

Chapter 12: Intra-Governmental Coordination / Public Services

12.0 Accomplishments Since 2007

Ensuring that services and infrastructure exist for residents in established communities as well as growth areas requires not only coordination between State, County and local governments but also coordination between all departments within the County. Since 2007, the Land Use Department has worked with Community Services to review their updated housing strategies and incorporate stated needs into the Comprehensive Plan and with Special Services to ensure that growth areas are targeted for sewer service and that areas with sewer service agreements are incorporated into growth plans. Both the Parks Plan regularly updated by Special Services and the Library Plan regularly updated by Community Services reflect the growth strategies of the Comprehensive Plan. Land Use has also coordinated with Special Services on stormwater management issues, helping to ensure that new growth is designed with sustainable water quality and quantity management.

The economic downturn since 2007 caused a significant increase in vacant and abandoned properties. The Department of Land Use and the Public Safety Department teamed up to register vacant properties and to help protect existing communities by monitoring both the external condition of the property as well as any suspicious activity associated with the premises.

12.1 Introduction

Public services provided by New Castle County include:

- Libraries
- Parks, open space, and greenways
- Recreation
- Public Safety (Police, EMS, 911 Communications, Fire, OEM)

12.2 General Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goals:

1. **Coordinate government programs and services at all levels to increase efficient use of governmental and non-governmental resources to improve the quality of life for citizens.**

The many different programs and services provided by the numerous New Castle County departments and agencies need to be coordinated and managed efficiently in order best to serve the residents and businesses of the County. This coordination takes effort to establish and maintain, but is vital to the quality of life of those within the County.

Objectives:

1. **Establish and maintain a close working relationship between County departments to advance the goal of a safe and healthy working and living environment.**

New Castle County's various departments all offer distinct services, many of which overlap or complement one another. By working together the County can achieve synergy between the departments and provide even more efficient services all aimed to maintain and improve a safe and healthy environment.

2. **Coordinate infrastructure and service strategies to provide for sustainability.**

Different departments are involved with County infrastructure, including, for example, Land Use and Special Services. Each department has their own goals and strategies. By working together, their services can become more effective and sustainable.

Strategies:

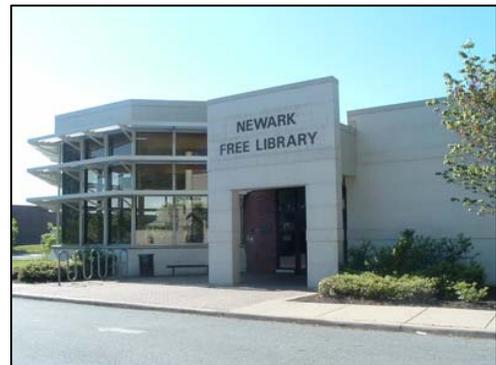
1. Identify areas for sub-regional plans to coordinate growth strategies.
2. Coordinate with the State agencies on sub-regional planning efforts, develop an intergovernmental monitoring system to track development and provide infrastructure when needed.
3. Develop closer working relationships with appropriate State and municipal agencies regarding coordination of respective capital improvement programs as well as annexation policies.
4. Develop a system to provide copies of proposed plans located in municipal Areas of Concern to each municipality for their information and feedback.

12.2 Libraries

12.2.1 Overview

Public library service in New Castle County includes:

- Nine libraries and one neighborhood lending library operated by New Castle County Department of Community Services (NCC DCS), and
- Five independent contracting libraries, two of which are operated by the Wilmington Libraries' Board of Managers.



Funding comes from multiple sources; however, the largest portion of operating funds for all of the libraries comes from County tax revenues.

A tremendous amount of library service development has taken place over the last two decades as a result of the Master Plan for Libraries 1990-2010, reflecting population growth in the County. New

library facilities have been built in accordance with the Master Plan in areas of the County that were sparsely occupied just a few decades ago.

In December of 2010, the Department of Community Services completed a Library Master Plan for 2010-2030. This plan is designed to ensure that all residents of New Castle County will have outstanding access to public library services for many years to come.

12.2.2 Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goals:

1. **Provide convenient access to a wide variety of informational materials and programs through the library system.**

The library system within New Castle County continues to improve and adapt as new technology evolves. Regardless of the format of the materials, it remains essential to provide access to as many people as possible.

Objectives:

1. **Encourage public access to a diversity of informational, educational and leisure time materials and programs through the public library system.**

The information, materials, and programs available through the library system are all essential to a high quality of life for County residents. Promotion of the library and its offerings is necessary to maintain the library system's sustainability.

Strategies:

1. Invest in existing, expanding and building new libraries consistent with the Statewide Master Plan/Study for Library Services & Construction and update New Castle County's Library Master Plan to address new demand and growth areas.
2. Provide space for educational and book-related enrichment events.
3. Examine and plan for the future role of the library in the community.
4. Continue to update libraries with appropriate technology and equipment through the capital improvement program.
5. Continue to provide literacy services and programs at library facilities.
6. Partner with local school districts so that the library collections will support the local school curricula and other entities like daycare centers and nursing homes so that library collections will be made available to populations who cannot easily access the facilities.
7. Develop a tiered system of new library facilities in areas with significant population growth to supplement existing libraries and to meet the needs of a new generation of library users.
8. New Castle County residents, regardless of their socio-economic status or native language will be able to access a full range of library and information services that enable them to succeed in

school, at work and in their daily lives and that enrich their lives as individuals, as family members and as participants in community life.

9. Improve the “browsability” of collections through the implementation of commercial materials display and marketing techniques.
10. Collaborate and partner with the Delaware Division of Libraries (DDL), public libraries, and other education and non-profit partners to establish cost-efficient means of providing deeper and broader collections and a broader array of programs and services.
11. Create programs that support the development of local book clubs for people of all ages.
12. Utilize social media tools to alert the public of the availability of resources and services.

12.4 Parks, Open Space, and Greenways

12.4.1 Overview

New Castle County Department of Special Services oversees parks, open spaces, and greenways within the County. See Tables 12-1 and 12-2 for parkland statistics north of the C & D Canal. Their goal is to work with other County departments, as well as the state, to meet nationally accepted standards created by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA). These standards include:

- **NRPA Standards:**
 - A “**core**” system of parklands is composed of 6.25–10.25 acres of *developed open space* for every 1,000 persons
 - An “**adjunct**” system of parklands of *regional open space* is composed of 15-20 acres per 1,000 persons, for a total 21.25-30.25 acres per 1,000 persons.
- **NRPA Standards By Park Type:**
 - Neighborhood Parks: 3.2 acres per 1,000 persons
 - District Parks: 2.3 acres per 1,000 persons
 - Regional Parks: 3.8 acres per 1,000 persons
 - Reservation Parks (Reservations): 4.2 acres per 1,000 persons

Category	Number	Acres	Per 1,000 Population
Neighborhood Parks	209	1,859	4
District Parks	23	840	2
Regional Parks	10	1,310	3.7
Reservation Parks	4	1,823	4.3
Total	246	5,832	14.0

Table 12-2: All Parks & Recreation Entities North of the Canal

Category	Acres
New Castle County Department of Parks and Recreation	5,832
New Castle County Additional Public Open Space	1,752
New Castle County Private Open Space	6,447
State of Delaware (owned)	8,161
State of Delaware (managed but not owned)	504
City of Wilmington Parks and Recreation	302
City of Newark Parks and Recreation	563
Total	23,561
Acres per 1,000 population	44

South of the canal, there are fewer parks, although there is much more open space. Based on NRPA standards, based on a population of 47,163, there is a need for nine neighborhood parks, two district parks, one regional park, and one reservation park.

At present, there are greater than ten neighborhood parks, but no other formal parks. There are three district parks and one regional park planned. There are also significant State and federal lands.

12.4.2 Goals and Strategies

Goal

- 1. Maintain, improve, and expand the park system within New Castle County to meet the current and future needs of the County’s residents, businesses, and visitors.**

Based on recognized guidelines, New Castle County has done well in establishing and maintaining its parks. With future growth anticipated, especially to the south of the canal, the County will need to focus attention towards the creation of new parks and recreational areas to keep up with projected population increases.

Strategies

1. Continue acquisition of neighborhood open space through the Land Development Process (Private & Public).
2. Selectively designate open space as public where it can enhance an already existing public facility or can benefit an underserved area.
3. Concentrate on the rehabilitation of and improvement to existing facilities. (Play Structures, Court Games, Turf, Design Alterations, Lighting).
4. Acquire land through fee simple means in strategic locations.
5. Plan development of district park facilities for designated parks #5 & #8 (Red Lion Area).
6. Concentrate on parkland acquisition and development south of the canal.
7. Allow individual developments to provide neighborhood parkland as “private open space”.

8. Develop a policy of “large District Parks” or “reduced Regional Parks” for southern New Castle County in public ownership.
9. Strategically locate public parks within key geographic growth areas.
10. Strategically locate a regional park within easy access of all southern New Castle County.
11. Coordinate park efforts with the Town of Middletown.
12. Coordinate potential land cooperation with DelDOT (based on final alignment of Rt. 301).
13. Sequence park development with sub-growth area hierarchies.
14. Build in flexible alter-strategies in cases where growth patterns may be adjusted.

12.5 Recreation

12.5.1 Overview

The New Castle County Department of Community Services, Community Resources Division, oversees recreation programs in the County. The department provides diverse activities to meet the recreational, informational, cultural, and public service needs of the community. They provide a full range of recreational and cultural programs and facilities that are accessible and affordable to all County residents including activities to underserved areas and to special populations of the County.



The Community Resources Division continues to be as effective as possible by:

- Providing recreational opportunities to all people.
- Exploring alternative sources of funding including user fees (pavilion and league field rentals) public/private sector joint projects, grants and donations.
- Promoting County recreational and cultural resources through improved marketing and programming in order to maximize the public benefit and increase use.

Some programs and activities include:

- **Community Activity Centers:** Places where County residents of all ages can gather in a safe, inviting atmosphere where they can participate in various recreational activities. In 2010, there were 38,455 attendees.
- **Sports & Athletics:** Adult and youth sports leagues, instructional camps and clinics, tournaments, and special events held for residents throughout the County. In 2010, there were 825 teams and 12,709 participants.
- **Park Permits:** Park amenities throughout the County can be rented, including pavilions, open space, and sports fields and courts. In 2010, there were 1,101 permits, 784 pavilion rentals, and 15,447 athletic field time slots.

- **Safety Town:** A program designed for 4-6 year old children to provide an educational enriching program that teaches life-saving lessons dealing with strangers, traffic, fire, pedestrian safety, guns, poison, playgrounds, internet, and bicycle safety. In 2010, there were 1,540 attendees.
- **Rockwood Mansion Museum and Park:** Includes tours, children’s programs, and special events. In 2010, there were 14,875 attendees.
- **The Fine Art Education Center:** Includes classes for adults, children, and persons with special needs. In 2010, there were 85 programs, and a total participation of 6,505.
- **Special Needs Programs:** Programs are designed to provide a commitment to diversity, with physical fitness, recreational, and arts programs at several locations throughout the County. In 2010, there were 358 participants.

12.5.2 Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goals:

1. **Provide a variety of outdoor vistas and recreational opportunities for public use.**

Outdoor recreational opportunities are essential to create and maximize quality of life within the County.

Objectives:

1. **Provide adequate district and regional public parks and an appropriate mix of leisure, active recreational and cultural programs to support the needs and recreational interests of County residents.**

The County will continue to plan for district and regional opportunities. Future population growth will be considered during the recreation planning and programming processes.

2. **Provide recreational opportunities within walking distance of homes.**

In order to promote a healthy lifestyle and a sustainable community, recreational opportunities should be convenient and should not require the use of transportation in order to access such opportunities. Recreational opportunities within walking distance allows for all people to take advantage of such opportunities.

3. **Provide a full range of recreational and cultural programs and facilities that are accessible and affordable to all County residents.**

New Castle County is home to people of all demographic categories. The programs offered should be cognizant of this and should be designed to promote full access.

Strategies:

1. Establish a green infrastructure comprised of linked public parks, natural areas, lands under conservation easement, private community open spaces and protected resources.

2. Continue to promote interconnected, publicly-accessible open space with existing parks and greenways through acquiring public and private open space during the land development process.
3. Continue to maintain and improve existing County parks and other facilities.
4. Continue to use the County's Long-Range Park Acquisition and Development Plan proactively to acquire open lands for passive and active recreation.
5. Continue to participate in the Federal, State and private open space acquisition programs, on the Open Space Technical Advisory Committee and in the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Planning process (SCORP.)
6. Continue to provide technical assistance to homeowner associations and maintenance corporations to ensure that they have the skills necessary to perform maintenance of common open space areas.
7. Promote County recreational and cultural resources through improved marketing and programming in order to maximize the public benefit and increase use.
8. Continue to concentrate on public active and passive recreation development both district wide and regionally.
9. Continue to participate in the planning group for the C & D Canal Trail plan and ensure connections to the federal parkland.
10. Continue to improve coordination of agencies to obtain public access easements.
11. Continue to explore alternative funding sources for the acquisition of additional parkland.

12.6 Public Safety

12.6.1 General Public Safety

12.6.1.1 Overview

The New Castle County Department of Public Safety provides police services, emergency medical services (EMS) and emergency communications center services (police, fire and EMS.) In addition the Department provides emergency management and preparedness and victim assistance programs.

12.6.1.2 General Goals

1. **Foster a safe and secure environment for citizens and visitors.**
A safe and secure environment is an essential role of government. New County Castle provides outstanding public safety and must continue to do so in order for the County to remain sustainable.
2. **Respond to emergency and non-emergency situations in an efficient and effective manner.**

The various public safety departments within the County must continue to grow and improve in pace with anticipated growth in order to remain efficient and effective. Changes to current operations may become necessary in order to support increased population and growth, especially in southern portions of the County.

12.6.2 *Police Services*

12.6.2.1 *Overview*

Police Services provide patrol and investigative services for the unincorporated areas of New Castle County. They respond to the immediate needs of communities with a problem solving approach. This places the County's police in more direct contact with the citizens served, as demonstrated by community policing sub-stations, mounted, foot, motorcycle, and bicycle patrols.



In order to provide more proactive and community oriented police service, studies conducted externally and in-house indicate the County would benefit from a significant increase in staffing.

12.6.2.2 *Goal & Strategies*

Goal

1. Continue to sustain the current downward crime trend within New Castle County.

New Castle County has been fortunate to see a decrease in crime in recent years. New Castle County will continue to make improvements to the department in order to ensure that this trend continues.

Strategies

1. Increase overall efficiency of operation.
2. Improve and modernize recruiting, mentoring, and hiring practices.
3. Improve and modernize technology in cooperation with the County's Informational Systems department.
4. Enhance career development opportunities for personnel in order to recruit and retain the best officers possible.

12.6.3 *Emergency Medical Services (EMS)*

12.6.3.1 Overview

New Castle County Emergency Medical Services provides pre-hospital advanced life support services. This paramedic service significantly increases survivability from a medical emergency or traumatic emergency. In addition to emergency response, the department provides public information, education, and public relations aimed to increase quality of life within the County. Activities include the promotion of prevention and proper response to medical emergencies, CPR training, and the dissemination of “Vial of Life” kits to senior citizens.



12.6.3.2 General Goal & Strategies

Goal

1. Maintain and improve delivery of County paramedic services.

Increases in emergency call volume, as well as advances in medicine and pre-hospital care options require continuous monitoring and improvements to ensure that the highest level of service is consistently provided throughout the County.

Strategies

1. Deploy additional resources to meet the growing demand for service.
2. Provide appropriate facilities that support the operational delivery of Advanced Life Support (ALS) care to the residents and visitors of New Castle County.
3. Continue the administration of the County Fleet Replacement Plan to maintain an EMS fleet that provides the reliability required for critical service delivery.
4. Update impact fees as necessary, based upon additional capital needs.
5. Evaluate options for multi-use facilities, such as the recent Kirkwood Highway Library and Paramedic Station project.
6. Employ innovative technologies to improve the ability to produce meaningful management reports and monitor the clinical effectiveness of the paramedic service.

12.6.4 Emergency Communications Services (911)

12.6.4.1 Overview

As the population grows, so does the need for police, paramedics, firefighters and emergency medical technicians, increasing the calls into the 9-1-1 center for assistance. The lifeline to these services is the Emergency Communications Center, also known as the 9-1-1 Center. 9-1-1 takes calls from all New Castle County residents, businesses, and people traveling through New Castle County, both in the unincorporated areas and in the towns and cities, with the exception of Newark and Wilmington. New Castle County is responsible for routing over 600,000 annual calls to the proper service



provider. The number of calls received helps to illustrate the demand that is placed on the 911 center as well as police, paramedics and volunteer fire companies.

12.6.4.2 *General Goal & Strategies*

Goal

1. **Continue the efforts to answer emergency 9-1-1 calls 90% of the time within ten (10) seconds or less.**

1. The emergency communications system is the first part of the emergency response process. As such, it is imperative to all emergency services in New Castle County that emergency calls are

Strategies

1. Maintain an effective Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system.
2. Maintain operating proficiency through the provision of training and implementation of systematic incident processing system for Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical incidents.
3. Continue to develop and maintain systems that handle new technologies in the Emergency communication arena, text messaging, Voice over IP (Internet Protocols) and GPS.

12.6.5 *Fire Service*

12.6.5.1 *Overview*

Volunteer fire companies provide fire protection services under an agreement with the New Castle County government, resulting in large savings for the tax payers of New Castle County. New Castle County has established impact fees for infrastructure improvements and provides annual funding to ensure fire protection facilities keep pace with demand.



12.6.5.2 *General Goal, Objective & Strategies*

Goal

- 1. Maintain adequate fire protection services and facilities to meet appropriate incidence response time standards, e.g., National Fire Protection Association Standards.**

A strong fire service will continue to ensure the protection of life and property in New Castle County. In addition to the protection of life and property, compliance with national standards has a direct impact on insurance costs which can help with economic development, as many industries seek areas with low insurance costs to establish facilities.

Objective

1. Develop funding strategies for sustaining fire service for current residents and businesses and to support future growth.

Strategies

1. Update impact fees as necessary, based upon additional capital needs.
2. Promote volunteerism in the fire service through incentives such as state tax and local property tax incentives.
3. Ensure that water volume and pressure standards are met for firefighting.
4. Work with the Delaware State Fire Marshal's Office, DelDOT, and the Office of State Planning to resolve differences among development, building and fire code requirements to ensure that structures are constructed in a safe manner while promoting mixed-use communities that incorporate smart growth design.
5. Investigate new methods for funding both operating and capital costs which may include application for grants, shared resources and growth related funding sources.

12.6.6 *Emergency Management*

12.6.6.1 *Overview*

The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is charged with preparing New Castle County and the public to manage activities before, during, and after the impact of natural and technological disaster agents to protect lives and property within the County.

The Office operates under the concept of Comprehensive Emergency Management, which applies to all types of hazards and requires a partnership among all levels of government, the private sector, industry, voluntary organizations, and the public.



12.6.6.2 *General Goal & Strategies*

Goal

- 1. Maintain and improve New Castle County's ability to staff, respond, and recover from All-Hazard threats through planning and coordination according to NFPA 1600 Standard.**

Emergency Management is a necessary tool, through mitigation, planning, response, and recovery. In order for the County to be able to prepare for and respond to any emergency, the Office of Emergency Management must continue to maintain and improve their abilities, resources, and procedures.

Strategies

1. Develop and ensure a County Government, Citizen and Business preparedness "culture."
2. Maintain New Castle County's ability to staff, respond, and recover from All Hazard threats through planning and coordination according to NFPA 1600 Standard.
3. Continue New Castle County Citizen Corps program of public education & training
4. Provide planning assistance to specialized facilities.
5. Encourage development outside of specialized hazard areas.
6. Finalize FEMA's CRS program approval.
7. Maintain and improve County Emergency Plans.