

CHAPTER 10

ADJACENT PLANNING AND ZONING

Muhlenberg Township is surrounded or bordered by eight (8) municipalities. These municipalities include Laureldale Borough, Alsace Township, Lower Alsace Township, the City of Reading, Bern Township, Ontelaunee Township, Maiden creek Township, and Ruscombmanor Township, all of which are located within Berks County. To provide an effective regional evaluation, the existing land use patterns, zoning ordinances and comprehensive plans of each municipality were evaluated to avoid potential land use conflicts and discrepancies. In addition, the Berks County Comprehensive Plan was also evaluated to avoid planning and land use discrepancies. This task satisfies the requirements specified by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. Figure 10 of this Plan depicts the existing zoning districts that are currently regulated by each adjacent municipality to Muhlenberg Township.

A. LAURELDALE BOROUGH

Laureldale Borough is located within the southeastern portion of Muhlenberg Township sharing a common municipal boarder of 32,500 linear feet with Muhlenberg Township. In 1930, Laureldale Borough was officially incorporated as a municipality from lands that were previously part of Muhlenberg Township. As part of this planning process, Muhlenberg Township had invited Laureldale Borough to participate in a joint planning effort, however the Laureldale Borough Council had declined the invitation. The following land use and zoning analysis is provided for Laureldale Borough:

Existing Land Use Composition: The existing land use composition of Laureldale Borough is considered typical of developed suburban communities. Some of the more prominent existing land uses within Laureldale Borough include the Laureldale Community Park, Central Fire Company, Muhlenberg Community Library, Muhlenberg School District Administration Building, Muhlenberg Middle School and Yuasa-Exide Corporation. Most of Laureldale Borough has been developed with residential uses with medium to high residential densities.

Existing Zoning Districts: The Laureldale Borough Zoning Ordinance was adopted in September of 1992 and last amended in May of 1999. Laureldale Borough has established five (5) Zoning Districts that are located around the perimeter of Muhlenberg Township. These Zoning Districts are depicted on Figure 10 and described below:

R-1 (Residential District): The R-1 District permits single family detached dwelling units on 5,000 square foot lots. The R-1 District also permits other uses including municipal, recreational, churches and educational uses.

R-2 (Residential District): The R-2 District permits single family detached dwelling units, single family semi-detached units, and two-family units on 4,000 square foot lots. The R-2 District also permits townhouses (1,800 square feet minimum per unit) and other uses including municipal, recreational, churches, educational and office uses.

R-3 (Residential District): The R-3 District permits a variety of residential uses including single family semi-detached units and two-family units on 3,500 to 6,000 square foot lots as well as garden apartments on 36,000 square foot lots.

C (Commercial District): The C District permits a wide variety of commercial uses including retail, professional offices, financial institutions, government offices, mortuaries, hotels, motels, gasoline stations, commercial recreational, automobile sale and service, churches and other commerce uses. In general, the minimum lot size required for development is 9,000 square feet and 1,800 square feet per commercial unit.

I (Industrial District): The I District permits industrial uses including offices, manufacturing, wholesaling, warehousing and research centers with limitations and development controls. In addition, retail service establishments and telecommunication facilities are permitted by special exception within the I District. Typically, a minimum of 2 acres of land is required for each of the industrial uses permitted within the I District.

Future Land Use Planning: The Laureldale Borough Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the Laureldale Borough Council on February 13, 1995. The Future Land Use Plan recognized seven (7) land use categories, including residential (moderate and high density), commercial (highway and mixed use), industrial, institutional, and recreational. The Future Land Use Plan recommends that the area along the northern boarder of Muhlenberg Township be developed with a combination of medium to high density residential and commercial uses; the area along the eastern boarder of Muhlenberg Township to be developed with recreational uses; the area along the southern boarder of Muhlenberg Township to be developed with medium density residential, commercial and industrial uses; and the area along the western boarder of Muhlenberg Township with residential and institutional uses.

B. ALSACE TOWNSHIP

Alsace Township is located along the eastern boundary of Muhlenberg Township sharing a common municipal boarder of 22,700 linear feet with Muhlenberg Township. The following land use and zoning analysis is provided for Alsace Township:

Existing Land Use Composition: The land use composition of Alsace Township is considered diversified with rural-suburban characteristics. Some of the more prominent existing land uses along the eastern boarder of Muhlenberg Township include the Urbanik Mobile Home Park, the Temple Quarry, Deer Path Hill and McKnight's Gap. In addition, there are a few low density residential developments and commercial establishments that are adjacent to Muhlenberg Township.

Existing Zoning Districts: The Alsace Township Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 1993 and last amended on June 24, 1998. At the time of this writing, the Alsace Township is in the process of considering revisions to the current Zoning Ordinance. The zoning analysis is based upon the regulations that were in effect in January of 2003. Alsace Township presently has four (4) Zoning Districts that are located along the eastern boarder of Muhlenberg Township. These Zoning Districts are depicted on Figure 10 and described below:

R-1 (Woodland Conservation District): The R-1 District permits single family detached dwelling units on 3 acre lots. The R-1 District also permits other uses including municipal, institutional and conservation uses.

R-3 (Rural Residential District): The R-3 District permits a variety of residential uses including single family detached dwelling units, single family semi-detached units and two-family units on 1 to 2 acre lots (dependant upon sanitary sewer availability). In addition, mobile home parks, institutional, recreational, agricultural and conservation uses are permitted with special provisions.

R-4 (Suburban Residential District): The R-4 District permits a variety of residential uses including single family detached dwelling units, single family semi-detached units and two-family units on 0.5 to 2 acre lots (dependant upon sanitary sewer availability). In addition, mobile home parks, institutional, recreational, agricultural and conservation uses are permitted with special provisions.

C-1 (Commercial District): The C-1 District permits a wide variety of commercial uses including retail, service establishments, professional offices, financial institutions, government offices, mortuaries, hotels, motels, restaurants, gasoline service stations, private recreational, educational, automobile sale and service, churches, shopping centers and other commerce uses. In general, the minimum lot size required for development is between 1 to 2 acres (dependant upon sanitary sewer availability) and subject to special provisions.

Future Land Use Planning: Presently, Alsace Township in conjunction with Oley Township and the County of Berks are in the process of preparing a Joint Comprehensive Plan to address regional issues pertaining to land use, community facilities and transportation. It is anticipated that the participating municipalities will adopt the proposed Joint Comprehensive Plan by March of 2003. Based upon a review of the final draft submitted to Muhlenberg Township as part of the intergovernmental review process, the Future Land Use Plan recommends that the area along the eastern boarder of Muhlenberg Township be developed with a combination of low to medium density residential, commercial and conservation uses.

C. LOWER ALSACE TOWNSHIP

Lower Alsace Township joins Muhlenberg Township at a single point at the southeast corner. The following land use and zoning analysis is provided for Lower Alsace Township:

Existing Land Use Composition: The existing land use composition of this portion of Lower Alsace Township is considered rural with most of the land area being part of Mount Penn Preserve. There are no residential developments within close proximity to Muhlenberg Township.

Existing Zoning Districts: The Lower Alsace Township Zoning Ordinance was adopted in February of 1993. Lower Alsace Township has one (1) Zoning District that is located to the southeastern corner of Muhlenberg Township. This Zoning District is depicted on Figure 10 and described below:

RC (Rural Conservation District): The RC District permits conservation, recreational, agricultural and forestry type uses. Single family detached residential uses are permitted within the RC District on 5 acre lots. Subdivision and land development activity is discouraged in this section of the RC District, since most of the land area is part of the Mount Penn Preserve.

Future Land Use Planning: The Lower Alsace Township Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1988. Presently, Lower Alsace Township in conjunction with Mount Penn Borough and the County of Berks are in the process of preparing a Joint Comprehensive Plan to address regional issues pertaining to land use, community facilities and transportation. It is anticipated that the participating municipalities will adopt the proposed Joint Comprehensive Plan by April of 2003. Based upon a review of the final draft, the Future Land Use Plan recommends that the area to the southeast of Muhlenberg Township be developed with conservation uses.

D. CITY OF READING

The City of Reading is located along the southern boundary of Muhlenberg Township sharing a common municipal boarder of 18,100 linear feet with Muhlenberg Township. The following land use and zoning analysis is provided for the City of Reading:

Existing Land Use Composition: The existing land use composition of City of Reading is considered diversified, urbanized and progressive. Some of the more prominent existing land uses along the southern boarder of Muhlenberg Township include the Albright College, the Northeast Industrial Park, First Energy Stadium, George Field, Berkshire Country Club and the Jewish Community Center. In addition, there are several commercial establishments and residential neighborhoods within Hampden Heights, Northmont, Riverdale and along the Warren Street Bypass.

Existing Zoning Districts: The City of Reading Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 1995 and last amended in 1998. The City of Reading has five (5) Zoning Districts that are located along the southern boarder of Muhlenberg Township. These Zoning Districts are depicted on Figure 10 and described below:

R-1 (Residential): The R-1 District permits single family detached dwelling units on 20,000 square foot lots. The R-1 District also permits other uses including municipal, recreational, institutional and conservation uses.

R-2 (Residential): The R-2 District permits a variety of medium to high density residential uses on lots between 1,800 and 5,500 square feet. The R-2 District also permits other uses including municipal, recreational and institutional uses.

R-3 (Residential): The R- District permits a variety of medium to high density residential uses on lots between 1,800 and 7,200 square feet. The R-3 District also permits other uses including municipal, recreational and institutional uses.

M-C (Manufacturing Commercial District): The M-C District permits a wide variety of uses including light manufacturing, commercial, retail, offices and wholesaling on lots with more than 25,000 square feet.

H-M (Heavy Manufacturing District): The H-M District permits a wide variety of uses including heavy industrial and commercial uses on lots with more than 40,000 square feet. Most of the underlying uses are related to sub-classes of manufacturing type uses.

Future Land Use Planning: The City of Reading Comprehensive Plan was adopted in June of 2000. The Plan for Future Land Use is directed towards growth opportunities, the compatible reuse of marginal property, the strengthening of existing neighborhoods, and the protection of historical and natural resources. Although a Future Land Use Map was not considered as part of this Comprehensive Plan, the existing Zoning Districts were utilized to project future land use activity. Therefore, the City of Reading Comprehensive Plan is consistent with the City of Reading Zoning Ordinance.



E. BERN TOWNSHIP

Bern Township is located along the western boundary of Muhlenberg Township sharing a common municipal boarder of 32,400 linear feet with Muhlenberg Township. The following land use and zoning analysis is provided for Bern Township:

Existing Land Use Composition: The land use composition of Bern Township is considered diversified, progressive with rural-suburban characteristics. Some of the more prominent existing land uses along the western boarder of Muhlenberg Township include the Schuylkill River, Reading Regional Airport, Northfield Business Center, Airport Industrial Park. There are only a few low to medium density residential units and commercial uses that are adjacent to Muhlenberg Township.

Existing Zoning Districts: The Bern Township Zoning Ordinance was adopted on December of 1991 and last amended on April 12, 2000. Bern Township has six (6) Zoning Districts that are located along the western boarder of Muhlenberg Township. These Zoning Districts are depicted on Figure 10 and described below:

AB (Agricultural/Business District): The AB District encourages agricultural preservation and agricultural related businesses. Single family residential lots are also permitted on 2 acre lots.

RR (Rural Residential District): The RR District permits single family detached dwelling units on 22,500 to 60,000 square foot lots(dependant upon sanitary sewer availability). The RR District also permits other uses including municipal, recreational, agricultural, religious and conservation uses.

SR (Suburban Residential District): The SR District permits single family detached dwelling units on 15,000 to 45,000 square foot lots (dependant upon sanitary sewer availability). The RR

District also permits other uses including municipal, recreational, agricultural, religious and conservation uses.

IR (Institutional/Recreational District): The IR District permits municipal, recreational, medical, educational, conservation and agricultural uses on lots containing a minimum of 5 acres.

ASU (Airport Special Use District): The ASU District permits special uses related to airport facilities and services on lots containing a minimum of 5 acres.

LI (Limited Industrial District): The LI District permits a wide variety of light industrial uses including wholesaling, warehousing, research centers, printers, publishers, food processing and public utility operations. The minimum lot size is a variable subject to the type of land use and the availability of sanitary sewage disposal facilities.

Future Land Use Planning: The Bern Township Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1987. The Plan for Future Land Use recommends that the area along the western boarder of Muhlenberg Township be developed with a combination of rural conservation, agricultural preservation, low to medium density residential, institutional, recreational, industrial and airport uses. In addition, the Plan also recognizes that there are a number of environmentally sensitive land areas (floodplains and wetlands) along the banks of the Schuylkill River.

F. ONTELAUNEE TOWNSHIP

Ontelaunee Township is located along the northern boundary of Muhlenberg Township sharing a common municipal boarder of 12,200 linear feet with Muhlenberg Township. The following land use and zoning analysis is provided for Ontelaunee Township:

Existing Land Use Composition: The land use composition of Ontelaunee Township is considered diversified with rural-suburban characteristics. The existing land uses along the northern boarder of Muhlenberg Township include low to medium density residential, agriculture, woodland, commercial and industrial uses.

Existing Zoning Districts: The Ontelaunee Township Zoning Ordinance was last adopted in January of 2000. Ontelaunee Township has five (5) Zoning Districts that are located along the northern boarder of Muhlenberg Township. These Zoning Districts are depicted on Figure 10 and described below:

R-1 (Low Density Residential District): The R-1 District permits single family detached dwelling units on 20,000 square foot to 1 acre lots (dependant upon sanitary sewer availability). In addition, municipal, recreational, agricultural and conservation uses are permitted with special provisions.

C (General Commercial District): The C District permits a wide variety of commercial uses including retail, professional offices, financial institutions, government offices, recreational and other commerce uses. In general, the minimum lot size required for development is 10,000 to 40,000 square feet per (dependant upon use and sanitary sewage availability).

C-2 (Shopping Center District): The C-2 District permits a variety of commercial uses within a common shopping center, including retail, professional offices, financial institutions, government offices and other commerce uses. The minimum lot size required for development is 5 acres.

IC-2 (Industrial Commercial District): The IC-2 District permits a wide variety of uses including light manufacturing, research and scientific centers, commercial, retail, offices and wholesaling on lots with more than 1 acre of land.

GI (General Industrial District): The GI District permits industrial uses including offices, manufacturing, wholesaling, warehousing and research centers with limitations and development controls. In addition, solid waste disposal facilities are permitted by special exception. Typically, a minimum of 75,000 square feet of land is required for each of the uses permitted in the GI District.

Future Land Use Planning: Ontelaunee Township in conjunction with Lessport Borough and Perry Township prepared and adopted a Joint Comprehensive Plan in October of 1996 to address regional issues pertaining to land use, community facilities and transportation. The Future Land Use Plan is consistent with the current Zoning Districts, as adopted by Ontelaunee Township.



G. MAIDENCREEK TOWNSHIP

Maidencreek Township is located along the northern boundary of Muhlenberg Township sharing a common municipal boarder of 3,200 linear feet with Muhlenberg Township. The following land use and zoning analysis is provided for Maidencreek Township:

Existing Land Use Composition: The land use composition of Maidencreek Township is considered diversified with rural-suburban characteristics. The existing land uses along the northern boarder of Muhlenberg Township include low density residential, agriculture, woodland, recreational and conservation uses.

Existing Zoning Districts: The Maidencreek Township Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 1993 and last amended May of 2000. Maidencreek Township has one (1) Zoning District that is located along the northern boarder of Muhlenberg Township. This Zoning District is depicted on Figure 10 and described below:

A (Agricultural District): The A District permits single family detached dwelling units on 1.5 acre lots. The A District also permits other uses including municipal, recreational, agricultural, institutional and conservation uses.

Future Land Use Planning: The Maidencreek Township Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1997. The Plan for Future Land Use recommends that the area along the northern boarder of Muhlenberg Township be developed with low to medium density residential development. This use would be compatible to the current R-2 Zoning District, which permits higher residential densities than the current zoning designation (Agricultural District).

H. RUSCOMBMANOR TOWNSHIP

Ruscombmanor Township is located along the northeastern boundary of Muhlenberg Township sharing a common municipal boarder of 1,600 linear feet with Muhlenberg Township. The following land use and zoning analysis is provided for Ruscombmanor Township:

Existing Land Use Composition: The land use composition of Ruscombmanor Township is considered diversified with rural characteristics. The existing land uses along the northeastern boarder of Muhlenberg Township include rural residential, agricultural and industrial land uses.

Existing Zoning Districts: The Ruscombmanor Township Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 1973 and last amended in 1999. Ruscombmanor Township has one (1) Zoning District that is located along the northeastern boarder of Muhlenberg Township. This Zoning Districts is depicted on Figure 1o and described below:

LI (Limited Industrial District): The LI District permits a variety of light industrial uses including offices, manufacturing, wholesaling, warehousing and research centers with limitations and special development controls. In addition, solid waste disposal facilities and mobile home parks are permitted by special exception.

Future Land Use Planning: The Ruscombmanor Township Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1994. The Plan for Future Land Use recommends that the area along the northeastern boarder of Muhlenberg Township be developed with low density residential development uses. This use is not compatible to the current LI-2 Zoning District, which permits for industrial uses.

I. BERKS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (*VISION 2020*)

Berks County is a metropolitan area of 373,638 persons (2000 Census), situated in southeastern Pennsylvania. The county seat, located within the City of Reading, is 56 miles northwest of the City of Philadelphia, which is one of the leading industrial and trade complexes in the nation. Schuylkill County borders the County on the north, on the west by Lebanon and Lancaster Counties, on the east by Lehigh County, and on the south by Chester and Montgomery Counties. Through numerous federal and state highways and turnpikes, the County is linked to other major cities such as New York (125miles) and Baltimore (97 miles). The County is a diamond-shaped area of 864 square miles. Sections of the Blue and South Mountains, two ridges of the Appalachian Mountain chain, form its northern and southern boundaries with elevations averaging about 640 feet above sea level. The Schuylkill River and several of its main tributaries drain almost the entire county.

The Berks County Planning Commission has recently prepared *Vision 2020*, a complete update to the Berks County Comprehensive Plan. *Vision 2020* has established the following planning goals:

- *To create and adhere to a logical, coordinated land use pattern that provides for a variety of appropriate types of development, while recognizing land and infrastructure capabilities in relation to natural features and environmental and physical factors.*
- *To preserve and promote the agribusiness system, agricultural community, and rural character of Berks County*
- *To direct growth to appropriate areas.*
- *To maintain and revitalize areas with established development through in-fill development and rehabilitation.*
- *To preserve and protect important open space and provide adequate recreational opportunities for County residents.*
- *To preserve natural features and conserve natural resources throughout Berks County.*
- *To use development techniques that will conserve natural resources while not conflicting with rural environments.*
- *To protect steep slopes greater than 25 percent, watercourses and their riparian buffers, wetlands, floodplains and aquifers, and to restore those already degraded.*
- *To provide and maintain community facilities and services that meet the basic needs of County residents and support the land use policies of this plan.*
- *To improve and maintain sanitary sewer and water systems in Existing Developed Areas, Designated Growth Areas and to provide sanitary sewer and water systems to Future Growth Areas.*
- *To provide and preserve adequate solid waste management facilities sufficient to serve the needs of County residents and create a program to address the clean-up of areas that are affected by pollution problems.*
- *To maintain and develop coordinated, modern emergency service systems.*
- *To expand educational opportunities to meet the need for skilled and professional workers.*
- *To improve existing storm water management facilities, to develop Stormwater Management Plans for all watersheds located in Berks County and to protect water quality.*
- *To provide and maintain a balanced transportation system that will safely and efficiently move people and goods in support of the land use policies of this Plan.*

- *To develop a maintenance-first philosophy to preserve existing infrastructure through its useful life cycle.*
- *To provide for a balance of highway, public transportation, aviation, rail, bicycle, and pedestrian systems into a coordinated transportation system.*
- *To incorporate system safety improvements into all projects and programs.*
- *To focus system improvements on reducing transportation system congestion to acceptable levels.*
- *To expand the system only if the previous goals, in conjunction with land use policies, do not produce the desired results.*
- *To preserve and promote all community, cultural, and aesthetic elements that identify Berks County as a special place to live and work.*
- *To maintain and enhance the character of established villages, towns, and boroughs, and to create new neighborhoods that have their own sense of community, while blending with surrounding development and open spaces.*
- *To promote and protect the people, places, and things that make Berks County unique to its residents and visitors.*
- *To recognize historic preservation as a means of retaining community character, providing affordable housing, and assisting economic development.*
- *To maintain and enhance the visual character that defines places in Berks County as distinct and livable.*
- *To expand and diversify the County's economic base and provide quality employment opportunities for County residents.*
- *To retain, expand, and enhance existing industry and business, to assure their continued presence and growth in Berks County.*
- *To attract new, targeted businesses and industries that bring new sources of quality jobs and capital investments to Berks County.*
- *Prepare Berks County to be a competitive and marketable location in order to attract new and sustainable economic activities and provide favorable conditions to retain existing industry.*
- *Facilitate the provision of adequate sites to accommodate new and expanding industries and businesses.*
- *To identify, assess, and support the safe cleanup and productive reuse of "brownfield" sites in a timely manner.*

- *To provide every household with the opportunity for affordable, healthful, and diverse housing choices in locations compatible with the land use policies of this Plan.*
- *To provide an adequate supply of dwelling units to meet present and projected population.*
- *To provide a variety of housing locations within areas containing community facilities and services and adequate access to transportation.*
- *To provide a variety of housing types and densities using innovative development patterns and design techniques.*
- *To provide a variety of affordable housing opportunities to households of all income levels throughout the County*
- *To require that existing housing and new construction meet minimum health and safety standards.*
- *To provide a diverse range of housing opportunities for special needs populations.*
- *To develop and expand cooperation and communication among municipal officials and citizens to provide for increased participation in the planning process, and to create a more efficient mechanism to meet governmental responsibilities.*
- *To develop and expand partnerships, communications, and coordination among municipal officials, the private sector, and citizens during the planning process.*
- *To take an intergovernmental approach to planning, zoning, and municipal service projects.*
- *To conserve energy through land use and transportation planning methods and education.*
- *To promote the wise use and conservation of all energy resources.*
- *To incorporate into the development process new energy-efficient technologies while, at the same time, using site and architectural designs and location choices that take advantage of existing energy and transportation resources.*
- *Retain the City of Reading as a strong regional center of Berks County.*
- *To provide reliable and efficient services, the City needs to continue and expand its cooperative arrangements, plus initiate new efforts with neighboring municipalities and the County of Berks.*

The **Vision 2020** Future Land Use Plan consists of six major categories of land use and a number of subcategories and special purpose land uses. The Muhlenberg Township Comprehensive Plan shall be developed utilizing conceptual ideas relayed by Muhlenberg Township Planning Commission, conducting extensive background research on existing conditions, utilizing the Future Land Use Plan for **Vision 2020** as a guide, and evaluating all feasible alternatives in an effort to recommend a final product that can be functionally utilized by the municipalities of Muhlenberg Township over the next 20 years.