or for the use and enjoyment of owners and occupants of land adjoining or neighboring such open space. Yards on individual lots are not open space."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

Common open spaces include parks and sports fields. They can have buildings and structures built on them, but not dwellings.

Example



What is **Outdoor Advertising?**

Code Definition

"A sign structure which directs attention to a business, commodity, service, or entertainment not necessarily conducted, sold, or offered upon the premises where such sign is located."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

These signs are usually referred to as billboards. Outdoor advertising is usually regulated as "use-off-the-premises" sign.

Example



What is a **Principal Use?**

Code Definition

"The primary activities or structure for which a site is used. A principal use may be either a permitted use, a conditional use, or a legally existing nonconforming use."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Example



Explanation

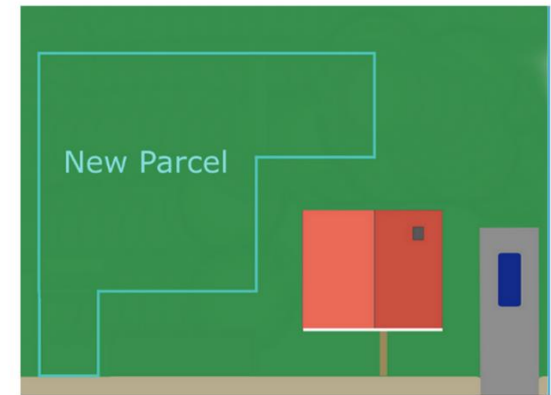
A property's principal use is its main, on the ground use. If someone runs a small business out of their house, the property's principal use is residential, and the accessory use is a home occupation. A property may have more than one principal use on it.

What is **Remainder?**

Code Definition

"The portion of a tract remaining after one or all eligible off conveyances have been created."
- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [155.005](#)

Example



Explanation

A remainder is what is left over of a property that has been divided by off conveyances. The term "remainder" does not apply to properties divided by subdivision

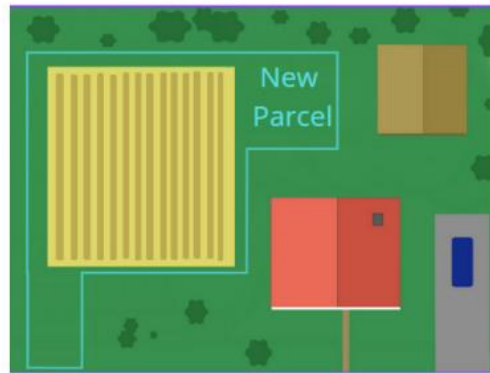
What is a Remaining Portion?

Code Definition

"In the "A" District, the land remaining after residential subdivision lots have been created from a legally established parcel of land through the subdivision process..."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [155.005](#)

Example



Explanation

A remaining portion is the land leftover when a property zoned "Agriculture" is subdivided into residential lots. Being zoned "Agriculture" does not necessarily mean a property is being used for agriculture. Remaining portions are distinct from and should not be confused with remainders.

What is Resulting Land?

Code Definition

"The land derived from the reduction of lot sizes when clustering pursuant to this chapter, which shall constitute a single lot."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [155.005](#)

Example



Explanation

Resulting land is land left over when a property is subdivided into a new clustered housing development. It is open or natural space for use of all residents of the subdivision. The diagram above is of a residential subdivision. Private property is shown in light blue, and resulting land in green.

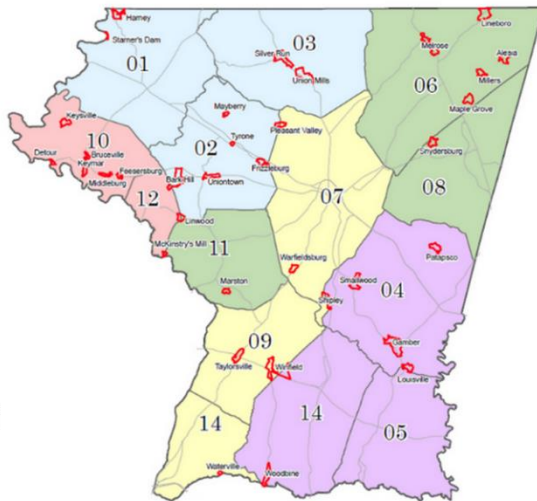
What are Rural Villages?

Code Definition

"An area designated in the Adopted Carroll County Master Plan and certified by the State of Maryland as a rural village pursuant to the Smart Growth Act of 1997"

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Example



Explanation

Carroll County has 35 rural villages. Rural villages are not incorporated like towns, but are small communities within the jurisdiction of the county. Rural villages are generally a concentration of residences and some local businesses located on relatively small lots, grouped close together. Above is the map of rural villages in the County.

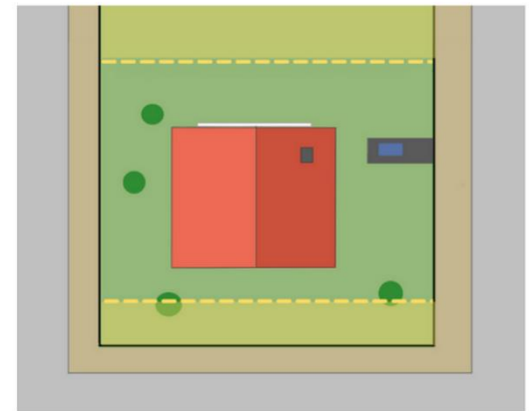
What is a Setback Line?

Code Definition

"The line that is the required minimum distance from the street right-of-way line or any other lot line that establishes the area within which a structure must be erected or placed."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Example



Explanation

Setback lines create buffer zones on a property. The area between a setback line and a street or property line generally cannot be built upon.

What is a Single-Family Dwelling?

Code Definition

"A detached building designed for or used exclusively for residential purposes by residents as a single dwelling unit."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Example



Explanation

Single-family dwellings are buildings with one household living in them. Single-family homes make up the majority of housing in Carroll County.

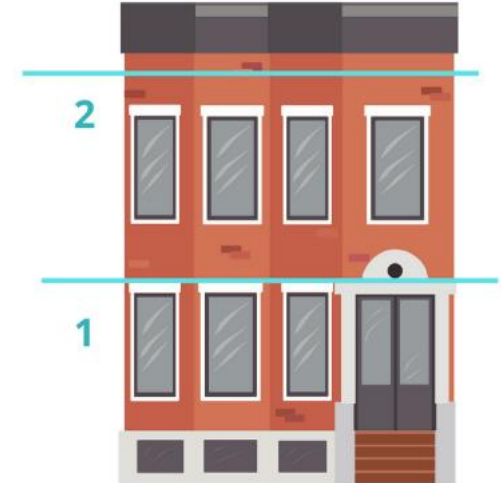
What is a Story?

Code Definition

"The portion of a building included between the surface of any floor and the surface of the floor next above it or, if there is no floor above it, the space between such floor and the ceiling above it.."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Example



Explanation

A story is a level of a building. The building in the diagram above has two stories.

What is a Structure?

Code Definition

"Anything constructed, the use of which requires fixed location on the ground or which is attached to something having such location, but not including fences, power, gas, water, sewage, or communication lines or poles, towers, or pole structures, sidewalks, driveways, or curbs. A utility shed is a structure whether or not it has a fixed location. "

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

A structure is a built object that includes buildings, sheds and barns, but not infrastructure such as utility lines.

Example



What is a Temporary Sign?

Code Definition

"Any sign, banner, pennant, or other advertising display constructed out of cloth, canvas, light fabric, cardboard, plywood, wallboard or other light materials with or without frames, that is or that is intended to be displayed for a limited period of time."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

Temporary signs include flyers for events and signs for seasonal sales. These signs are not meant to be permanent.

Example



What is a **Townhouse?**

Code Definition

"One of a group of more than two attached dwelling units, in the same structure, each of which units is separated by continuous common wall from any adjacent unit and each of which dwelling units has its own entrance directly from the outside."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

Townhouses, also commonly known as townhomes or rowhouses, are single-family dwellings connected together. They are not apartments, which are part of one building. Each townhouse is its own separate property.

Example



What is a **Two-Family Dwelling?**

Code Definition

"A detached building with one dwelling unit above the other (duplex) or two semidetached dwelling units located on abutting lots or on the same lot, separated by a party wall without openings, in either case for or used exclusively for residential purposes, but not more than a total of two families or two housekeeping units."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Explanation

Two-family dwellings are commonly known as duplexes. These are two homes that are connected to one another by a common wall. They are different from townhouses as only two units are connected.

Example



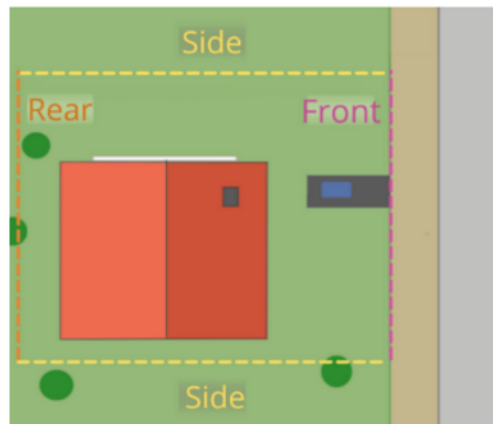
What is a **Yard?**

Code Definition

" An open area on the same lot with a principal building(s) which lies between such building(s) and the lot line and is open and unoccupied from the ground up."

- Carroll County Code of Ordinances [158.002](#)

Example



Explanation

Yards are the spaces between buildings and lot lines.