Every five years the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) tracks changes in the number of acres developed for various land uses that exist within the county. The MCPC compares this information with the progress of growth goals from the county's comprehensive plan, Montco 2040: A Shared Vision. Since the 1970s, many of the county’s developed land uses have exploded in terms of number of acres. Residential uses doubled the number of acres developed. Infrastructure uses like utilities and transportation right-of-ways have also seen significant growth as these categories are necessary for the proper function of all the other growth. The most pronounced growth has been in commercial land uses, especially office.

Major Growth Trends between 1970-2015

Between 1970 and 2015, Montgomery County shifted from a series of industrial and bedroom communities dependent on Philadelphia for jobs and other services, to a county that is self-sufficient and an employment center in its own right. This was due to the emergence of independent suburban development not directed towards Philadelphia. The number of acres of office use went from 541 to 5,099, a nearly 950% percent increase, and helped cement Montgomery County as a major job center for the Philadelphia region. In addition, retail area increased 119% and industrial increased 60%.

Alongside these commercial developments, residential growth blossomed and helped to support them. Combined, all residential categories grew by a full 100%. The largest subcategory was single family attached housing which nearly quadrupled in land area. The amount of acreage that represents wooded areas has decreased since 2000 as a result of the explosive growth within the county. However, between 1970 and 2000 wooded acres increased. This is due to both there being more forest on vacant farmland and a possible underestimation of forest during the 1970 survey. In contrast to the growth of developed areas between 1970 and 2015, agricultural and other vacant land have decreased.
decreased by 67% during the same time period. The county was nearly 70% undeveloped in 1970, but only 42% remained undeveloped in 2015.

**Growth Trends between 2010-2015**

In the past five years, since the last analysis in 2010, a number of new trends have started to present themselves in regards to land use. First, while agricultural areas have continued to decrease, the decline in the last five year period was much less than others past. Second, industrial land use acreage has started to decline after posting small gains over the past decade. Third, there was significant drop in the amount of new acres for single-family detached housing. This trend is likely to continue as there are fewer large parcels for this type of development, other housing types gain momentum, and changing demographics influence household formation. Lastly, the Willow Grove Joint Naval Air Station in Horsham ceased operating in 2011 and has since been only partially occupied by the remaining Air National Guard. As a result, a significant portion of the former base has transitioned from being military use to vacant. Overall, the changes in land use over the last five years indicate a trend of denser housing configurations, greater amounts of in-fill development, redevelopment of existing properties, and relative decline in the development of traditional commercial subcategories like retail and office.

### Growth in office land acreage between 1970 and 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>1970 Total Acreage</th>
<th>2000 Total Acreage</th>
<th>2005 Total Acreage</th>
<th>2010 Total Acreage</th>
<th>2015 Total Acreage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Family Detached (SFD)</td>
<td>42,297</td>
<td>75,405</td>
<td>79,470</td>
<td>80,458</td>
<td>81,089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFD - Low Density</td>
<td>16,459</td>
<td>27,568</td>
<td>29,022</td>
<td>29,972</td>
<td>30,856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multifamily (MF)</td>
<td>1,503</td>
<td>3,301</td>
<td>3,466</td>
<td>3,420</td>
<td>3,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Family Attached (SFA)</td>
<td>1,952</td>
<td>6,956</td>
<td>7,568</td>
<td>8,405</td>
<td>8,888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Homes</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>13,564</td>
<td>17,817</td>
<td>18,131</td>
<td>18,365</td>
<td>18,945**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility</td>
<td>664</td>
<td>1,568</td>
<td>1,547</td>
<td>1,566</td>
<td>1,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>2,732</td>
<td>5,215</td>
<td>5,508</td>
<td>5,845</td>
<td>5,979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Use</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>1,630</td>
<td>1,832</td>
<td>1,871</td>
<td>1,911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>5,099</td>
<td>5,546</td>
<td>5,654</td>
<td>5,679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>8,273</td>
<td>11,868</td>
<td>12,229</td>
<td>12,994</td>
<td>13,396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>6,153</td>
<td>9,733</td>
<td>9,813</td>
<td>9,983</td>
<td>9,863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation &amp; Parkland</td>
<td>9,975</td>
<td>16,008</td>
<td>16,718</td>
<td>16,820</td>
<td>16,758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooded</td>
<td>54,596</td>
<td>61,520</td>
<td>59,125</td>
<td>58,189</td>
<td>57,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant / Agriculture</td>
<td>144,443</td>
<td>59,437</td>
<td>53,290</td>
<td>49,798</td>
<td>50,972**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>3,487</td>
<td>3,581</td>
<td>3,580</td>
<td>3,607</td>
<td>3,604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>961</td>
<td>954</td>
<td>889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Base</td>
<td>3,326</td>
<td>3,326</td>
<td>3,326</td>
<td>3,326</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Transportation was calculated differently from past periods in that all rail lines were included for the current 2015 analysis.

** Vacant/Agriculture increased in 2015 due to the closure of the Horsham Joint Air Base closing in 2011. Otherwise the category would have decreased from 49,798 in 2010 to 47,551 in 2015. The military category now only includes part of the Horsham Air Base still operated by the Air National Guard.
Over 3,000 acres of “vacant” land have been added to the county in Horsham through the decommissioning of the former air station located there.

**Comparisons: 2000-2005 vs. 2010-2015**

These two periods are more similar to each other, in terms of economic climate and growth, than the five year period in between them. Both of these periods are representative of growing, post-recession, economies. Total newly developed acreage increase between 2000 and 2005 was two and a half times higher than the increase between 2010 and 2015.

- Relative to the period between 2000 and 2005 there was much less acreage used for SFD and SFD-low density between 2010 and 2015.
- Mining acres increased during the five year period between 2000 and 2005, while they decreased during the last five year period. Redevelopment is largely the reason.
- While much of the county’s current office buildings were built prior to 2000, there was still more robust growth in office acreage between 2000 and 2005 than 2010 and 2015.
- There was twice as much loss of wooded acres between 2000 and 2005 than 2010 and 2015.
- If accounting for the change in use of the former Horsham Joint Air Station, the totals of various categories are altered including an over 3,000 acre increase in vacant land, while there is a requisite 3,000+ decrease in military acres. The remaining Air National Guard station keeps 93 acres in the military category total as well.

The paradigm of development has started shifting over the last 15 years. In 2000, a driving concept was peripheral sprawl as undeveloped land was still available within reasonable commuting distance of existing employment centers, especially toward the west end of the county. By 2015, infill and redevelopment started to become more important for both municipalities and private developers. Many projects in the county take into account aspects such as walkability, mixed-uses, and multi-modal connections where 15 years ago these were less emphasized.
Montgomery County Land Use - 2015

- Single-Family Detached
- Single-Family Detached Low Density
- Multi-Family
- Mobile Home
- Transportation
- Utility
- Retail
- Mixed Use
- Office
- Institutional
- Industrial
- Recreation and Parkland Fields
- Wooded
- Vacant / Agriculture
- Water
- Mining
- Military Base
Land Use Definitions

**Single Family Detached (SFD)**
Residential areas with homes that are completely separated from each other and have yards of varying size on all sides.

**Single Family Detached - Low Density**
Residential areas with the same characteristics as SFD, but with larger lot sizes (typically an acre or more) and more rural character. Generally, they are found in areas without public sewer service.

**Single Family Attached (SFA)**
Residential areas with homes that share at least one vertical wall with a neighboring house. The most common examples are rowhomes, twins, townhomes, and quadruplexes.

**Multifamily (MF)**
Residential buildings that contain more than one dwelling unit, with units usually horizontally separated. Apartments, including garden-style apartment complexes, and duplexes are classified as multi-family.

**Mobile Home Park (MH)**
Residential developments that contain mobile homes, which are also known as manufactured homes.

**Transportation**
Areas dedicated to the movement of people or goods. This category recognizes those transportation uses that consume the most land, such as public transportation centers, highways, highway interchanges, roads, and airports. Arterial, collector, and local roads have been estimated within each land use category.

**Utilities**
These areas include power generators and substations, water filtration and storage tanks, wastewater treatment plants, landfills, and recycling centers.

**Retail**
Land that is predominately used for the sale of goods and services. Commercial strips, malls, big box stores, shopping centers, gas stations, convenience stores, and restaurants are obvious examples.

**Mixed Use**
These areas include traditional main street or village corridors. They typically feature retail, residential, and office facilities with little separation among uses. Many of the buildings are attached to each other, and it is common to have first floor retail with apartments or offices on the floors above.

**Office**
Land that is occupied by office buildings and associated parking. This category also includes research and development facilities, hotels, and convention centers.

**Institutional**
These areas include a wide variety of governmental and non-profit services. Examples include government centers, educational facilities, places of worship, cemeteries, hospitals and medical centers, nursing homes, life care facilities, and correctional facilities.

**Industrial**
This category includes heavy industrial uses - such as oil refineries, chemical plants, steel and metal fabrication facilities, and manufacturing facilities - as well as lighter industrial uses, warehousing and distribution centers, mini- storage facilities, body shops, junkyards, and other outdoor storage facilities.
Recreation and Parkland
This category pertains only to outdoor recreational uses, both public and private, and parkland fields, even if not currently developed for active recreation. It includes parkland fields, golf courses, picnic areas, camps, fairgrounds, swimming pools, and zoos.

Wooded
Areas that are heavily forested are shown as woodland, even in developed portions of the county. For example, interconnected woodlands along streams running through developed and lotted areas have been put into this category.

Agricultural or Vacant Land
This is generally land that is undeveloped and not wooded. Most of it is farmland, but vacant land in urban areas is included as well. Farmhouses, barns, and other buildings on farms are included in this category.

Water
Because this is a county-scale map, only rivers and the Green Lane Reservoir are included in this category. Narrow streams, ponds, detention basins and other small manmade water bodies are not shown on the map.

Mining
Within Montgomery County, this category is limited to quarries.

Military
Within Montgomery County, this category is limited to Horsham Joint Air Base and/or the Air National Guard Station.