

CHAPTER 9

EXISTING LAND USE

The existing land use composition and development patterns within Muhlenberg Township are essential planning elements to formulate a plan for future growth and conservation management. This chapter will focus on the existing land use conditions, construction activity, and subdivision and land development activity within Muhlenberg Township. This documentation shall be utilized to formulate a plan for future land use over the next 20 years.

A. EXISTING LAND USE SURVEY AND ANALYSIS (2002)

In March of 2002, an existing land use survey of Muhlenberg Township was undertaken by reviewing land use assessment codes and maps issued by the Berks County Mapping Department, studying aerial photography and conducting a windshield survey. In August of 2002, a second land use survey was completed to verify the accuracy of the initial land use survey. The results of the surveys are described in the text below and portrayed on Figure 9, Existing Land Use Map (2002).

AGRICULTURAL

Prior to 1960, agricultural land uses were the most prominent land use classification within Muhlenberg Township. Today, there are very few large contiguous land areas that could be classified as agricultural. This land use category includes a wide range of uses including crop production, dairy farming, livestock production, mushroom production, tree farms, and pastures. There are a total of 628.63 acres of land considered as agricultural lands, occupying 8.16 percent of the total land area within Muhlenberg Township. These areas are identified as **green** on the Existing Land Use Map (2002). As a rule of thumb, these areas had to be at least ten (10) acres in size and display some evidence of agricultural activity within the past two (2) years. The existing agricultural land areas are scattered in small pockets within the eastern and western portions of Muhlenberg Township. A significant amount of this land use will be consumed by other residential and municipal uses in the near future.

SINGLE FAMILY DETACHED RESIDENTIAL

Single family detached residential uses are a prominent land use classification within Muhlenberg Township. This land use category includes only single family detached dwelling units. These areas are generally located along existing roads or within developments containing low to medium residential densities. There are a total of 1,874.67 acres of land associated with single family detached land uses, occupying 24.34 percent of the total land area within Muhlenberg Township. These areas are identified as **yellow** on the Existing Land Use Map (2002).

The existing acreage and percentages for this land use designation is somewhat skewed considering a single family detached dwelling unit could be placed on a residential lot containing 5,000 square feet or 5 acres. Therefore, the 2000 Census data should also be utilized to avoid a misrepresentation of data. According to the demographic information for population and housing, there were 4,553 single family detached housing units representing 66.0 percent of the housing stock in Muhlenberg Township.

In general, single family detached residential units are located throughout Muhlenberg Township with higher concentrations and densities within established developments (pre 1980) such as Hyde Park, South Temple, Temple, Cherokee Park, Muhlenberg Park, Riverview Park and College Heights, or within new developments (post 1980) such as Eagle's Landing, Whitford Hills, Fox Chase, Kings View Estates, Rivers Bend (Phases I and II), Clearview Heights, Heritage Place, Rivers Edge, Heather Knoll and Willingham Park.



TWO TO FOUR FAMILY RESIDENTIAL UNITS

This land use category includes either two to four family detached dwelling units on a common lot and/or semi-detached dwelling units. These uses are moderately found within Muhlenberg Township, however, higher concentrations are generally found in Hyde Park, Temple, South Temple Heights and Rivers Edge. These areas are identified as **light orange** on the Existing Land Use Map (2002). There are a total of 31.65 acres of land associated with two to four family units, occupying 0.41 percent of the total land area within Muhlenberg Township. This classification is typically associated with medium to high residential densities and therefore the amount of land area associated with this land use classification is relatively low. According to the most recent demographic information for population and housing, there were 1,414 two to four family housing units representing 20.5 percent of the total housing stock in Muhlenberg Township.

MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL UNITS

There are a few multi-family residential uses within Muhlenberg Township. This land use category includes either townhouse or apartment. These areas are found within College Heights, Hyde Park, Temple, Heather Knoll, Heritage Place, Dogwood Place as well as a few other scattered locations. These areas are identified as **orange** on the Existing Land Use Map (2002). There are a total of 42.07 acres of land associated with multi-family units, occupying 0.55 percent of the total land area within Muhlenberg Township. This classification is typically associated with high residential densities and therefore the amount of land area associated with this land use classification is very low. According to the most recent demographic information for population and housing, there were 657 multi-family housing units representing 9.5 percent of the total housing stock in Muhlenberg Township.



MOBILE HOME PARKS

This land use category includes developments that contain mobile homes, which can be transported from site to site. These areas are found in the Laurel Commons Mobile Home Park and the Valley View Mobile Home Park. These areas are identified as ***brown*** on the Existing Land Use Map (2002). There are a total of 36.08 acres of land associated with mobile home parks, occupying 0.47 percent of the total land area within Muhlenberg Township. This classification is typically associated with very high residential densities and therefore the amount of land area associated with this land use classification is very low. According to the most recent demographic information for population and housing, there were 273 mobile homes representing 4.0 percent of the total housing stock in Muhlenberg Township.



MIXED USE (COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL) UNITS

There are few mixed use units within Muhlenberg Township. This land use category includes a combination of commercial and residential uses on the same lot, either within the same structure or within independent structures. These areas are remotely found within Muhlenberg Township, however higher concentrations are generally found in Hyde Park and Temple. This land use classification is commonly associated with a village commercial atmosphere and is identified as ***pink*** on the Existing Land Use Map (2002). There are a total of 23.49 acres of land associated with mixed use units, occupying 0.30 percent of the total land area within Muhlenberg Township.

COMMERCIAL

There are numerous commercial land uses within Muhlenberg Township. This land use category includes a variety of commercial uses including: retail business establishments; business and professional offices; personal service establishments; occupational trade establishments; restaurants; banks and financial institutional establishments; shopping plazas and centers; automobile service and sales; medical and dental offices; hotels and motels; and entertainment complexes. These areas are found primarily along Business Route 222, Route 61 and Kutztown Road. This land use classification is commonly associated with a village and highway commercial uses, which are identified as **red** on the Existing Land Use Map (2002). There are a total of 524.57 acres of land associated with commercial uses, occupying 6.81 percent of the total land area within Muhlenberg Township.



Some of the more prominent commercial centers and land uses include the Fairgrounds Square Mall, Madeira Plaza, Muhlenberg Shopping Plaza, North Reading Plaza, Penn Plaza, Lowes Home Center, Met-Ed and Tempstar Employment Center.

INDUSTRIAL

Based upon the existing transportation network within close proximity to Muhlenberg Township, there are several industrial land uses within Muhlenberg Township. This land use category includes a variety of industrial uses including: manufacturing; warehousing; wholesale and distribution; metal processing; printing and publishing; laboratory and research centers; and intensive agricultural uses. These industrial areas are primarily found within close proximity to major traffic arteries and are identified as **purple** on the Existing Land Use Map (2002). There are 1,074.22 total acres of land associated with industrial uses, occupying 13.95 percent of the land area in Muhlenberg Township.



Some of the more prominent industrial areas include Agere Systems, NGK Metals, Clover Farms Dairy, World Electronics, Singer Equipment, Bachman Company, Ancora Capital (Jetsort), Sealed Air Corporation (Cryovac), Power Packaging, Carpenter Technology, and Elite Sportswear.

PUBLIC, INSTITUTIONAL AND MUNICIPAL

There are numerous public, institutional and municipal land areas within Muhlenberg Township. This land use category includes a variety of uses, facilities and services including: governmental; educational; recreational and administrative. These land uses are identified as *dark blue* on the Existing Land Use Map (2002). There are 1,132.63 acres of land associated with public, institutional and municipal land uses, occupying 14.70 percent of the land area within Muhlenberg Township.



Some of the more prominent public, institutional and municipal uses within Muhlenberg Township include the buildings and properties owned by Muhlenberg Township, the Muhlenberg School District, Berks County Intermediate Unit, Reading Muhlenberg Vocational Technical School, Muhlenberg Township Municipal Authority, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the local churches.

VACANT, UNDEVELOPED OR RESERVED LAND AREAS

There are several scattered sites located within Muhlenberg Township, which are classified as vacant, since the site is primarily not utilized for a specific land use activity at this time, or is reserved as common open space, or remains as open space containing meadows or woodlands. The land use assessment code developed by the Berks County Mapping Department also identifies these areas as vacant land. In addition, some of these vacant land areas have been recently approved for a specific use, however, the site has not been developed at this time. These vacant parcels of land are identified as *light gray* on the Existing Land Use Map (2002). There are 1,035.97 acres of land associated with public, institutional and municipal land uses, occupying 13.45 percent of the total land area within Muhlenberg Township.

EASEMENTS AND RIGHTS-OF-WAY

There are numerous scattered sites with odd configurations within Muhlenberg Township, which are classified as easements or rights-of-way. These areas are vacant, but do occupy land for a specific purpose such as utilities and transportation. Most of these land areas are either owned or maintained by Muhlenberg Township, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and/or public utility companies providing service within Muhlenberg Township. These vacant parcels of land are identified as *white* on the Existing Land Use Map (2002). There are 1,298.87 total acres of land associated with easements and rights-of-way, occupying 16.86 percent of the total land area within Muhlenberg Township.

B. EXISTING LAND USE COMPOSITION (2002)

The following table provides the existing land use composition for Muhlenberg Township in 2002, as portrayed on Figure 9, Existing Land Use 2002.

MUHLENBERG TOWNSHIP EXISTING LAND USE COMPOSITION (2002)				
Existing Land Use Category	Land Use Color	Total Land Area	Municipal Percentage	Municipal Rank
Agricultural	Green	628.63 acres	8.16 %	6
Single Family Residential Units	Yellow	1,874.67 acres	24.34 %	1
Two - Four Family Residential Units	Light Orange	31.65 acres	0.41 %	10
Multi-Family Residential Units	Dark Orange	42.07 acres	0.55 %	8
Mobile Home Parks	Brown	36.08 acres	0.47 %	9
Mixed Use	Pink	23.49 acres	0.30 %	11
Commercial	Red	524.57 acres	6.81 %	7
Industrial	Purple	1,074.22 acres	13.95 %	4
Public, Institutional and Municipal	Dark Blue	1,132.63 acres	14.70 %	3
Vacant, Undeveloped or Reserved	Light Gray	1,035.97 acres	13.45 %	5
Easements and Rights-Of-Way	White	1,298.87 acres	16.86 %	2
<i>Source: Berks County Mapping Department, ARRO Consulting, Inc. and Hawk Valley Associates, P.C.</i>				

Based upon the information presented above, the following existing land use characteristics for the year 2002 can be concluded:

1. The largest land use category in terms of land area within Muhlenberg Township is *Single Family Detached Residential* (1,874.67 acres or 24.34 percent). This category accounts for 66 percent of the overall housing stock for Muhlenberg Township and it is consistent with most suburban municipalities that have experienced rapid development after 1950. The overall percentage for this land use category is significantly higher as compared to the total for Berks County (14.5 percent).
2. The second largest land category in terms of land area within Muhlenberg Township is *Easements and Rights of Way* (1,298.87 acres or 16.86 percent). Most of this land area is the form of public roads, which are owned by Muhlenberg Township or the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The overall percentage of this category is notably higher as compared to Berks County (4.6 percent).
3. The third largest land use category in terms of area within Muhlenberg Township is *Public, Institutional and Municipal* (1,135.97 acres or 14.70 percent). The most prominent uses within this category include parks, recreation areas, schools, churches, cemeteries and open space areas. The overall percentage of this category is compatible as compared to Berks County (12.3 percent).

4. The fourth largest land use category in terms of area within Muhlenberg Township is *Industrial* (1,074.22 acres or 13.95 percent). The most prominent industrial land uses include Carpenter Technology, Agere Systems, NGK Metals, Berks Corporate Center, Cross Roads Corporate Center, Muhlenberg Industrial Mall West and Tuckerton Commerce Center. The overall percentage for this land use category is significantly higher as compared to the total for Berks County (3.2 percent).
5. The fifth largest land use category in terms of land area within Muhlenberg Township is *Vacant, Undeveloped or Reserved* (1,035 acres or 13.45 percent). Although these areas are currently undeveloped, it is anticipated that most will be developed with uses that are permitted through their designated zoning classifications over the next 20 years. However, certain land areas will remain vacant or undeveloped due to physical or environmental development limitations.
6. The sixth largest land use category in terms of land area in Muhlenberg Township is *Agricultural* (628.63 acres or 8.16 percent). The most notable uses include the mushroom production facilities in the northeastern section of Muhlenberg Township and the few remaining farms located in the western section of Muhlenberg Township. Although the farms are currently undeveloped, it is anticipated that most will be developed as recreational uses or with uses that are permitted through their designated zoning classifications over the next 20 years. The overall percentage for this land use category is also considerably lower as compared to the total for Berks County (34.3 percent).
7. The seventh largest land use category in terms of land area within Muhlenberg Township is *Commercial* (524.57 acres or 6.81 percent). The most prominent commercial uses include the Fairgrounds Square Mall, Madeira Plaza, Muhlenberg Shopping Plaza, North Reading Plaza, Penn Plaza, Lowes Home Center and Met-Ed. The overall percentage for this land use category is also significantly higher as compared to the total for Berks County (1.9 percent).
8. The remaining land areas within Muhlenberg Township include: Two and Four Family Residential (31.65 acres or 0.41 percent); Multi-Family Residential (42.07 acres or 0.55 percent); Mobile Home Parks (36.08 acres or 0.47 percent) and Mixed Use (23.49 acres or 0.30 percent). These land uses are not very prominent in terms of size, however, the percentages are compatible to those of Berks County. In addition, the current Muhlenberg Township Zoning Ordinance does account for these uses within certain zoning districts.



C. SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

Historically, the population of Muhlenberg Township has grown at a substantial rate as was the case for most municipalities within Berks County between 1950 and 2000. This growth rate is further defined under Chapter 5 (Demographics) of this Plan. In order to link the existing land use patterns with the anticipated growth areas within Muhlenberg Township, the recent subdivision and land development activity needs to be evaluated.

ENDORSED SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT PLANS

The following chart provides a cumulative inventory of the approved subdivision and land development activity within Muhlenberg Township between the years 1997 and 2001. All of these subdivision and land development plans have been reviewed and approved in accordance with the requirements specified by Muhlenberg Township and the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

ENDORSED SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY (1997 – 2001)						
Development Activity	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Total (1997-2001)
Number of Plans	7	5	14	10	10	46
Single Family Units	12	188	2	7	25	234
Semi-Detached Units	0	84	18	0	50	152
Townhouse Units	0	48	26	3	0	77
Apartment Units	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mobile Home Units	0	0	0	0	0	0
Commercial Lots	0	3	7	4	3	17
Industrial Lots	2	0	4	0	0	6
Other	0	1	9	6	3	19
Developed Acreage	8.81	61.71	125.90	144.92	26.58	367.92
Linear Feet of New Roads	0	2,551	10,606	1,200	1,853	16,210
Total Residential Units	12	320	46	10	75	463
Total Developed Residential Acreage	7.39	54.20	8.44	52.65	22.86	145.54
Average Dwelling Units/Acre	1.62	5.90	5.45	0.19	3.28	3.18
<i>Source: Berks County Planning Commission, Muhlenberg Township and Hawk Valley Associates, P.C.</i>						

Based upon the information contained within the table on the preceding page, the following observations have been made concerning the subdivision and land development plan applications approved between the years 1997 and 2001:

1. Muhlenberg Township had 46 applications approved representing 2.66 percent of the total number of applications approved within Berks County.
2. Muhlenberg Township had 463 total residential units approved representing 5.15 percent of the total number residential units approved within Berks County.
3. Single family detached residential units accounted for 50.54 percent of the total residential units approved within Muhlenberg Township. This percentage is significantly less when compared to the percentage of single family detached dwelling units (66.0 percent) within the total housing stock of Muhlenberg Township.
4. Single family semi-detached units accounted for 32.83 percent of the total residential units approved within Muhlenberg Township. This percentage is considerably higher when compared to the percentage of single family semi-detached units detached dwelling units (66.0 percent) within the total housing stock of Muhlenberg Township.

5. Townhouse units accounted for 16.63 percent of the total residential units approved within Muhlenberg Township. This percentage is considerably higher when compared to the percentage of multi-family dwelling units detached dwelling units (9.5 percent) within the total housing stock of Muhlenberg Township.



6. There were no approved residential developments within Muhlenberg Township, which contained apartment units or mobile home units.

7. Muhlenberg Township has experienced a fair amount of non-residential land development activity. Most of the approved commercial and industrial subdivision or land development plans are located in close proximity to Business Route 222, State Route 61, Kutztown Road and Tuckerton Road.

8. The approved subdivision and land development plans contained 3.07 miles of new roads. This represents an increase of 2.97 percent of the total length of roads within Muhlenberg Township.

9. The approved residential developments within Muhlenberg Township had a mixed balance of residential densities with an average of 3.18 dwelling units per acre. This mixture is based upon the availability of utilities (sanitary sewer and water supply facilities), limitations for development (physical or environmental) and/or by the prevailing zoning requirements.

10. Within the last five (5) years, there were 367.92 acres of land approved for subdivision and land development. This accounts for 4.78 percent of the total land area within Muhlenberg Township. Less than half (39.56 percent) of the total developed land area was utilized to accommodate residential development. limitations for development and/or by the prevailing zoning regulations.

ACTIVE SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT PLANS

The number of approved subdivision and land development plans is one method to measure growth and activity within a given area. Another method is to identify subdivision and land development plan applications, which are being considered by each municipality within Muhlenberg Township. The following chart identifies the major residential developments (greater than 10 units) and land development plan applications, which have been recently approved or are being considered.

MAJOR SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT PLANS				
Map No.	Name of Development	Type of Development		Status of Application
		Land Use	Units	
1	Kingsview Estates II	Residential (SF)	20	Preliminary Plan
2	Reed Subdivision	Mixed Use Residential (124 SF; 114 TH)	238	Sketch Plan submitted; re-zoning application is pending
3	Santarelli Development	Residential (SD)	30	Final Plan has been approved
4	Sabatucci Development	Residential (SD)	40	Final Plan has been approved
5	Orchard Apartments	Residential (Apts.)	20	Final Plan
6	Riverview Industrial Park	Industrial	12	Final Plan has been approved
7	Settlement at Reed Farm I	Residential (Apts.)	225	Final plan approved; construction is underway
8	Settlement at Reed Farm II	Residential (SF)	115	Final plan approved; construction is underway
SF = Single Family Detached Unit		SD = Semi-Detached Dwelling Unit	TH = Townhouse Unit	Apts. = Apartment units
<i>Source: Muhlenberg Township, May 2003</i>				

Based upon a review of the recent subdivision and land development activity that has been approved or is in the process of being considered for approval, the following observations have been made concerning future growth and development:

1. Muhlenberg Township has approved or is considering the approval of approximately 688 new residential dwelling units of which include: 259 single family detached (37.6% of the total units); 70 semi-detached units (10.2% of the total units); 114 townhouse units (16.6% of the total units); and 245 apartment units (35.6% of the total).
2. If the 688 new dwelling units are constructed and occupied over the next 20 years, Muhlenberg Township could experience a net increase of 1,624 new residents within its municipal borders bringing the total population to nearly 18,000 residents. This assumed rate of growth is consistent with the population projections formulated as part of Chapter 5 of this Plan.
3. Over the past few years, there have been a fair or proportionate share of residential land uses that have been approved or are in the process of being considered for municipal approval by Muhlenberg Township.

D. RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

The recorded subdivision and land development plans for Muhlenberg Township provide data used to monitor the progress of construction activity. In order to determine the actual residential growth within Muhlenberg Township, the building permits issued must also be analyzed. The following chart provides the building permits issued by type between the years 1997 and 2001.

RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY (1997 – 2001)						
Building Permits Issued by Type	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Total (1997-2001)
Single Family Units	18	39	22	36	36	151
Semi-Detached Units	14	16	24	40	30	124
Townhouse Units	0	0	0	0	0	0
Apartment Units	0	0	0	0	4	4
Mobile Home Units	0	0	0	0	0	0
Conversions	0	0	0	0	0	0
Apartments Formed	0	0	0	0	0	0
Units Demolished	2	0	0	1	1	4
<i>Source: Berks County Planning Commission, Muhlenberg Township and Hawk Valley Associates, P.C.</i>						

Based upon the information contained within the table presented above, the following observations can be made concerning residential growth within Muhlenberg Township:

1. The demand for residential building permits is keeping pace with the number of residential lots or units approved through the subdivision and land development plan application process. Over the past 5 years, the occupancy rate has been 60.25 percent of the available supply of new housing units within Muhlenberg Township.
2. Single family detached residential units accounted for 54.12 percent of the total building permits issued for residential construction within Muhlenberg Township.
3. Single family semi-detached residential units accounted for 44.44 percent of the total residential building permits issued within Muhlenberg Township. All 116 approved townhouse units are located within Caernarvon Township.
4. Building permits issued for townhouses (0 percent), apartments (1.43 percent) and mobile homes (0 percent) were almost unaccountable over the past 5 years.