

EXISTING LAND USE ANALYSIS

Introduction

A comprehensive study and mapping of existing land uses serves as a guide for future development. A land use study depicts the development patterns within Hereford and Washington Townships and outlines restrictions and opportunities for future growth and development.

Existing Land Use

To a great extent, the existing land use patterns of Hereford and Washington Townships have been influenced and shaped by the region's physiographic features and topography. The close relationship of these natural features with the existing development pattern is evident in the area's transportation network. Historically, transportation routes were developed along corridors where travel and construction were the easiest, thus directly influencing the type, location, and intensity of subsequent land uses. Development in the western portion of the Townships is fairly sparse. Most development has occurred in the lowland areas along the eastern portions of the Townships adjacent to the State Route 100 corridor.

For land use to be practical, it must accurately inventory existing land uses and development characteristics. Then, with proper analysis, future land use schemes can reflect reality, and avoid the creation of nonconforming uses when implemented through zoning regulations. To determine existing land uses, two sources were consulted. First the Berks County Planning Commission has prepared a land use Geographic Information System (GIS) map coverage which blends tax parcel record information with land cover features as derived from aerial photography interpretation. Specifically, tax parcel data is used within "developed" areas while land cover data is used in outlying rural areas. This land cover data can "split" larger properties into several uses. For example, a farm with a house will depict the house as one use, and the farmland as another; this gives a truer picture of uses in outlying rural areas. Conversely, within more populated portions of Washington Township (around the boroughs of Bally and Bechtelsville) the County's tax parcel information was used to determine land use. Here, the tax records list one predominant land use on the entire property, which is also more accurate than aerial photo interpretation when analyzing a "built" environment. Second, the GIS data was reviewed by the Hereford/Washington Joint Comprehensive Planning Committee during this update with corrections noted. Regionally, the existing land use pattern includes a wide range of uses and settings which are depicted on the Existing Land Use Maps, found following this section.

Land Use Distribution

The distribution of land uses in the planning area is quantified in the table on the next page. Figures 31 and 32 illustrate that the existing land use distribution of the planning area is characterized as predominantly rural in nature. Open space land, including agricultural lands, dominate the landscape. Collectively, they comprise nearly 69 percent of the total land area (12,996.56 acres of the 18,845.15 total acres in the planning area).

Land that has been developed comprises 29.5 percent of the land use in Hereford and Washington Townships. Most of the developed land in the planning area is used for single-family low-density housing, with just over 3,386 acres throughout both Townships dedicated to single-family residential uses. The transportation network is the second most dominant developed land use, with just over 700 acres devoted to such uses. High density residential (exceeding one dwelling unit per acre) uses are the third most abundant developed use. Remaining developed land is comprised of institutional, commercial and industrial uses.

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Existing Land Use in the Hereford-Washington Township Joint Planning Area, 2017						
LANDUSE	Joint Planning Area		Hereford Township		Washington Township	
	# Acres	% of Area	# Acres	% of Area	# Acres	% of Area
Agriculture	5,848.34	31.0%	3,423.43	34.8%	2,424.56	26.9%
Commercial	314.92	1.7%	116.11	1.2%	198.80	2.2%
Industrial	287.09	1.5%	128.20	1.3%	158.88	1.8%
Institutional	243.32	1.3%	92.97	0.9%	150.34	1.7%
Open Space	7,148.22	37.9%	3,809.73	38.7%	3,338.10	37.1%
Recreation	191.73	1.0%	88.99	0.9%	102.73	1.1%
Residential High	628.23	3.3%	177.65	1.8%	450.56	5.0%
Residential Low	3,386.13	18.0%	1,573.83	16.0%	1,812.14	20.1%
Transportation	702.39	3.7%	375.70	3.8%	326.65	3.6%
Water	94.78	0.5%	48.55	0.5%	46.23	0.5%
Total	18,845.15	100.0%	9,835.16	100.0%	9,008.99	100.0%

Source: Berks County Planning Commission

While developed land use percentages are fairly similar, the distribution of developed land uses within each Township is different. Washington Township has a greater percentage of its land devoted to low density residential uses. It also has three times as much high density residential acreage. Hereford Township has greater percentages of agricultural and open space lands. These larger percentages also represent greater acreage since Hereford Township is slightly larger than Washington Township in land area.

The following paragraphs provide further description and definition of each of the land use categories applicable to this planning area.

Residential

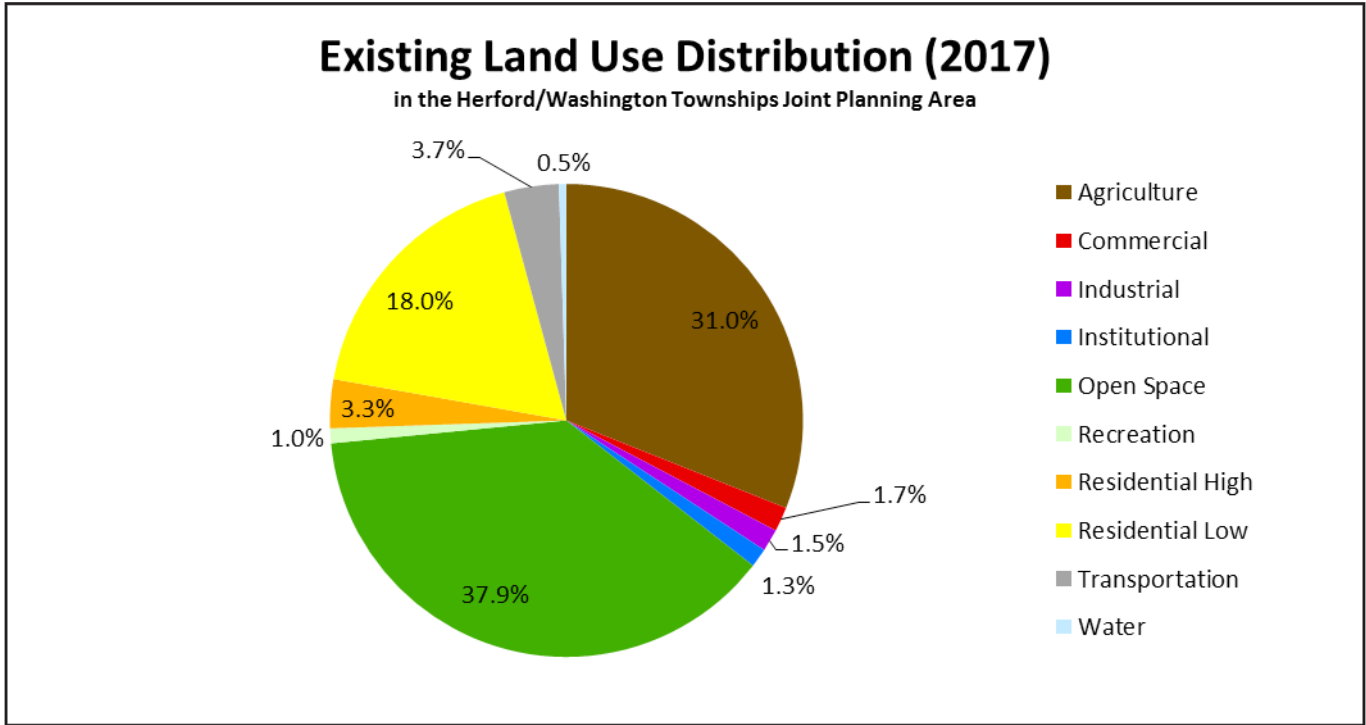
Residential land uses include all establishments offering residence or accommodation, such as homes, apartments, housing for the elderly, and hotels. They include dwelling unit structures; most are characterized by the uniform size and spacing of structures, linear driveways, and expanses of lawn. Residential uses are found throughout the planning area and comprise over 4,000 acres (21.3 percent) of the total land area. Residential uses cover a higher percentage of land area in Washington Township (25.1 percent) than they do in Hereford Township (17.8 percent). The location and intensity of the existing residential development pattern is largely determined by zoning and access to the transportation network. Most are sited adjacent with direct private access to the roadway.

Residential land uses can be further sub-classified as low density and high density, meaning one dwelling unit on one to five acre lots or many dwelling units per acre (such as an apartment building or condominium). Low density residential uses total 3,386.13 acres (18 percent). High density residential uses are quite limited across the planning area, amounting to 628.23 acres (3.3 percent) of total planning area. Hereford Township has a few small, scattered multi-family sites in the Village of Hereford. Washington Township has several multi-family sites along State Route 100 (SR 100) and Old Route 100.

Commercial

The commercial lands category contains such uses as retail, offices, utilities (electric and phone companies) and personal, professional and business services. In the planning area commercial uses cover 314.92 acres (1.7 percent) of the total land area. Commercial areas are typically located along transportation routes that provide easy access for customers and for deliveries. Commercial uses are found along State Route 100 (SR 100), Old

Route 100, State Route 29 (SR 29), and in the Village of Hereford. Small parcels of commercial uses are also found scattered in the western portion of Hereford Township.



Industrial

Industrial land uses include processing, fabrication or assembly of raw materials or component parts, wholesale trade and warehousing. Landfills, junkyards, and quarries are also included within this designation. Industrial lands comprise only a small portion, 287.09 acres (1.5 percent), of the total land area. Slightly more industrial acreage is found in Washington Township than Hereford Township. Like commercial lands, industrial areas are often located adjacent to transportation facilities.

Institutional

Institutional lands are used for public services such as governmental and public safety facilities, educational facilities (including athletic fields owned by educational institutions), cemeteries and religious institutions. Institutional lands total only 243.32 acres (1.3 percent) in the planning area.

Recreation

Recreation land provides space and facilities for people to engage in active and passive recreation activities. These include playgrounds, parkland, state gamelands/forests, as well as recreation land owned by non-profit recreational groups (i.e. homeowners associations and sportsman clubs) and commercial recreation such as golf courses and campgrounds. One (1.0) percent or approximately 191 acres of existing land use in the joint planning area is designated as a recreational use.

There may be some discrepancies between the number of acres of recreational land identified here than what is identified in the Community Facilities Analysis. This is because some of the passive recreational areas are included in the Open Space category. The Community Facilities Analysis chapter should be referenced when looking for specific recreational opportunities within the joint planning area.

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Agricultural

Agricultural lands are those that are dedicated to crop, dairy, and livestock production and the support of these operations. The planning area continues to host a significant amount of agricultural activity, namely 5,848.34 acres (31 percent) of the total land area. Agricultural areas can be found along SR 100, as well as in the western interior. While the planning area was once dominated by farming, much of the agricultural pattern has been speckled with residential uses. Even so, large contiguous farming areas can still be found in both Townships.

Open Space

Open space is land that is predominantly wooded or open land that does not include a structure such as meadows and fields (not farmland). Residue land associated with large residential lots over five acres, as well as forested land on farmland is also included in this category. The majority of this land is typically private with the exception of municipal watershed lands. Many of these areas may have previously been under cultivation but now provide temporary or permanent open space uses for the planning area. Secondary uses, such as passive recreation, are easily supported in these areas. Open space uses total 7,148.22 acres (37.9 percent) of the total land area, making it the number one land use category in the planning region. This further confirms that the municipalities still remain predominantly rural in nature.

Water

While these lands are covered by water, it is often helpful to know the quantity and distribution of water resources in a planning area as they relate to other land uses. Water resources cover 94.78 acres (0.5 percent) of the planning area. While the number of acres covered by water resources differs slightly between Hereford and Washington Townships, the percentage of land covered is the same.

Regional and Local Development Trends

Historical development of eastern Berks County focused on small villages, located at roadway intersections or along railroad corridors. They served as the social and business centers for the predominantly agricultural community. Churches, schools, and general stores were located in these centers, along with early commercial and industrial uses that developed to support the agricultural industry. Road and rail routes carried trade items between the towns and villages throughout the 19th century.

A number of factors changed the way towns and villages grew during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Land uses began to segregate; roadways were improved; real estate values rose in downtown areas; and business operations began locating outside the community and business centers, where land was less expensive.

Personal automobiles and improvements to the transportation network influenced land use patterns during the 20th century. Improved roadways, new highways, and affordable vehicles enabled residents to travel greater distances to their work, school, and social destinations in less time. This allowed residents greater flexibility in selecting residential settings. This flexibility has led to scattered development along the road network, as residents seek rural sites accessible to urban areas. Today, we also find commercial and industrial complexes in suburban and rural areas where transportation access is available and land is inexpensive to develop.

Regionally, the larger urban areas of Reading, Allentown, and Philadelphia that surround Hereford and Washington Townships are experiencing out migration into the surrounding areas. This has resulted in the further expansion and spread of suburbanization, encroaching on the adjacent rural areas throughout Bucks, Lehigh, Berks, and Montgomery Counties. As Hereford and Washington Townships lie between these three urban areas, they are vulnerable to widespread suburbanization.

In addition, the agricultural community and economy are changing. Younger generations are taking less interest in continuing family farms. Older generations are selling all or portions of the family farm to pay for retirement or, increasingly, for health care. Farms of all sizes are joining agricultural cooperatives in order to remain viable

in the agricultural market. These changes have made the agricultural landscape of crop fields and dairy and livestock pastures more susceptible to development pressures.

Development pressure is increasing along the SR 100 corridor where areas are prime for development. The topography is relatively level and utilities are available. However, this area also contains some of the most productive soils. Property owners have shown interest in retaining the agricultural and open space landscape through the Agricultural Security program, though this promises only temporary agricultural use.

Development pressure exists in other portions of the planning area, as well. The edges of large farms have been speckled with residential sites that front the local roadways. This has created a landscape that appears less agricultural and more residential, though not quite suburban, as from the perspective of one driving through the planning area. While agricultural and woodland areas remain behind these residences, they are not in the foreground of the Townships' character.



The potential for sprawl of residential subdivisions, strip-type retail development, and unnecessary loss of farmland undoubtedly exists in the planning area. Such land use changes have negative traffic, environmental, and community impacts. Careful planning will be needed to guide the amount, type and timing of future development, as well as the priorities for open space and agricultural preservation efforts.

Land Use Regulatory Measures

Comprehensive Plans are used to guide future land use policy and decision-making. Hereford and Washington Townships produced a Joint Municipal Comprehensive Plan in 2006. Generally, it designated large portions of the Townships for both rural resource protection and agricultural preservation, while development of residential and commercial areas were to be focused on the existing villages, around boroughs and along the SR 100 corridor. A key goal of this plan was to guide development to areas with available infrastructure and reduce development pressure on the rural landscape.

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC, Act 247 of 1968, as amended) provides the legal framework for local governments to enact, administer and enforce both zoning, and subdivision and land development regulations. Zoning is a method a community may use to regulate the use of land and structures and is designed to protect public health, safety, and welfare, and to guide growth. In contrast, subdivision and land development regulations do not control which uses are established within the municipality or where a use or activity can or cannot locate. Rather, it controls how a use or activity relates to the land upon which it is located.

Both Townships have enacted zoning ordinances for their respective municipality. The Hereford Township Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 1973, and has been subsequently amended. The Washington Township Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 1982; it has also received amendments since such time. Both Ordinances contain the Townships' general purpose, definitions, zoning districts & map, supplementary regulations, non-conforming uses, roles of zoning officials, and amendments.

Like a Zoning Ordinance, a Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance provides for intended purposes, definitions, enforcement, and the roles of process officials. Hereford Township's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance was adopted, as growth became an issue. Washington Township has a Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance; it is an amendment (Chapter 107) to the original ordinance of 1989. The Ordinance holds the developer to certain minimum requirements, such as design standards, plan requirements, processing procedures, and acceptance by the Township.

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Both Townships have a Planning Commission, Zoning Hearing Board or Zoning Board of Appeals, and one or more Zoning Enforcement Officers. The Planning Commission is an advisory body to the Board of Supervisors in matters of planning, zoning, and subdivision control. The Commission reviews all applications for subdivisions and land development in the Township and makes recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. A Zoning Board handles appeals. A Zoning Code officer in Washington Township enforces the zoning regulations, zoning variance applications, and building codes. Hereford Township holds a private contract for enforcement services.

In addition, municipalities may include in their zoning and land development ordinance provisions that require open space, parks, and recreation facilities along with the development of residential and nonresidential uses within their communities. These requirements are authorized under various sections of the MPC. Both Townships utilize a fee-in-lieu provision as an alternative to land donation. The Planning Code also enables municipalities to protect certain natural features of the land, including flood plains, steep slopes, wetlands and other resources.

Agricultural Preservation



Changes in the agricultural economy, population, and American culture and standards of living have increased the pressures to convert farmland to residential uses in many areas of Pennsylvania and across the country. Farming is less attractive to younger generations today and the land is more valuable for its development potential than its production value. Yet many Pennsylvanians feel that agriculture is a significant part of their heritage and worthy of protection. Many municipalities were interested in pursuing farmland protection but felt uncertain of the authority and appropriate means to do so. In 2000, Acts 67 and 68 amended the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) to address agricultural preservation and other land use issues. These acts clarify the authority of municipalities and counties to create “Locally Designated Growth Areas: as part of their comprehensive land use plans, while encouraging and enhancing the use of transferable development rights.” Such rights are commonly used as a tool to preserve open space and farmland.

There are a number of tools available to the Townships and County to preserve agricultural land. The following is a description of such tools available in Hereford and Washington Townships:

Agricultural Security Areas

The Agriculture Area Security Law (Act 43; 1981) authorized the creation of agricultural security areas to preserve farmland. Agricultural Security Program offers the following features:

- Voluntary for farmers. The farmers to create the ASA submit petitions to township supervisors. They are reviewed every seven years; however, new parcels of farmland may be added to an established ASA at any time.
- A minimum of 250 acres from among all the participating farmers is required.
- An ASA may include non-adjacent farmland parcels of at least ten acres or be able to produce \$2,000 annually from the sale of agricultural products.
- Participants receive special consideration regarding:
 - Local ordinances affecting farming activities.
 - Nuisance complaints.

- And review of farmland condemnation by state and local government agencies.
- An ASA qualifies land for consideration under the Easement Purchase Program at the landowner's request, if the ASA has at least 500 acres enrolled. (Source: PA Bureau of Farmland Preservation website)

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture 2015 Farmland Preservation Annual Report and as depicted on Figures 11 and 12, 8,021 acres have been enrolled in the Agricultural Security Program across the planning area. In Hereford Township, 59 property owners have enrolled 3,592 acres. In Washington Township, 59 property owners have enrolled 4,429 acres.

Transfer of Development Rights

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) allows development rights to be purchased and transferred for use at another location. The use of TDRs in Hereford Township could direct growth to certain areas, such as the SR 100 corridor, while permanently preserving agricultural land in other parts of the Townships. A TDR program generally creates a sending district and receiving district. Property owners in the sending district are allotted development rights based on the zoning ordinance. These rights can be sold to property owners in the receiving district to build at higher densities than allowed under the applicable zoning ordinance.

Clean & Green

Clean and Green (also known as The Pennsylvania Farmland and Forest Land Assessment Act of 1974) is a Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture conservation program for land in agricultural use, agricultural reserve, or forest reserve. Property tax rates are adjusted (based on the value set annually by the Dept.) for program participants. Landowners qualify if:

- Property is 10 acres or more of agricultural land.
- For properties less than 10 acres of agricultural land, but gross at least \$2000 annual income from the land.
- Property is 10 acres of forestland.

There are 524 Clean and Green sites located throughout the Townships fragmented in large parcels. There are approximately 11,526 acres of land under this program protection.

Conservation Easements

An easement is the legal agreement between a property owner and an entity (usually a non-profit or public organization). The agreement binds the landowner to protect the character of the property for compensation (usually a tax break), while maintaining ownership. This tool is often used to protect historic landmarks or preserve land.

There are two types of conservation easements in Hereford and Washington Townships, as shown on Figures 11 and 12. There are nine Agricultural Conservation Easements (ACE) in the Townships. There are over 347 acres in the Townships as a part of this program. All ACE's are on or in close proximity to SR 100. Berks County administers the program through its Agricultural Land Preservation Board. The main focus of the Board is to purchase contiguous easements of farmland. Priority is given to parcels located in Agricultural Preservation Areas.

The Berks County Conservancy, now known officially as Berks Nature, and the Natural Lands Trust also conserves agricultural land and woodlands by funding easements. There are currently seven easements in Hereford and Washington Townships. Together they contribute 426 acres to the collection of preserved land in the Townships.

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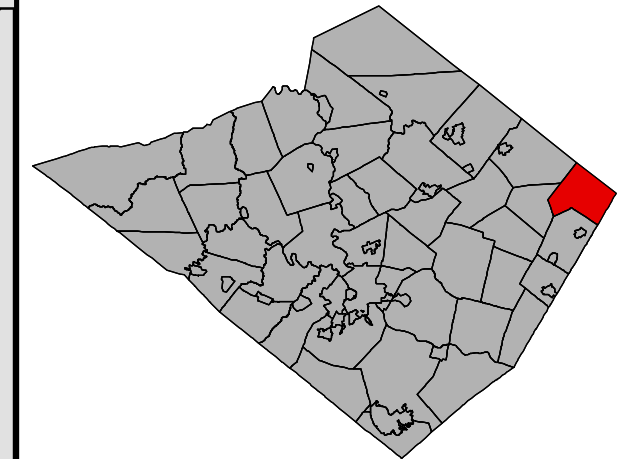
Trends and Issues

- **Most development has occurred in the lowland areas along the eastern portions of the Townships.** Some future development is planned in this area, particularly the southeastern portion of Washington Township where sewer service is available.
- **Both Townships remain predominantly rural.** Nearly 69 percent of the total land in the planning area lands is used for agricultural and open space uses.
- **Most of the developed land in the planning area is used for single-family housing,** with over 3,300 acres throughout both Townships. Roads and rights-of-way are the second most dominant developed land use, with just over 700 acres devoted to this purpose.
- **The Townships vary in their land use distribution, but residential development is the predominant developed land use type.** Washington Township has a greater percentage of its land devoted to single-family residential uses. It also has nearly three times as much multi-family residential acreage. Washington Township has greater percentages of commercial and institutional lands. The Townships' acreage and percentage of industrial land is relatively similar.
- **Development pressure has waned partly due to the recession,** but the potential for sprawl of residential subdivisions, strip-type retail development, and loss of farmland still exists in the planning area.
- **Both Townships have a previously adopted joint comprehensive plan (January 2006) but still maintain separate zoning ordinances.**
- **Residents and officials of the planning area and the County are interested in agricultural preservation.** Nearly 8,021 acres in the planning area have been enrolled in the Agricultural Security Program. That's nearly 2,621 acres more than were enrolled in 2005.













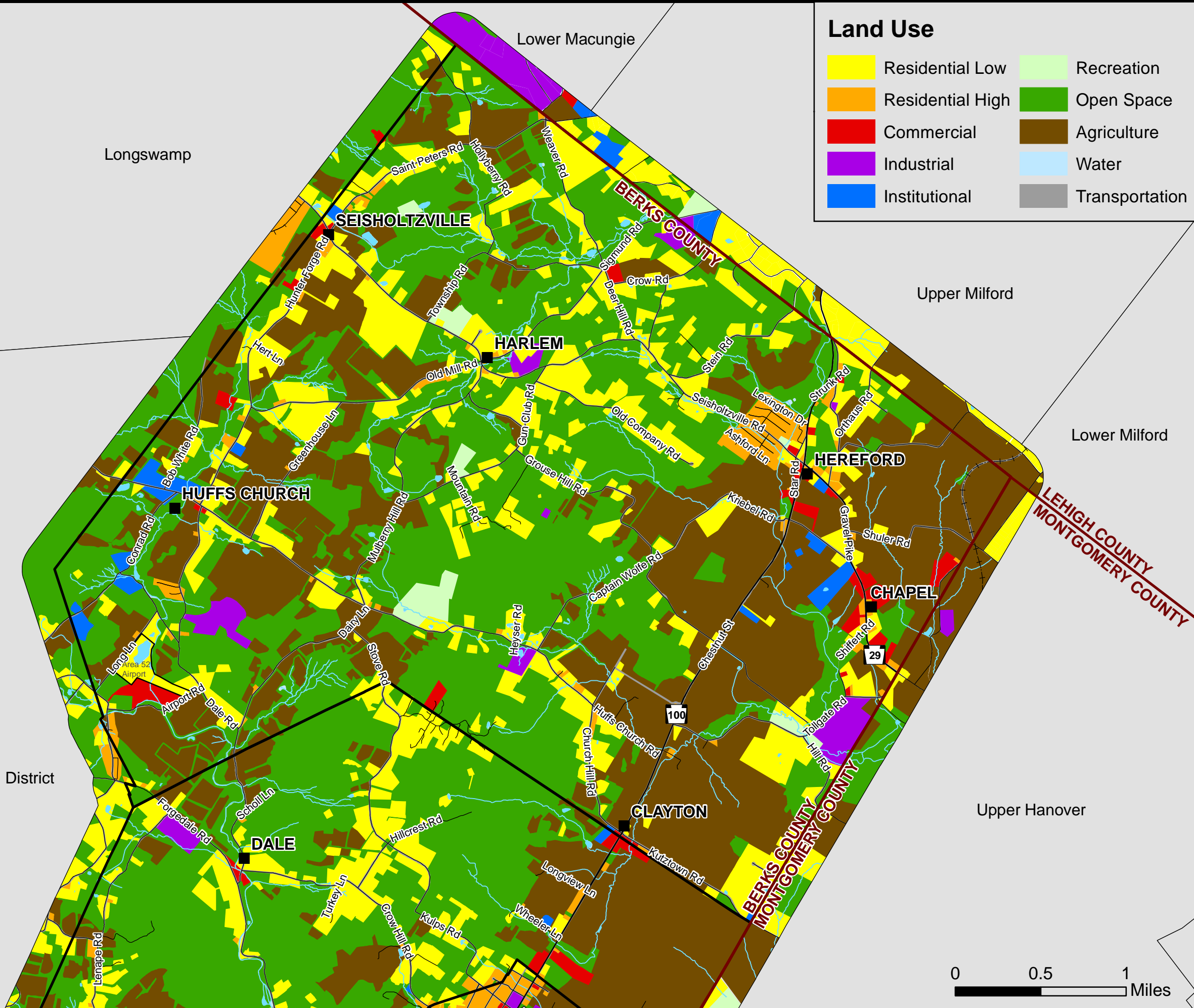
Hereford and Washington Joint Comprehensive Plan Update
Adopted: August 2018

Existing Land Use Hereford Township









Land Use

	Residential Low		Recreation
	Residential High		Open Space
	Commercial		Agriculture
	Industrial		Water
	Institutional		Transportation



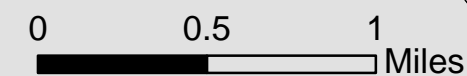
Legend

-  Villages
-  Roads
-  Railroads- Active
-  Streams and Water Bodies
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  County Boundaries

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Berks DES, US Census Bureau

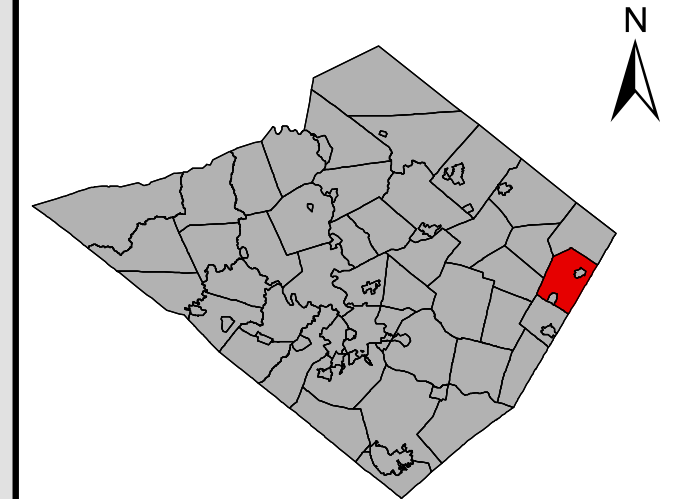
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Hereford and Washington Joint Comprehensive Plan Update
Adopted: August 2018

Existing Land Use Washington Township



Legend

- Villages
- Roads
- ++++ Railroads- Active
- Streams and Water Bodies
- Municipal Boundaries
- County Boundaries

Land Use

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| Residential Low | Recreation |
| Residential High | Open Space |
| Commercial | Agriculture |
| Industrial | Water |
| Institutional | Transportation |

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Berks DES, US Census Bureau

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