

F.A.Q. -- Building a new house in Barnesville

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How much land do I need to build a house in Barnesville?

A building lot for a new house must be at least four acres in size. This is defined in Barnesville's Zoning Ordinance. (*Click here to download a copy.*) You have probably noticed that some older houses in Barnesville are located on property that is less than four acres. In earlier times, the town's zoning standards did not require as much land to build a house. This new standard is more consistent with current Montgomery County and Maryland regulations that determine how much land is needed for approval of water and sewer service for a new house.

What kind of house am I permitted to build?

Barnesville's development standards are shown in the Zoning Ordinance. In general, we allow single-family houses and accessory buildings, such as barns and garages. There are limitations on size - e.g., your house cannot be more than 40 feet tall. There are many other such requirements, so be sure to review the Zoning Ordinance carefully.

How do I get a building permit?

You may get a copy from the Town Clerk, or *click here to download*.

Do I need a building permit for an addition to my house?

Yes, all new construction, including renovations, additions and accessory

buildings must have a building permit.

Do I need a building permit from the County *and* from the Town of Barnesville?

Yes, you need to get permits both from Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services and from the Town.

If I have enough land to build more than one house, what should I do?

If you have eight or more acres, you can seek permission to divide your parcel into separate lots with the goal of selling the lots or building a house on each lot.

What is "subdivision"? [Preliminary]

Subdivision is the formal legal process of dividing a larger parcel into smaller ones (or combining smaller parcels into a larger one) for the purpose of sale or development of that land. (For a copy of Barnesville's Subdivision Ordinance, [click here to download.](#))

The Subdivision Ordinance says that the Planning Commission must declare any lot or parcel eligible for development before the building permit can be issued.

There are two major steps in this process.

Step (1) - Preliminary Plan stage, in which you present a plan for approval. This will be a graphical plan showing how you anticipate dividing or combining the land. The Subdivision Ordinance spells out information that must be included in an application for Preliminary Plan of Subdivision.

Step (2) - If the Preliminary Plan is approved, you move on to the Record Plat stage, creating the Town's legal record of the lots that are created by subdivision. A plat is a linen record (legal drawing) of each lot, which is kept in a Plat Book maintained by the Town Clerk.

Who approves a request for subdivision?

The Barnesville Planning Commission approves (or disapproves) a Preliminary Plan of Subdivision. There are five members on this commission. All are town residents appointed by the elected Town Commissioners.

Is subdivision approval required for any kind of land division in Barnesville?

No, there are some exceptions. If land is being divided or combined for exclusively agricultural use, you are not required to go through a formal subdivision process. There are several other exceptions listed in the Subdivision Ordinance.

Where do I get an application for subdivision approval?

You may get a copy from the Town Clerk, or [click here to download.](#)

Where do I send my application when it is ready?

Deliver your completed application, with all necessary attachments and the fee, to the Town Clerk.

How much are the fees?

The application fee is based on the amount of land and the number of lots in your Preliminary Plan. *Click here* to see the current fee schedule.

May I submit a "draft" plan?

Yes. That draft is called a "Pre-preliminary Plan" and it is used to secure advice or a tentative comment from the Planning Commission, but not a formal decision. Submitting a Pre-preliminary Plan, which must include a graphical layout of the land in question, is often a useful way to get feedback on a formal Preliminary Plan proposal that you will make at a later time.

How are town residents informed of a pending subdivision application?

The Barnesville Planning Commission will notify residents and all the owners of property adjacent to your land, sending them information about the application and a schedule of Planning Commission meeting(s).

In addition to the town officials, what other government agencies will review my application?

The Town will request comments from agencies in Montgomery County Government, the Montgomery County Planning Board, the school system, the Maryland Department of Transportation and other agencies. These agencies must respond within 30 days, or, if they do not respond, the assumption is made that they have no comment.

An important criteria for approval from these other agencies is whether the public facilities needed to support this new development are adequate.

How long does it take to get a decision on a Preliminary Plan?

The Subdivision Ordinance requires that your Preliminary Plan be presented to the Planning Commission at its first regular meeting after 60 days following receipt of the application, provided that all required information is complete. In practice, the town Planning Commission will hold a "review meeting" at the end of the 30-day comment period mentioned above to decide if the application is ready for presentation – i.e., no missing information or unanswered questions or needed changes. If more information is needed to complete the application, the "60-day clock" may stop until the applicant, provides the necessary additional material. Once the Plan is presented to the Planning Commission, a decision should be made within 30 days.

Note that an application must be "signed off" by various state and county transportation officials and the storm-water management agency of Montgomery County Government. So it is possible that Barnesville's approval may be delayed

until those sign-offs are received.

What happens after a Preliminary Plan is approved?

Within one year after Preliminary Plan approval, you must present your record plats to the Town Clerk. The plats must agree with the approved Preliminary Plan. You must also pay a fee at the time of record plat. (*See the Barnesville Subdivision Ordinance* for a list requirements in preparing record plats.)

The three elected Town Commissioners grant final approval of record plats, which show each lot and any dedications of land for public use.

After record plat is approved by the Commissioners of Barnesville, the Town Clerk transmits the relevant information from the Town to the Clerk of the Circuit Court so that all Barnesville land records will be included in the land records of Montgomery County.

You may apply for building permits after the record plats are approved.