

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The Future Land Use Plan emphasizes land use planning that accommodates projected community and economic growth, directs growth to areas of existing or planned infrastructure, and protects sensitive resources from development and its impacts. The core purpose of the Future Land Use Plan is to manage the amount, intensity, character and timing of development.

Future Land Use Plan Recommendations

The following describes land use categories, as shown on Figures 21 through 24. In most cases, these categories are intended to generally relate to zoning districts. The Future Land Use Plan is primarily intended to:

- a) protect existing residential neighborhoods,
- b) moderate the rate of housing construction to avoid overloading the public school system, roads, utilities and groundwater supplies,
- c) coordinate development across municipal borders, including municipalities that are not part of this Regional Comprehensive Plan,
- d) avoid serious traffic congestion and safety problems, particularly by avoiding new commercial strip development along major roads,
- e) promote new business development in appropriate locations, including the strengthening of older business areas, with careful attention towards the types of businesses allowed in areas near homes, and
- f) make sure development properly relates to the natural features of the land, particularly to protect steeply sloped areas, major water supplies and creek valleys.



*Flying Hills
Photo courtesy of Governor Mifflin School District*

Policies Affecting Many Land Use Categories

- In many residential areas, it would be desirable to provide a density bonus if housing is limited to persons age 55 and older. Also, in the boroughs and the more developed areas, it may be desirable to allow taller building heights (such as 5 or 6 stories) if an apartment building is limited to persons age 55 and older and if fire safety issues are fully addressed. In most other cases, outside of the downtowns of the boroughs, a maximum building height of three stories is recommended.
- To promote home ownership and neighborhood stability, and to avoid parking problems, the conversions of existing one family homes into additional numbers of housing units should be prohibited in most of the region.
- If any lot is not served by both central water and central sewage service, then a minimum lot size of at least one acre is recommended. Where higher densities are described in this Plan, they assume that both central water and central sewage services would be provided. If a new lot will be served by an on-lot septic system, the lot should be approved for both a primary and an alternative drain field location before the lot is created.
- It is recommended that places of worship (such as churches) and public and primary schools be allowed in most areas, except possibly some conservation and agricultural preservation areas.

Chapter 9 - Future Land Use Plan

(Note - Federal and State law control the ability of a municipality to limit locations of religious activities. There are differing court opinions about whether a municipality can limit the location of a public school).

- To promote use of Transfer of Development Rights (described later on in this chapter), it would be appropriate to consider reducing the maximum densities of some of the residential districts in the townships if transfer of development rights is not used. The lower base densities should generate stronger interest in using TDRs.
- Interconnecting recreation trails should be sought, particularly to connect existing trails, the creeks, the downtowns, neighborhoods, parks and schools. These trails will not only be beneficial for recreation, but also could be useful for bicyclists to reach work. An emphasis should be placed on developing off-road trails that run parallel to roads that are unsafe for pedestrians and bicyclists and which cannot be easily improved. These trails are described further in the Community Facilities and Services section and existing trail networks can be viewed on **Figure 17**.
- Thick natural vegetation should be preserved or planted along creeks to filter out pollutants from runoff, avoid erosion and maintain good water quality. This matter is discussed further in the Natural Features and Agricultural Conservation Plan section.

Note - Brecknock's zoning ordinance has a set of environmental requirements that reduce densities and increase lot sizes based upon the natural features of each area of land. For example, if a 1.5 acre lot size is required, that lot size is calculated after deleting areas of certain natural features. Therefore, in many cases, lot sizes are actually required to be larger than stated later in this chapter.

Future Land Use Analysis

Methodology

The Future Land Use Plan was created digitally using a geographic information system (GIS). The existing land use and zoning GIS data was used as the foundation to create the Future Land Use. Additional GIS data such as public water and sewer areas, slopes, floodplains, tax parcels, and easements were overlaid onto the existing land use. The combination of all the different GIS data allowed an analysis to be performed which determined areas that are currently developed, areas where growth should occur at different densities, the location of agriculture, recreation, as well as areas where industrial and commercial development should occur.

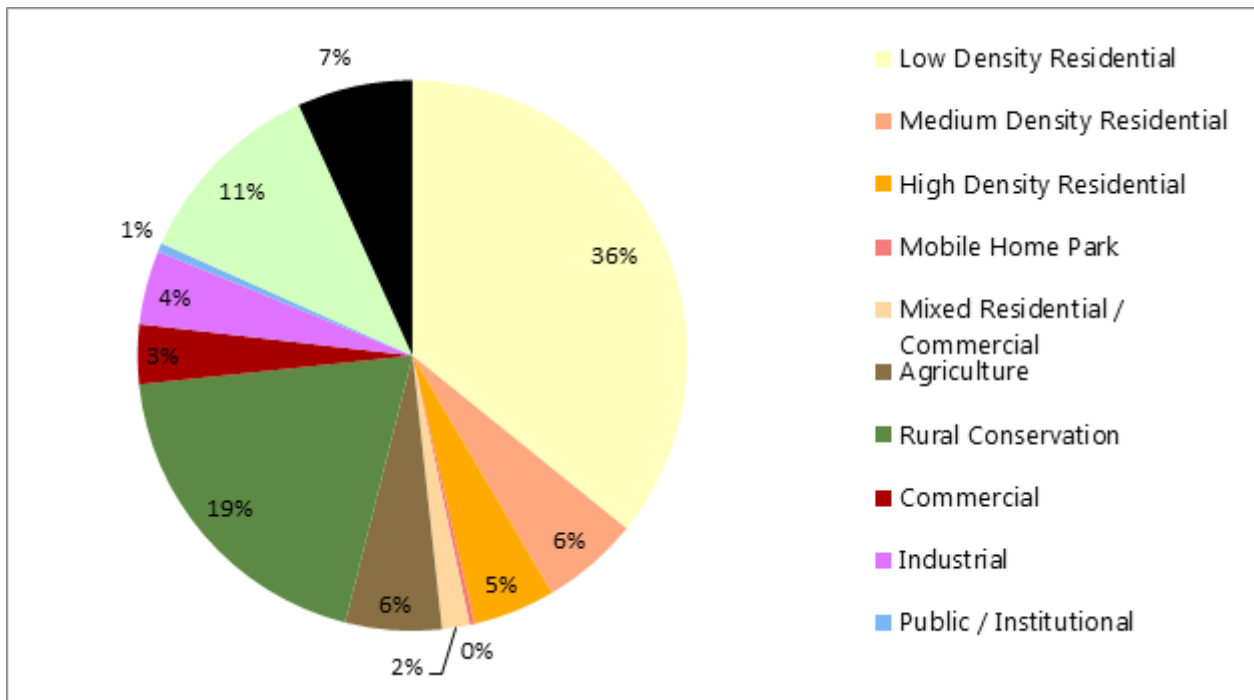
The Future Land Use Plan, depicts the pattern of projected land use, targeting areas that are appropriate for urban growth and reinvestment, as well as areas that should be preserved/conserved for their agricultural, recreational or natural resource assets.

The Future Land Use Plan is divided into twelve (12) categories:

1. Low Density Residential
2. Medium Density Residential
3. High Density Residential
4. Mobile Home Park
5. Mixed Residential / Commercial
6. Agriculture
7. Rural Conservation
8. Commercial
9. Industrial
10. Public / Institutional
11. Recreation
12. Transportation Network

The table below shows the acreage for each Future Land Use category for the Region.

Future Land Use	Brecknock	Cumru	Kenhorst	Mohnton	Shillington	Total
Low Density Residential	6,878.68	2,572.27				9,450.95
Medium Density Residential		1,055.62	86.11	223.38	144.25	1,509.36
High Density Residential		886.40	97.53	106.21	186.14	1,276.28
Mobile Home Park	77.55	2.77				80.32
Mixed Residential / Commercial	147.09	186.04	50.93	10.61	32.39	427.06
Agriculture	90.07	1,401.69				1,491.76
Rural Conservation	2,044.72	3,074.68				5,119.40
Commercial	482.40	414.91	22.29	3.02		922.62
Industrial		1,080.14		50.00	17.07	1,147.21
Public / Institutional	16.40	70.58	0.32	1.06	48.98	137.34
Recreation	1,323.23	1,606.48	19.48	25.87	63.11	3,038.17
Transportation Network	445.10	1,034.91	95.66	70.02	146.67	1,792.36
Total	11,505.24	13,386.49	372.32	490.17	638.61	26,392.83



The following describes the twelve (12) land use categories portrayed in the Future Land Use Plan.

1. **Low Density Residential**

This category is primarily intended to provide for single family detached development. With on-lot well and septic systems, a one or one-and-a-half acre minimum should be required depending on the municipality. With central water and sewage services, a lot size of approximately 1/2 acre to 1/3 acre would be appropriate in most areas. Through the Open Space Development option, approximately 1/3 to 1/5 acre lots could be provided, with 30 percent of the tract preserved in open space. Also, lot sizes as small as 1/5 acre could be appropriate through the Transfer of Development Rights (described later on in this chapter).

All of the Low Density Residential category is located within the southeastern portion of Cumru Township and most of Brecknock Township. This category comprises 36% of the region’s land use, making it the most

prominent land use category within the joint comprehensive planning area.

2. **Medium Density Residential**

This category is primarily intended to provide for single family detached homes and twin houses. With central water and sewage services, an average of approximately 2 to 6 homes per acre would be appropriate without open space preservation. The Open Space Development option could provide for approximately 1/4 or 1/6 acre average lot sizes with 30 percent of the tract preserved as open space. Also, lot sizes as small as 1/6 acre average lot sizes could be appropriate through the Transfer of Development Rights.

The Medium Density Residential category encompasses approximately 6% of the land use within the region. The majority of which are located in Cumru Township adjacent to the Boroughs.

3. **High Density Residential**

This category is intended to provide for a mix of housing types at densities at over 6 homes per acre. Higher densities (such as 8 or 9 homes per acre) could be appropriate if the housing was limited to persons age 55 and older or through transfer of development rights. These areas should allow for all housing types. These areas are particularly important to meet obligations under State law to offer opportunities for all types of housing. It also is important to provide opportunities for various housing types in order to meet the needs of different types of households, such as empty nesters, singles, low income and senior citizens. All apartment and townhouse developments (except the smallest) should be required to include some recreation or open space area for residents.

High Density Residential can be found mostly within the borders of the Boroughs with a portion located within Cumru Township along the western side of Interstate 176. High Density Residential makes up about 5% of the total land area of the region.

4. **Mobile Home Park**

This use is usually considered single-family homes, but when placed in parks require services associated with higher density development. A single mobile home park is located within Brecknock Township near the intersection of Schlouch and Camp Roads. This land use category makes up less than 1% of the total Future Land Use in the Governor Mifflin Region.

5. **Mixed Residential / Commercial**

This category is intended to provide for a mix of light businesses and a mix of housing types. These areas should provide for retail stores, offices, personal services, day care centers, banks, exercise clubs and similar uses. The intent is to prohibit the heaviest commercial uses that are most likely to spur demolition or create nuisances for neighbors, such as 24 hour convenience stores, gas stations, vehicle repair, adult bookstores, restaurants with drive-through service and vehicle sales.

In the downtowns and older villages, development should be encouraged that complements, rather than detracts from, the existing character of historic areas. In older areas, buildings should be placed with setbacks from the road/street that are similar to nearby older buildings. To the maximum extent feasible, parking should be located to the rear or side of buildings. If desired, the Traditional Neighborhood provisions of the State Planning Code could be used to require that new construction be consistent with existing buildings (such as requiring parking to be to the side or rear of buildings and requiring front porches for new homes).

The Historic Preservation Plan section discusses methods that can be used to control demolition of historic buildings, particularly in the downtowns and villages.

Mixed Residential / Commercial future land designation makes up approximately 2% of the total land use of the region.

6. Agriculture

The need for agricultural preservation and methods to achieve it are described in the Agricultural and Natural Resources Conservation section of this Plan. One goal is to avoid a dense residential subdivision in the middle of active farmland - to protect the investment of the adjacent farmers.

In general, the desire is to preserve large contiguous areas of prime farmland, mainly through encouraging landowners to sell conservation easements to the County or the Township. As an alternative, owners of land are encouraged to consider selling conservation easements to a developer in return for a “transfer of development rights” (as described later in this chapter).

In addition to discouraging large numbers of homes in prime agricultural areas, it is also desirable to carefully locate new homes on a tract to minimize conflicts with agricultural activities. New homes should be placed as far as is reasonable from livestock operations, and preferably should be upwind from livestock.

The majority of active agricultural land is located in Cumru Township directly on its southern border with Brecknock. The Agricultural land use designation makes up approximately 6% of the total land use in the region. The agricultural land located in Brecknock Township surrounded by Low-Density Residential are purchased County agricultural conservation easements.

7. Rural Conservation

These lands are characterized by low density development, prominent forest cover, and may contain slopes greater than 15%, as well as fragmented areas of farmland and land eased for open space, natural resource or woodland conservation. Development should be subject to flexible siting standards, conservation design standards, and disturbance limitations, especially on slopes greater than 15%, to avoid the most critical environmental constraints, and allow land to be developed efficiently with the least degree of environmental impact.



House located on sloped land in Brecknock Township

These areas have important natural features that make them suitable for only the very least intense types of development. These Conservation areas include steep areas South of Knauers and Alleghenyville along Lancaster County Border, areas around the State Game Lands No. 52 in southern Brecknock, and most of Neversink Mountain adjacent to Reading. Most of these areas are steep slopes with limited access to public roads.

Ideally, the vast majority of Neversink Mountain would become a passive county park (or community forest). Much of the Neversink Mountain is already preserved. However, 100 acres in the far northern corner of Cumru Township at the end of Reading’s 9th Street is owned by a private construction company, which has approval for a five acre quarry. Over the long run, it would be desirable to have some of the remaining private land on Neversink Mountain acquired for public recreation and to preserve this major scenic asset.

Chapter 9 - Future Land Use Plan

A very large minimum lot size can be justified because of the extreme difficulty in drilling suitable wells, the natural features of the sites and the limited access to public roads. For example, even if a road would be extended to serve new lots in the Conservation areas in southwestern Brecknock, it would result in an excessively long cul-de-sac because it would be difficult to find an alternative route in case of an emergency. A ten acre minimum lot size is recommended. However, a ten acre minimum should only be possible if the applicant conducts a well test and finds a suitable well site before being granted subdivision approval. Larger lots could be required if steep slopes or other natural features are involved.

Consideration should be given to promoting Open Space Development. For example, this could require ten acre minimum lots if there was no preserved open space. However, if at least 60% of the tract was permanently preserved in some form of open space, then the remainder of the land could be developed in three acre minimum lots.

The Rural Conservation category is the second largest category in the Future Land Use analysis. Rural Conservation accounts for 19% of the region's total acreage.



Commercial strip in Cumru Township

8. Commercial

This category is intended to provide for a wide range of commercial development, particularly in areas of more “highway” oriented commercial development. As opposed to the Mixed Residential / Commercial areas described earlier in this chapter, these areas should provide opportunities for uses such as gas stations, vehicle sales and auto sales. A careful set of standards are needed to require coordinated traffic access among different uses.

If an excessive amount of commercial zoning is allowed at one time, it may encourage sprawled development, with businesses simply relocating from one business site to a new site, leaving the old site vacant. There are a number of shopping centers with large vacant spaces in the surrounding region, as new stores have decided to build on new sites instead of reusing sites of stores that have closed. If the supply

of commercially zoned land is held to a moderate amount, it will encourage rehabilitation and redevelopment of older commercial sites.

This category is proposed to include many existing commercial areas (including along Business Route 222) and also the Maple Grove Racetrack, campground and adjacent lands.

The Commercial areas should also include land near the new interchange of Routes 222/272 and 568. This should include land between Deer Creek Road and Route 222. This is consistent with Spring Township's commercial zoning east of Deer Creek Road. This area does not currently have public sewage service, but conceivably could be extended by a developer if sewage would be provided in adjacent lands in Spring Township.

3% or a total of 923 acres of the region includes this Commercial designation.

9. Industrial

The Industrial areas are intended to provide for a wide range of industrial uses. These areas are particularly important to meet obligations under State law to provide opportunities for all types of business uses, including some uses that are less desirable. The heaviest industrial uses should need special exception from the

zoning hearing board or conditional use approval from the supervisors/borough council.

Because this plan involves multiple municipalities, it will not be necessary for each municipality to provide for all types of industrial uses. It is recommended that the heavier industrial uses be concentrated around the site of the former Titus generating station and Western Berks Landfill in the northeastern part of Cumru, and that heavy industrial uses be prohibited in other industrial areas. These heavy industrial uses could include petroleum tank farms, asphalt plants, cement plants, trash transfer stations and hazardous chemical plants.

A careful set of performance standards should be used to control noise, dust, vibration and other nuisances and hazards, especially from industrial uses. Extensive landscaped buffers should be required next to homes. Where a very intensive use is proposed next to homes, a landscaped earth berm and/or solid fencing should also be required.

A high quality setting will help to attract additional desirable types of business development and higher paying types of jobs. In newer industrial areas, a set of site design regulations should be used to promote light industrial/office parks in a well-landscaped campus-like environment. Truck parking and outdoor storage areas should be required to be screened from view from roads. The majority of the first 30 feet along a road should be landscaped, with truck loading docks and truck parking located to the side or rear of buildings.

Approximately 1,147 acres or roughly 4% of the regions total land area is reserved for industrial use.

10. Public / Institutional

This category recognizes existing large public, semi-public and institutional uses, such as schools and municipal buildings. A total of 1% or 137 acres are designated as Public/Institutional within the planning area.

11. 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. sportsman clubs, and little league organizations) and commercial recreation (i.e. golf courses, miniature golf courses, campgrounds). Recreation lands occupy 3,038 acres or over 11% of the Region's total land area.

12. Transportation Network

Land in this category contains roads and railroads. While the network of transportation modes that serves Berks County also includes air service, bus and motor freight services, these land uses, as well as parking garages are included in the commercial category.

While many factors can influence growth and development patterns, the existing transportation network has always been prominent in shaping Berks County, as well as the Governor Mifflin planning region. Over time development has historically concentrated near major transportation facilities to take advantage of their accessibility. The amount of land area consumed by such a network is 1,792 acres or approximately 7% of the region's total land area. Recent upgrades to the highway network include U.S. 222 South.

Further discussion of the transportation network within the Region can be found in the Transportation section of this plan.

Concepts for Future Development

1. Extend the best features of older development into newer development.

Chapter 9 - Future Land Use Plan

Consideration should be given to strongly encouraging forms of “traditional neighborhood development.” This involves extending the best features of the older areas into new neighborhoods. As discussed later in this Chapter, this concept also involves making sure that development or redevelopment of lots within older neighborhoods occurs in a way that fits within the “urban fabric.” Traditional neighborhood development primarily involves the following:

- Street trees should be planted to eventually provide a canopy of shade over streets. Studies show that mature street trees can increase the value of homes up to 10 percent. If it is not appropriate to have shade trees in the right-of-way, they can be required immediately outside of the right-of-way.
- Requiring that new street lights meet a certain design standard that is similar to older styles of street lights.
- Sidewalks should be provided (or asphalt paths along main roads in rural areas). There should be an orientation to pedestrians, with an ability to walk or bicycle to stores, schools and parks. Overly wide residential streets and intersections should be avoided to discourage speeding and to make it easier for pedestrians to cross the street.
- A modest density should be encouraged that is similar to the typical development that occurred during the 1930s through 1940s. This density (such as 5 to 8 homes per acre) should make best use of available land, while avoiding overly dense development and parking problems.
- Whenever practical, parking should be located to the rear or side of buildings, so that the front yard can be landscaped. At best, parking and garages would be placed to the rear of lots, with access using alleys. This design avoids conflicts between sidewalks and vehicles backing into the street, and allows the entire curbside to be available for on-street parking.
 - If rear access to garages is not practical, then garages should enter onto the side of homes whenever possible, particularly on corner lots. If a front-entrance garage is proposed, it should be designed so that it is not an overly prominent part of the street. For example, a one lane driveway can pass along the side of a house and then widen to enter a two-car garage that is setback from the front of the house. “Snout” houses should be avoided that have a front entrance garage as the home’s most prominent feature.
 - Care is needed to discourage new twin and townhouse development that has numerous driveways entering directly onto a street from the front. Garage doors should not be an overly prominent part of the views of housing from the front. Where garages and parking cannot be avoided in the front yard, larger lot widths should be required to make sure that there is green space in the front yard. Regulations are needed to make sure that the majority of the front yards of housing developments are not covered by paving.
- Buildings should be placed relatively close to the street, with front or side porches, to encourage interaction among neighbors. On a corner lot, a side porch can have the same effect. If residents spend time on their front porch, they can help oversee the neighborhood and report suspicious activity to the police.

This concept can be used to maintain the character of older residential areas. For example, driveways can be required to access onto an alley or side street where it is available, as opposed to having a front garage and driveway. This design avoids conflicts between sidewalks and vehicles backing into the street, and allows the entire curbside to be available for on-street parking. Otherwise, new driveways may remove as many parking spaces as they create.

New buildings can be required to have a maximum setback from the street that is similar to other buildings on

the block. New buildings can also be required to include front porches. Front porches encourage interaction among neighbors, which builds more of a community spirit. If residents spend time on their front porch, they can help oversee the neighborhood and report suspicious activity to the police.

Most new parking can be required to be placed to the rear or side of the main building on the lot, which makes the building and not parked cars the most visible feature along the street.

New street trees can be required by a zoning ordinance as part of the construction of any new principal building, instead of only being required for new subdivisions. Neighborhood character can also be established with older styles of street lights and street name signs.

Under the State Planning Code, a municipality can require some of these features in zoning ordinances. Or, a municipality could offer density incentives for this type of traditional development.

2. Traffic Access Control

If traffic access onto a major road is properly managed, the road will be able to safely handle large volumes of traffic. However, if a road combines a large number of business driveways entering a road at many locations, there will be right-hand turns and left-hand turns at many locations. The constant stopping and starting from these turns greatly affect the smooth flow of vehicles and create safety hazards. This is known as “strip” commercial development.

At best, intense business development should be concentrated in well-planned developments with internal roads that access a major road with a traffic signal and turn lanes. Where a traffic signal is not warranted at the present time, there should still be a plan for where traffic signals are intended to be built in the future. This will allow driveways and street intersections to be directed towards those intersections so that the traffic signal will be well-placed in the future. Where traffic signals are not appropriate, adjacent commercial uses should have shared driveways and interconnected parking lots. The interconnected parking lots are particularly valuable so that a person can visit more than one adjacent business without having to enter and re-enter a major road.

3. Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs)

This concept should be a voluntary option in the Zoning Ordinances of the townships. TDRs offer incentives for private developers to pay to preserve land. If a developer of one tract of land pays an owner of another tract to permanently preserve their land, then the developer could receive approval to build at a higher density on the developer’s tract. The tract that receives the higher density would need to be in an area that the township has designated as being suitable for a higher density. The tract that would be permanently preserved would need to be in an area that the township has targeted for preservation. The developer and the owner of the open land would negotiate on their own to determine how much the developer pays to the other landowner for the preservation.

- This method allows development to be shifted from locations where preservation is desired to allow a higher density on other tracts in a township that are well suited for development.
- The township would then approve the development at a higher density at the same time as a conservation easement went into effect to preserve the other land. The preserved land would remain privately owned but could never be developed. The preserved land could be re-sold and could be used for agriculture or certain open space uses.
- For example, this process might allow preservation of land in the Agricultural and Rural Conservation areas, in return for allowing a higher density in a Low Density Residential or Medium Density Residential area. Or, density might be transferred from one part of an Agricultural or Rural Conservation area to another part of the Agricultural or Rural Conservation area.

Chapter 9 - Future Land Use Plan

- The number of homes that could be transferred from one tract to another would be based upon a “Yield Plan.” This sketch plan would show how many homes would have been permitted on the tract that is to be preserved. Once the township accepts this Yield Plan, that number of homes could be transferred from one tract to another tract. However, there would still be limits on the density of the tract being developed to make sure that it is not excessive.
- TDR can also be used in combination with commercial development. For example, for every housing unit that is transferred from one area of a township, an additional amount of building coverage or impervious coverage could be allowed in a business district.

4. Open Space Residential Development

Open Space Residential Development involves development in which a substantial percentage of the land area of the tract is permanently preserved as open space. For example, many Open Space Developments are designed with 25 to 60 percent of the total land area of a development preserved in some form of open space. Open Space Development typically allows smaller lots and smaller setbacks than would be allowed under conventional development without open space. This concept is also known as “Conservation Design” Development.

5. Emphasize Compatible Development and Traffic Patterns across Municipal Borders.

Most of the land areas adjacent to the Governor Mifflin region have very compatible development patterns and zoning with this Comprehensive Plan. However, there are some areas of concern. Most areas adjacent to the northern portions of the region are already developed and are zoned in a manner to reflect existing development. Most areas in the southern portions of the region are zoned by those municipalities in a manner that promotes low density residential, rural and agricultural uses that are very compatible with the similar zoning proposed in this Comprehensive Plan.

The eastern border of Cumru Township with Robeson Township deserves particular attention. The Regional Comprehensive Plan for Robeson Township along the Route 724 corridor proposes residential uses. The area of Cumru east of I-176 immediately south of Route 724 is proposed for Business Park development if suitable road access would be constructed by a private developer. Land that is further south in Cumru is proposed for Conservation type of development with an average of at least 2 acres per dwelling. The adjacent land in Robeson is mainly proposed for low density rural development, according to their Regional Comprehensive Plan. The land near the interchange of I-176 and Route 10 in Cumru is proposed for Business Park development, if suitable road access would be provided. The land in Robeson between I-176 and Route 10 is proposed for Interchange Commercial development. The land west of Route 10 in Robeson is proposed for Low Density Residential and High Density Residential. The adjacent land in Cumru is zoned for Medium Density Residential and Office development.

The remaining areas of Robeson and Caernarvon (Berks) that adjoin Cumru and Brecknock are proposed for Rural development according to their Comprehensive Plan. For example, the zoning in adjacent areas of Caernarvon (Berks) is R-2, which allows single family detached houses on 1.8 acre minimum lots. That is consistent with this Governor Mifflin Plan. There is a landfill and other industrial zoning in New Morgan Borough, but that does not immediately adjoin Brecknock Township and is separated by I-176.

Caernarvon Township (Lancaster County) and Brecknock Township (Lancaster County) to the south are zoned for agricultural preservation and rural conservation at low densities.

The southern portion of Spring Township is zoned for rural conservation type of development at low densities (such as 5 acres per home), with the potential for cluster development. In the vicinity of the new Mohns Hill Road interchange of Route 222, Spring Township has zoning that allows business development, which would be similar to some of the business development that would be allowed under Cumru’s overlay zoning

near the interchange. Other areas of Spring Township, Wyomissing and Reading are already developed. Most adjoining areas of Reading adjacent to Shillington are zoned for low density residential, except the Lancaster Avenue corridor is zoned Commercial Highway. A mixed Commercial-Industrial zoning district exists in part of Reading adjacent to Kenhorst south of Route 222. Alvernia College and surrounding residential neighborhoods in Reading are zoned Medium Density Residential. A Light Industrial district exists along Route 10/Morgantown Road in Reading. Fritz's Island and Angelica Park are both zoned Preservation by Reading.

The adjacent areas of Lower Alsace Township that include Neversink Mountain are zoned for conservation-type uses. Along the Cumru Township border north of the Schuylkill River, Exeter Township has zoned the land as Light Industrial. In adjacent areas along the river, a conservation corridor is proposed in Cumru.

6. Strengthen Older Residential Areas

It is extremely important that the older areas of the Governor Mifflin Region remain strong and viable business and residential areas. This includes the older areas of Kenhorst, Mohnton and Shillington, as well as villages throughout the region. The best way to control sprawl is to make sure that older areas remain healthy and desirable places in which to live and conduct business.



Berks County Military History Museum in Mohnton Borough

This section recommends actions to stabilize and improve older residential neighborhoods. Stable neighborhoods are not only important to provide desirable places to live, but also to protect the health of nearby business areas. If the residential areas deteriorate, they will cause crime and vandalism problems that will discourage business activity. If the surrounding residential areas are strengthened, they will provide a strong base of customers who will hopefully find the downtowns a convenient place to serve their shopping and service needs.

To maintain its economic health, it is important to continually work to attract and retain middle-income households in older areas. This is particularly true because there will always be existing residents moving into newer and more expensive houses, and because there will always be older residents who will be moving to nursing homes, personal care centers or retirement communities. To maintain the same owner-occupancy rate, there needs to be a continual stream of new home-buyers.

To maintain its economic health, it is important to continually work to attract and retain middle-income households in older areas. This is particularly true because there will always be existing residents moving into newer and more expensive houses, and because there will always be older residents who will be moving to nursing homes, personal care centers or retirement communities. To maintain the same owner-occupancy rate, there needs to be a continual stream of new home-buyers.

Promoting Home Ownership - Many households could afford the monthly costs of owning a home, but do not have sufficient savings for the closing costs and down payment. These households need to be linked with available programs to help them achieve home ownership.

However, care is needed to avoid placing very low-income households in subsidized home-ownership. In too many cases, these households do not have the funds to pay for repairs that are periodically needed in an older home. If they have no equity in the home, they may be tempted to walk away from the mortgage. As a result, a property can stand vacant for months until foreclosure occurs and the property is resold. During this time, the property can deteriorate and/or be vandalized.

The availability of housing designed for senior citizens is an important part of the mix. This type of housing relieves older persons of maintenance and repair responsibilities and expenses. If older persons decide to move from large homes to senior housing, it then frees up that housing for families, and often puts those homes in the hands of people who can better maintain the homes. However, if there is insufficient demand by homebuyers for those homes, this trend of older homeowners moving out can reduce owner-occupancy rates.

Chapter 9 - Future Land Use Plan

Maintaining Housing Conditions - It is important to prevent blight and deterioration before it occurs. A single problem property can encourage responsible residents of nearby properties to move out of the neighborhood and can discourage new home-buyers from investing in the neighborhood. A problem property can also discourage homeowners from investing in improvements to their home because they do not believe they will be able to see any return on their investment if they sell.

To promote home ownership and neighborhood stability, and to avoid parking problems, the conversions of existing one family homes into additional numbers of housing units should be prohibited. Owner-occupied housing typically has a much higher level of property maintenance than older renter housing. Types of new housing should be promoted that are most likely to be owner-occupied, such as singles, side-by-side twin homes and townhouses, as opposed to apartments or one unit above another unit.

The municipalities must continue to emphasize enforcement of the basic property maintenance codes to require property-owners to: a) properly maintain their buildings or b) sell the buildings to another party who will make the needed improvements. The goal in code enforcement must be to intervene before buildings deteriorate to the point where it is no longer cost effective to repair them. If property-owners are forced to complete basic maintenance and repairs in a timely manner, severe deterioration can be avoided.

Many older communities have adopted programs for the periodic inspection of rental properties to make sure they meet basic safety standards. To target an inspection program to the properties that are most likely to involve fire and safety hazards, inspections could be limited to buildings that were constructed prior to the enforcement of any comprehensive building codes. This would avoid the need for regular inspection of apartment buildings built during the last few decades, because those buildings typically have fire-resistant construction and safe means of access.

One option would be to require inspections when there is a change in tenants. This would make the program less intrusive to tenants. This option would also target the program to the housing units with the most turnover, which often are the units that need the most improvements. The cost of inspections can be covered by an annual license fee.

Emphasize housing rehabilitation - Most housing efforts primarily involve low-interest loans to rehabilitate homes owned by households with low or moderate incomes. Expanded marketing efforts are needed to make sure that eligible owners of properties in need of rehabilitation are aware of the financing programs that are available. Particular attention needs to be paid to low-income resident owners of property who need to make improvements to comply with municipal codes.

The Berks County Area Agency on Aging also offers a “Home Modification” program for minor household repairs and safety modifications. In most cases, the homeowner only pays for the cost of materials. The program is mainly aimed towards older persons with limited incomes and persons with disabilities.

Buyers of older homes should be encouraged to take advantage of the Federal Housing Administration’s 203(k) program. This allows a homebuyer to receive a single loan to purchase a home and to complete a major rehabilitation of it.

It would be desirable to combine job training funding with County housing rehabilitation programs. The Federal Government has provided greater flexibility to use Federal job training dollars in ways that address local needs. Local non-profit housing organizations should work with job training agencies to design programs to meet mutual needs. Residents can learn useful job skills, while the job training programs help provide funding for needed housing rehabilitation.

Densities - Higher densities should only be considered for: a) housing developments that are limited to senior citizens and the physically handicapped, and b) the conversions of older non-residential buildings (such as old mills) into apartments.

Density bonuses should be considered for developments limited to persons age 55 and older and their spouses, with no children under age 18. These density bonuses are logical because the typical household of older persons generates less traffic, less need for parking and less water and sewage usage compared to other types of housing. Housing for older persons also does not generate additional public school students, thereby avoiding negative impacts upon school finances.

Compatibility in Uses - It is important to protect older residential areas from incompatible development. This is particularly a concern in older areas where there is typically a relatively dense mix of commercial, industrial and residential uses, with small setbacks.

In commercial areas near neighborhoods, the types of commercial uses should be carefully controlled. Most commercial areas near neighborhoods should not allow for heavy commercial uses, such as gas stations, 24 hour convenience stores, taverns, nightclubs and auto repair. Where practical, the hours of operation and hours of trucking activities should be controlled (such as conditions upon any zoning hearing board approval that is needed). Other problem uses should be very carefully controlled or prohibited, such as after hours clubs that are open after 2 a.m. In areas closest to neighborhoods, it may be appropriate to prohibit or require zoning hearing board approval for a use to be open to the public or patrons between Midnight and 5 a.m. The zoning hearing boards should carefully review changes to existing business uses in residential zoning districts (which are called “nonconforming uses”) to make sure they will not harm the neighborhood.

In industrial areas near neighborhoods, great care is needed about the types of uses that are allowed. The heavier types of industrial uses should be prohibited from these areas or need special exception or conditional use approval.

Neighborhood Character - Zoning provisions can be put into place to require that new buildings in older neighborhoods be compatible to nearby buildings. This concept is described earlier in this chapter.

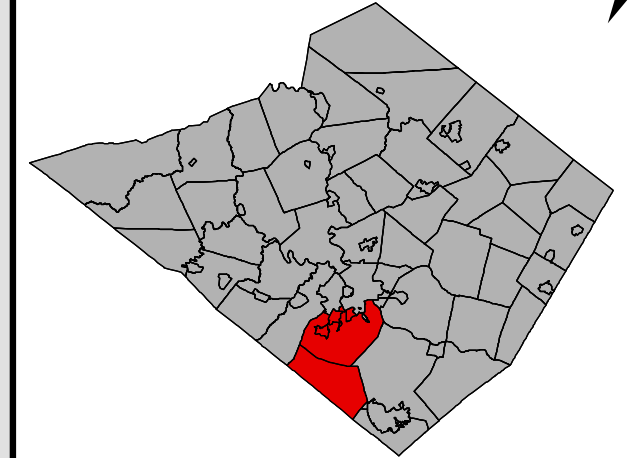
7. Strengthen Older Business Areas

One goal of this Plan is to strengthen the downtowns of all three boroughs as business, cultural and civic centers for the region. The recommendations in this section are based upon the “Main Street Program,” that has been very successful in many towns across the country. While the three boroughs are not large enough to have a professional Main Street Manager, many of the same principles can be still be used.

The Main Street Program stresses four major approaches:

- Organization and Cooperation - To have a strong organization of all interested parties working cooperatively in partnerships to carry out needed actions.
- Design and Renewal - To improve the physical environment including the “streetscape” and the attractiveness of the fronts of buildings (particularly through rehabilitation of historic features), and providing adequate parking.
- Economic Development - To recruit and retain businesses and investors to expand job opportunities and generate additional local tax revenue. To provide information to support new business development. To maintain regular contacts with existing businesses to help them remain and grow in the downtowns. (More on Economic Development in the Governor Mifflin Region can be found in the so titled section of this document).
- Promotion - To market the downtowns with a unified identify. To use special events to attract new customers and businesses. To emphasize high-quality distinctive products and services, including businesses serving a special market niche that is not served by mass-market discount retailers.

Future Land Use



Legend

- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Mobile Home Park
- Mixed Residential / Commercial
- Agriculture
- Rural Conservation
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Public / Institutional
- Recreation
- Transportation Network
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Berks DES, Governor Mifflin Joint Comp Plan Committee

Published by the Berks County Planning Commission

BAB 12/17

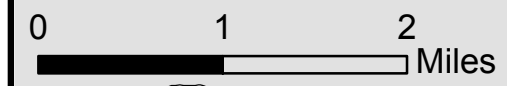
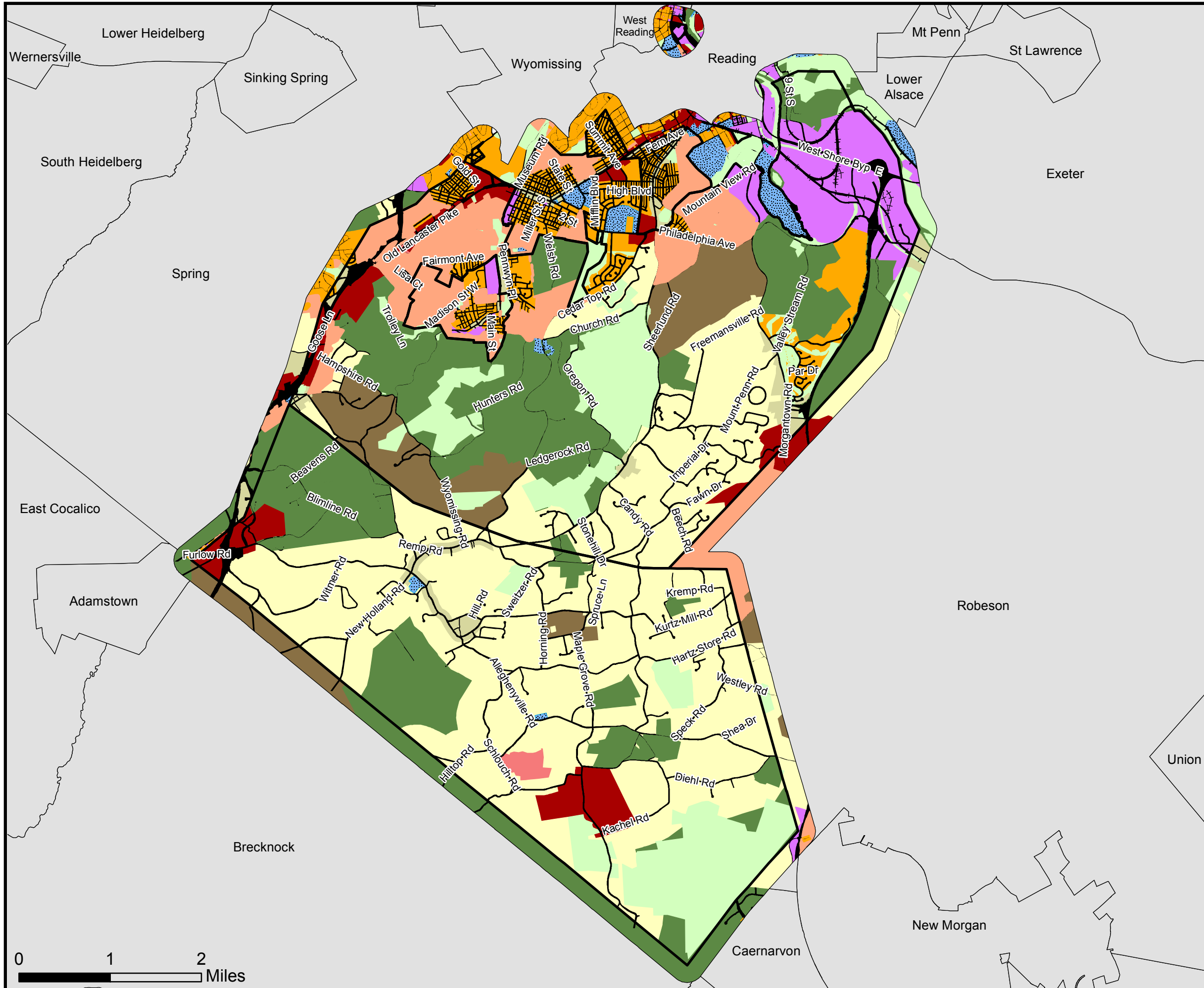
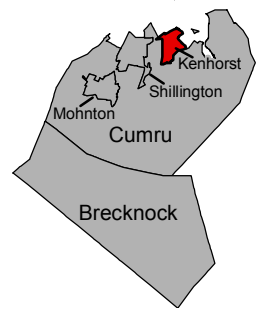
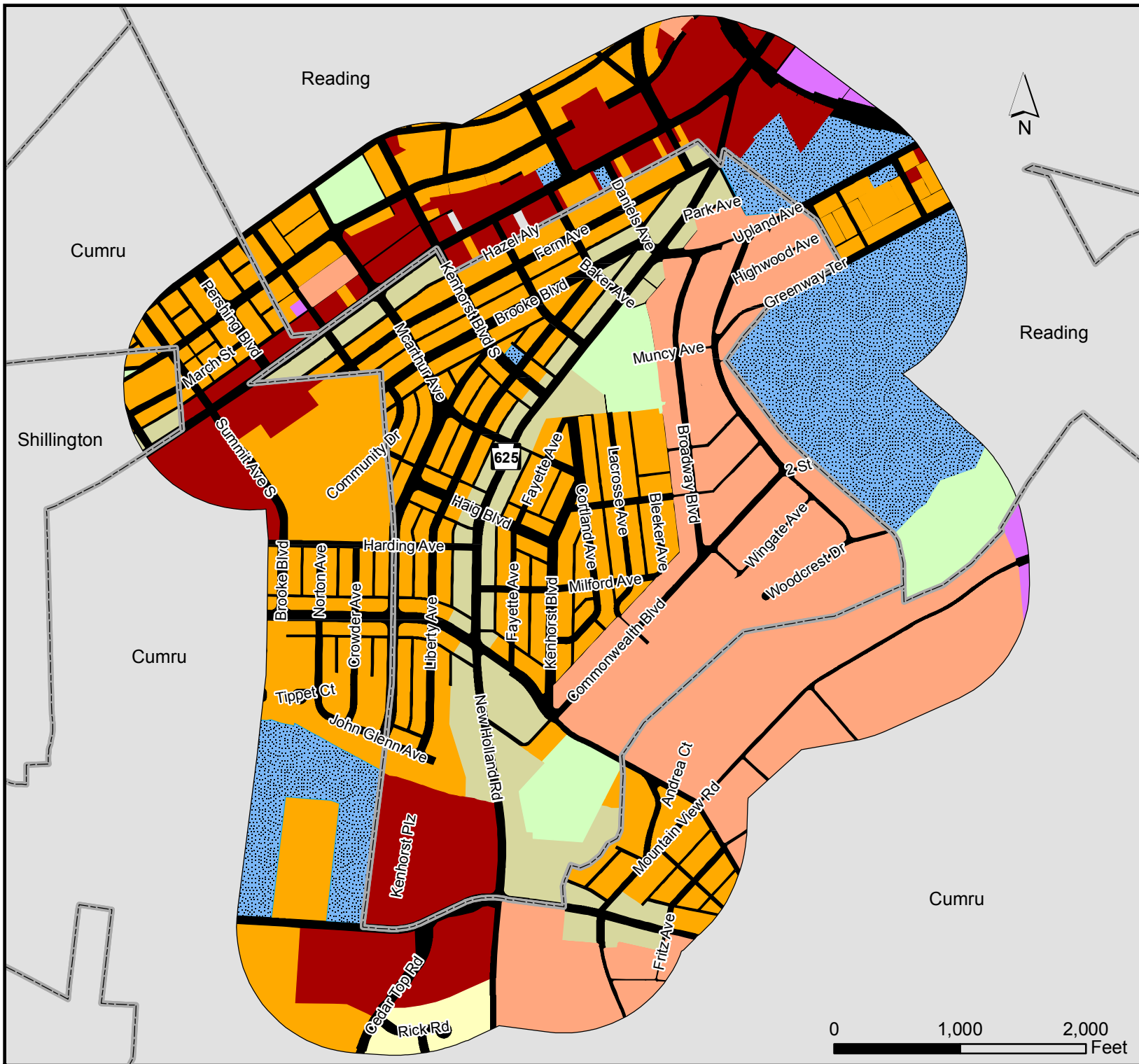


FIGURE 22

Cumru, Kenhorst, Mohnton, Shillington, Brecknock
Joint Comprehensive Plan Update
December 2017

Kenhorst Borough Future Land Use



Legend

- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Mobile Home Park
- Mixed Residential / Commercial
- Agriculture
- Rural Conservation
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Public / Institutional
- Recreation
- Transportation Network
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Source data:
Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Kenhorst Borough

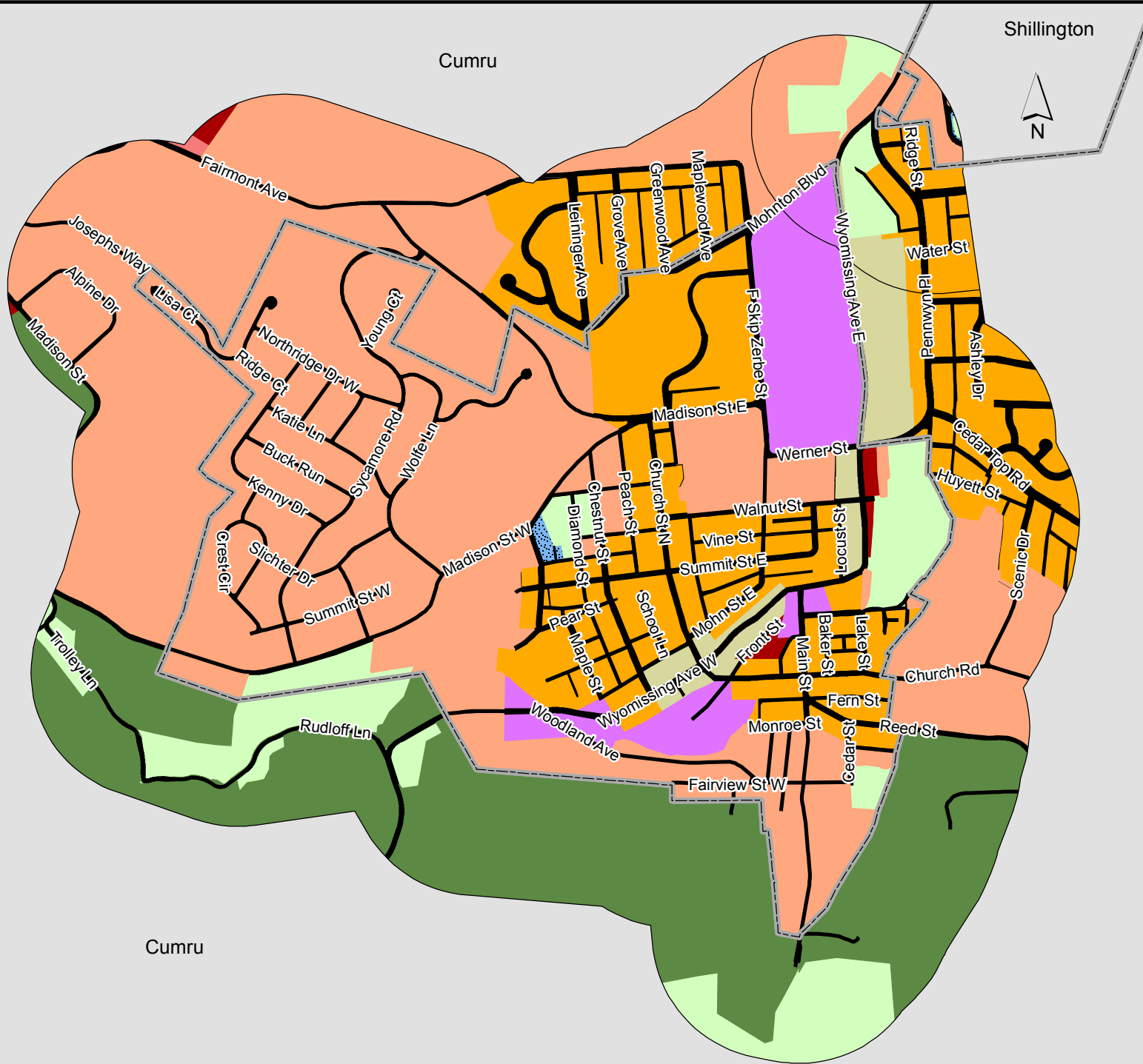
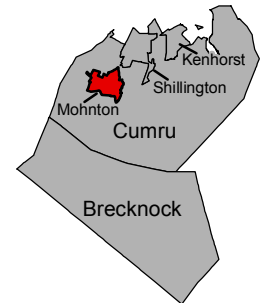
Published by the Berks County Planning Commission
BAB 12/17



FIGURE 23

Cumru, Kenhorst, Mohnton, Shillington, Brecknock
Joint Comprehensive Plan Update
December 2017

Mohnton Borough Future Land Use



Legend

- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Mobile Home Park
- Mixed Residential / Commercial
- Agriculture
- Rural Conservation
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Public / Institutional
- Recreation
- Transportation Network
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Source data:
Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Mohnton Borough

Published by the Berks County Planning Commission
BAB 12/17

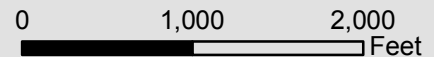
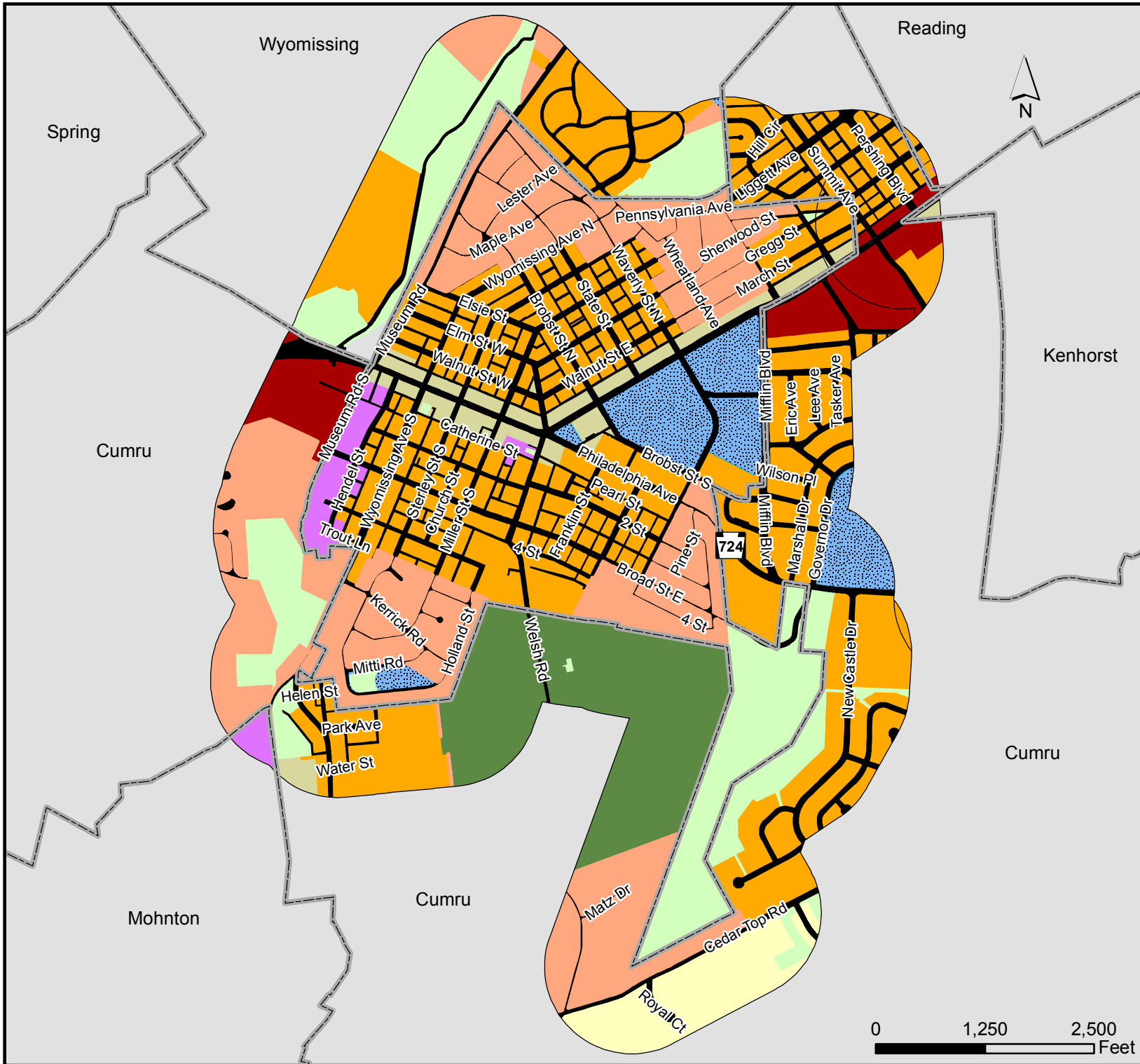
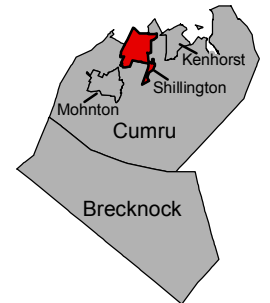


FIGURE 24

Cumru, Kenhorst, Mohnton,
Shillington, Brecknock
Joint Comprehensive Plan Update
December 2017

Shillington Borough Future Land Use



Legend

- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Mobile Home Park
- Mixed Residential / Commercial
- Agriculture
- Rural Conservation
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Public / Institutional
- Recreation
- Transportation Network
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Source data:
Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County
GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Shillington Borough

Published by the Berks County Planning Commission
BAB 12/17

