

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.



The Shoppes at Wyomissing

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 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 Sinking Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing, and more populated portions of Spring 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 Suburban Berks West Joint Planning Committee 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

The maps accompanying this section illustrate the existing uses of different areas of the region, as of 2018. The Suburban Berks West region encompasses a total area of 15,942 acres. Commercial development is concentrated along Route 422 Business (Penn Avenue), Woodland Road, Paper Mill Road, Park Road North, Broadcasting Road and Berkshire Boulevard. The commercial uses in these areas range from office complexes and regional shopping centers to mixed use commercial and residential uses in the more densely populated boroughs.

The area has a number of industrial properties. The bulk of these industrial uses are located along the Route 422 Business (Penn Avenue) corridor in Sinking Spring Borough and Spring Township along Fritztown and Mountain Home Roads. There are a number of industrial properties located sporadically in West Reading and Wyomissing Boroughs.

Institutional uses are abundant in the region. Institutional land use designations include municipal buildings, schools and hospitals. The Reading Hospital/Tower Health campus, a large regional medical and surgical center is located within the boundaries of West Reading Borough. The Berks County campus of Penn State University

Chapter 10 - Existing Land Use Plan

is located with Spring Township.

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 Wyomissing, West Reading and Sinking Spring Boroughs, as well as the northern portion of Spring Township around the borough boundaries.

The southern portion of Spring Township has experienced some scattered single family detached home subdivisions on one to two acre lots. Some of this land area continues to be wooded or used for agricultural activities.

Existing Land Use Analysis

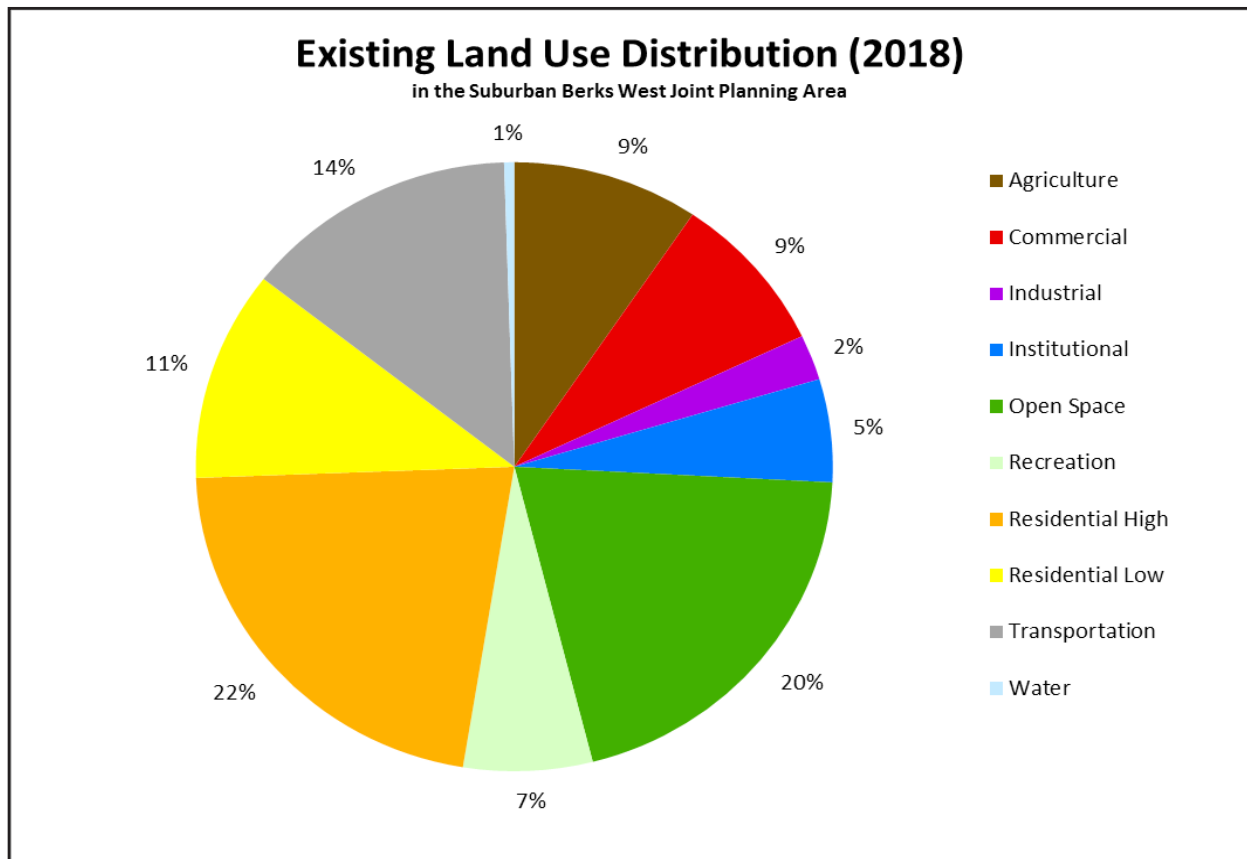
1. Methodology

The Existing Land Use Maps, Figures 31 through 34, were 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 Act 537 sewer plans, and other GIS data related to land use was also used in the analysis.

The table and chart below illustrate the existing land uses by acreage in the region:

Existing Land Use in the Suburban Berks West Joint Planning Area, 2018										
LANDUSE	Joint Planning Area		Spring Twp		Sinking Spring		West Reading		Wyomissing	
	# Acres	% of Area	# Acres	% of Area	# Acres	% of Area	# Acres	% of Area	# Acres	% of Area
Agriculture	1,508	9.3%	1,487	12.5%	21	2.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Commercial	1,353	8.4%	639	5.4%	112	14.0%	60	15.8%	542	18.7%
Industrial	384	2.3%	217	1.8%	105	13.1%	10	2.6%	52	1.8%
Institutional	871	5.6%	598	5.0%	27	3.4%	65	17.1%	181	6.2%
Open Space	3,223	21.0%	3,075	25.9%	47	5.9%	19	5.0%	82	2.8%
Recreation	1,044	6.5%	719	6.1%	55	6.9%	17	4.5%	253	8.7%
Residential High	3,480	21.8%	2,114	17.8%	292	36.5%	88	23.2%	986	34.0%
Residential Low	1,780	10.6%	1,691	14.3%	9	1.1%	0	0.0%	80	2.8%
Transportation	2,217	14.0%	1,250	10.5%	131	16.4%	121	31.8%	715	24.6%
Water	82	0.5%	70	0.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	12	0.4%
Total	15,942	100.0%	11,860	100.0%	799	100.0%	380	100.0%	2,903	100.0%

Source: Berks County Planning Commission



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 10.6% of the region’s land area or 1,780 acres, Residential Low land is the fourth largest land use category. Spring Township (1,691 acres) contains the majority of this type of residential development.
- West Reading Borough has no residential low land use.

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.

- At 21.8% this is the predominant land use within the region. The majority of this land is concentrated in Spring Township (2,114 acres) with Wyomissing (986 acres) having the second largest concentration.

Chapter 10 - Existing Land Use Plan

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 8.4% of the region's total land area or 1,353 acres.
- The majority of the commercial uses are located within Spring Township and account for 639 acres or 47% of commercial land use within the Suburban Berks West Region. Wyomissing Borough contains the second largest amount of this land use at 542.

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 384 acres or 2.3% of industrial land uses encompass the land in the Suburban Berks West Region.
- Industrial uses within the region are primarily located in Spring Township and Sinking Spring 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.

- Institutional lands occupy 871 acres or approximately 5.6% of the region's land area.
- Nearly 69% of the institutional land is located within Spring Township.

6. Agricultural Land

The rich soil, aided by a favorable climate and centralized Mid-Atlantic location, has contributed to a strong agricultural tradition in Berks County. 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 1,508 acres or approximately 9.3% of the region's land area.
- Out of those 1,508 acres, Spring Township has the majority of land area occupied by agricultural uses. Spring has 1,487 acres or approximately 98% of the region's agricultural production.
- Not surprisingly the boroughs contain very little to no agricultural uses because of their dense residential and commercial 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 1,044 acres or 6.5% of the region's total land area.
- 68% of the total recreation land in the region is located within Spring 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 second largest use of land at 3,223 acres or approximately 21% of the region's total land area.
- Not surprisingly, 95% of the total open space in the region is found in Spring 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.

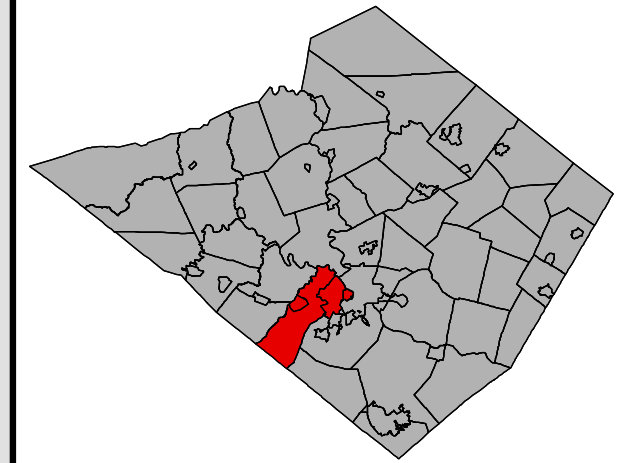
- The amount of land area consumed by such a network is somewhat significant (2,217 acres or approximately 14% of the total region's land area), due to the varying widths of rights-of-way associated with the highway and railroad modes of transportation.
- Spring Township has the most land area covered by transportation at 1,250 acres or 56% of the region's total transportation land area.
- The transportation category is the third largest land use designation by area in the joint planning area.

10. Water

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

- Water occupies 82 acres or approximately .5 % of the region's total land area.

Existing Land Use



Legend

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

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Berks DES, Spring Township
 Published by the Berks County Planning Commission BAB 10/18

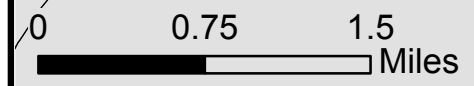
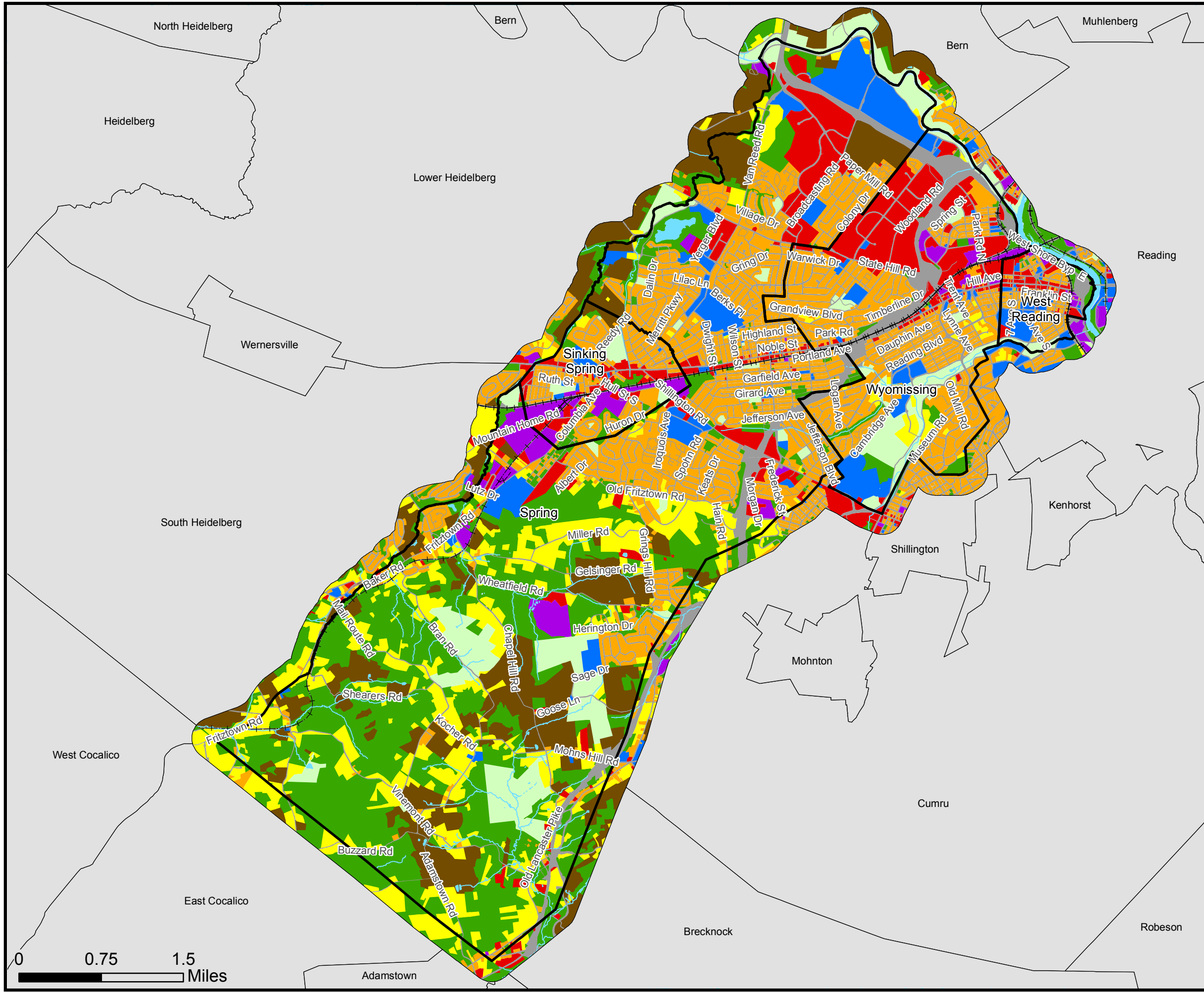
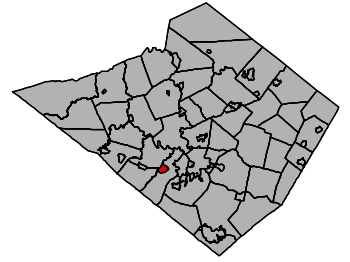
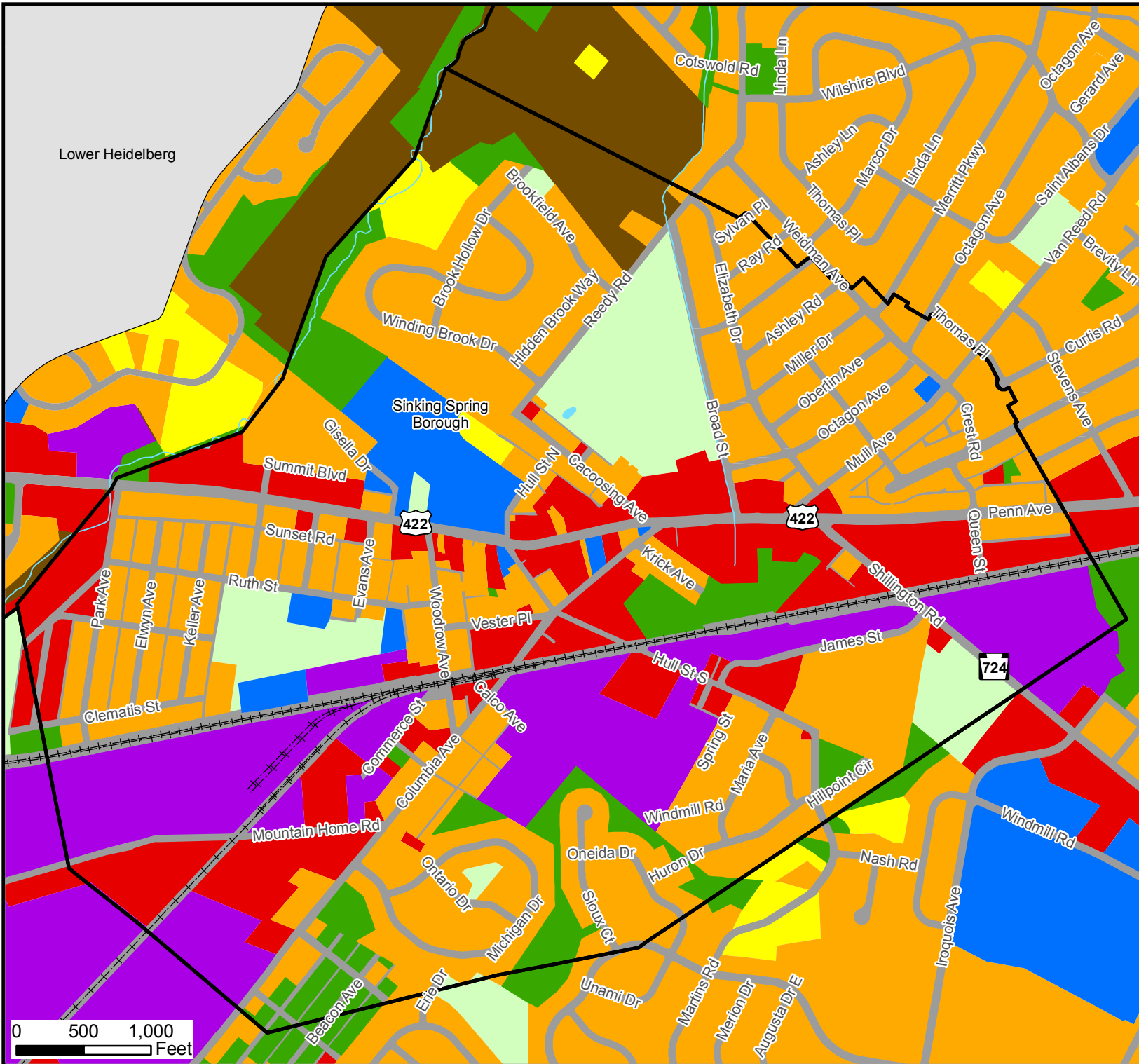


FIGURE 32

Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomingissing Joint Comprehensive Plan Update September 2018

Sinking Spring Borough Existing Land Use



Legend

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

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

Published by the Berks County Planning Commission BAB 10/18

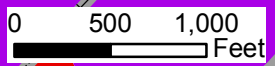
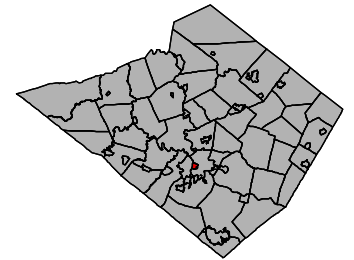


FIGURE 33

Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing Joint Comprehensive Plan Update September 2018

West Reading Borough Existing Land Use



Legend

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

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

Published by the Berks County Planning Commission BAB 10/18

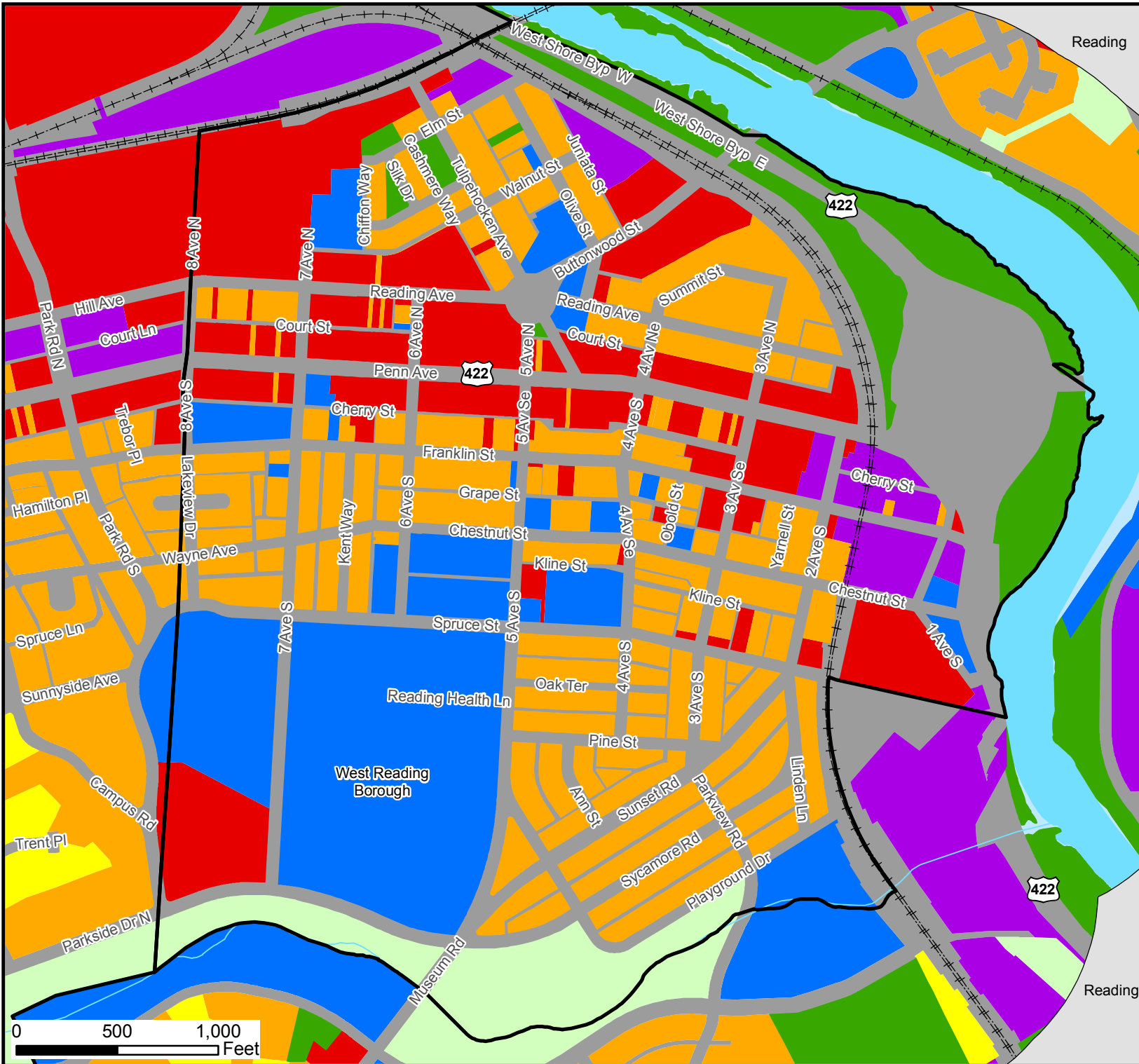
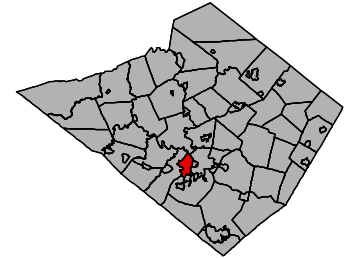


FIGURE 34

Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing Joint Comprehensive Plan Update September 2018

Wyomissing Borough Existing Land Use



Legend

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

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

Published by the Berks County Planning Commission
BAB 10/18



www.countyofberks.com/planning

