

CHAPTER 3

FUTURE LAND USE AND HOUSING PLAN

The Future Land Use Plan graphically brings together all of the chapters of the plan and evaluate all of the information that has been mapped and gathered during this planning process. This plan will determine what future land uses would be most appropriate in Kutztown and at what density. Factors such as existing land use, natural features, soil conditions, demographics, housing, economic development trends, road conditions, sewer and water capacities, and downtown and neighborhood vitality all play a role in the development of the Future Land use Plan. The Plan takes into account the goals of the current Berks County Comprehensive Plan.

The Future Land Use Plan will serve as a guide for future municipal ordinance amendments and regulatory controls, including zoning, sewer, and water facilities planning, transportation planning, and recreation planning.

It is important to stress that the Future Land Use Plan is not a zoning map, nor does it change the zoning ordinances and maps that have been previously adopted by the Borough. It is a reference tool to be used by municipal officials and planners when making decisions regarding future development.

The Future Land Use Plan Map for the Kutztown Borough includes the following Land Use Categories:

- Commercial
- Main Street Revitalization/Mixed Use
- Low to Medium Density Residential
- Medium to High Density Residential/Multi-Family Residential
- Industrial
- Public/Institutional
- Economic Development
- Streets/Roads/Railroads

While the Public/Institutional category has been included on the Future Land Use Plan to identify the location of existing land uses, zoning maps enacted pursuant to the Plan may not have Public and Institutional zoning districts. It is not the intent of this Plan to recommend that land be zoned only for public purposes.

Strategies to Support the Future Land Uses Plan

1. Amend municipal zoning ordinances and maps to reflect the objectives of this Plan and be consistent with the designations of the Future Land Use Map.

2. Provide land development techniques that protect existing resources and preserve open space.
3. Provide development regulations that are consistent with the character and densities of existing development patterns.
4. Provide zoning regulations to minimize incompatibility of land uses and reduce friction between uses.
5. Include appropriate roadway access provisions for commercial areas.
6. Consider changes to the overlay zoning for the Economic Development area.
7. Amend municipal subdivision and land development ordinances to reflect the objectives of the Plan.
8. Prohibit (Restrict) future development within the 100 year floodplain.
9. Require buffering of natural and historic resources during the development process.
10. Require environmental assessment studies, hydrogeological studies, and historic resources impact studies.
11. Enforce guidelines for development in wellhead protection and water re-charge areas.
12. Insure that floodplain mapping is correct and that regulations are consistent with the Borough's objectives for utilization of industrial properties along the Sacony Creek floodplain.
13. Utilize property maintenance regulations to insure maintenance of vacant properties.
14. Support existing desirable land uses to avoid vacation of buildings and land. Work with landowners to increase utilization of vacant and underutilized land.

Natural Areas Preservation Strategies

The Borough has taken clear and decisive steps to protect property it owns that borders its wellhead areas. In addition to leasing the land to farmers that use organic and/or sustainable farming practices, the Borough has also entered into agreements with neighboring farm owners to reduce and eliminate the use of sludge as fertilizer that can contaminate ground water. Additionally, the Borough has initiated a conservation plan to protect the wellhead areas in cooperation with the [Rodale Institute](#) and the [Berks Conservancy](#) to plant indigenous plants and trees to help in the natural filtration of groundwater before reaching our wells. The Borough is looking into grants and other public funding opportunities to create alternative energy generation such as a solar farm at this property.

Future actions by the Borough to protect natural resources include educating landowners who border the Sacony Creek on issues regarding protection of the creek including misunderstandings about what is safe and unsafe for this area.

Future Land Use Map Categories

Commercial – This category focuses on areas of primarily consisting of currently operating commercial uses and shopping centers.

Low to Medium Density Residential – This category reflects existing areas that have been developed at a low to medium density. Any new lots would likely be single family homes, attached or detached, on lots of one-quarter acre or larger. The Planning Commission notes that there is an area that is agricultural now and it is the belief that this use would continue. The category recognizes predominantly undeveloped hillside areas north of Route 222 and Short Lane that have limitations to development because of steep slopes, but have the potential for service by public sewer and water facilities. Care must be taken to prevent environmental disturbances by protecting steep slopes and clustering development on the areas presenting the fewer limitations to development. Density of development and types of dwelling units will depend upon the availability of public sewer and water.

Medium to High Density/Multi-Family Residential – This category consists of areas that are considered growth areas within the Borough, and will allow for residential development at medium to high densities. The actual density of development will depend upon the availability of public sewer and water facilities, availability of off-street parking, and will likely range from one to twenty dwelling units per acre, under current Zoning regulations. The Medium to High Density/Multi-Family Residential area is likely to contain a range of zoning districts, from those allowing only single family homes to those allowing higher density, multi-unit developments.

Main Street Revitalization – This category provides for the continuation of the mixing of residential and commercial uses in the center of Kutztown. Dwelling types would vary with the zoning district. In some instances, conversion of units to apartments or from apartments to commercial uses would be permissible. Availability of off-street parking for new uses will be crucial to approval. The commercial uses would be those compatible with residences as well as consumers from outside the area. This is an area where increased efforts to revitalize neighborhoods and commercial offerings will be the primary focus.

Industrial – This category is intended to provide for varying degrees of industrial and office activities which will not have adverse environmental impacts as the area is close to the floodplain. General industrial areas are also located near residential areas and it is understood that the activities in this area may impact the nearby residents. Regulations are in place to minimize the impact where possible.

Public/Institutional – This category is intended to accommodate a multitude of uses for the public benefit including municipal facilities, public parks, [Kutztown University](#), cemeteries, public schools, etc.

Economic Development – This category covers an area where the local development authorities and the property owner are working together to find the highest and best use of the land for the benefit of the community as a whole. Currently the area has an Industrial overlay but that districting may be changed to allow for commercial/residential development.

HOUSING

Provision for a variety of housing densities, housing types, and development patterns in appropriately designated areas is accomplished through the Future Land Use Plan and supported in current zoning ordinances. Revisions may be made to the zoning ordinances to clear up ambiguities with relation to new housing development. Strict enforcement of the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code and local property maintenance codes will occur to improve and/or maintain the condition of existing and new housing stock.

The intensity of residential rental units in the Borough shall be monitored and Zoning ordinances enforced to limit the future conversion of single family homes into multiple units as much as is legally possible. Encouraging property owners of rental units to continually maintain and improve their properties will be a primary focus. Programs that exist to encourage this activity, such as [Kutztown Community Partnership's](#) (KCP) Façade Improvement Grant program, as well as new programs yet to be instituted, will be actively promoted and utilized. Every effort will be made to preserve the existing character of traditional neighborhoods.

As taxes and housing costs rise, there is always concern for the elderly. Long term residents of the Borough can find themselves in positions where it is increasingly difficult to maintain and retain ownership of their properties. New housing options for these groups will be encouraged in place of more student-oriented rentals.

The Borough should explore what characteristics and elements constitute a 'livable community', and work to incorporate those elements in municipal zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances. The Borough can work with developers to see that those elements are incorporated into any new land development plans. Defining these elements includes defining the characteristics of the different neighborhoods, what makes them special and unique, what elements create a sense of place for residents, and how the municipality can remain different from every other place in America. To say that there is a 'sense of place' is to say that there is a location which is distinctive, to which people attach meaning, where there is a sense of a physically defined area, and where past and future experiences can be shared with other people.

Elements of a livable community include:

- Methods of controlling the safety and esthetic impact of automobiles. Provide residents a choice of mobility, such as using bicycles and walking; appropriate use of our alley system; providing and maintaining sidewalks and/or walking paths; incorporating traffic calming techniques; and requiring sidewalk ramps at intersections and reducing new curb cuts through sidewalks.
- Revise the subdivision and land development ordinances to encourage interconnected, multi-purpose streets. Include street trees and block design as is seen in the older areas of town.
- Provide for community gathering places and settings for public, market, or institutional uses, such as greens and squares.
- Provide for lot increments to allow a variety of lot sizes.
- Consider traditional setback and lot size to dwelling footprint ratios which allow greater utilization of developed land.
- Provide for mixed uses and range of housing opportunities in terms of type, cost, and type of household targeted. Appropriate uses might include convenience and neighborhood services businesses and civic and community functions.
- Physical and visual access to and incorporation of natural resources.
- Provide useful open space which is safe, comfortable, and linked to other uses.
- Incorporate prominent buildings such as schools, civic buildings, and places of worship which serve as community activity and cultural centers. (example, the 1892 School House)
- Encourage architectural elements and appearance which complement the existing built environment.
- Preserve important character-defining historic, architectural, and landscape features. New development should fit into its environment rather than destroy and/or redefine it.
- Connections between private living spaces and public spaces, such as porches and pathways.

Impact of the Kutztown University Student Population on the Borough

The impact of the continually increasing size of the student population of [Kutztown University](#) on Kutztown is significant and must be acknowledged as such. For example: the Borough has only about 3,200 permanent residents, yet across the street from its border is an undergraduate student population of over 10,000. The Borough needs to attend to existing problems, to address current issues of infrastructure (water/sewer, public streets, and roads, etc.) inadequate to accommodate continuing university growth, and to anticipate future problems whenever possible.

The Borough has a responsibility to maintain and protect the quality of life of its residents. Some of the problems already present for these municipalities are as follows:

erosion of the tax base, conversion of single-family homes into student rentals, disregard for codes/ordinances for minimal safety and hygiene of rental units, disregard for private property and disturbances of the peace, traffic congestion and loss of parking, burden of increased community services and expenses far beyond the needs of the permanent residential population (police, fire, road repairs, sanitation), challenges to the zoning restrictions regarding land use, etc.

STRATEGIES:

1. Examine how the growing KU population, the need for student housing, and the sale of land/property affect it.
2. Support active code enforcement through additional staffing and should revise the codes to accurately reflect the needs, character, and safety of the community.
3. Research and enact ordinances to protect traditional single-family residential neighborhoods.
4. Encourage the conversion of rental properties, currently being used as student housing in residential neighborhoods, back to owner-occupied homes.
5. Identify historic properties and districts and establish ordinances to regulate their preservation and use to protect their integrity if converted to student housing.
6. Lobby state legislators to create a funding formula that provides communities that host and/or are impacted by the SSHE presence with annual financial compensation for the additional police, emergency, and code enforcement personnel made necessary by the large university student population.
7. Work with and support the efforts of groups like the [Pennsylvania Economy League](#) (PEL), the [Pennsylvania Association of Boroughs](#), and the [Pennsylvania League of Cities and Municipalities](#) (PLCM).
8. Work cooperatively to pursue other initiatives such as a proposed tax on alcoholic beverages served within a municipality or other methods by which to generate additional revenue that might be targeted toward the disproportionate costs of providing adequate police protection and code enforcement.
9. Maintain open and cooperative communication with Kutztown University. Town/gown meetings should deal with substantive issues and be held more frequently. Students, landlords, property owners, and residents of the Borough should be invited to attend and to present concerns/suggestions.
10. Work with the KU administration on resolving off-campus issues related to housing, conduct, needs, and volunteer activities.
11. Require property owners to educate tenants on the municipal services, refuse/recycling program, code requirements, and conduct expectations of the Borough. Provide the tenants with better information and increase absentee landlords' presence and influence to enable tenants to better understand the content/boundaries of their leases and help them to connect to the community, potentially reducing property damage and destructive behavior.
12. Maintain and enforce the Student Separation Zone legislation to provide more distance between student housing and low-density residential zoning districts.

13. Maintain and enforce off-street parking requirements for all student housing.
14. Improve the Disruptive Conduct legislation and strengthen landlord and tenant responsibility where ever possible.
15. Review current zoning classifications to determine if some commercially zoned areas would be more appropriate as a low to medium density residential area to further limit the future conversions of traditionally single-family homes to multi-unit student properties.
16. Establish a method of recognition/reward for landlords who manage their properties in an exemplary fashion (e.g., property maintenance, conduct of tenants, etc.)