

## **Chapter 4**

### **Existing Land Use**

---

#### **Introduction**

It is impossible to plan for the future land use without first understanding what patterns exist today. This chapter discusses the existing land uses by category and acreage in Penn and Jefferson Townships, and Bernville Borough. The approximate acreage of each category is provided for a comprehensive overview of how land was utilized at the time this Plan was developed. Existing land use patterns not only have a significant impact on the development of the future land use plan, but they affect circulation within the area and the demand for community facilities and services as well. By understanding how land is utilized, one can plan for uses that may be desired or that are currently lacking in the region.

The Berks County Planning Commission supplied the GIS (Geographic Information System) information to create Figure 4.1, the Existing Land Use Map for the Region. This data was based on the Berks County tax assessment of each parcel in the Region.

Land Uses are classified into the following types for mapping purposes.

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Mixed Use
- Mobile Home
- Multi-Family
- Residential

The Existing Land Use Map should be used in conjunction with other maps in this document. The Agricultural Soils Map, Figure 7.2, is particularly helpful in further analyzing the agriculture/agribusiness on the Existing Land Use Map, Figure 4.1. The Agricultural Soils Map shows prime agricultural soils, agricultural security areas, and agricultural easements within the Region.

## LAND USE PATTERNS

Concern for the use of land is the essence of comprehensive planning. The existing land use pattern in Jefferson and Bernville is based on the development form that first shaped Berks County: rural villages serving as commercial marketplaces and population centers for the surrounding countryside. Residential subdivisions, shopping centers and strip commercial development are among the modern trends that are changing the balance that once existed between town and country in Berks County. Jefferson and Bernville today are a mixture of the area's historic configuration and its more recent development trends.

The Region has experienced modest population growth and expansion over the past 20 years. Penn and Jefferson Township includes the largest clusters of population in the Region while the Borough has the highest density of population.

Residential development, farmland, institutional and rural areas are most prevalent in the Region; however, there are other land use characteristics as well. Commercial and industrial areas are found predominately in Jefferson Township along PA Route 183 and Christmas Village/Womelsdorf Road. The PA Route 183 Corridor plays a vital role in the Region's economy. Other uses in the Region include institutional areas, multi-family residential, and various scattered undeveloped parcels and buildings that offer future development potential. The land use categories and approximate acreage of each are described in detail in Table 4.2.

Figure 4.3, the Existing Zoning Map, shows the Region and its current zoning regulations. While the zoning looks to be sufficient in protecting the Region's natural and agricultural resources, comparing it to the Existing Land Use Map, Figure 4.1 reveals the pattern of low density residential within the Agricultural, Open Space, and Conservation categories.

The past year has seen increasing numbers of residential development plans submitted in Penn Township and a decrease in Jefferson Township. However, even with the increased growth pressure in the Region, undeveloped parcels still remain, which offer infill development potential.

**Table 4.1: Building Permits Issued for New Housing Units**

YEAR	BERNVILLE BOROUGH	JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP	PENN TOWNSHIP	TULPEHOCKEN SCHOOL DISTRICT
2000	3	14	23	84
2001	1	31	17	83
2002	9	35	8	92
2003	6	43	13	104
2004	0	39	10	77
2005	0	41	4	73
2006	0	25	14	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>571</b>

Source: Berks County Tax Assessment Office

Below are the descriptions of each of the land use categories displayed on the Existing Land Use Map, as well as acreage developed under each category. Trends are discussed following the descriptions.

The existing land use allocation shows the current land use in the Region with the total acreage used in each category. The category with the largest acreage is Agriculture followed by Residential then Institutional.

**Table 4.2: Existing Land Use Allocation**

	Jefferson Township	Penn Township	Bernville Borough	REGION TOTAL
Agriculture	6,588.46	5982.82	54.85	<b>12,626.13</b>
Commercial	362.15	88.82	9.65	<b>460.62</b>
Industrial	191.22	22.33	9.14	<b>222.69</b>
Institutional	394.41	3000.53	73.59	<b>3468.53</b>
Mixed Use	.38	1.12	0	<b>1.5</b>
Mobile Home	56.14	28.13	.09	<b>84.36</b>
Multi-Family	3.33	2.87	4.95	<b>11.15</b>
Residential	2341.53	2514.96	91.04	<b>4947.53</b>
Road	306.71	334.78	33.56	<b>675.05</b>
Stream	16.03	.21	0	<b>16.24</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,260.36</b>	<b>11976.57</b>	<b>276.87</b>	<b>22,513.8</b>

SOURCE: Berks County Planning Commission, 2002; verified by SSM

## **Agriculture**

The Agriculture category consists of areas currently or typically in agricultural use (cropland, pastureland, dairy facilities, barns, and stables), along with agriculturally based businesses.

## **Commercial**

Commercial uses consist of all properties where goods and services are sold, ranging from restaurants, convenience stores, gas stations, and markets, to professional offices and golf courses. Commercial development is concentrated mostly along the PA Route 183 Corridor, although scattered small commercial operations may be found intermixed with residential development.

## **Industrial**

The industrial land use category includes all properties being used for manufacturing and processing facilities, quarries, research and development facilities, metal- and woodworking shops, truck terminals, airports, and office/warehouse uses. The Region's industrial development includes industries located along PA Route 183, Bernville Borough and a small area in Penn Township.

## **Institutional**

Institutional lands include buildings and lands owned by the municipal, county, state, or federal governments; churches; recreational, cultural, and park facilities; libraries; schools; churches and adjacent properties; fire stations. Specific descriptions and examples of this use are provided in Chapter 9, Community Facilities & Services.

## **Mobile Home Park**

This category includes the mobile home park in the Region that is located in Jefferson Township.

## **Multi-Family Residential**

Multi-family residential uses are scattered throughout the Region and cover substantially less total acreage than single-family residential housing. This category consists of the following specific development types: three-family residences, condominiums, apartments (including those over garages), and residential conversions.

## **Residential**

This is the second largest land use after Agriculture in the Region. Specific development types included in this category are single-family dwellings and two-family dwellings (when constructed as semi-detached or “twin” houses). Significant concentrations of single-family residential development are located throughout the Region, with the highest concentrations located in Jefferson and Penn Townships.

## **Understanding the Trends**

Analysis of the Existing Land Use Map reveals several land use trends in the Region. One of the most important factors to the economy of a region is a healthy commercial and industrial base. There is one concentration of industrial use in Jefferson Township with smaller concentrations in Bernville and Penn Township. The Townships also have the potential to increase the level of commercial and industrial development through their zoning regulations, which can allow these uses in areas consistent with this Plan.

The Region is dominated by farmland, some productive, some simply meadow and open space. This abundance of open land and farms adds to the rural character and quality of life that is so important to the Region’s residents. Residential development pressure has increased over the past few years, and if left unchecked will slowly break up the Region’s rural landscape.

Higher density residential areas are located throughout the region with slightly more in Bernville Borough. The Region has experienced increased development as seen by the building permits granted in Chapter 5. This development pattern, if it continues, could erode the Region’s rural character and threaten the viability of agriculture in the future. It is critical that new growth be encouraged to locate in the Designated Growth Areas delineated in this Plan.