

Chapter 6

Existing Land use

As development spread across the region during the past several hundred years, it established the framework on which zoning and land use planning are applied. As development continues, it changes that framework. Therefore, it is critical to classify the types and identify the amounts and locations of existing land uses within the community. This chapter provides this “snapshot” of existing characteristics. It will be used as the basis for future land use goals and objectives. Examination of existing land use, therefore, forms the basis for planning future development and preservation of desirable natural features, farmlands, and rural character.

This chapter provides a picture of the current developed and undeveloped situation in Worcester Township. It does not represent current opportunities or restrictions to development.

Categories of Existing Land Use

This chapter identifies categories of existing land use in the township and the amounts of land consumed by each category in April 2007. The data for these categories are listed in the table in Figure 6 - 1, Summary of Existing Land Use Data. The map in Figure 6 - 2, Existing Land Use, shows the land areas covered by these categories. These categories are as follows:

- Multifamily
- Single-family Attached
- Twin/Duplex
- Mobile Home Park
- Single-family Detached (lots smaller than five acres)
- Single-family Detached (lots from five to twenty acres)
- Mixed Use
- Retail
- Office
- Institutional
- Industrial
- Utilities
- Undeveloped

- Public Open Space
- Private Open Space
- Agriculture

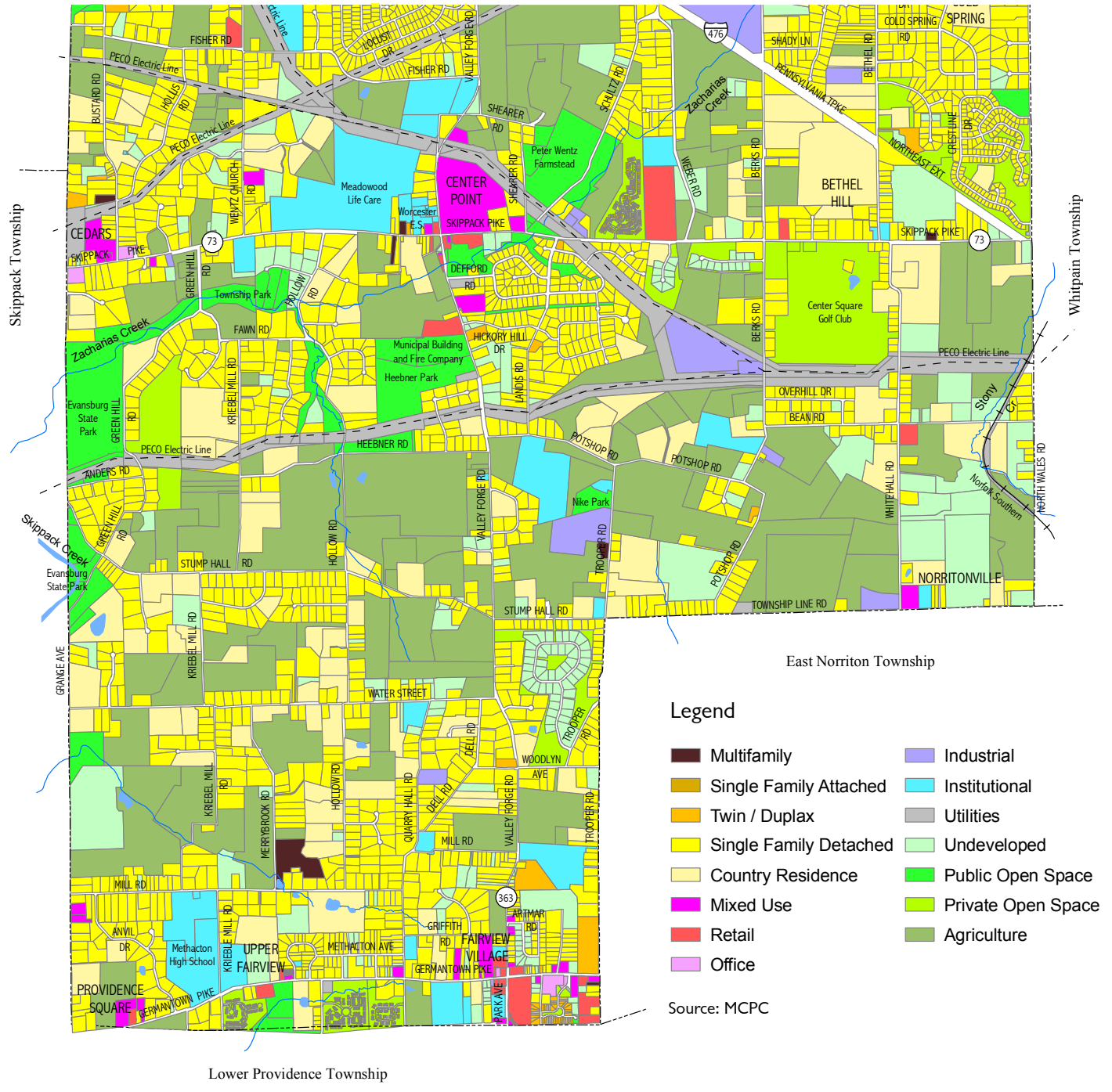
The data, charts, and mapping do not provide precise measurements, and have been modified within reason to reduce inaccuracies with a margin of error small enough for the purposes of this chapter and for use as the basis for future land use considerations.

Figure 6–1
Summary of Existing Land Use Data

| Land Use Categories | 2007 | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| | units/sf/acres | % total |
| Multifamily | 314 du | 6.0% |
| Single-family Attached | 717 du | 13.7% |
| Twin/Duplex | incl in SFA | |
| Mobile Home Park | 16 du | 0.3% |
| Single-family Detached < 5 acres | 2,216 du | 61.9% |
| Single-family Detached > 5 acres | 126 du | 18.2% |
| Total Residential Units | 3,389 du | 100.0% |
| Mixed Use | incl in Retail | |
| Retail | 313,200 sf | 14.5% |
| Office | 44,000 sf | 2.0% |
| Industrial | 900,000 sf | 41.6% |
| Institutional | 905,300 sf | 41.9% |
| Total Building Floor Area | 2,162,500 sf | 100.0% |
| Utilities | 380 ac | 2.2% |
| Undeveloped | 835 ac | 7.0% |
| Public Open Space | 477 ac | 4.4% |
| Private Open Space | 488 ac | 4.3% |
| Agriculture | 2,897 ac | 27.1% |
| Total Township Acreage | 10,240 ac | 100.0% |

The Existing Land Use map in Figure 6 - 2 provides a picture of the geographical distribution of existing land uses throughout the township. It is not surprising to see that the large concentrations of higher density residential and nonresidential uses occur along major roads, generally at or near major intersections. The geographical distribution of existing land uses, road network, extent of public sewer and water systems, and planning for open space, recreation, and preservation of natural features are all important elements for determining a reasonable Future Land Use Plan for the township, as proposed in Chapter 7 of this comprehensive plan update. When existing land use data and charts are updated in the future, the existing land use map should also be updated to show where the changes in the township's land use have occurred.

Figure 6-2
Existing Land Use



Descriptions and Comparisons of Categories of Existing Land Use

This section describes the land use categories used in the current evaluation of existing land use. The designation given to each property was based initially on land use classifications used by the Montgomery County Board of Assessments (BOA), which assigns categories for taxing purposes. However, we adapted the BOA categories to be more meaningful for land use planning purposes. For example, private golf courses are commercial land use for taxing purposes, but are private open space for land use planning.

Residential Categories:

Residential types are defined according to the number and arrangement of dwelling units. A dwelling unit is generally defined as one or more rooms intended to be occupied as separate living quarters, with cooking, sleeping, and sanitary facilities in the unit for the exclusive use of a single family maintaining a household. Residential categories include all parcels that have been developed for only residential purposes. Parcels with both residential and non-residential uses are included in the "mixed use" category.

Multifamily

Description: Multifamily dwelling units are those located in a detached residential building containing three or more dwelling units, usually referred to as apartments. Multifamily development is usually under one operating unit, as a rental or condominium property, and may include garden, mid-rise and high-rise apartment buildings, and conversions from single-family detached dwellings or other buildings. Multifamily dwellings are generally located entirely above or below one another, may share outside access and/or internal hallways, lobbies, and similar facilities, and share the lot on which their building is located.

Comments: Five properties and a portion of a larger property are currently developed with multifamily dwelling units, with a total area of about 31 acres containing a total of 314 dwelling units.



Meadowood Multifamily units in Worcester.

Pictometry

Twin/Duplex

Description: Two dwelling units in one building that is not attached to any other building. Twins have two dwelling units placed side-by-side, joined to each other by a vertical common party wall. Duplexes have one dwelling unit placed above the other and share a common horizontal partition (floor/ceiling).

Comments: Worcester currently has about 60 acres developed with twin duplex units. The number of twin and duplex units is included in the total number for single-family attached units.



Twins in Worcester.

Pictometry

Single-family Attached

Description: Single-family attached dwellings typically include townhouses, rowhouses, triplexes, and quadruplexes. These are commonly defined as a dwelling unit with independent outside access, no other dwelling units located directly and totally above or below it, having party walls in common with at least one but not more than three adjacent similar dwelling units, and located in a building that contains at least three dwelling units.

Comments: This category currently includes "townhouse" developments and developments of "triplex" units on a total area of about 19 acres in Worcester. There are, including the twins and duplexes, 717 single-family attached dwelling units in Worcester.



Townhouses in Worcester.

Pictometry

Mobile Home Park

Description and Comment: Mobile Home Park is a distinct classification identified in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code as a parcel of land that contains lots rented under one operating unit for the placement of mobile homes. Typically, the residents own the mobile homes. When mobile homes are placed on lots owned by the mobile home owners, they are considered single-family detached dwellings. There is a 16-unit mobile home park in Fairview Village on about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre of a larger property with other uses.



Mobile homes in Worcester.

Pictometry

Single-Family Detached (SFD)

Description: A building designed for and occupied exclusively as a residence for only one family and not attached to any other building or dwelling units.

Comments: The current data uses two categories of single-family detached dwellings based on lot size. SFD lots less than five acres are considered unlikely to be further subdivided. SFD lots more than five, but less than twenty acres (“country residence”) are presumed to be large enough that there is a probability that they will eventually be subdivided into additional lots. Lots larger than twenty acres that contain single-family detached residences are included



A horse in a home's front yard pasture along Kriebel Mill Road in Worcester.

MCPC

in the “Agriculture” category (presuming agriculture as the dominant use).

In April 2007, there are currently about 3,222 acres of land area occupied by 2,216 SFD lots of less than five acres, and about 954 acres occupied by 126 “country residence” lots.

Undeveloped, Public and Private Open Space, and Agriculture

Descriptions:

Undeveloped. Undeveloped parcels are designated as vacant land under the Board of Assessments' land use classifications. They all have individual tax parcel numbers and are capable of being transferred to new owners as vacant lots.

Public Open Space. Park, recreation, and open space parcels, owned by the township, Montgomery County or the state.

Private Open Space. This includes golf courses, sportsmen's or gun clubs, and open space within residential land developments. Some of the private open space, such as golf courses, can be sold by its private owners and/or be used for development otherwise permitted by the zoning districts in which these parcels are located. Some of the private open space is permanently preserved.

Agriculture. Parcels larger than 20 acres that are covenanted under Act 319, lands whose development rights were sold to Montgomery County under the Farmland Preservation Program, and other farmlands identified from aerial photography and input from municipal officials. Many parcels contain a house, but agriculture is the dominant use.

Comments: Overall, the amount of undeveloped, open space, and agricultural land amounts to 4,381 acres, which is about 43% of the total area of Worcester.



A view across the Smith Farm on Fisher Road in Worcester.

Susan Caughlan

Office

Description. This includes properties that are developed exclusively for office purposes, as well as some miscellaneous uses including animal hospitals, funeral homes, and banks. Some office businesses are included in the mixed use category because they share a building with retail uses or dwelling units.

Comments: In April 2007, the amount of land classified in this category was about 12 acres, containing about 44,000 square feet of building space.



Offices at Germantown Pike and Heritage Drive in Worcester.
Pictometry

Mixed Use and Retail

Descriptions:

Mixed Use. This category identifies individual properties that have more than one land use on them, generally including a residential component and one or more nonresidential uses. Mixed uses are often combinations of stores and dwellings or stores and offices.

Retail. Stores, restaurants, repair shops and garages, and a variety of other commercial uses frequented by the general public. Retail businesses that share a building with offices or dwelling units are included in the mixed use category.



The Palmer Farm in Worcester has multiple uses on one property.
Pictometry

Comments: In April 2007, the amount of land occupied by mixed and retail was about 126 acres, containing about 313,200 square feet of building space.

Industrial

Description and Comments: Industrial uses in the township include manufacturing uses and contractors' shops. In April 2007, the land categorized as industry was about 177 acres, containing about 900,000 square feet of building space.



Worcester Industry. MCPC

Institutional

Description and Comments: Schools, churches, museums, cemeteries, and fire companies are the most common and noticeable institutional uses. Meadowood and the two tennis clubs are also included in this category. In April 2007, there was about 517 acres of land developed with institutional uses containing about 905,300 square feet of building space.



The Peter Wentz Farmstead is a popular living history museum in Worcester.
Morgan McMillan

Figure 6-3
General Land Use Categories

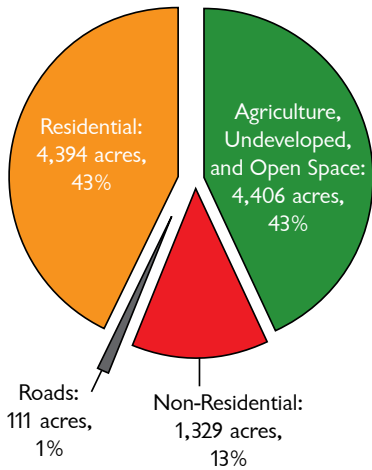
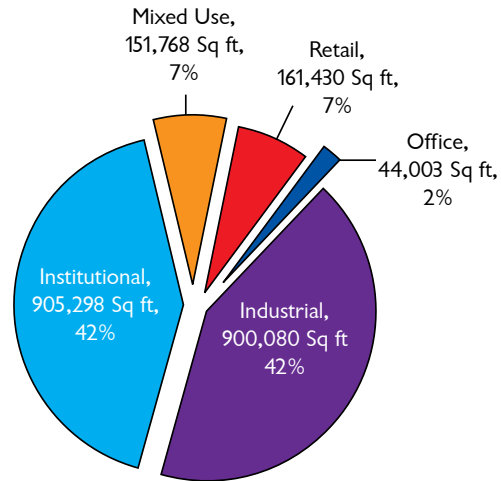


Figure 6-4
Mixed Use and Non-Residential Building Area



Utilities

Description and Comments: Primarily sewer and water company properties, and gas and electric transmission lines. The land area for this land use category includes lands owned by these utilities and also those sections of the electric company's transmission lines that are within easements on lands in other categories. The current total of about 380 acres is that land used and owned by the utilities.

Land Use Proportions

The chart in Figure 6 - 3 divides the township's 10,240 acres into various combinations of existing land use categories. The chart identifies the acreage occupied by three groups of land use categories and the percentage of township land area in each group. In addition, the chart includes roads, which occupy over 100 acres in Worcester, and should be included when considering total township land area.

Figure 6-4 illustrates the proportions of Worcester's mixed use and non-residential building areas.

Figure 6-5 compares the unbuilt lands in the township.

Figure 6-5
Open Space, Agriculture, and Undeveloped

