

EXISTING LAND USE PLAN

Land use is only one aspect of planning; however it is an extremely important one. Land use is the alteration of the natural environment into man-made or built environment and includes lands which are undisturbed by man. Development regulations, physical restraints and highway networks all contribute to the land use patterns within a region. Land use is used as a tool for evaluating current zoning and subdivision and land development policies as well as provides guidance for future development. Land use helps evaluate public needs, potential environmental impacts as well as prevents potential conflicts. Municipalities utilize land use planning to balance development and preserve natural resources. It serves to guide official decisions regarding the distribution and intensity of private development, reinvestment in urban centers and capital improvement programs.



Farm in the Governor Mifflin Area

For a 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 photograph 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 the Boroughs of Kenhorst, Mohnton, Shillington, and more populated portions of Cumru Township 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 GMACC during this update with corrections noted. Regionally, the existing land use pattern includes a very wide range of uses and settings which are depicted on the Existing Land Use Map, found following this section.

Existing Land Use Patterns

Figure 20 illustrates the existing uses of different areas of the region, as of 2016. The Governor Mifflin Region encompasses a total area of 26,377 acres. Commercial development is concentrated along Business Route 222/Lancaster Avenue, New Holland Avenue (State Route 625), the western portions of Route 724/Philadelphia Avenue and along Morgantown Road (State Route 10) as it traverses into neighboring Robeson Township. The main areas of commercial uses in Brecknock Township are the Maple Grove Park racetrack and campgrounds and the village of Knauers.

The area has only limited industrial development. This includes some industrial uses along Morgantown Road south of Reading, and existing and proposed industrial uses north of Route 724 on both sides of Interstate 176. This includes the East Pointe Industrial Park east of I-176. A major underused industrial property exists east of Hill Street in Mohnton.

Several older villages provide character to the community. These include Grill, Gouglersville, and Angelica in

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Cumru, and Knauers and Alleghenyville in Brecknock.

The denser areas of residential development have been limited to areas where central sewage service has been available and where it was allowed by zoning. These areas include within and around Kenhorst, Shillington and Mohnton Boroughs, as well as the Pennwyn, Colonial Hills, Mifflin Park and Montrose Manor areas in Cumru. The Flying Hills development was built around a golf course, starting in the 1960s. Flying Hills includes a mix of housing types and a neighborhood commercial center.

Brecknock Township has primarily experienced scattered single family detached home subdivisions on one to two acre lots. Many of those homes have been placed in areas that had the most suitable soils for on-lot septic systems. Unfortunately, those soils are also the most suitable for crop farming. Most of Brecknock's land area continues to be wooded or used for agricultural activities.

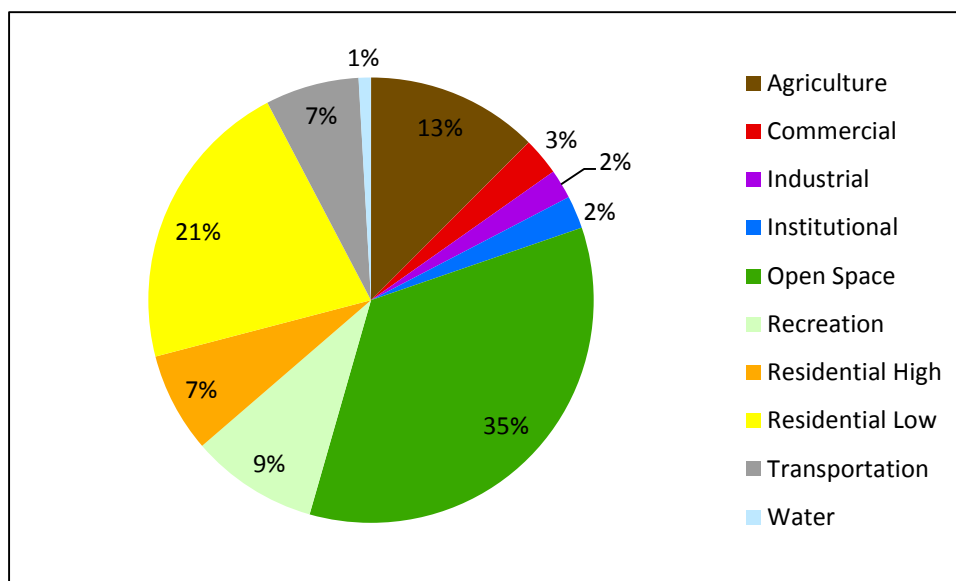
Existing Land Use Analysis

1. Methodology

The Existing Land Use Map (Figure 20) was created digitally using a geographic information system (GIS). The Berks County GIS tax parcel data was modified to include a specific existing land use designation for each parcel. Land use assessment codes, aerial imagery, information from the Act 167 stormwater plans, and other GIS data related to land use was also used in the analysis.

The table and chart on the next page illustrates the existing land uses by acreage in the region:

LANDUSE	Brecknock	Cumru	Kenhorst	Mohnton	Shillington	Total
Agriculture	2,265.25	1,028.61		0.02		3,293.88
Commercial	233.77	399.05	39.13	13.60	37.12	722.67
Industrial	10.86	494.11	0.44	47.77	6.09	559.27
Institutional	42.11	485.56	10.38	18.64	70.78	627.47
Open Space	4,153.26	4,928.82	42.90	19.36	14.02	9,158.35
Recreation	1,308.70	1,029.34	19.48	19.46	56.59	2,433.56
Residential High	163.52	1,062.25	162.72	235.61	289.39	1,913.49
Residential Low	2,819.03	2,741.61		65.72	12.68	5,639.04
Transportation	445.10	1,034.91	95.66	70.02	146.67	1,792.36
Water	63.64	171.58			1.56	236.78
Total	11,505.23	13,375.84	370.71	490.19	634.89	26,376.86



2. Residential Lands

Residential Low

The Residential Low category consists of primarily single-family detached dwelling units on one to five acre lots. A lot size larger than five acres was subject to more than one existing land use designation, as the residue land was typically designated as Open Space.

- Comprising 21% of the region’s land area or 5,639 acres, Residential Low land is the second largest land use category. Cumru (2,742 acres) and Brecknock (2,819 acres) Townships contain the majority (20%) and share almost equal amounts of this type of residential development.
- Kenhorst Borough has no residential low land use and Mohnton and Shillington Boroughs contain only 1% of the 21% total in the region for this land use category.



House in Mohnton Borough

Residential High

The Residential High category is characterized by a variety of dwelling unit types, including single-family detached, semi-detached, townhouses, apartments, and mobile homes within parks, at densities that exceed one unit per acre.

- Only 7% of the total lands in the region or 1,913 acres are used for “high density residential”. The majority of this land is concentrated in Cumru Township (1,062 acres) with Shillington (289 acres) having the second largest concentration. Mohnton Borough is third (235 acres) with Kenhorst Borough (162 acres) and Brecknock Township (163 acres), sharing almost identical acreages.

3. Commercial Lands

The Commercial lands category contains such uses as, retail, offices, utilities (electric and phone companies) and personal, professional and business services.

- Commercial uses comprise only 3% of the region’s total land area or 723 acres.
- The majority of the commercial uses are located primarily within Cumru Township and account for 399 acres or 55% of commercial land use within the Governor Mifflin Region.

4. Industrial Lands

Industrial land uses include processing, fabrication or assembly of raw materials or component parts, wholesale trade and warehousing. Landfills, junk yards, and quarries are also included within this designation.

- Approximately 559 acres or 2% of industrial land uses encompass the land in the Governor Mifflin Region.
- Industrial uses within the region are primarily located in Cumru Township and Mohnton Borough.

5. Institutional Lands

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.

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- Institutional lands occupy 627 acres or approximately 2% of the region's land area.
- Nearly 78% of the institutional land is located within Cumru Township.

6. Agricultural Land

The rich soil, aided by a favorable climate and centralized Mid-Atlantic location, has contributed to a strong agricultural tradition. Agriculture lands are used for crops, pasture, the raising of livestock, farmsteads, barns, silos, mushroom farms, and the fields where trees and plants are harvested for nurseries.

- Agricultural lands occupy 3,294 acres or approximately 13% of the region's land area.
- Out of those 3,294 acres, Brecknock Township has the majority of land area occupied by agricultural uses. Brecknock has 2,265 acres or approximately 69% of the region's agricultural production.
- Not surprisingly the boroughs contain very little to no agricultural uses because of their dense residential development.

7. Recreation Lands

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, sportsman clubs, little league) and commercial recreation (i.e. golf courses, miniature golf courses, campgrounds).

- Recreation lands occupy 2,434 acres or 9% of the region's total land area.
- 54% of the total recreation land in the region is located within Brecknock Township.

8. Open Space Lands

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 5 acres, as well as forested land on farmland is also included in the category. The majority of this land is private except for municipal watershed lands.

- Open Space is the largest use of land at 9,158 acres or approximately 35% of the region's total land area.
- 54% of the total open space in the region is found in Cumru Township.

9. Transportation Lands

Transportation lands are used for roads and railroads. While the network of transportation modes that serves the region also includes bus and motor freight services, these land uses, as well as parking garages are included in the commercial category.

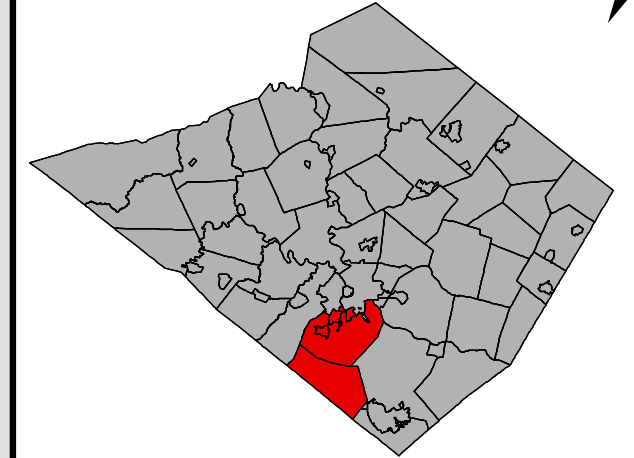
- The amount of land area consumed by such a network is somewhat significant (1,792 acres or approximately 7% of the total region's land area), due to the varying widths of rights-of-way associated with the highway and railroad modes of transportation.
- Cumru Township has the most land area covered by transportation at 1,035 acres or 58% of the region's total transportation land area.

10. Water

The water category is comprised of rivers, streams, ponds, and lakes.

- Water occupies 237 acres or approximately 1 % of the region's total land area.

Existing Land Use



Legend

- Residential Low
- Residential High
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Recreation
- Open Space
- Agriculture
- Water
- Transportation
- Roads
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

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

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