

Chapter 13

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 Shippensburg Township and Shippensburg 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 Cumberland County Tax Assessment Office supplied the GIS (Geographic Information System) information to create Figure 13.1, the Existing Land Use Map for the planning area. This data was based on the Cumberland County tax assessment of each parcel in the study area and the Borough's 1991 Comprehensive Plan Existing Land Use Map. Site verification was performed to confirm the accuracy of the data, and the Steering Committee provided insight as well. At the time of the development of this Plan, Franklin County did not have parcel information or land use categories digitized in a GIS format. The parcel coverage was provided by C&E Design, which was digitized by students from Shippensburg University. This is the same parcel data used in the Zoning Ordinance for the Borough of Shippensburg.

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

- Single-Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Mixed Use
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Public/Semi-Public
- Parking Lots
- Open Space
- Agricultural/Agribusiness
- Communications/Utilities
- Nursing Homes/Assisted Living Facility
- Vacant Lands/Buildings

The Existing Land Use Map should be used in conjunction with other maps in this document. The Agricultural Resources Map is particularly helpful in further analyzing the agriculture/agribusiness and public/semi-public categories on Figure 13.1. The Agricultural Resources Map (Figure 13.2) shows prime farmland and agricultural security areas within the study area.

LAND USE PATTERNS

The Shippensburg Region has experienced population growth and expansion over the past twenty years. The Borough and most of the Township create a major center of population and economic activity in the west end of Cumberland County, providing the bulk of the services to surrounding municipalities. Though the pressures of residential development have extended from the Borough into the adjacent townships, much of the surrounding region, including portions of Shippensburg Township, remains rural.

Residential development dominates the Borough; however, there are other characteristics and land use categories within the Borough which make it unique. The downtown commercial and mixed-use districts play a vital role as a regional community center. Other uses in the Borough include general commercial, public/semi-public areas, industrial areas, and various scattered vacant parcels and buildings that offer future development potential. The land use categories and approximate acreage of each are described in detail in Figure 13.3.

The Township has also experienced residential development, generally extending out from the Borough along the main transportation corridors. The past four years have seen increasing numbers of commercial and industrial development plans submitted that may change the Township's character. These proposed and approved major subdivisions and land developments, shown on Figure 13.3, demonstrate the growth pressures experienced throughout the region. However, even with the increased growth pressure in the Township, vacant parcels and vacant buildings still remain, which offer infill development potential.

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.

FIGURE 13.3: EXISTING LAND USE ALLOCATION

Figures in acres; percentages may not sum to 100.0 due to rounding error. Categories are listed in order of dominance in the Region. Note that the "residential" category is divided into "single-family" and "multi-family."

	BOROUGH	TOWNSHIP	REGION TOTAL
Residential	434.96 (33.5%)	316.35 (19.8%)	751.31 (25.9%)
<i>Single-Family</i>	386.13 (29.8%)	257.60 (16.1%)	643.73 (22.3%)
<i>Multi-Family</i>	37.26 (2.9%)	58.75 (3.7%)	96.01 (3.3%)
Agriculture/Agribusiness	1.05 (0.1%)	608.69 (38.1%)	609.74 (21.1%)
Public/Semi-Public	378.56 (29.2%)	96.47 (6.0%)	475.03 (16.4%)
Commercial	52.81 (4.1%)	165.51 (10.4%)	218.32 (7.6%)
Institutional	0.00	227.38 (14.2%)	227.38 (7.9%)
Transportation (roads and railroads)	159.83 (12.3%)	52.27 (3.3%)	212.10 (7.3%)
Industrial	135.54 (10.5%)	24.91 (1.6%)	160.45 (5.5%)
Vacant	73.92 (5.7%)	58.73 (3.7%)	132.65 (4.6%)
Open Space	24.17 (1.9%)	20.30 (1.3%)	44.47 (1.5%)
Mixed Use (commercial and residential)	26.34 (2.0%)	9.32 (0.6%)	35.66 (1.2%)
Communication/Utilities	5.33 (0.4%)	6.42 (0.4%)	11.75 (0.4%)
Nursing Homes/Assisted Living Fac.	0.00	9.64 (0.6%)	9.64 (0.3%)
Parking Lots	3.04 (0.2%)	0.00	3.04 (0.1%)
TOTAL	1,295.55 (100.0%)	1,595.99 (100.0%)	2,891.54 (100.0%)

SOURCE: Cumberland County Planning Commission, 2004; C&E Design, 2004; field verified by SSM, 2004.

Not surprisingly, the majority of exiting land uses for the region consists of residential uses. What is somewhat surprising is the second highest existing land use acreage is agricultural/agribusiness. Much

of the land classified as agricultural however, is located near the I-81 interchange, and does not include truly productive farmland. Rounding out the top five existing land uses for the region are public/semi-public; commercial; and institutional.

Single-Family Residential

More acreage is in this land use than any other in the Region. Specific development types included in this category are single-family dwellings, two-family dwellings (when constructed as semi-detached or “twin” houses), mobile homes, and mobile home parks. Significant concentrations of single-family residential development in the Township are located in subdivisions like Mountain View near Baltimore Road, the mobile home park along US Route 11, along Route 696 (North Earl Street), and along Wyrick Avenue and South Fayette Street.

The Borough was developed in a grid pattern with blocks created by streets intersecting at right angles, alleyways, and sidewalks on both sides of each street. Areas with predominately single-family uses include the blocks between Queen Street and Craig Street, Walnut Street and Orange Street, and some scattered areas to the far west of downtown. The largest concentration of older and historic homes is located around the downtown central business district of the Borough. Generally, the residential areas of the Township do not have this same growth pattern, even where located adjacent to the Borough, so there is no sense of Borough extension. The Township developed mostly as a rural community, with Shippensburg University encompassing a large amount of land in the northern part of the Township.

Multi-Family Residential

Multi-family residential uses are scattered throughout the Township and Borough, and cover substantially less total acreage than single-family residential housing. In the Township, this category contains a large number of apartments that function as student housing for Shippensburg University, although they are not University-owned. This category consists of the following specific development types: three-family residences, condominiums, apartments (including those over garages), residential conversions, fraternity and sorority houses, and boarding/rooming houses. There are several notable concentrations in the Township, including Timber Hill, the fraternity and sorority houses located off of Britton Road, Bard Meadows Townhouses, College Park Apartments, Britton Square Apartments, and several converted homes located near the University campus. Multi-family uses within the Borough are generally scattered throughout established single-family neighborhoods.

Mixed-Use

The mixed-use category includes structures that contain both commercial and residential uses, where both uses are considered a primary use. There are no significant concentrations of mixed-use development in the Township. In the Borough, mixed-use structures are concentrated in the downtown central business district, where retail uses occupy the street level and residences are found on upper floors. This arrangement is typical of older towns. People who live in and around mixed uses are more likely to walk to local businesses instead of driving, keeping the downtown vibrant.

Commercial

Commercial uses consist of all properties where goods and services are sold, ranging from fast food establishments and department stores to professional offices. Commercial development in the Township is concentrated along Walnut Bottom Road (Rte. 174), King Street (US Route 11/533), and Baltimore Road, although individual commercial operations may be found intermixed with residential development. The majority of the commercial uses in the Borough are located within the downtown central business district along King Street (US Route 11/533).

Open Space

The open space category consists of *privately owned* open space and recreational lands, such as private open space set aside within a residential development for the exclusive use of the residents. There are limited areas of private open space within the Borough, as most of the open spaces are publicly owned and are therefore included in the following category. In the Township, much of the private open space is farmed and therefore designated "agriculture/agribusiness."

Public/ Semi-Public

Public and semi-public lands include cemeteries; buildings and lands owned by the municipal, county, state, or federal governments (including police stations); recreational, cultural, and park facilities; libraries; schools; churches; fire stations; correctional facilities; and rail, bus, and airport terminals. Specific descriptions and examples of this use are provided in Chapter 16, Community Facilities & Services.

Institutional

The dominant use in this category is the property owned by Shippensburg University, including all campus buildings, dormitories, sports facilities, and parking areas.

Industrial

The industrial land use category includes all properties being used for manufacturing and processing facilities, research and development facilities, metal- and woodworking shops, truck terminals, and office/warehouse uses. Most of the Township's industrial development has occurred along North Queen Street and Walnut Bottom Road. Virtually all of the Borough's industrial uses are in the Shippensburg Borough Industrial Park on East Dykeman Road.

Communications/Utilities

This category includes lands owned by utility companies such as water and sewerage providers; gas, electrical, and telephone systems; pipelines; and radio, television, and cellular transmission structures. Note that this includes such lands only when they are owed outright by the utility; areas of easements are not counted here.

Vacant Lands/Buildings

Vacant parcels were identified by the Cumberland County Tax Assessment Office in their 2001 reassessment and are found scattered throughout both municipalities. There are no significant concentrations. They are of interest principally for the re-use potential that they present.

Agricultural/Agribusiness

The agriculture/agribusiness category consists of areas currently or typically in active agricultural use (cropland, pastureland, dairy facilities, barns, and stables) along with agriculturally based businesses. Not surprisingly, nearly all of this land is in the Township.

Nursing Homes/Assisted Living Facilities

This category includes nursing homes, retirement communities, and assisted-living facilities. There are several facilities of this type located in the Township, particularly along Walnut Bottom Road; no uses of this type are found in the Borough.

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 are several significant concentrations of commercial use in the Township: the Walnut Bottom Road, King Street, Hot Point Avenue, and Baltimore Road corridors. The Township also has the potential to increase the level of commercial and industrial development through its zoning regulations, which allow these uses by right or conditional use. In the Borough, the established commercial area continues to be the downtown business district along King and Fayette Streets. This trend should persist, as there are vacant parcels and buildings available for purchase and/or re-use. A trend which has occurred nationwide, and some communities are trying to reverse, is the relocation of businesses which serve the day-to-day needs of residents to shopping areas outside Boroughs. The Borough must strive to attract new businesses, while retaining and supporting the existing ones in order to remain a viable economic and cultural center for the region. The established business districts in the Township will continue to be pressured by new 'big-box' retail centers as they locate in the region. The Economic Development Chapter of this document will discuss these issues in detail.

The Borough is by far the main residential center of the region; however single-family residential developments are now found throughout the Township. The Township is also experiencing increased development of multi-family townhouses and apartment complexes, as seen on the Approved and Proposed Subdivision and Land Development Plans Map (Figure 13.4). There are a number of multi-family apartment complexes in the Township located around the University, including the College Park Apartments, the Bard Meadows Townhouse complex, and the "fraternity and sorority row" along Sunbeam Court.

There is a trend toward converting older, larger single family homes to student housing in the Township, especially in the vicinity of Shippensburg University. The University's enrollment is growing, and the need for student housing with it. Student housing can affect the look and make-up of an established residential area. It is important that the Township regulate conversions and enforce building and maintenance codes in order to preserve the façades of these homes as well as to retain the character of the community.

The Borough industrial park is the dominant concentration of industrial land in the region. The few industrial sites in the Township are concentrated along North Queen Street and Walnut Bottom Road. As previously mentioned, zoning regulations will enable the Township to develop additional property for industrial uses.