



Department of Land Use

July 7, 2020

Constance Holland, AICP - State Planning Director
Office of State Planning Coordination
122 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard South
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Ms. Holland,

It is my pleasure to submit New Castle County's comprehensive plan annual report to the Office of State Planning Coordination. Please feel free to contact me at (302) 395-5463 with any questions regarding this report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard E. Hall", is written over the typed name.

Richard E. Hall, AICP
General Manager

Enclosure

Cc: Tricia Arndt, Circuit-Rider Planner for New Castle County, Office of State Planning Coordination
Andrea Trabelsi – Assistant Land Use Manager, New Castle County
Stacey Dahlstrom, AICP – Comprehensive Planning Manager, New Castle County
Antoni Sekowski – Planning Manager, New Castle County

County Comprehensive Plan Annual Report

Name of County: New Castle

Date of Plan Certification: June 11, 2012

Date of Report: July 1, 2020

Annual Report contents (below) as taken from, *Delaware Code, Title 9, Chapters 26, 49, 69 § 2658, 4958, 6958. Evaluation and appraisal of comprehensive plan (d)*:

The New Castle County Department of Land Use has been transforming into a more proactive, strategic agency, through the re-establishment of a comprehensive planning unit within the Department, which had not existed for roughly 20 years. The Department is focused to support strong and vibrant communities by promoting economic investment, job growth and commercial revitalization while preserving important County resources such as scenic byways, waterways and open space. The Department's initiatives aligning with our comprehensive plan over the last year are highlighted below, as well as in the accompanying "Department of Land Use 2019 Annual Report" and "NCC @ 2050" report.

1. *Please state your accomplishments in implementing your comprehensive plan over the last year. These accomplishments may be used in the annual report to the Governor.*

County Response (listed under I – X for clarity/reference). Note: many of the following accomplishments are featured in more detail in the "Department of Land Use 2019 Annual Report":

I. Creating initiatives and opportunities for economic development

- A. *North Claymont Master Plan* - New Castle County partnered with WILMAPCO to co-manage this study, which comprises an area of vacant former steel mill lands and underutilized commercial properties that present unique opportunities for economic redevelopment given the direct access to an enviable host of transportation options. Notably, the study takes advantage of a newly relocated SEPTA commuter rail station and DART/SEPTA bus transfer hub, as well as a proposed grid of multi-modal streets that have the potential to induce and support high-end walkable, mixed-use development. Other participants include DelDOT, Claymont Renaissance Development Corporation, Delaware Transit Corporation (DART), the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination, DNREC and the Delaware Economic Development Office. The Final Report was issued in January 2017 and is available on WILMAPCO's website. During 2019, steps toward plan implementation have been taken. The Department has developed a Comprehensive Plan Community Master Plan element for incorporation of the North Claymont Community Master Plan and is currently in the process of evaluating the UDC zoning categories to determine how best to develop zoning categories to implement the North Claymont Master Plan.
- B. *Route 9 Corridor Master Plan* – This study, led by NCC partner WILMAPCO, identified reinvestment and redevelopment strategies for Route 9, particularly in the 3-mile stretch of corridor between the City of Wilmington and City of New

Castle boundaries. Key focus areas include promoting mixed-use and mixed-income redevelopment and examination of land uses and potential zoning adjustments and transportation improvements. New Castle County completed construction and opened the Route 9 Library and Innovation Center along the corridor in September 2017 as a key component for redevelopment efforts. The Final Master Plan was issued in May 2017 and is available on WILMAPCO's website, and New Castle County continues to participate in the Route 9 Monitoring Committee to help guide and fulfill the recommendations of the study. The Route 9 Community Master Plan will also be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan through the Community Master Plan. The Department is also evaluating zoning for how best to provide zoning to implement the Route 9 Community Master Plan.

- C. ***US 202 Corridor Land Use and Transportation Study*** - This study, led by NCC partner WILMAPCO, began with a market assessment for U.S. 202/Concord Pike and its immediate environs as an initial step to help inform a future Master Plan process. An assessment of existing conditions, trends and future market dynamics was undertaken to determine the strength of the market for office, retail and residential uses. Findings included a need for development diversity and a demand for multifamily housing in a mixed-use setting. WILMAPCO is responsible for administering the Master Plan development project, which started in Spring 2018. The development of the US 202 Corridor Master Plan, has been led by WILMAPCO, DeIDOT, and the NCC Department of Land Use. Four Visioning Workshops for the Concord Pike (US 202) Corridor Master Plan Study have been held through April 2020, and a final plan is expected late this summer 2020.
- D. ***Southern New Castle County Master Plan*** - This master plan process, initiated in 2018, is being undertaken collaboratively by WILMAPCO, the NCC Department of Land Use, DeIDOT, and key stakeholders. The Master Plan builds on the work of previous plans, including the 2009 Infrastructure Master Plan and the 2003 Local Road Plan, and will help guide development and transportation decisions in one of New Castle County's fastest growing areas for decades to come. Consultant selection was completed in June 2018 and staff team and public kickoff meetings were held during the fall. Several visioning public workshops were also held in early 2019. In November 2019, the first draft report was released for public review. The draft report has been continued to be further refined and the full transportation analysis was completed in June 2020.
- E. ***Jobs Now*** – Jobs Now is an initiative for job-rich projects that are ready to build. The process establishes submission and review deadlines necessary to get projects under construction and built as soon as possible while maintaining a quality review. This process provides certainty and accelerated regulatory plan review to non-residential projects that are committed to bringing new or expanded employment opportunities to New Castle County. Recordation time is generally reduced by 50% or more when the Jobs Now process is employed. In 2019, seven projects completed the Jobs Now process, which have the potential to create as many as 7,780 new jobs.

II. Proactively working to preserve and enhance existing communities

- A. ***Vacant Property Reduction Strategy/Adoption of 2018 International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC)*** - designed to help stabilize existing communities by identifying vacant properties that represent blight and community degradation and promote rehabilitation and occupancy of these premises. Legislation was adopted in 2017 to enhance this effort and place an emphasis on transforming vacant properties into value for the communities affected by this national crisis, and dozens of formerly abandoned properties have since been rehabilitated and their neighborhoods stabilized. In 2019, twenty-eight properties were taken to sheriff's sale and \$1.42 million was collected in back taxes, code enforcement fees, and other charges that can be redeployed for necessary county programs. The County also adopted the 2018 IPMC in December 2018, which is designed to preserve the health, safety and welfare of the public in the built environment to meet or exceed public health and safety goals.
- B. ***National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS) Achievement*** - The County's CRS application, initiated in 2018, is managed by the Department's Engineering Section and the County's Office of Emergency Management. The County was able to achieve a score of 6 which provides a 20% reduction in flood insurance rates to community members effective in May 2019 as property owners renewed their annual flood insurance policies. Besides the benefit of reduced insurance rates, CRS floodplain management activities protect the environment, reduce damages to property and public infrastructure, and enhance public safety efforts.
- C. ***Building code and active/ongoing pursuit of accreditation*** – The County continues to work to update Department policies to document operational best practices and ensure consistent implementation of departmental expectations, including quality audits and performance review times. Implement State adopted Plumbing and Mechanical codes to align enforcement with other regulatory agencies.
- D. ***Neighborhood quality and Code Enforcement*** - Established a "Consolidated Enforcement Chapter" in order to simplify the administrative enforcement process by defining a procedure to combining enforcement actions in the five (5) existing code standards, creating an incremental penalty schedule, streamlining the abatement process, and clarifying and streamlining the appeal process. In addition, the rental code was revised to increase its effectiveness

III. Working with stakeholders to preserve environmental, scenic and historic assets

- A. ***Protection Strategy for Scenic Byways, Watersheds, and Village Areas*** – This effort primarily focuses on the Brandywine Valley National Scenic Byway, Red Clay Valley Scenic Byway, and Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway and methods to protect and enhance the intrinsic qualities and unique characteristics of byway areas. During 2019, the Department continued its effort with a working group of interested stakeholders to explore the establishment of a new overlay zoning district that encourages protection of scenic and historic resources through conservation design and context-sensitive development.

B. *GreenNCC initiatives* - GreenNCC is a countywide program established to improve the environment and the quality of life for county residents by enacting policies, practices and legislation to: Enhance water and air quality; Encourage healthy and eco-friendly lifestyles; Conserve and protect local habitats; Promote smart growth; and Reduce harmful emissions by promoting renewables and improving energy efficiency. In 2019, as part of this initiative, legislation to limit the height of landfills and a moratorium on use septic systems for major land development were passed by County Council.

C. *Open space added through record plan approval* - In 2019, an additional 381.22 acres of private open space were permanently added in New Castle County through the record plan approval process.

Annual Open Space Acreage

Projects Recorded From:

Year Recorded	Project # Project Name	Work Type	Recorded Date	Public Open Space	Private Open Space
2019	20140730 SUMMIT POINTE	D-MAJ	10/23/2019	0	107.2
2019	20140739 BAKER FARM	D-REZN	03/28/2019	0	32.28
2019	20150247 SUMMIT CIRCLE	D-MAJ	08/29/2019	0	9.11
2019	20150455 WILMINGTON COUNTRY CLUB	D-MAJ	06/27/2019	0	0
2019	20150867 FORWOOD COMMONS	D-REZN	07/25/2019	0	0
2019	20160375 COUNTRY HOUSE COTTAGES	D-MAJ	06/27/2019	0	0
2019	20160376 COUNTRY HOUSE - 4830 KENNETT PIKE	D-MAJ	08/29/2019	0	0
2019	20160795 DELAWARE PARK HOTEL	D-MAJ	05/15/2019	0	0
2019	20160806 BAYMONT FARMS	D-MAJ	07/25/2019	145.3	0
2019	20170252 451 BOYDS CORNER ROAD	D-REZN	08/29/2019	0	0
2019	20170446 THE VILLAGE AT PINE VIEW	D-MAJ	09/25/2019	0	122.78
2019	20170451 PRESERVE AT ROBINSON FARMS	D-MAJ	07/25/2019	0	109.85
2019	20170545 17 BELLECOR DRIVE	D-MAJ	03/28/2019	0	0
2019	20170718 CHRISTIANA FIRE COMPANY	D-MAJ	01/24/2019	0	0
2019	20170768 MEADOWCREST AT MIDDLETOWN (AKA VANTAGE POINT)	D-MAJ	07/25/2019	0	0
2019	20190157 INCYTE CAMPUS EXPANSION	D-MAJ	09/25/2019	0	0
Totals for: 2019				145.3	381.22
Report Totals:				145.3	381.22

IV. Increasing opportunities for stakeholders and citizens to be involved in land use processes and to stay informed

- A. Continued and enhanced the consistent and comprehensive public notification of plans through weekly notices in the News Journal and County website, an enhanced online Land Development Activity Map, and social media posts.
- B. Comprehensive participation in area plans and corridor studies, as well as public information workshops regarding potential changes to the Unified Development Code and other Land Use initiatives.
- C. Continued to create new opportunities for interested stakeholders and the public to stay informed via email and text messaging through multiple notification options, such as email news flashes, online calendars and agendas; also introduced a “Resident Toolbox” feature for access to the many tools and resources available online.
- D. Department presented and subsequently played the “Growing Better Places” game with over 100 attendees. The board game is a development scenario tool that helps residents, students, employees, and other stakeholders discuss and understand the dynamics of growth, development, infrastructure, community amenities, as well as the negotiations and tradeoffs involved in real-world land development decision making. The game has been adapted into a digital, web-based form that is available to anyone on the County website.
- E. The Land Preservation Task Force was formed to examine key land preservation questions and is crafting a plan for enhancing the County’s land preservation strategy. The Task Force is also considering methods to improve collaboration with other entities to increase resources for the purchase and maintenance of land. The Task Force will issue a final report by September 2020 outlining keys findings and a suggested path forward.
- F. The Housing Advisory Board is responsible for reviewing and providing comments on affordable housing programs for low-income households, with an emphasis on promoting fair housing choices and increased housing opportunities throughout New Castle County.

V. Consistently utilizing new technology and resources to improve efficiency and effectiveness

- A. *Improved Website and New Features* – the Dept. of Land Use updated and improved its 80-plus web pages in 2018 as part of the County’s website renovation by creating a fresh homepage and revised menu structure that includes numerous advantages for its partner agencies and the public, including easier navigation, increased transparency, and multiple user-friendly enhancements such as the “Resident Toolbox” noted above. Further website enhancements are planned for implementation in 2020, as well a new standalone website dedicated to the upcoming Comprehensive Plan Update process, “NCC@2050.” NCC@2050 was launched on June 24, 2020 and is now accessible as part of the New Castle County Website: <https://www.ncde.org/2054/NCC2050-The-Comprehensive-Plan>
- B. *Virtual Inspections* – allows our building inspectors to remotely view a construction site using free applications such as Skype and FaceTime to perform