

Matthew S. Meyer
County Executive



Richard E. Hall, AICP
General Manager


Department of Land Use

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

Connie
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,


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, 2019

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 2018 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 2018 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 2018, steps toward plan implementation have been taken.
- B. *Route 9 Corridor Master Plan* – This study, led by NCC partner WILMAPCO, identifies 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. A public workshop was held in June 2018 and New Castle County continues to participate in the Route 9 Monitoring Committee to help guide and fulfill the recommendations of the study.

- 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 Project Management Committee (PMC) will collaborate on developing the US 202 Corridor Master Plan, and will include WILMAPCO, DelDOT, and the NCC Department of Land Use. Two informational public meetings were held in CY 2018 and the effort is ongoing.
- 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, DelDOT, 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.
- 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 2018, five plans began the Jobs Now process, three of which were recorded in early 2019.
- F. ***Craft Alcohol Production Establishment Ordinance (CAPE)*** – This legislation was signed into law May 16, 2018 and encourages economic development by allowing the establishment of CAPEs and Farm wineries in additional appropriately zoned locations, subject to limited use standards.

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, resulting in a nearly 18% reduction in vacant properties in 2018. 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 future flood insurance rates to community members. 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.

III. Working to incorporate superior design into land development planning

Unified Development Code Updates - Phase Two of the County's UDC update, adopted in July 2018, was focused on Process and Site Design. The update incorporates best practices in site design and landscape design, including: building and streetscape integration; new standards for parking ratios, drive-thru lanes and loading zones; an expanded plant list with a focus on native species; new guidance on reforestation practices; and provisions for open space implementation. It also included administrative review revisions; sunseting clarification; Traffic Impact Study (TIS) timing clarification; and other updates.

IV. 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 2018 the Department initiated 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. ***Open space added through record plan approval*** - In 2018, an additional 274.17 acres of private open space were permanently added in New Castle County through the record plan approval process.

Annual Open Space Acrage

Projects Recorded From:

Year	Project #	Work	Recorded	Public	Private
<u>Recorded</u>	<u>Project Name</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Open Space</u>	<u>Open Space</u>
2018	20031177	D-MAJ	01/24/2018	0	61.95
	PENNFIELD/LESTER PROPERTY				
2018	20120510	D-REZN	11/08/2018	0	0
	MARVEL PLAZA - FUSCO PROPERTIES				
2018	20130660	D-REZN	12/04/2018	0	0
	GLASGOW COMMONS				
2018	20140468	D-REZN	01/11/2018	0	0
	MILLTOWN SQUARE				
2018	20140700	D-REZN	07/25/2018	0	0
	AVON COMMONS				
2018	20140730	D-MAJ	09/12/2018	0	107.2
	SUMMIT POINTE				
2018	20150181	D-MAJ	09/12/2018	0	15.15
	SUMMIT BRIDGE ESTATES				
2018	20150222	D-MAJ	09/12/2018	0	44.03
	TRADITIONS AT WHITEHALL				
2018	20150366	D-MAJ	11/28/2018	0	45.84
	BRIGHTON - HAMLET 4				
2018	20160833	D-MAJ	02/15/2018	0	0
	WHITEHALL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL				
2018	20170374	D-MAJ	06/28/2018	0	0
	144 SOUTH DUPONT HIGHWAY				
Totals for: 2018		Projects: 11		0	274.17
Report Totals:		Projects: 11		0	274.17

V. 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 news flashes, online calendars and agendas; also introduced a “Resident Toolbox” feature for access to the many tools and resources available online.
- D. Recognized and participated in “Building Safety Month 2018” by hosting a series of events and educational opportunities to raise awareness about building safety and the critical role of county code officials in ensuring safe and sustainable structures. The Licensing & Permits Division hosted multiple free events in May 2018 to share

pertinent information with our residents, as well as a series of presentations to area high schools and colleges regarding the importance of building safety and exploring the construction industry as a viable career choice.

VI. 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.
- B. *Virtual Inspections* – allows our building inspectors to remotely view a construction site using free applications such as Skype and FaceTime to perform inspections, which saves time and money through reduced travel, etc. In CY 2018, 248 virtual inspections were completed, a nearly 50% increase from CY 2017.

VII. Continuing to maintain an inventory of available land for industrial and other non-residential uses

Zoning districts lost and gained – we continue to monitor existing zoning classifications to ensure land is available for a broad range of uses. There was again a slight increase in non-residentially zoned land in 2018 with the majority rezoned to the CR and HI districts. A total of 115.26 total acres were rezoned in the calendar year 2018. There was no loss of non-residential zoned property during this period.

The chart below shows the total acres lost and gained by zoning district overall for UDC rezonings from 1998 through December 31, 2018.

Zoning Districts Lost and Gained (Acres) UDC Rezonings (1998 through December 31, 2018) Total Acres Rezoned - 2,711.43 acres*														
Zoning Districts	To NC	To SR	To SE	To S	To ST	To ON	To OR	To CN	To CR	To BP	To I	To HI	LOSS	To (H) Historic Overlay
From NC				3.55	419.54	20.23		39.77	19.16				502.25	18.53
From SR				2.29	1.65	5.32					35.78		45.04	
From SE				12.01									12.01	5.42
From S					1285.04	24.01		61.47	158.02				1528.54	86.97
From ST											0.62		0.62	
From ON								3.53					3.53	0.85
From OR					79.11				31.93				111.04	1.09
From CN					0.14	0.96							1.10	1.38
From CR					12.23			0.21				51.01	63.45	1.10
From BP					31.74				104.95				136.69	
From I				6.60	122.41		22.64	1.48	154.03				307.16	
From HI													0.00	
GAIN	0.00	0.00	0.00	24.45	1951.86	50.52	22.64	106.46	468.09	0.00	36.40	51.01	2711.43	115.34
Net Gain (-Loss)	-502.25	-45.04	-12.01	-1504.09	1951.24	46.99	-88.40	105.36	404.64	-136.69	-270.76	51.01	0.00	

* Note: Does not include 115.34 acres zoned H (Historic Overlay) and does not include 785.15 acres zoned HT (Hometown Overlay) Zoning District. The Hometown Overlays include Claymont, Claymont Addition, Hockessin, Centerville and Saint Georges. Also does not include previously approved rezonings or Barley Mill Plaza.

VIII. Working to sustain a sufficient supply of housing for residents regardless of income level

Workforce Neighborhood Housing Program – in monitoring the former Workforce Housing Program, we observed that our goals were not being met in regard to low and moderate income households. As a result, new legislation was adopted in December 2014 to promote moderately priced housing by requiring all major residential subdivisions with rezoning or variance applications to increase density to include moderately priced dwelling units. The program has resulted in 243 occupied workforce housing units through December 31, 2018 with additional units are still being built under the Workforce Housing Program.

IX. Continuing to support agriculture as a viable industry

- A. *Farmers Markets* - New Castle County sponsors Farmers markets at four County Parks to support local farmers. These seasonal farmers markets are offered at Carousel, Glasgow, Route 9, and Cool Spring Park throughout the summer months.
- B. *Farmland Preservation* - While no additional acreage was added to the County farmland preservation program in 2018, the program remains a viable option for those who wish to continue to use their land for agriculture, and New Castle County has funds earmarked in the 2020 – 2025 Capital Program for farmland preservation and open space initiatives. Preliminary efforts to organize a strategic land preservation program began in 2018 and are progressing.

X. Process Efficiency

Process Efficiency - We continue to improve upon our process with an emphasis on both efficiency and effectiveness. As a result, our review times make up less than a quarter of the total amount devoted to bringing projects to recordation for rezonings, major and minor land development plans and resubdivision plans.

Summaries of Recorded Plans
Average Calendar Days From Receipt to Recorded
Recorded Plans Recorded From 1/1/2018 To 12/31/2018

<i>Plan Type</i>	<i>No. Plans</i>	<i>Avg Days Developer Had Plan</i>	<i>Avg Days County Had Plan</i>	<i>% Days County Had Plan</i>	<i>Total Avg Days</i>
RZ-MAJ	4	1114	43	3	1554
MIN	38	344	82	17	476
-OTHER	13	106	22	11	194
MAJ	7	1438	50	3	1512
RSUB	41	274	44	12	360
RZ-MIN	3	809	65	7	877
TOTALS:	106	681	51	9	829

We have also identified several factors that contribute to development plans being processed more efficiently, including encouraging ownership to participate, writing out schedules, not missing public information deadlines, and establishing a

collaborative review team with our external review agencies for applicants and the Department that sets goals, benchmarks, and deadlines for the review process.

2. *List the major problems of development, physical deterioration and the location of land uses and the social and economic effects of such uses in the area.*

County Response:

- Vacant properties continue to be a focused concern to growth in New Castle County. Progress has been made through State and County legislation and internal processes towards a long-term solution.
- The loss of jobs relating to industry has been a concern as both the chemical industry (DuPont) and pharmaceutical industry (AstraZeneca) have reduced their presence in New Castle County.
- Residents in a variety of locations have expressed concerns about the impact of pre-existing environmental conditions. This has arisen in discussions about development along Route 9, where zoning, roads and infrastructure have encroached over the years to create unhealthy and unsafe communities. The Coastal Zone in Claymont and other previous industrial locations throughout the County are actively involved in improvements, although environmental conditions and the cost of clean-up will remain a focus for redevelopment well into the future.

3. *List the condition of each element in the comprehensive plan at the time of adoption and at date of report.*

County Response:

Future Land Use

- The current land use map includes sufficient land for development and redevelopment to support the projected population and employment in New Castle County
- County code regulations and approved revenues should be sufficient to support the maintenance and expansion of necessary facilities and infrastructure to support projected population and employment increases.

Mobility and Transportation

- Each development application is reviewed and monitored by New Castle County planners and our partner State and Federal review agencies.
- DART, SEPTA and Amtrak continue to operate mass transit systems in New Castle County, and improvements to the Claymont train station are underway.
- There is currently no commercial passenger air service in New Castle County.

Water and Sewer

- Sewer capacity is continually monitored by the NCC Department of Public Works to ensure that adequate public sanitary sewer services are available to support the development activity in New Castle County.

- Water utility companies regulated by the Delaware Public Service Commission that provide public water service to New Castle County are:
 - Artesian Water Company, Inc.
 - Tidewater Utilities, Inc.
 - Suez (formerly United Water of Delaware)

Conservation and Natural Resources

- New Castle County’s Unified Development Code (UDC) ensures that all proposed development within the County comply with regulations governing environmental features, such as:

Coastal Zones	Riparian Buffer Areas
Critical Natural Areas	State Wetlands
Drainage	Surface Water
FEMA Flood Zones	Topography
Forests	Water Resources
National Wetlands	Watersheds

Historic Preservation

- Each development application is currently reviewed by a Historic Preservation Planner.
- Recently enacted legislation has created mechanisms to reduce the potential for demolition by neglect of historic structures.

Housing

- The variety of housing types in new construction has increased in the last few years, with a greater number of multifamily apartments and twin/townhouses being built (avg. 477 units/yr. from 2016-2018) to go along with consistent output of single-family homes (avg. 596 units/yr.) in the same three-year period.
- Since the inception of the Accessory Dwelling Unit legislation in 2007, a total of 265 ADU permits have been issued, 22 of which were issued in 2018.

Economic Development

- New Castle County partnered with the State of Delaware in 2016 to develop a tax relief package for the DuPont Company to encourage their continued participation in the New Castle County economic community
- Adoption of the Economic Empowerment District zoning is another option to encourage the growth and development of job-rich businesses
- Finalization of Community Master Plans for areas such as North Claymont, Route 202, and Route 9 will aid in redeveloping and maximizing the potential for these historically vibrant non-residential areas. (see I)
- Some recent development projects with potential positive economic impact have been initiated or completed by the following employers: Christiana Hospital, CSC, Dot Foods, Incyte, and Wilmington University.

Community Design

- We continue to work with Claymont, Hockessin and Centreville Design Review Advisory Committees (DRACs) as they review development and redevelopment

proposals within their overlay areas. North St. Georges has been inactive but is working to create their DRAC.

- Guiding Principles that apply to the design review process for new plans have been adopted and help to ensure that design components are available as part of the review process.
- Site Design guidelines were also adopted to incorporate best practices in site and landscape design.

Inter-Governmental Coordination

- New Castle County participates in routine and regular meetings with DelDOT, WILMAPCO, DNREC, the State Fire Marshall's Office, and municipalities on issues of joint concern.
- The implementation of ePlans (electronic plan review) has provided an opportunity for all County and State agencies to review submissions concurrently and to contribute to thorough and timely reviews for applicants in the land use process.

Intra-Governmental Coordination

- ePlans is being utilized by all county departments contributing to the review of plans and permits.
- The following boards and committees, populated by members of the public, make decisions or recommendations to the Department and/or County Council regarding a variety of land use issues:
 - Board of Adjustment
 - Historic Review Board
 - License Inspection Review Board
 - Planning Board
 - Resource Protection Area Technical Advisory Committee
 - Claymont Renaissance Design Review Advisory Committee
 - Hockessin Village Design Review Advisory Committee

4. List the comprehensive plan objectives as compared with actual results at date of report.

County Response:

Future Land Use

1. Objective: Continue to manage new growth consistent with Smart Growth Principles that require adequate facilities and concurrency as well as protection of important resources.
Result: Ongoing – multiple smart growth projects for mixed use communities have been reviewed and approved to date including Whitehall, Linden Hill Station, and Concord Plaza.
2. Objective: Continue to guide new development to Northern New Castle County to achieve greater use of existing infrastructure and public resources.