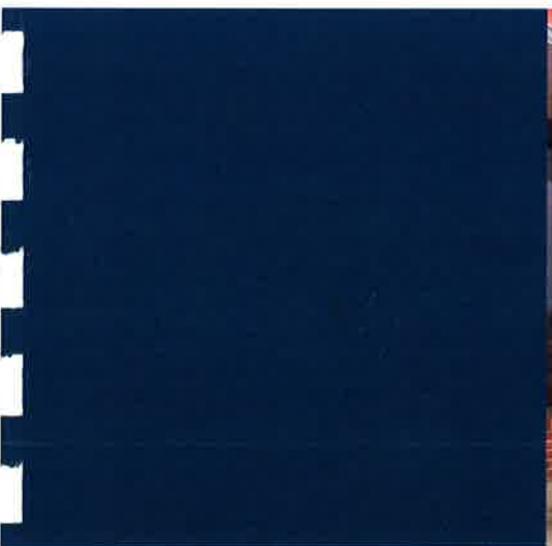
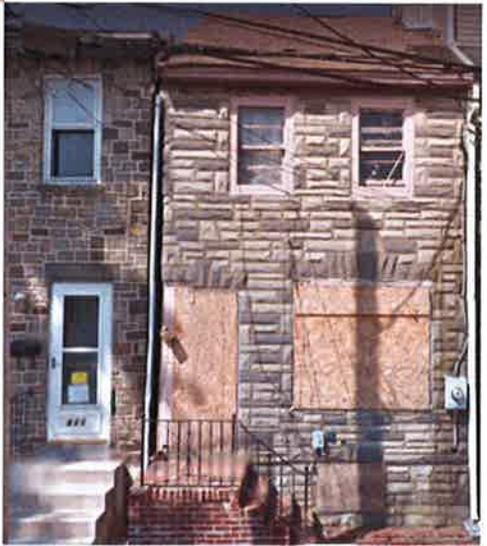


City of New Castle

# Downtown Development District Plan



OCTOBER 2018

**AECOM**





**DOWNTOWN  
DEVELOPMENT  
DISTRICT**

**CITY OF  
NEW CASTLE**

City of New Castle

# Downtown Development District Plan

This Downtown Development District (DDD) Plan identifies assets, challenges, and opportunities within the City of New Castle's Downtown, establishes goals and objectives for community and economic development, and recommends implementation strategies to achieve these goals. This District Plan is submitted as part of the application for DDD designation by the State.

**Plan Amendment.** This 2018 District Plan amends the 2016 District Plan by re-delineating the District boundary focusing on the central business district and immediate surrounding where designation will have the most beneficial impact. The previous plan focused on urban design issues, developing large swaths of vacant land, and extending the downtown core outward. This amendment focuses more on areas with the greatest housing and socio-economic needs in a more concentrated, compact District boundary.

Previous Boundary



Proposed Boundary



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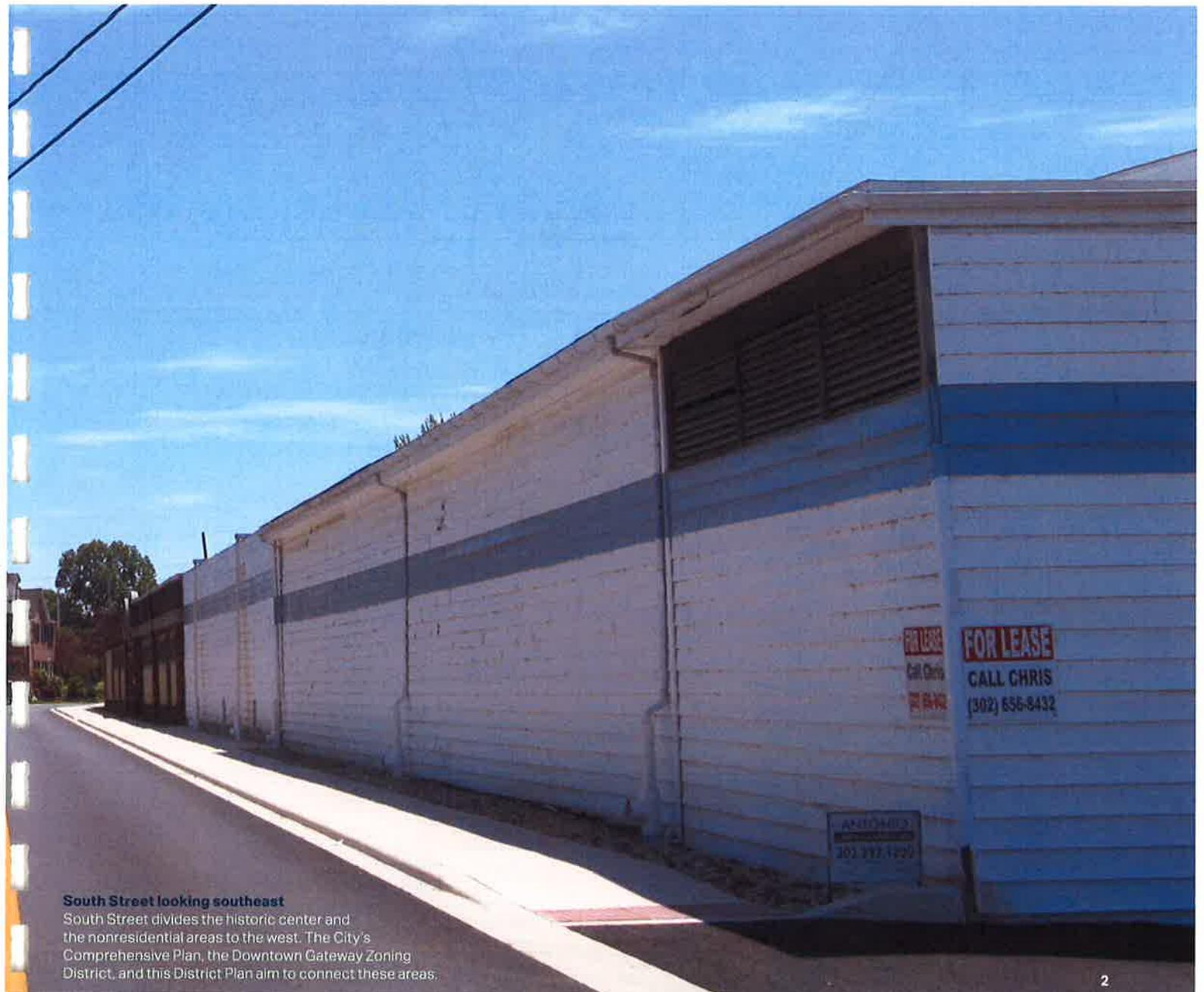
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- Appendix A: Downtown Development District Task Force Members
- Appendix B: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, (SWOT) Results
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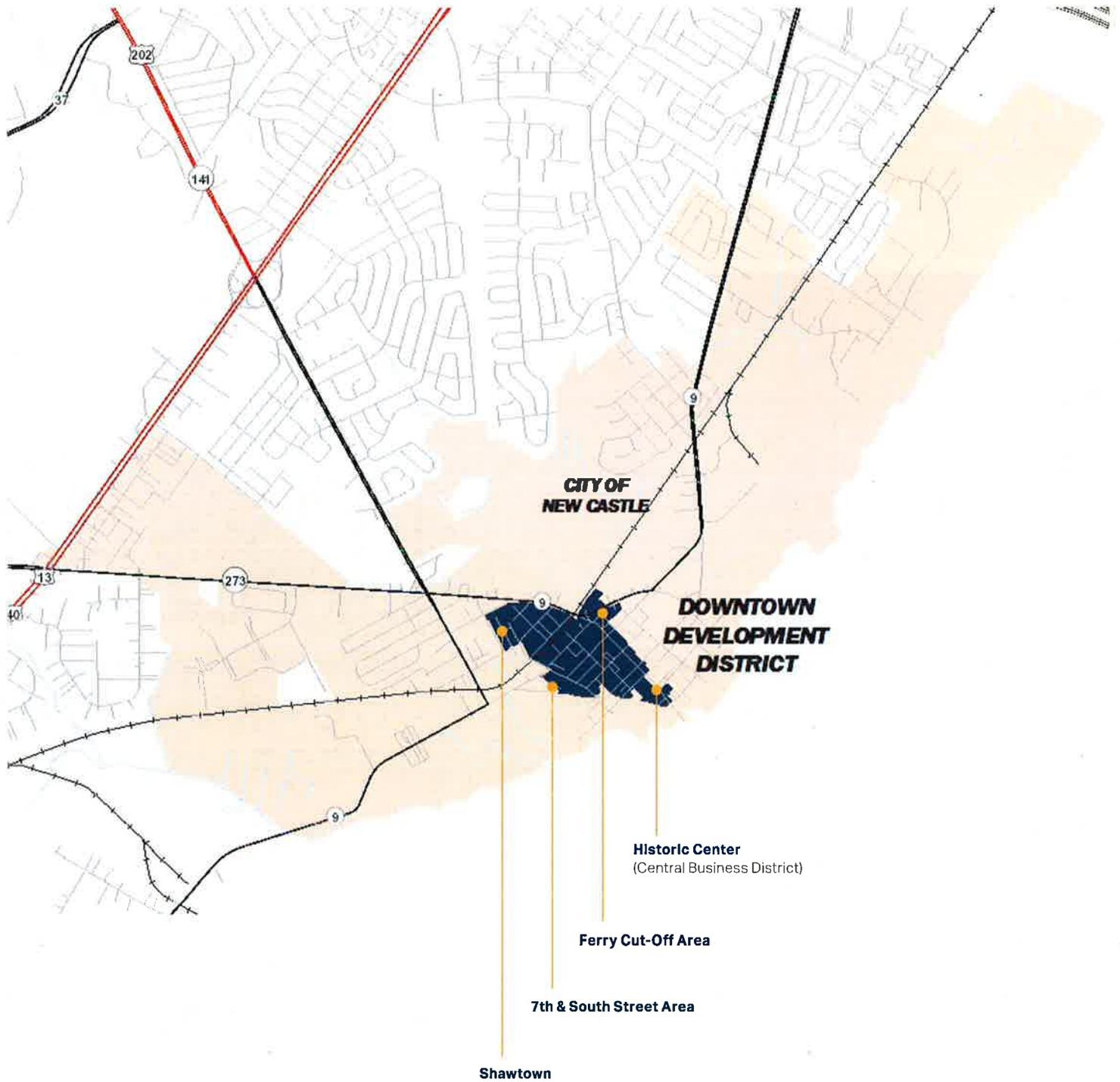


# Introduction



**South Street looking southeast**

South Street divides the historic center and the nonresidential areas to the west. The City's Comprehensive Plan, the Downtown Gateway Zoning District, and this District Plan aim to connect these areas.



**Figure 1:** Downtown Development District Location Map. See Map 1: District Boundary for more detail.

# 01 INTRODUCTION

[Project Background](#)  
[Related Documents](#)  
[Community Outreach](#)  
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[Benefits of Designation](#)

New Castle received a Neighborhood Building Blocks Fund Grant in 2015 to prepare a District Plan and submit an application. This District Plan identifies needs, challenges, and opportunities within the designated downtown, establishes goals and objectives, and recommends implementation strategies to achieve these goals. The planning process for this District Plan included an extensive stakeholder and public outreach process, including the formation of a Downtown Development Task Force. This District Plan is a 'master plan' intended to guide the community with a vision of the Downtown's future focusing on continued community and economic development.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

Healthy and vibrant downtowns are critical components of Delaware's economic well-being and quality of life. To help our downtowns and neighborhoods become more healthy and vibrant places, the Delaware General Assembly enacted the Downtown Development Districts Act in 2014, creating designated areas in our cities and towns that would qualify for significant development incentives and other state benefits. The City of New Castle is seeking Downtown Development District (DDD) designation as an integral component to its comprehensive economic, housing and community development initiatives. The goals of the designation are to:

- Spur private capital investment in commercial business districts and other neighborhoods;
- Stimulate job growth and improve the commercial vitality of such districts and neighborhoods;
- Help build a stable community of long-term residents by improving housing opportunities; and
- Assist local governments in strengthening neighborhoods while harnessing the attraction that vibrant downtowns hold for talented people, innovative small businesses, and residents from all walks of life.

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

As part of this DDD planning process, existing relevant plans and documents were reviewed to provide context and the backdrop for this District Plan. The goals and strategies outlined in this District Plan are consistent with the stated goals and strategies of other plans for the New Castle area. The City of New Castle's 2009 Comprehensive Plan and New Castle County's 2012 Comprehensive Plan both aim to improve the quality of life by actively managing development, providing for a mix of land uses, preserving open space, and promoting infill and reuse of brownfields. Additionally, both the Delaware Strategies for State Policies and Spending and Livable Delaware plans both suggest meeting growth needs in part by reusing developed land and promoting infill development in existing communities like the DDD. Lastly, the DDD's Act was specifically enacted by the General Assembly in order to achieve the aforementioned goals of designation. It is with the Assembly's goals in mind that this Plan was written. The following provides a summary of relevant plans and documents that were reviewed and used to help inform this District Plan.

*Both the City and County's Comprehensive Plans aim to improve quality of life by actively managing development, providing for a mix of land uses, preserving natural and cultural resources, and promoting infill redevelopment that is compatible with the surrounding built environment's scale and character.*

## Comprehensive Plan Update City of New Castle, 2009

Much of the data, information, assumptions, and many of the recommendations of the City of New Castle's 2009 Comprehensive Plan are still valid. The 2009 Plan brought forward past recommendations, suggested new ones, and matched both to a series of City-wide implementation strategies. The 2009 Plan recognized that, while the City should be proud of its historic downtown, a "pedestrian-oriented precinct of unmatched physical beauty and architectural distinction," not all areas of the City benefit from the same level of design quality. The overall goal of the 2009 Plan was to provide a more strategic planning approach to address the development issues of recent decades and achieve the promise of a more unified New Castle. This District Plan furthers the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan as it relates to the gateway areas and the historic center, and provides more focused implementation strategies. The 2009 Plan can be found on the City's website. The City is currently updating its Comprehensive Plan, it is anticipated that it will integrate the issues and strategies set forth in this District Plan.

## Strategies for State Policies & Spending State of Delaware, 2015

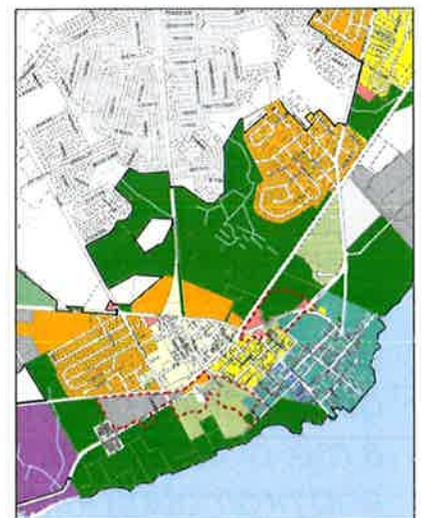
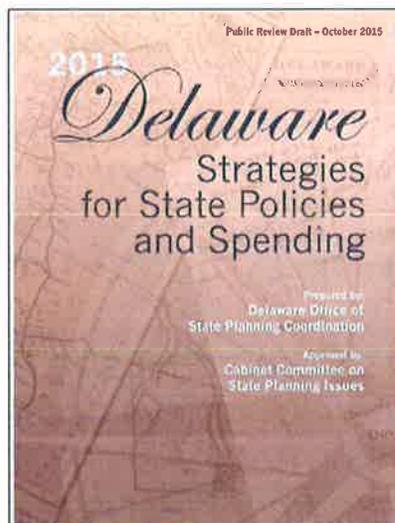
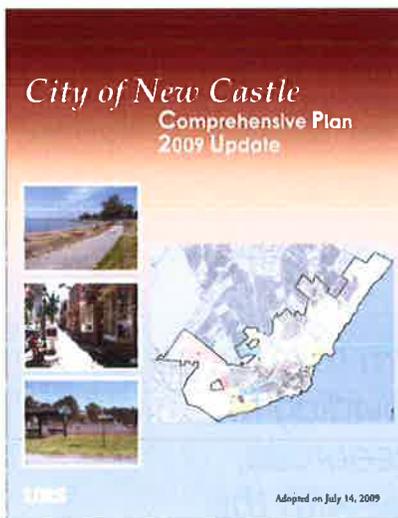
On April 14, 2016, Governor Jack Markell signed Executive Order #59, approving an update of the Strategies for State Policies and Spending. The Strategies are a combination of state and local land use policies intended to guide State investment decisions. As shown on **Map 2: State Strategies**, the majority of the District is defined as Investment Level 1. In Level 1 Areas, state investments and policies should support and encourage a wide range of uses and densities, promote a variety of

transportation options, foster efficient use of existing public and private investments, and enhance community identity and integrity. Overall, it is the State's intent to use its spending and management tools to maintain and enhance community character, to promote well-designed and efficient new growth, and to facilitate redevelopment in Level 1 Areas. These areas would be a prime location for designating "pre-permitted areas" to help steer development where the local government and citizens are most prepared to accept it.

Out-of-Play lands include publicly-owned lands, private conservation lands, lands for which serious legal and/or environmental constraints on development are identified, and lands in some form of permanent open-space protection (such agricultural easements). Out-of-Play areas are generally not expected to be the location of private development activities. However, government entities, private property owners, and conservation organizations are still expected to invest in these areas for the purposes in which they were acquired and preserved. Some large areas within the City are Out-of-Play due to tidal marshes and wetlands associated with the Delaware River. Battery Park and The Green are also considered Out-of-Play.

## Zoning Regulations & Design Standards City of New Castle

Chapter 230 – Zoning, Article IV establishes the City's zoning district regulations, including statements of their intent, permitted uses, and development design standards. These regulations are supplemented by Article V – Supplementary District Regulations, which include parking, signage, and performance standards, among others, as well as the Schedule of District Regulations, which include lot, yard, and bulk requirements. These zoning



regulations are the key tools in implementing the goals and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. Similarly, the regulations are an important implementation tool for this District Plan, as the types of uses, size and shape of buildings, and intensity and density of development have a direct correlation to the downtown’s character and function.

The City has recently adopted a new Downtown Gateway District (DG) to address some of these needs, which is a significant step forward in the City’s redevelopment efforts. The DG advances placemaking principles that promote pedestrian activity, enhances the aesthetic appearance of gateways, and encourages a lively, human-scaled extension of the historic center. In general, the zoning districts in the Downtown allow for a mix of uses and allow an overall density, rhythm, and scale that are conducive to extending and maintaining a vibrant, historic, and walkable downtown. A more detailed description and assessment of the zoning districts within the District are provided in Section 2- Existing Conditions Analysis, Land Use, Zoning & Development Potential.

### Parking Committee Report Parking Sub-Committee, 2015

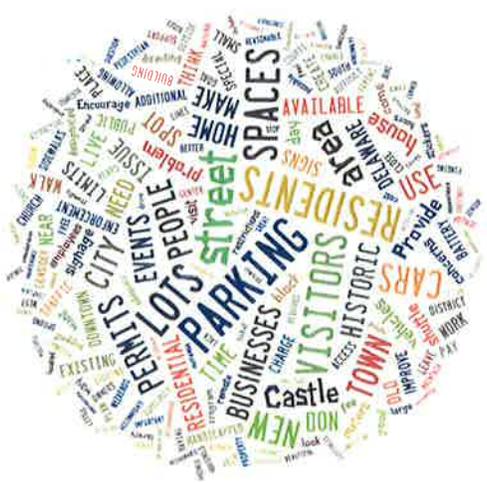
The Planning Commission formed a Parking Sub-Committee, which is comprised of volunteers. The Sub-Committee evaluated parking issues and needs, prepared a report with recommendations, and presented their findings to the Planning Commission. The Committee set forth parking goals and principles to guide parking related decisions, as well as implementation strategies to achieve these goals. A detailed discussion of the Sub-Committee’s findings is provided in Section 2- Existing Conditions Analysis, Parking. The existing study can be found at

[http://newcastlecity.delaware.gov/files/2015/07/Planning-Commisison-NC\\_Parking\\_10-26-2015.pdf](http://newcastlecity.delaware.gov/files/2015/07/Planning-Commisison-NC_Parking_10-26-2015.pdf). Under the direction of a Planning Commission Member, students from the University of Delaware School of Public Policy and Administration helped to update and refine the Sub-Committee’s parking report.

### New Castle Community Wellness Initiative City of New Castle, Delaware Greenways, 2011

In early 2011, the City of New Castle and Delaware Greenways kicked off the Community Wellness Initiative. The Initiative is a community driven effort requiring involvement of all sectors of the community – from schools to community organizations to places of employment – to take action toward better health. It is one of three community-based efforts aimed at changing the context in which citizens live their lives – community/school/work environments, the policies in place in those environments, and the overall community systems – so that there are fewer barriers and more opportunities to make healthy choices. Efforts of the Wellness Initiative include:

- Connecting the Industrial Track Trail to adjacent neighborhoods;
- Connecting the community to fresh, local produce at the Penn Farm;
- Establishing Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) at the Penn Farm with William Penn High School; and
- Identifying barriers to healthy lifestyles and building awareness of local resources.

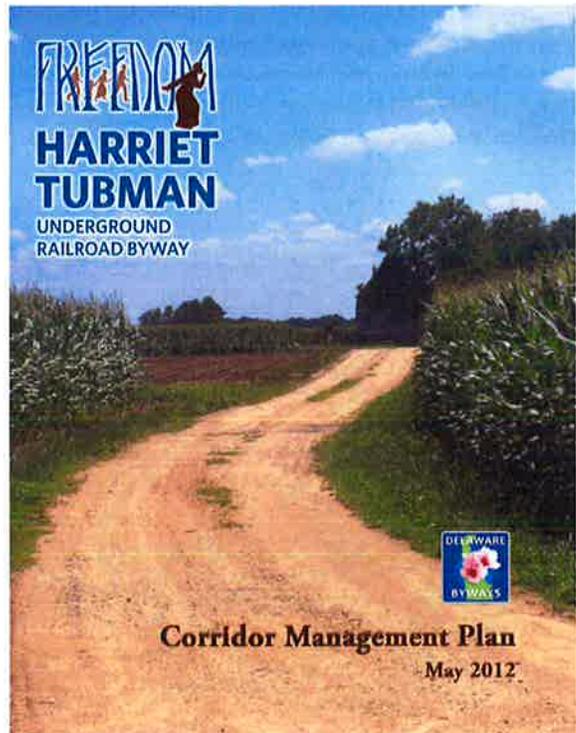
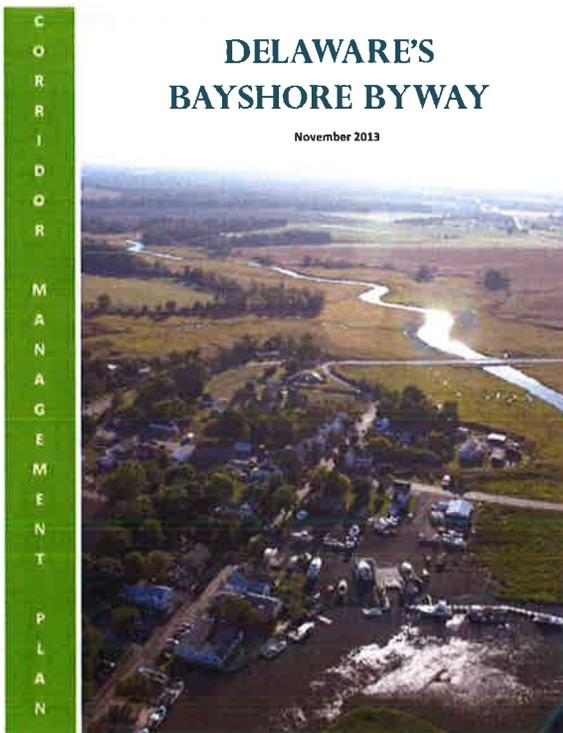


**Delaware Bayshore Byway Corridor Management Plan**  
 DeIDOT, Delaware Greenways, 2013

New Castle is distinguished as a Discovery Zone along the Delaware Bayshore Byway. The Byway links multiple Delaware coastal communities and natural areas along Route 9 by means of a physical route as well as a shared vision, mission, and goals to protect the region’s rich maritime heritage and abundant natural resources. As stated in the Byway Corridor Management Plan (CMP), Discovery Zones, including New Castle, are “destinations that embody activity areas where travelers can learn about the byway, engage in outdoor recreational activities and other byway pursuits and events, and are directed toward visitor amenities.” The CMP sets forth the State’s Bayshore Initiative and tells the story and the aspirations of each Discovery Zone. The CMP also sets forth tools to preserve and enhance the Byway, and how various agencies and stakeholders can work together to implement the recommendations. New Castle embraces its role as a Discovery Zone and this District Plan seeks to augment and build upon the strategies and recommendations provided in the CMP. Many of the implementation strategies in this District Plan are ways to improve the visitor experience which would solidify the City’s role as a Discovery Zone.

**Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway Corridor Management Plan**  
 DeIDOT, Underground Railroad Coalition, 2012

New Castle is located on the National Underground Railroad Network and the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway (HTURB). The Byway’s Corridor Management Plan (CMP) 2012 identifies the Courthouse Museum as an Underground Railroad Site and an intrinsic resource with national significance involving slavery and the Underground Railroad. Significant events at the Courthouse included the trials of abolitionists. Key goals of the CMP are to foster economic development and continued research with a clear course for future actions within the communities along the Byway, such as New Castle. The CMP provides information that assists the preservation, promotion, interpretation, enhancement and management of the intrinsic resources found throughout the HTURB corridor. It sets forth promotion, economic development and marketing strategies as well as potential sources of funding and financing. It also discusses signage for wayfinding, interpretation and gateway signage. Many of the goals and strategies in this District Plan are ways to improve the visitor experience for travelers of the Byway.



## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Community outreach is an important component to any planning process. The City recognized this and crafted an aggressive community outreach program including the formation of a DDD Task Force which guided the planning process and the development of this Plan. To help facilitate the Task Force's mission, the community outreach program also included receiving public input during the March into Downtown event and through an on-line survey.

### DDD Task Force

The Task Force members represent a diverse cross section of City stakeholders. The members of the group included residents, property owners, the Public Library Director, County representatives, school organizations, members of local organizations, a Planning Commission member, and a City Council member. A list of the Task Force Members can be found in Appendix A. The City's planning consultants helped facilitate the meetings by preparing meeting agendas and handouts, and presenting an overview of the discussion topics. With their background and knowledge of New Castle, the Task Force provided input, feedback, and strategies moving forward in creating the District Plan. The Task Force met on six separate occasions:

**Task Force Meeting #1 | Kick-Off | 12-14-2015.** The Task Force members and the consultants discussed the 2014 Downtown Development District Act, Neighborhood Building Blocks Fund (NBBF) Grant, and New Castle NBBF grant application. The overall project scope and schedule was discussed, as well as project roles and responsibilities. A brief overview of recent projects and investments was given that led into a discussion of the District's demographics and existing conditions. Members were introduced to their homework assignment – a SWOT analysis – where they were asked to traverse the District area and think about its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The purpose of this process is to help the City understand the District from an unbiased perspective. The SWOT results informed the Existing Conditions Analysis herein and are integrated throughout this Plan. The SWOT results are in Appendix B.

Members were also asked to review and comment upon draft survey questions that would be finalized and made public in January 2016. A proposal for a community outreach event was also discussed.

**Task Force Meeting #2 | Visioning | 01-13-2016.** The second Task Force meeting focused on visioning activities. The Task Force and the consultants reviewed five model projects: Winchester, VA; Apex, NC; Milford, DE; Keswick Village, PA; and a mixed-use Habitat for Humanity project located in Albany, NY. The consultants also discussed lessons learned in interviewing staff from these and other "model" towns, as well as their own past experiences. Members were asked their opinions on the proposed District boundaries. The SWOT analysis that had been assigned as homework for the first meeting was discussed in depth. Members were introduced to their homework assignment – draft goals and objectives. They were also asked to attend the upcoming community outreach event – March into Your Downtown – and reminded to participate in the online survey and ask others to as well.

**Task Force Meeting #3 | Goals & Strategies | 03-23-2016.** The third Task Force meeting focused on goals and strategies. The survey results were presented and discussed. The District boundary was also discussed and finalized. Attendees discussed the goals, objectives and strategies for the DDD Plan, and were asked what possible incentives the City could consider as part of their local incentive package to accompany the DDD application.

**Task Force Meeting #4 | Draft Plan | 04-20-2016.** The Task Force meeting included a discussion on the draft District Plan and the proposed local incentives. Task Force members were provided a copy of the draft plan to review prior to the meeting and provided input and feedback at the meeting.

**Task Force Meeting #5 | Plan Amendments | 03-23-2018.** The Task Force was reactivated to help amend District Plan and strengthen the application for State DDD designation. The Task Force and consultants reviewed a proposed new District Boundary as well the housing and socio-economic data that the boundary was based on. The Task Force evaluated issues related to housing, employment, building conditions, code violations, crime, and flood risks, which were the drivers to identify areas with the greatest needs.

**Task Force Meeting #6 | Plan Amendments | 03-23-2018.** At the final meeting, the Task Force and consultants evaluated the various amended goals, objectives and strategies, as well as options to amend the City's incentives.

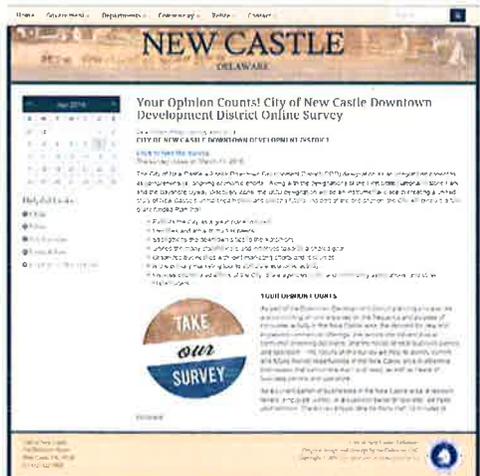
*Input received from the stakeholder and community outreach process directly informed the Existing Conditions Analysis and is integrated throughout this District Plan.*



**SWOT Analysis.** The results of the SWOT analysis helped to inform the Existing Conditions Analysis, as well as the Goals, Objectives and Strategies.



**Community Event.** The event raised awareness of the downtown and the project, and encouraged residents and visitors to complete the survey.



**District Survey.** The survey collected information on the frequency and purpose of consumer activity, the factors that influence shopping decisions, and the needs of consumers and local business owners.

**Figure 2:** Community Outreach

## Community Event

On March 4, 2016, the City of New Castle Downtown held an event named “March into Your Downtown”, in conjunction with the City’s recurring First Friday event. The intent of the event was not only to display the DDD project, but to encourage area residents and visitors to visit downtown businesses and sites to learn what they sell or services they provide, and to encourage them to patron a new business or entity. A project booth was displayed at the New Castle Public Library, which was the event base. The purpose of this booth was to display information on the DDD Project, to gain feedback on the proposed boundary, to hear additional challenges and opportunities facing the District, and to encourage attendees to fill out the online downtown survey. An advance meeting was held, with email follow-up, with many of the local businesses. On the day prior to the event, the planning consultant and the President of City Council visited businesses within the DDD to encourage their participation (through the display of the event logo) in the event and to further describe the intent and status of the District Plan and to encourage their input. Articles, flyers and media ads were used to promote the event.

## Downtown District Survey

In January 2016, an online survey was opened to all residents, business owners and operators, property owners, renters, and visitors to the City of New Castle. Those needing help filling out the survey were directed to the New Castle Public Library. Postcards and flyers describing the DDD project, as well as requesting completion of the survey, were distributed at the March into Your Downtown community event, throughout the downtown, and emailed to various individuals and organizations. A total of 351 responses were collected. Surveys were differentiated for residents/visitors and merchants. The purpose of the survey was to collect information on the frequency and purpose of consumer activity in the New Castle area, the demand for new and expanded commercial offerings, the factors that influence local consumer shopping decisions, and the needs of local business owners and operators. The results of the survey played a key role in informing the Existing Conditions Analysis and the development of the Goal, Objectives and Strategies.

“ Unfortunately one barrier is that the residents themselves probably have a multitude of views about the town. Some just want it to be for the locals, while others like me want a combination of residential with a flair of niche business.”

District Survey Respondent (Question 19)



A common thread found throughout the survey results is that the respondents are attracted to shopping and business areas that have attributes typically found in a healthy and vibrant traditional downtown versus a suburban shopping center or mall. These attributes include walkability, having a variety of stores, and having a personal experience in an attractive place. When asked how appealing certain future scenarios for the City's downtown are to them (Question 11), respondent's overwhelmingly supported 'having an aesthetic blend of green space and pedestrian amenities with an historic flavor' as the most appealing. Respondents also envision the downtown as a center of community activities with a mix of shopping, restaurants, cultural resources and recreation spaces. Being a regional destination retail center was the least appealing. Specific survey questions as they relate to economic development are further discussed in Section 2- Existing Conditions Analysis.

When looking at potential changes that would improve the downtown (Question 15), the highest response, by a wide margin, was to have a greater variety of stores. The majority also stated that attractive outdoor dining and improved parking would be beneficial. Not surprisingly, the survey results indicated that New Castle's historical look and atmosphere was the number one thing respondents would keep about the downtown (Question 18). Similar and consistent with Question 15, having both a greater variety of stores and improved parking were the things they would change. The survey also revealed that improved parking would help attract people to the downtown; as would additional marketing and advertising (Question 19). In the merchant survey, business owners stated that parking and not enough customer traffic were the major limitations to success of their business (Question 34).

The survey forms and more detailed results can be found in Appendix C- District Survey. In addition to informing the Goals, Objectives and Strategies, the survey results are integrated into the Existing Conditions Analysis in this Plan.

“ I think that it would be nice to have a specialty shop. Somewhere where you can get fresh bread, pastries and other bakery items.”

District Survey Respondent (Question 17)

## STAKEHOLDERS & PARTNERSHIPS

City leaders recognize that ongoing coordination and collaboration with public, private and non-profit organizations is critical to achieve its community and economic development goals. Many of the strategies set forth in this District Plan involve other organizations, whether in the form of securing funds, promoting businesses or community events, obtaining technical assistance, coordinating physical improvements, or aligning common goals. Continued coordination among entities will be important as plans are implemented, and are further identified in Section 4- Implementation Plan. The following provides a list of some of the public, private and non-profit organizations that the City currently collaborates with to varying degrees, and that provide opportunities for further collaboration. These organizations and stakeholders could play a key role in furthering the goals and objectives of this Plan and in its implementation.

### **New Castle Community Partnership | Delaware Main Street.**

The mission of the New Castle Community Partnership is to preserve, promote and enhance the historic heritage of the City by coordinating and organizing various community events. The Partnership is a non-profit Commercial District Affiliate (CDA) of Downtown Delaware, which is a designation developed by the former Delaware Economic Development Office, (now the Division of Small Business) for communities that choose to implement downtown revitalization strategies similar to designated Main Street programs, but on a smaller scale. As a CDA, the Partnership is considering future Main Street designation. There are opportunities for the Division of Small Business and New Castle Community Partnership to work together to build strategies that will encourage partnership-development, new funding opportunities, and increased opportunities for small businesses. CDAs are in the Downtown Delaware's "network" to learn about best practices in the field of revitalization, to work with a downtown business development expert, and to trade best practices with peers from around the state, particularly in the area of business development. Many of Delaware's CDA's are direct beneficiaries of USDA grant-related activities. Ultimately, CDA's are offered an opportunity to plan proactively for a vibrant, synergistic downtown commercial business district based on the Four Point Main Street model. <http://www.delawaremainstreet.com>.

The Partnership works to enhance the economy, appearance, and image of the historic City of New Castle by utilizing the Main Street strategy. The Main Street Approach includes economic vitality, design, promotion and organization. The Partnership has established themselves to focus on each one of these areas,

and currently are specifically focusing on design and promotion. The City and the Partnership are committed to continued discussion regarding the potential for Main Street designation and in determining appropriate roles and responsibilities to achieve such designation.

**New Castle Historical Society.** The New Castle Historical Society is an incorporated, non-profit membership organization with 501(c)(3) status. It operates three historic buildings for guided tours for individuals and groups. The Society is also involved in educating the public about the history of New Castle through exhibits, programs, lectures, publications, and resource materials. The Society works to promote historical awareness and encourage the preservation of historical architecture and material culture of New Castle. The NCHS has been a partner with the City, and other groups in town, to protect the architectural integrity and history of New Castle. These are what make New Castle unique and a great destination for visitors. The DDD designation strengthens these efforts by supporting new and local businesses, better housing, and a more walkable community. This is especially true for the NCHS since they now operate the New Castle Visitors Center at The Arsenal, immediately adjacent to the proposed DDD.

**Trustees of New Castle Common.** The Trustees of New Castle Common, a nonprofit organization, was incorporated in 1764 and reincorporated by the Delaware Assembly in 1792. Its purpose is to preserve and protect the historic Common lands for the use and benefit of the inhabitants of the City of New Castle. Income is derived primarily from property rentals and investments. There are four Trustees properties in the proposed DDD.

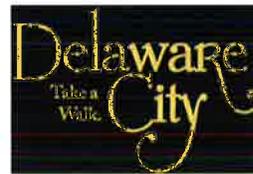
**Arasapha Garden Club.** Arasapha has three purposes. Its primary emphasis is on the beautification and improvement of the Amstel House, Dutch House, and Native Plant gardens while preserving their historical integrity. It also aims to stimulate interest in and practical knowledge of gardening and historical gardens among its members and the community through educational programs and activities. Finally, it aims to beautify and improve Old New Castle. Arasapha's most important values are community, excellence, stewardship, education, and access.



**New Castle Public Library.** The New Castle Public Library began as a subscription library in 1812. It moved to its current location on Delaware Street in 1965, reopening in 2010 after renovations and expansions were completed to meet the growing needs of the community. The library offers audio, video, magazines, e-books, databases, and print materials for all ages. A specialized collection of New

Castle history is also available for use within the library. Programs are offered for all ages and interests including ESL, GED in Spanish, First Friday Lego Club, and Teen's Game-on. Public access computers, wireless access, and meeting space are available as well. The library is supported by the enthusiastic New Castle Library Friends who plan fundraisers and an annual book sale. The library played an important role in promoting the District Survey and assisting participants in completing the survey. The library was also "home base" for the March into Your Downtown event.

**Delaware City.** The Delaware Bayshore Byway CMP



recognizes the opportunity to partner with the next Discovery Zone to the south, Delaware City. The CMP recommends that the municipalities consider additional joint initiatives with other

communities along the Bayshore Byway that share common interests to increase tourism and promote their downtowns. A current example of this cross promotion is the River Towns Ride & Festival, where cyclists can ride between festivals at The Green in New Castle and Battery Park in Delaware City.



**Bike Delaware.** The Delaware Bayshore Byway CMP also recognizes the opportunity to partner with Bike Delaware. The CMP recommends that the City continue to partner with Bike Delaware to promote the trail expansion and connections in the City

and region, including the Heritage Greenway Trail / Industrial Track Trail and the East Coast Greenway.

**New Castle Senior Center.** The mission of the New Castle Senior Center is to serve older adults with programs to enhance their health, happiness, and independence within the community. New Castle Senior Center welcomes everyone over 50 years of age regardless of race, religion, sex, ethnic origin, or handicap. The Center has been serving seniors in the greater New Castle area since 1970. It incorporated and became a private nonprofit in 2001, expanding in 2007 with a 6,000 square foot addition including a dining room with dance floor, an activity room for cards and exercise classes, exam rooms and physician offices for a health center, a full catering kitchen, and administrative offices. The Center also houses a library, crafts area, billiard tables, shuffleboard table, and computers.

**Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs.**

A mission of Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs is to disseminate accurate historical information through historic research, archaeological and architectural analysis. It also develops interpretive programming activities complementing exhibits, historic sites, and provides public outreach.

**Delaware Greenways.** Delaware Greenways is a



community-based organization specializing in natural and scenic resource protection and sustainable land use to

improve quality of life and promote healthy and active lifestyles. Delaware Greenways assists municipalities with community economic development, community wellness, eco-tourism and locally grown food programs, which are all an important part of the City's community development goals and initiatives.

The City's partnership with Delaware Greenways has led to the designation as a Discovery Zone along the Delaware Bayshore Byway, as well as the creation of the Community Wellness Initiative. The Wellness Initiative included community-based efforts to improve community health by aiming to remove barriers and create more opportunities and awareness for making healthy choices. The Wellness Initiative also includes use of the Historic Penn Farm, which is a living historical farm providing fresh, local produce to the City and the region through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Delaware Greenways has also led the development and management of greenways that connect to the City of New Castle, including the Heritage Greenway Trail / Industrial Track Trail.

The Greenways current work at Historic Penn Farm, the Bayshore Byway and the First State National Park are all designed to add vibrancy to New Castle and to strengthen its economic and tourism industries. The City is also proud to promote the Greenways' activities and initiatives for the Byways and the Penn Farm.

**Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs.**



GWCVB's mission is to serve the community's customer focused destination marketing organization, generating economic growth through leisure travel and meetings development by

aggressively marketing attractions, facilities, amenities and services for visitors. The City of New Castle is one of the region's great assets for marketing the area. The DDD designation will enforce reinforce and strengthen all that is currently in place.

## DISTRICT BOUNDARY

The project team evaluated the socio-economic data within a large study area, and used that data to delineate a boundary to where designation will have the most beneficial socio-economic impacts. The data on housing, employment, building conditions, code violations, crime, and flood risks were the drivers to identify areas with the greatest needs. **Map 1: District Boundary** shows the amended Downtown Development District boundary. The District contains 530 parcels totalling 85 acres, including the streets and rights of way and with no enclaves. As shown in Figure 3, the District includes four planning areas within a concentrated core: Historic District / Central Business District; 7th and South Street area; Ferry Cut-Off area; and the Shawtown neighborhood.

This Plan Amendment redirects the focus and strategy from developing vacant land, as generally set forth in the previous Plan, towards improving existing neighborhoods with homeowners that may need more assistance. By removing large swaths of vacant land and adding more compact residential blocks, the new boundary has twice as many parcels than the previous boundary.

## NEEDS FOR DESIGNATION

While City residents are proud of their rich historic district, some adjacent neighborhoods have not benefited from the same level of design quality and investment. Beyond the tourism, recreation and leisure merits within the historic center lies a downtown with distinct neighborhoods and a diverse local economy that includes locally owned businesses, offices, industrial operations, highway businesses and residents who care passionately about the future of their City. For decades, the City has been planning to not just protect and promote its historic center, but also to improve and connect surrounding neighborhoods and balance diverse needs. One major issue is the high number of properties that are in disrepair and property related code violations. Within the DDD, the issue is mostly concentrated within the Shawtown area, which correlates with the area's low homeownership, low home values, low per capita income, and high poverty rate. This area also has one of the higher concentrations of criminal activity in the City, and are mostly property related offenses.

Another major issue is poor access to affordable, healthy, and convenient retail that meet the daily needs of neighborhood residents. The City has experienced a significant loss of retail as a result of the evolution of the downtown from a local service to a tourist economy. In addition, past market driven development and State transportation policies separated uses and designed the streets for cars only; resulting in a highway-oriented design that separated areas from the historic center. The Shawtown neighborhood, already without retail uses, was

physically separated by the railroad track, which breaks up the street grid and impedes connectivity and accessibility.

A third major issue is the high cost of restoring aging and historic structures. Most of the structures in the District were built before 1939. With an aging housing stock comes the need for repairs and renovations, increasing the overall housing costs and the likelihood of neglected and abandoned properties. In addition, many of the City's homes were built before 1900 and in the Historic District. Historic rehabilitation projects are generally more complex and more expensive. Because of these constraints, property owners may be reluctant or incapable of making improvements and let the building fall into disrepair; harming the City's historic fabric.

## BENEFITS OF DESIGNATION

It is anticipated that the recognition and economic incentives through the State's Development District designation, coupled with the City's strategies and incentives package, will stimulate economic development, improve housing conditions, and attract a greater mix in uses to balance the needs of residents and visitors. Improving physical and social connections between the historic center and surrounding neighborhoods will unify the disparate neighborhoods into a seamless, fully integrated, single New Castle. For the Shawtown neighborhood, it is anticipated that the area's low homeownership and home values will rise, increasing a sense of pride in homeownership and property upkeep. For the historic center, financial incentives will help ease the cost burden to current and prospective property owners and investors to maintain and rehabilitate historic and aging structures. For the gateway areas, the underutilized properties are deemed market-ready, and designation will help direct private capital investments to these areas.

The designation would also help advance the vision, goals and objectives of the City's Comprehensive Plan. The City's land use and development policies help to address the needs of the downtown as they preserve historic structures, promote mixed use development, promote property maintenance, and require pedestrian-oriented design guidelines and standards, all of which help foster places of quality. With adequate infrastructure, zoning, and policies in place, obtaining State designation is the next integral component to the City's comprehensive, ongoing redevelopment efforts, which will advance years of planning into tangible investments.

In sum, the designation will be a major vehicle towards redeveloping underutilized areas in the City, connecting disparate areas to the historic center, instilling a sense of pride in homeownership and property upkeep, and protecting this national historic treasure. All of which are key components of the City's community and economic development initiatives.

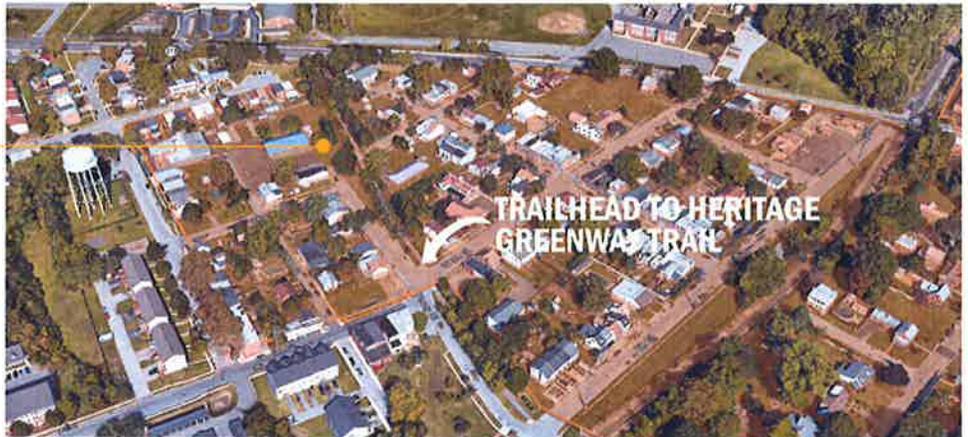
**Ferry Cut-Off Area**

North Gateway along the Ferry Cutoff corridor. This area includes the River Plaza Shopping Center, other retail and offices. It is identified as a priority redevelopment area with a need for streetscape improvements.



**Shawtown**

Residential neighborhood situated between 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Gray Street, Young Street and the Ferry Cut-Off. The neighborhood provides a variety of housing types with proximity to the downtown and the Heritage Greenway Trail.



**7<sup>th</sup> & South Street Area**

The south gateway adjacent to the Historic Center, between South Street, Battery Park, and 7<sup>th</sup> Street. This area includes the SPCA and storage/warehouse uses. The Brosius-Eliason building fronting South Street provides an adaptive reuse opportunity.



**Historic Center**

Includes Delaware Street, a portion of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, and the historic residential 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets. This area includes the City's designated Historic District, and is the central business district.



**Figure 3:** Downtown Development District Planning Areas



# 02



# Existing Conditions Analysis



**Second Street, adjacent to New Castle Commons**  
Historic residential street with a boutique store, an art gallery, an historic church and the George Read House II and Gardens adjacent to New Castle Commons.

**River Plaza Shopping Center**  
Ferry Cut-Off Area



## 02 EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

### Overview

### Census Data

### Code Violations & Crime

### Land Use, Zoning & Development Potential

### Natural Resources & Hazards

### Historic Resources

### Transportation, Connectivity & Walkability

### Gateways & Streetscape

### Public Spaces

### Parking

### Community Events

### Economic Conditions

### Conclusion

## OVERVIEW

**Map 1: District Boundary** delineates the proposed boundary for economic and community development efforts that are part of this District Plan. The District has some development constraints to overcome as well as many strengths and assets that can be drawn upon towards achieving the vision and goals for a healthy and vibrant community. This section describes these critical issues that may be slowing the City from meeting its economic potential, as well as the many assets and opportunities to capitalize upon. These challenges and opportunities were derived from many sources, including the following:

- Related planning documents listed in Section 1.
- Community Outreach Process described in Section 1. This included an opinion survey, SWOT analysis, Task Force meetings, a community event, and coordination with City Staff and the City Police Department.
- District Reconnaissance Survey. The City's planning consultants performed a walkthrough within the District boundaries at the very outset of the planning process. The objectives of the reconnaissance survey were to observe, document, and photograph the existing conditions as they relate to the built environment, urban form, and community character. Observations and photographs from the survey are integrated throughout this section.

This section analyzes demographic and housing conditions, as well as issues with property maintenance and crime. It also evaluates the types of land uses and businesses, and redevelopment opportunities in the District. There is also a discussion on flood risks, historic preservation needs, connectivity and walkability, and other contributing features to socio-economic and community development.

## CENSUS DATA

### Demographics

**Population.** The City of New Castle's population remained unchanged in the decades between 1970 and 2000, and then experienced a 10% increase in the next 15 years. The City's estimated population in 2015 was 5,371 an increase of over 500 people since the 2000 Census count of 4,862. New Castle County also saw an increase of 10% over these years, and the State saw an 18% increase. The significant majority of the District parcels reside within U.S. Census Block Groups 162.1 and 162.2. These two Block Groups experienced a population increase from 1,819 persons in 2000 to an estimated 2,157 in 2015, which is almost 20%. Adversely, Block Group 161.2, which contains a small portion of the DDD boundary, east of Delaware Street, experienced an 18% decrease in population. The reasons for these variances between population changes in different areas of the City is unclear. It is further noted that the number of people actually coming into the City reaches over 10,000 people a day due to the number of businesses and tourists. The Block Groups that intersect the District Boundary and a summary of the census data are provided in Figure 7 and Table 5.

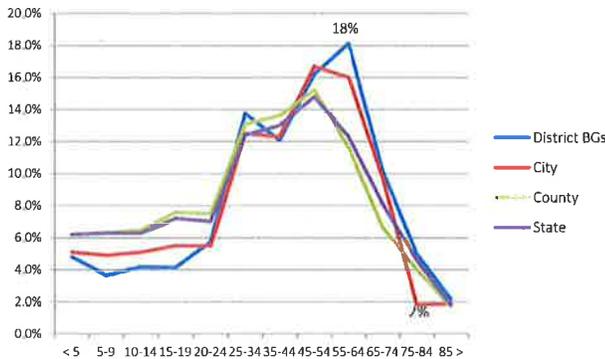
**Racial Profile.** Per the 2010 U.S. Census, the City, County, and State showed similar racial compositions. The City's population included 67% white, 27% black, and 5% other races. The County's population included 65% white, 24% black, and 11% other races. The State's population included 69% white, 21% black, and 10% other races. From 2000 to 2010, the major shift in demographics was growth in diversity. Across the board, the white population dropped 5 to 10 percent. The DDD was slightly more racially homogenous in 2010 than the City, County and State, with 72% white, 12% black, and 15% other races and multiracial; however, it did see growth in diversity. In 2000, 89% of the District area was white, 9% was black, and 1% was other races.

**Age Profile.** As shown in Table 1 and Figure 4: Age Profile, the City has a slightly older population than New Castle County and the State of Delaware and the population within the District is slightly older than that of the City itself. The median age in the District is 52, and the most prevalent age group is between 55 and 64 years old, while the least prevalent age group is over 75 years old.

**Table 1:** Age Profile

Age	District (BG 161.2, 162.1 & 162.2)		City	County	State
	#	%	%	%	%
<5	125	4.8	5.1	6.2	6.2
5-9	96	3.7	4.9	6.3	6.3
10-14	109	4.2	5.1	6.5	6.3
15-19	108	4.1	5.5	7.6	7.2
20-24	149	5.7	5.5	7.5	7.0
25-34	358	13.7	12.5	13.1	12.4
35-44	315	12.1	12.3	13.6	13.0
45-54	422	16.2	16.7	15.2	14.8
55-64	472	18.1	16.0	11.6	12.3
65-74	265	10.2	9.7	6.6	8.1
75-84	130	5.0	1.8	4.0	4.6
85 >	56	2.2	1.9	1.7	1.8
Median	52		44	39	38

**Figure 4:** Age Profile



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

## Housing

In 2000, the City had 2,260 housing units. In the next 15 years, the City added 249 housing units, bringing its total to 2,509. About a quarter of these housing units are in the DDD boundary. The demand for housing in Delaware’s downtowns is anticipated to increase as the growing population of baby boomers and millennials seek walkable and urban living.

**Types of Housing Stock.** The DDD’s housing stock consists mainly of historic row houses and duplexes (i.e. single-family attached dwellings), and compact single-family detached dwellings, which contribute to the historic residential character making up much of the District. There are also a few multi-family buildings in the District.

**Age of Housing Stock.** In general, the City’s housing stock is aging. The percentage of housing built before 1939 is significantly higher than at the County and State levels. Per 2015 U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS), approximately 36% of City’s housing stock was built before 1939. In contrast, housing built prior to 1939 accounts for only 11% in the County and 9% in the State. Block Group 161.2 and 162.1 have an very high percentage of units built before 1939 with 81%. See Table 2- Structures Built Before 1939.

**Table 2:** Structures Built Before 1939

	Block Group 161.2	Block Group 162.1	Block Group 162.2
Total # of Structures	604	658	1,499
# built before 1939	389	294	175
% built before 1939	81%	82%	26%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 2015 ACS 5 Year Estimates

**Housing Values.** Figure 5: Median Housing Values depicts the 2000 and 2015 median housing values for the City of New Castle, New Castle, and the State of Delaware. Between 2000 and 2010, median housing values increased by 85% in both the County and State, but not quite as much in the City – at 80%. This was quite an increase; however, the median housing values have since decreased almost 10% between 2010 and 2015. It is important to note that with an aging housing stock comes the need for repairs and renovations, increasing the overall housing costs.

**Figure 5:** Median Housing Values



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 ACS 5-Year Estimates

**Ownership and Vacancy.** Per the 2015 American Community Survey, the homeownership rate in the District’s Census Block Groups is 48%, which is very low compared to the County and State rates of approximately 70%. The rental rate in the District’s Census Blocks is 41%, which is higher than the City and County rates of approximately 30%. The percentage of vacant housing units of 10% in the District is slightly higher than the City and County levels of approximately 8%, but is significantly lower than the State level of 17%.

## Income & Poverty

**Income.** Per 2015 ACS data, the average median income of the households within the District’s Block Groups is approximately \$60,000, which is higher than the City median of \$56,307, but lower than the County and State values of \$65,476 and \$60,509. From 2000 to 2015, the City saw its median household income increase 7%, and its per capita income increase 35%. The County and State also had an increase in median household income and per capita income during this same time period.

**Poverty.** The poverty rate in the District’s Block Groups averaged 11%, which is slightly lower than the poverty rate at the City (13.7%), County (13.5%) and State (12.0%). The greatest concern in the District is the Shawtown neighborhood, which had a 15% poverty rate and a per capita income of only \$27,558. See Table 3: Income, Poverty & Unemployment Comparison.

## Employment

**Job Types.** A primary job is a single job per worker that provides the highest wages for that individual. This job can be public or private. According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s Center of Economic Studies, as of 2015, there were 436 people with primary jobs who lived within the district, and there were 133 primary jobs within the istrict.

Most individuals whose primary job was within the district earned over \$1,250 per month. Forty one percent earned \$1,251 to \$3,333 and 44% earned over \$3,333 per month. Only 15% of the district workers earned less than \$1,250 per month. Half of the individuals who worked within the district were between 30 and 54 years old.

**Unemployment.** Per the 2011-2015 ACS estimates, the City had a 6.5% unemployment rate. This is slightly higher than the Bureau of Labor Statistics rates for the County and State levels in 2015, at 3.9% and 4.6%, respectively. The unemployment rate is the number of unemployed persons divided by the number of persons in the civilian labor force. Block group 161.2 had the highest unemployment rate in the study area, at 9.3%.

**Job Inflow and Outflow.** The City envisions an active and vibrant downtown. To help achieve this vision, there is a need to create a more balanced inflow and outflow of workers. There were 470 workers who lived within the district boundary. Out of these 470 workers, only 2 worked within the District. Similarly, there are 147 jobs within the district with only two of those living in the City. Figure 6 shows the inflow and outflow of jobs. The City should try to capture some of the commuting workers by increasing housing opportunities for incoming workers and jobs for residents. Living and working locally, people spend less time commuting and are able to run more errands, support the local economy, and socialize more. Increasing job opportunities for residents and housing opportunities for employees could help increase foot traffic and create a more active downtown.

Figure 6: Job Inflow & Outflow

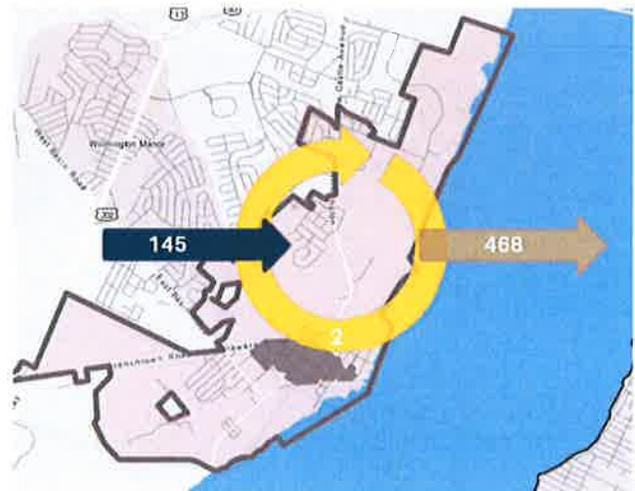


Table 4: Job Inflow & Outflow

Worker Totals and Flows	#	%
Workers Living within the district boundary	470	100%
Living in area, but Employed Outside	468	99.6%
Living and Employed in area	2	0.4%
Employed within the district boundary	147	100%
Employed in area, but Living Outside	145	98.6%
Employed and Living in area	2	1.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau’s OnTheMap, May 2018

Table 3: Income, Poverty & Unemployment Comparison

	BG 161.02	BG 162.01	BG 162.02	City			County			State		
	2015	2015	2015	2000	2010	2015	2000	2010	2015	2000	2010	2015
Median Household Income	\$62,721	\$59,531	\$56,750	\$52,449	\$57,693	\$56,307	\$52,419	\$62,474	\$65,476	\$47,381	\$57,599	\$60,509
Per Capita Income	\$57,227	\$42,409	\$27,558	\$24,052	\$31,727	\$32,433	\$25,413	\$31,220	\$32,894	\$23,305	\$29,007	\$30,554
Poverty Rate	7.2%	8.1%	14.6%	13.9%	4.4%	13.7%	8.4%	10.3%	11.4%	9.2%	11.0%	12.0%
Unemployment	9.3%	3.1%	6.7%	4.5%	6.7%	6.5%	3.2%	8.3%	3.9%	3.7%	8.4%	4.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2010 Census; 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Bureau of Labor Statistics

Figure 7: Census Data Summary

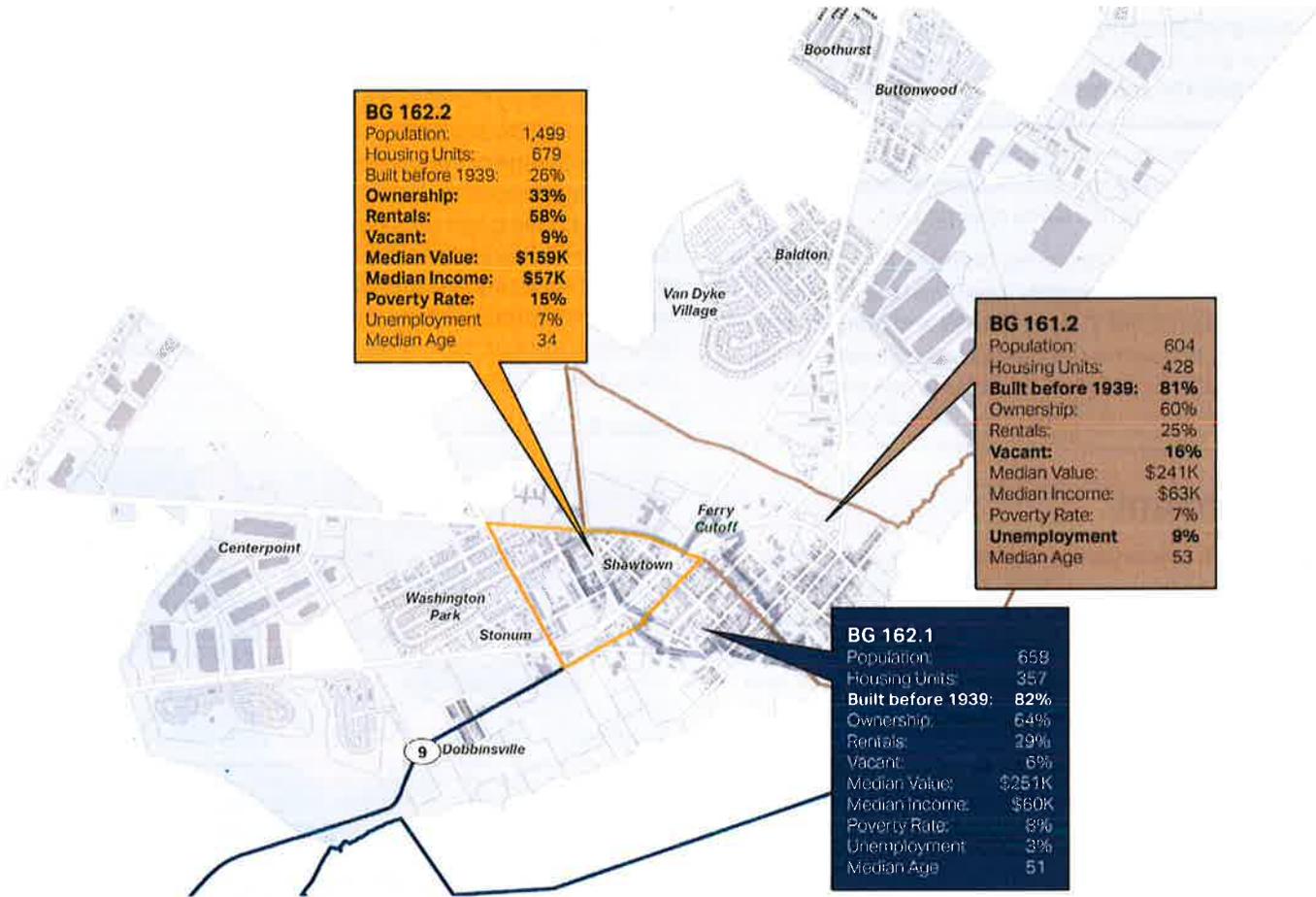


Table 5: Census Data Summary

Comparison

	Tract 161 BG 2	Tract 162 BG 1	Tract 162 BG 2	Blocks*	City	County	State
Total Population	604	658	1,499	1,218	5,371	549,643	926,454
Median Household Income	\$62,721	\$59,531	\$56,750		\$56,307	\$65,476	\$60,509
Poverty Rate, All People	7%	8%	14%		14%	13%	12%
% Housing Built 1939 or earlier	82%	82%	26%		36%	11%	9%
% Owner occupied	60%	64%	33%	68%	59%	69%	69%
% Rental occupied	24%	29%	58%	32%	33%	31%	31%
% Vacant Housing Units	16%	6%	9%	7%	7%	8%	17%
Median Housing Value	\$240,600	\$251,300	\$159,000		\$199,900	\$242,400	\$231,500

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates;

Blocks per 2010 U.S. Census; These Blocks most closely correspond to proposed District.

# CODE VIOLATIONS

Older buildings typically require a greater degree of upkeep and maintenance and have a greater chance of being neglected or even abandoned. A visual survey and New Castle County parcel data shows the majority of the buildings in the downtown district are in fair to good condition, though many would benefit from some exterior improvements and property clean-up.

Based on City records in the last five years, there were almost 1,000 code violations within the City; about 200 of which were within the District. The violations are incidents where the City had reached out to the property owner by letter, email, phone call, or hand delivery. As shown on Figure 8: Code Violations, there are three hot spots in the City with a relatively high concentration of violations. These areas are the residential neighborhoods of Dobbinsville, Washington Park, and Shawtown. About 100 property maintenance violations are within Shawtown, which is one key reason for including the neighborhood in the District.

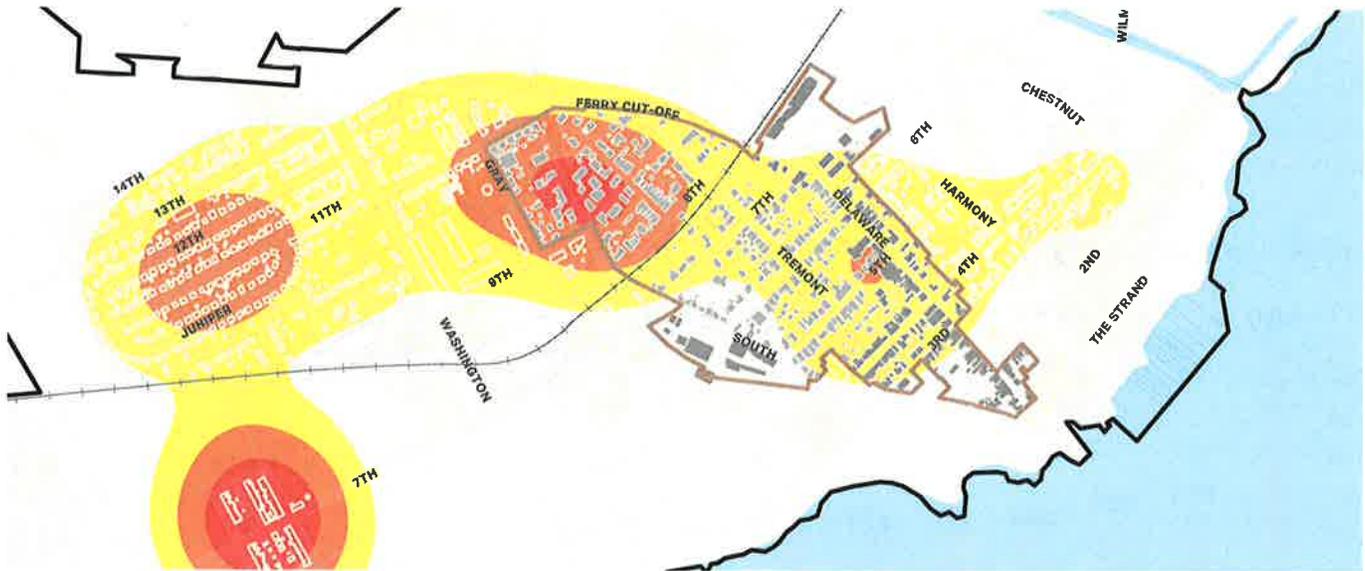
Almost 90% of the incidents within the District and City wide are related to property maintenance related, including building exteriors, high grass-weeds, debris in yard, and similar issues. Other incidents were violations of the sanitary code and sidewalk code. A few incidents were deemed dangerous to public health and safety. See Table 6 for types of the code violations.

**Table 6:** Code Violations

	City	DDD
Property Maintenance	835	167
Utility / Sanitary	50	11
Sidewalks /Streets	30	9
Dangerous / Vacant	13	3
	928	190

Source: City of New Castle Building and Zoning Department, 2012 - 2017

**Figure 8:** Code Violations Heat Map



# CRIME

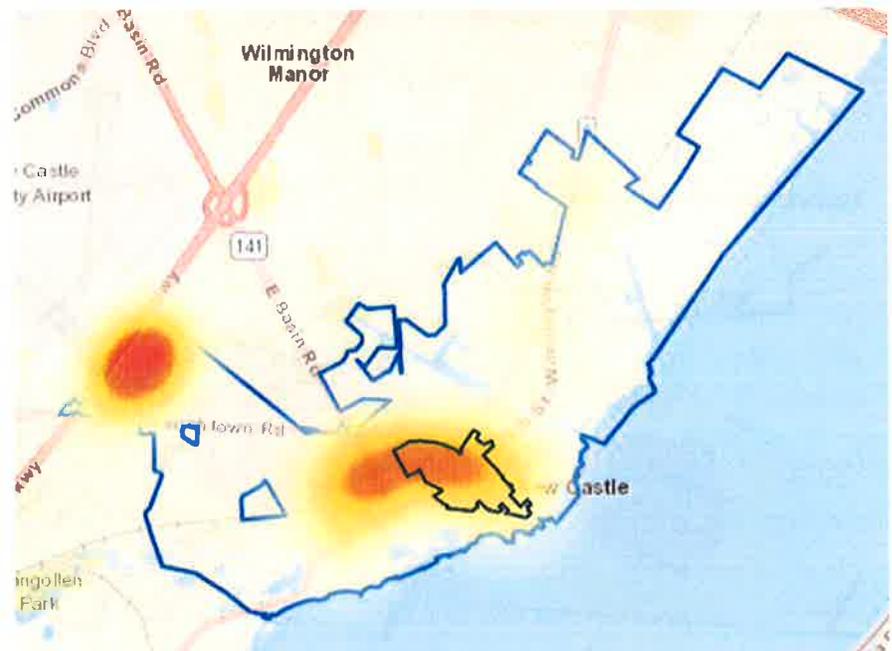
Per the 2016 USA Crime Index, the City of New Castle area has above average serious crime levels. See Figure 9. The project team worked closely with the City of New Castle Police Department to evaluate crime data and delineate a DDD boundary that includes areas with high concentrations of criminal incidents. The Police Department provided the number and types of criminal offenses within City limits. Within the last two years, there were over 3,000 offenses reported. The most frequent types of incidents included larceny and stolen property, and vandalism. The second most frequent call types were spread out amongst simple assaults, fraud, drug violations, family offenses, DUIs and disorderly conduct. Approximately one-third of the incidents were classified as 'citation' or 'interview' and other offenses that are not categorized. Figure 10 shows the density of criminal activity reported. There are two areas of high concentration of reported activity. One area is at the City's edge along Route 13 which includes a large regional shopping center. The second area is between 7th Street, Washington Street, and the Ferry Cut-off, which includes the Shawtown and Washington Park neighborhoods. A breakdown of crime types is provided in Figure 11.

Figure 9: US Crime Index, 2016



Source: Neighborhood Building Blocks Fund Story Map, University of Delaware

Figure 10: Crime Incidents Heat Map



Source: New Castle City Police Department, 2015-2017

Figure 11: Crime Incidents, 2015-2017

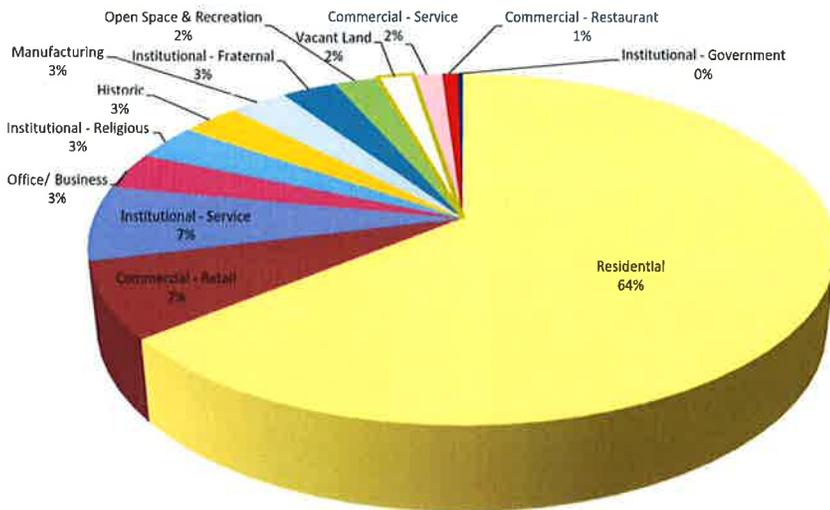


# LAND USE, ZONING & REDEVELOPMENT

## Land Use

**Map 3: Existing Land Use** and Figure 12 display the distribution of each existing land use type within the District boundaries. The District contains a diverse mix of uses that are well-dispersed throughout. The most prevalent land uses in terms of land area is residential, which makes up 64% of the District. Institutional uses such as government, religion, fraternal and public services combine to make up 10% percent of the District. Commercial uses are grouped into three categories of general retail, restaurant, and service, and together they make up 8.5% of the total District area. Offices and business uses make up 3% of the District. Manufacturing, storage and warehouse sites, such as Brosius-Eliason site, makes up about 3%. Open space and historic land uses make up 5%. More detail of the four distinct planning areas in the District is as follows:

**Figure 12:** Existing Land Use

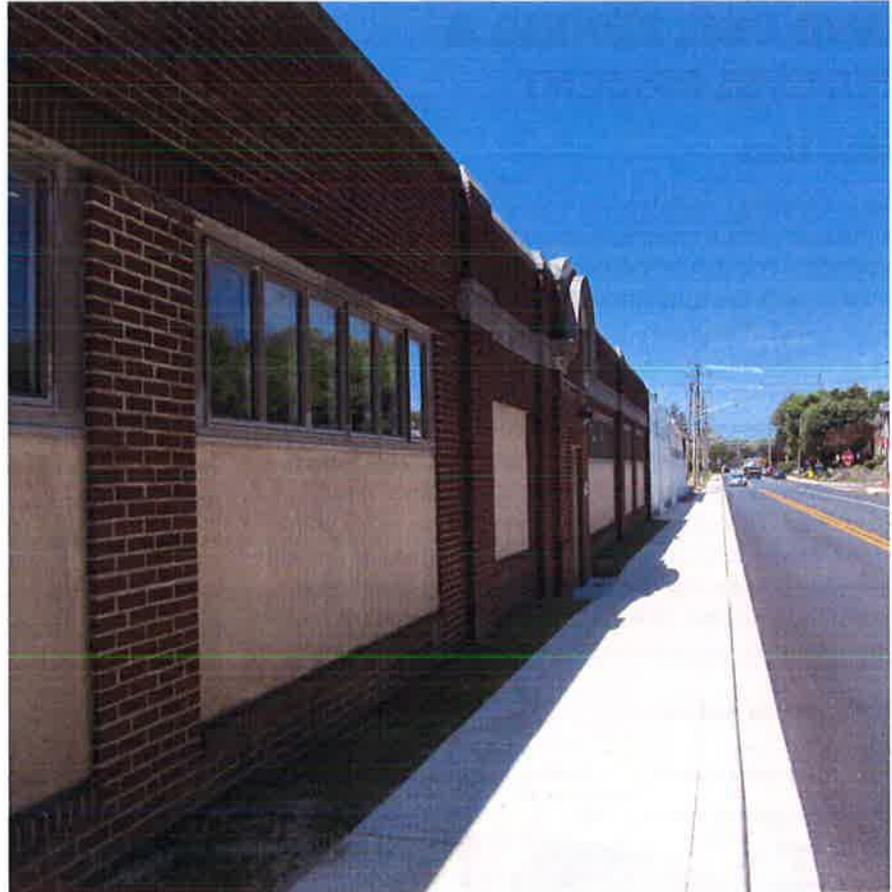


**Historic Center.** The Downtown District's historic center is between Delaware Street and South Street and between the Strand and 6th Street. It includes a portion of the City's Historic zoning districts and the National Register Historic District. Delaware Street exemplifies a traditional 'Main Street' character as it contains a variety of neighborhood scale businesses such as boutiques, antique shops, professional offices, and restaurants, along with single-family residences and apartments on upper floors. Delaware Street is a regional destination spot that offers a shopping, dining, and leisure experience in an unparalleled historic setting. It also includes service-oriented uses such as a post office, bank, government/civic uses. Delaware Street includes the First State National Historical Park / Court House Museum and other historic properties and museums, such as the Amstel House. Second Street includes residences, a boutique shop, an art gallery, New Castle Presbyterian Church, and the George Read II House and Garden. It is important to note that Courthouse Museum, The Green, Battery Park, and other historically prominent uses are adjacent but not located in the District boundary; however, these uses are an integral part of the physical, economic and social fabric of the downtown.



**Figure 13: Scenes in the Historic Center**  
There are a variety of uses with consistent colonial architectural character

**7th and South Street Area.** The 7th and South Street Area is situated between the historic center to the east, Battery Park to the south, and the railroad to the north. It is considered the western gateway into the City. A mix of institutional, commercial services, and residential uses are present here. There are also underutilized properties that provide redevelopment and infill development opportunities, which are discussed in the Development Potential section below. Although, this area is directly adjacent to the historic center, the area feels physically and culturally disconnected. South Street has the perception to be the edge of the City, and the boundary between residential and non-residential uses.



South Street looking north.



Figure 14: Scenes in 7th and South Street Area

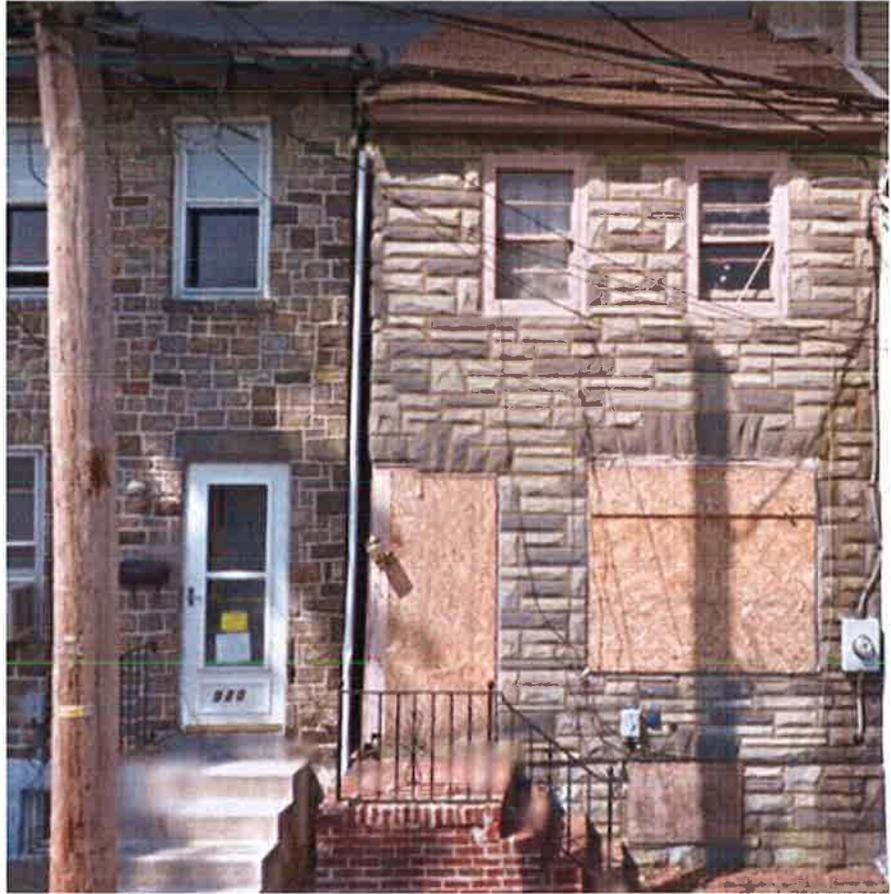
**Ferry Cut-Off Area.** The Ferry Cut-Off area is situated between the historic center to the south, residential housing to the west, and the railroad to the north. The area consists of the medical offices, the River Plaza Shopping Center, auto sales and services, and other institutional and commercial retail uses. As with the 7th and South Street Area, the Ferry Cut-Off area also feels physically and culturally disconnected from the historic downtown. Ferry Cut-Off has the perception of being the northern edge of the City and 6th Street appears to be the boundary between residential and non-residential uses. There are also vacant and underutilized properties which provide redevelopment and infill development opportunities, which are discussed in Section 2- Existing Conditions Analysis.

As evident in the District Survey results and as stated in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan Update, a major issue in the DDD, as a whole, is the lack of neighborhood scale retail. Past planning policies separated incompatible uses and designed the streets for cars only, resulting in a highway-oriented design, which essentially cut these communities off from one another. The availability of neighborhood retail not only enhances the convenience of residents, it also diversifies the economy and provides employment opportunities. As the City's historic center continues to focus on destination-based markets while hoping to expand other business types, there is an opportunity for some small retail stores within the R-2 and R-3 zoned neighborhoods, which are referred to as "Corner Stores" in the Districts in the City Zoning Code as a permitted use. There is also an opportunity for mixed-use redevelopment within the Downtown Gateway District. The transition in these redevelopment areas has begun. These redevelopment areas and the DG Downtown Gateway District are discussed in more detail below.



Figure 15: Scenes in Ferry Cut-Off Area

**Shawtown.** The Shawtown neighborhood is situated between Gray Street to the west, the Ferry Cut-Off to the east and north, and the railroad to the south. It is a neighborhood that is in proximity to the historic center, but is physically separated as the railroad track breaks up the street grid impeding connectivity and accessibility. The area is predominantly residential with a few institutional uses. There are no commercial retail or service uses. There are a variety of housing types including single-family, duplexes and townhouses. There are some vacant units and lots and under-maintained properties that would benefit from upkeep and rehabilitation. The current trailhead to the Heritage Greenway Trail / Industrial Track Trail is located here, which will link the Downtown and Battery Park to the Wilmington River Walk and the East Coast Greenway. The neighborhood also has two parks; Susi Park and Young Street Park.

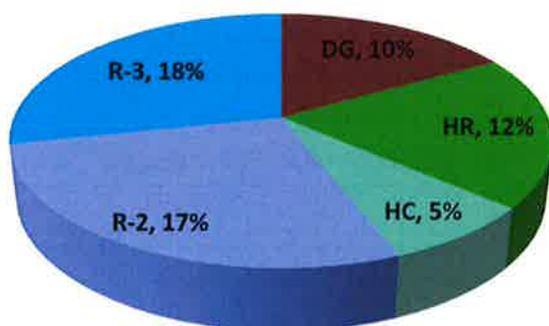


**Figure 16:** Scenes in Shawtown

## Zoning

**Map 4: Zoning** displays zoning of parcels within the District boundaries. The District is made up of five zoning districts- the DG- Downtown Gateway, HC- Historic Commerce, HR- Historic Residence, R-2 Residential, and R-3 Residential. While the District contains a mix of zoning, each zone is separated into neighborhoods and have clear boundaries. The percentage of each zone is well distributed in terms of land area, and the three residential zones (HR, R-2, and R-3) make up most of the District. Figure 17: Existing Zoning displays the distribution of each zoning category within the District boundaries. The City's Comprehensive Plan currently does not recommend any further changes to zoning and future land uses in the DDD.

**Figure 17:** Existing Zoning



The **DG- Downtown Gateway** zone makes up 10% of the District area. The DG zoning ordinance was adopted in 2014 to implement recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan. The intent of the ordinance is to:

- Create a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood commercial district providing primarily local goods and services, and presenting a gateway worthy of the City of New Castle.
- Extend the built-form, character and scale of the historic center.
- Encourage lively, human-scaled gathering places for the community through building design and orientation and by encouraging a mix of uses.
- Encourage the consolidation of parcels identified for redevelopment.
- Reduce the number of existing or future driveways and produce more efficient access by encouraging shared use of parking areas.
- Minimize the aesthetic and safety impacts of parking structures and surface parking lots.
- Enhance the aesthetic appearance of the Downtown Gateway Districts.
- Improve the pedestrian environment along streets, parking lots and other pedestrian areas.

The DG permits a variety of uses encouraging mixed-use development with neighborhood scale retail and services. The design and development standards are grounded in form-based, pedestrian-friendly, and placemaking



principles. It gives developers flexibility in design, while maintaining historic characteristics of the Downtown.

The DG allows small lot sizes and minimal front and side yard setbacks, which create a more compact environment by bringing buildings closer to the street, sidewalks, and each other. The streetscape standards require street trees, lights and sidewalks, and the architectural standards aim to create a sense of place and promote the sidewalk and store fronts as public space. The DG also permits diverse housing types which would help to meet a wide range of price points, and may provide both ownership and rental options. In addition, the zoning permits relatively high-density residential neighborhoods which, with proper design and connections, would help provide market support to the businesses and services.



The **R-2 and R-3 Residential** zones make up about 35% of the District. The R-2 permits single-family detached and duplex dwellings, as well as neighborhood retail, or "Corner Stores". The R-3 permits the same uses as the R-2, as well as row homes.



The **HR- Historic Residence** zone makes up 12% of the District, and is mostly located on 3rd and 4th Streets, connecting the DG and HC Districts on Delaware Street. Second Street, between Delaware Street and Harmony Road, is also

zoned HR. The HR permits the same uses as the R-2, as well as row homes.



The **HC- Historic Commerce** zone covers 5%, and is located on the west side of Delaware Street between 5th Street and The Strand. The HC is intended to "preserve, promote and protect the historic commercial heart of the City". Permitted uses are

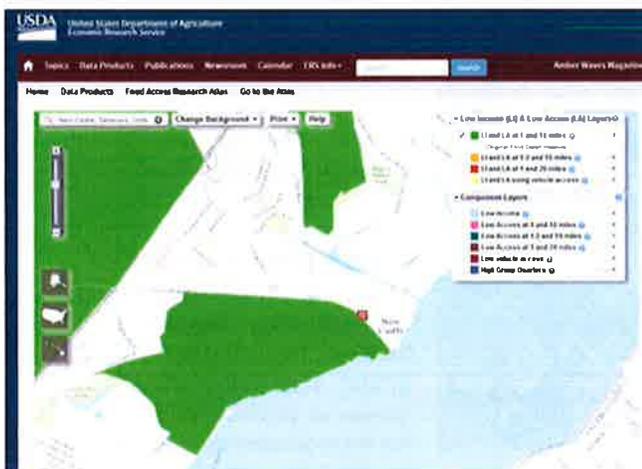
consistent with traditional downtowns including convenience stores, bakeries, banks, restaurants, boutiques, antiques, and personal service shops. The HC also permits single-family and two-family dwellings that foster a traditional neighborhood.

The lot size, building bulk and yard area requirements in these zones allow an overall density, rhythm and scale that are typical of traditional downtowns. The HC and HR zones offer site design flexibility to foster development that is consistent with historical context as proposed development must obtain a historic review certificate.

## Redevelopment

The Comprehensive Plan promotes infill development on vacant parcels for mixed-uses, redevelopment of underutilized parcels, as well as the reuse of existing historical and architecturally significant structures. As shown on **Map 5: Vacant Property**, there are some vacant lands and buildings in the District. There were 20 entirely vacant parcels totaling 1.4 acres when this data was collected in October 2017. There were 24 vacant buildings. These vacancies are spread out in the district with no grouping that provide a large scale redevelopment opportunity. While vacant land and buildings raise both aesthetic and public-safety issues, they are also considered an asset as they offer an opportunity for infill development. Figure 18 shows three priority redevelopment areas that were identified in the planning process. Some common examples from the District Survey that indicate respondent's ideas on the possible use of vacant and underutilized properties include shops and businesses (27%), public and civic space (i.e. parks, open space, a gardens, farmers' market) (23%), restaurants (20%), and a grocery store (10%).

It is important to note that the USDA Food Access Research Atlas identifies two of three Block Groups in the District boundary as 'low income and low access' and a 'food desert'. There is low access in some areas to grocery stores or convenience stores that carry affordable, healthy foods.



Source: USDA Food Research Atlas

“As a resident, I would love to be able to stay in town to complete most of my shopping, including food. It would be ideal to have a well-stocked market, complete with fresh vegetables, bread, wine, etc.”

District Survey Respondent (Question 17)

**Historic Center.** There is retail space available in some existing buildings in the historic center. One notable priority area and prime opportunity on Delaware Street that was commonly referenced in the District Survey, is the David Finney Inn building and courtyard. Anchoring the corner at 3rd and Delaware Streets directly across from the First State National Historical Park/Court House Museum, this 17th century building is at a prime central location with high visibility and vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Survey participants envision the use of the site to cater to both residents and visitors, such as a restaurant, specialty food store, brewery or wine bar.

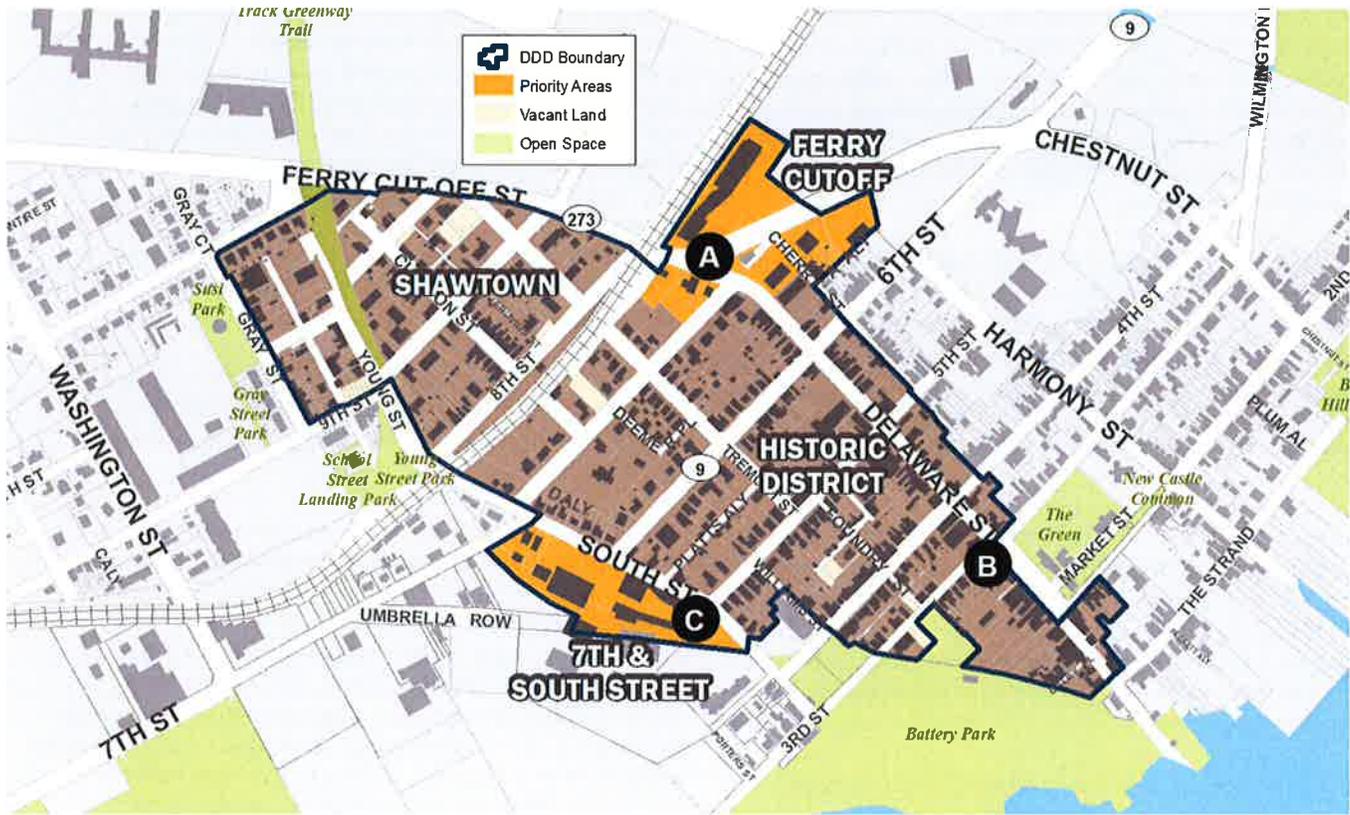
**7th and South Street and Ferry Cut-Off Areas.** There are some underutilized parcels within the 7th and South Street and Ferry Cut-Off areas. These parcels are highly visible as they are situated on major corridors that lead into the historic center. These areas are within walking distance to the historic center and are an important piece of the City's overall community, redevelopment, and economic development goals.

The 7th and South Street Area adjoins the western boundaries of the historic center. The Comprehensive Plan envisions this area as “a new, dynamic extension of downtown emulating the built-form, character and scale of the Historic District”. The Future Land Use Section in the Comprehensive Plan recommends that the portion of this area east of Washington Street be mixed-use redevelopment. Most of this area is the old Brosius-Eliason industrial buildings. The main building that fronts South Street now offers considerable leasing space.

The Ferry Cut-off Area adjoins the northern boundaries of the historic center. The Economic Development Section of the Comprehensive Plan states that the area contains a number of retail and local commercial land uses and is located within easy walking distance of many of the City's neighborhoods. The Plan further recognizes that because the area is auto-oriented and lacks pedestrian amenities, the area is not safe, convenient or attractive to pedestrians. “Patrons who may live just blocks away are compelled to drive to businesses located in this area”. The Land Use Section states that “this area offers the opportunity to be redeveloped as a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood commercial district providing primarily local goods and services, and presenting a gateway worthy of the City”.

**Shawtown.** The Shawtown neighborhood is predominantly built-out with residential homes, but there are handful of vacant lots that offer infill opportunities for housing, as well as vacant and under-maintained buildings that would benefit from upkeep and rehabilitation.

Figure 18: Priority Redevelopment Areas



Map ID	Location	Opportunities
A	Ferry Cut-Off area. Some available leasing space, vacant buildings, and infill retail development.	Sites are highly visible in a high volume traffic area. Building in accordance with the Downtown Gateway District zoning standards offers opportunities for pedestrian-oriented development that defines the streetscape and adds an attractive gateway. Intersection, streetscape, and traffic calming improvements are a high priority for this area.
B	David Finney Inn Building. Unoccupied retail space at 3rd and Delaware Streets.	Prime central location across from the Court House Museum with high visibility and vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Opportunity for retail space and courtyard that caters to both residents and visitors, such as a restaurant, artisan/specialty shop, and brewery or wine bar. Opportunity for a boutique hotel or inn for visitors to stay longer.
C	7th and South Street Area. Some underutilized buildings and vacant space in the Brosius-Elias complex.	Strategic location in terms of providing the eastern gateway into New Castle and the proximity to the Downtown. Opportunity for large scale adaptive reuse of industrial building(s). Development should consider pedestrian connection to surrounding neighborhood and Battery Park, and extension of Umbrella Row connecting 7th to South Streets and 5th Street or 4th Street.



## FLOOD HAZARDS

Initially a port town, the City is where it is because of the strategic location along the Delaware River. While the built historic center is generally located outside the flood hazard areas, much of New Castle and the DDD are susceptible to flooding associated with upstream flooding and downstream tidal surges.

Twelve acres of the proposed District is within the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Zone AE flood hazard area. The AE flood zone is expected to have a one-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year, and are at risk for occasional extreme flooding events due to strong coastal storms. **Map 6: FEMA Flood Hazard Zones** shows the designated floodplains.

The City has adopted and enforces a Floodplain Management Ordinance (City Code, Chapter 130) and also participates in the National Flood Insurance Program. The Ordinance requires that all new construction and substantial improvements for all structures in Zone AE be built with additional flood hazard resistant construction methods, such as freeboard of at least 18 inches above the base flood elevation.

Question 25 on the merchant portion of the Downtown Survey asks "if programs were available, could your business use information on or assistance with the following topics?" Out of the 11 responses, four business owners stated that they could definitely use additional

information or assistance on floodproofing, and two stated they could probably use the information or assistance. There may be additional opportunities for City staff to work with property owners in the floodplain to better understand flood damage reduction measures, FEMA programs, and potential savings in flood insurance premiums. In addition, it is noted that City staff is currently reviewing the City's Floodplain Ordinance to assure that it meets basic Federal and State requirements and provides suitable protection of life and property while also allowing the type of development envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan and this District Plan.

The City recognizes that overall precipitation is increasing with more frequent and intense storm events related to climate change. The City also recognizes that sea level rise is expanding high tide inundation areas and increasing flood hazards throughout the City, including portions of the DDD. To evaluate these issues, the City partnered with the Delaware Coastal Program of DNREC to prepare a Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan in 2018. Using conservative projections, the Plan anticipates an increase in sea level and flood elevations of 2 feet with worst case of 5 feet by 2100. The Plan identifies vulnerabilities and sets forth an action plan to improve the City's resiliency. The Plan maps the hazards and inundation areas in three categories: 1) Present day flood hazards, 2) Future high tide due to sea level rise, and 3) Future flood hazards due to sea level rise. For more information, please refer to the Plan, which is provided in the City Administration Building and on the City's website.



City Pier Post-Superstorm Sandy  
Photo Credit: AECOM



New City Pier  
Photo Credit: Bruce Burk

### City Pier

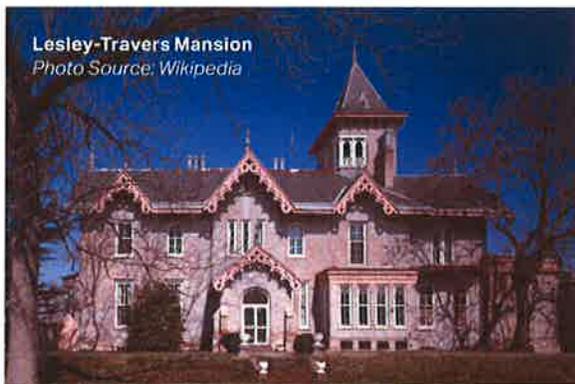
The City Pier was destroyed by Superstorm Sandy in 2012. The newly built pier was reopened in 2017, and is a strong example of the City's resiliency.

## HISTORIC RESOURCES

### Historic District

The history of New Castle goes back to its settlement in 1651 with the construction of Fort Casimir by Peter Stuyvesant and his followers to gain control of the Delaware River for the New Netherlands government. Much of the City's long history is still reminiscent in the heart of the DDD. Thirty acres of the District are within the City's National Register Historic District. **See Map 7: Historic Resources.** This Historic District was originally declared in 1967 and later expanded in 1984. Three sites within or immediately adjacent to the DDD are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

- Amstel House. The Georgian mansion's original woodworking and architectural detail and open-hearth kitchen reflect the style and refinement of the City's early prosperity.
- First State National Historical Park. The Park extends the length of the state and has a presence in all three counties, including the Court House Museum complex.
- New Castle Court House Museum. Built in 1732, Delaware's first capitol and court house, and one of the oldest court houses in the nation, features restored court and assembly rooms, period furniture, portraits and exhibits. Its cupola is the center of the 12 mile circle, which forms the curved state boundary. It is also a registered National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom site.
- Lesley-Travers Mansion. The historic home was built in 1855 with a castle-like appearance in the Gothic Revival style.



“ [Preserve the] charming historic atmosphere - we are a hidden gem - need to promote it to attract year round visitors not just for special events.

District Survey Respondent (Question 18)



### Protection and Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings

About 33 of the DDD's 85 acres fall within the City's National Register Historic District. The City recently strengthened its historic design guidelines and review process, which encourages repairs over replacement, and requires any new construction in the Historic District to be compatible with the City's historic architecture. The City of New Castle Zoning Code sets forth the powers, duties and proceedings of the Historic Area Commission. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, construction, alterations, repairs, or demolitions of a structure in the Historic Residence District (HR) and the Historic Commerce District (HC) are required to obtain an historic review certificate. These projects then must be reviewed and inspected by the Historic Area Commission for a Historic Certificate of Compliance, which is required for a certificate of occupancy.

Out of the 11 responses on the merchant portion of the Downtown Survey, four business owners stated they could definitely use additional information or assistance on historic renovations and maintenance to their property, and two stated they could probably use the information or assistance (Question 25).

While numerous factors influence the cost to rehabilitate a structure, the City's Building Official estimates that an historic structure typically costs 10 to 20% more to rehabilitate than non-historic structures. Historic rehabilitation projects are generally more complex with more expensive materials and are often detailed-oriented requiring the expertise of a specialist.

Because of cost constraints, property owners may be reluctant or even incapable of making such improvements and let the building fall into disrepair. To help ease the cost burden and encourage historic renovations, Federal and State tax incentives are available for assistance in the rehabilitation of historically significant structures in the Historic District. Delaware's Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program encourages property owners to rehabilitate buildings in ways that retain their historic character, and to foster economic vitality in historic downtown areas.

The City will continue to partner with the New Castle Historical Society and the State Historic Preservation Office to identify properties which contribute to the historic fabric, to assess the capability for rehabilitation or adaptive reuse of structures within the Historic District, and to explore and publicize available programs for historic preservation.



**Figure 19: Transportation**

**A.** DART Bus Route 13. **B.** Norfolk Southern Railroad.  
**C,D.** Recent road improvements in the 7th and South Street Area focused on pedestrian and biking mobility.

## TRANSPORTATION, CONNECTIVITY & WALKABILITY

### Transportation

**Map 8: Transportation** shows the transportation network, including roads, sidewalks, bike routes, and bus routes within and surrounding New Castle's Downtown. The Downtown is connected to major arterial/collector State roads Route 9 and Route 273. These arterial roads connect to other regional highways, including Route 141/202, Route 13 and Route 40, as well as Interstates 295 and 95 and the Delaware Memorial Bridge. The proximity to major routes provides convenient access to surrounding areas, which is a key asset and offers an opportunity to bring more people into the Downtown. It will be important that the Downtown appear less separated, and that there be a regional draw with adequate signage to bring in travelers from Route 273 and Route 9 into the Downtown; and not as a cul-through.

DART operates one bus route (#15) that connect New Castle with Rodney Square in Wilmington, the Christiana Mall, and Park and Ride and other nearby destinations. There are multiple bus stops on Washington Avenue, 7th Street, and 6th Street. An active rail line, owned by Norfolk Southern, exists at the edge of the District. It carries freight as part of the main Delmarva Peninsula Line. The closest passenger rail services are provided by Amtrak and SEPTA with stations at Wilmington, Churchman's Crossing, and Newark. The New Castle County Airport provides facilities for general aviation and some limited passenger flights. The nearest major airline hub is the Philadelphia International Airport.

Responsibility for street maintenance and construction is shared between the City (municipal streets) and DelDOT (interstate, U.S., and state roads). The City and DelDOT carried out streetscape improvements throughout the Downtown and surrounding area to efficiently move vehicular traffic and to improve the pedestrian and biking environment. Major projects included streetscape improvements on Washington Avenue, which are intended to direct traffic to stay on Route 273 away from the residential streets. Additional streetscape, traffic calming, and intersection improvements are being discussed for 6th Street and Route 273/Ferry Cut-Off. Streetscape improvements on 7th Street and South Street have improved the gateway and mobility into the Downtown. Streetscape projects have included repaving, curbing, drainage improvements, sidewalk, crosswalk, and curb ramp improvements. Recent walking and biking trail improvements were made along the Battery Park Trail and the Industrial Track Trail, both of which include planned future extensions. See **Map 9: Projects & Investments**.

## Connectivity & Walkability

The historic center is a compact, intact area containing a mix of residential and non-residential uses in a highly pedestrian-oriented built form. The District has a grid street network made up of narrow, local roads, alleys, and extensive sidewalks. Street block lengths are short and widths are narrow. The streetscape maintains a pedestrian scale with street lighting, street trees, brick sidewalks and buildings built to the sidewalk. All of these design elements make the area more convenient, comfortable, and safer for pedestrian use. Per Question 6 in the District Survey, over half of the participants travel to Downtown establishments by walking. A third said they drive in and use on-street parking to visit multiple establishments, and few said they are driving in for just one place and then leaving or driving to multiple places. These survey results are good indicators of a pedestrian-oriented and active Downtown. While there is high connectivity within the historic center, pedestrian connectivity to the 7th and South Street and Ferry Cut-Off Areas is limited for reasons of design and function. The residential streets between 3rd Street and 6th Street connect to South Street area to the historic center; however, South Street seems to be the divide between the historic center and the non-residential areas to the west. The railroad divides neighborhoods to the north, including Shawtown, from the historic center. As identified in the City's Comprehensive Plan, there is a need to better connect these areas.

The sidewalks in the historic center of the District are wide and made of red brick, which significantly contribute to a welcoming pedestrian environment. In general, the sidewalks in the District are in good condition and well maintained. There are some notable gaps in the network within the historic center, at the following locations:

- 7th Street between South Street and Tremont Street
- 3rd Street between South Street and Foundry Street
- Foundry Street

Delaware Street is relatively wide at the Court House Museum area. This area has a very high volume of pedestrian and vehicular activity. With many visitors driving through this area and with a high turnover of parking, pedestrian safety and comfort should be paramount. While the current crosswalk and signage helps to alert pedestrians, more pedestrian-oriented design features may be needed. As the District provides a greater regional draw, it will be important to maintain and enhance traffic calming measures and transportation alternatives that offer bikers and pedestrians comfort, safety, and convenience.



**E.** Brick sidewalk on Delaware Street **F.** Pedestrian crossing on Delaware Street at the Court House Museum. **G.** Asphalt sidewalk on Ferry Cut-Off **H.** Recently installed ADA compliant sidewalk on South Street

# GATEWAYS & STREETScape

## Gateways

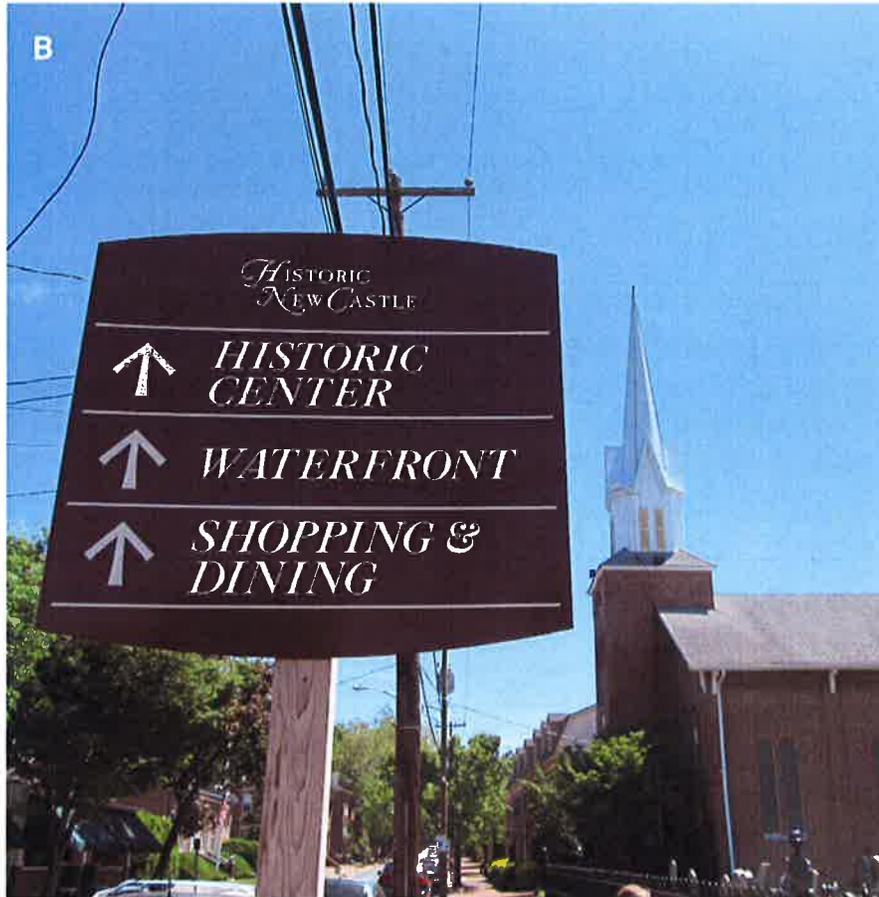
Downtown gateways and edges are important as they help to extend the Downtown, define and reinforce community identity, and bestow a sense of civic pride. The 7th and South Street and Ferry Cut-Off areas are in a strategic location in terms of providing the gateways into New Castle and the historic center. A common criticism voiced during the 2003 Comprehensive Plan public improvement process was that development among the City's edges and principal gateways has not been very high quality, that it lacks architectural merit, and does not respect the historic built form of the City. These sentiments were echoed in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan, which led to the creation of the Downtown Gateway District. There is a lack of relationship between the historic center and the surrounding modern development. Both the 7th and South Street Area and Ferry Cut-Off Area consist of auto-oriented development that hide the fact that just beyond is a national historic treasure. A major contributing factor to the quality of new development was the City's then weak zoning and land use regulations that prescribed minimum standards of performance rather than requiring excellence in design. The streetscape and pedestrian amenities on Delaware Street within the historic center, as discussed below, offer some great examples for improvements at the gateways and other areas in the District. The key features in the historic center let residents and visitors know that they are in the Downtown and provide a strong sense of place.

## Streetscape

The historic center has distinct streetscape and architectural features that help create a unique identity and character that epitomizes a traditional historic downtown. The key streetscape features in the Downtown include red brick strip in the sidewalks, pedestrian scale street lighting, wayfinding signage, and red brick and distinguishable architecture. Interesting signage, attractive window displays and sidewalk furnishings placed by business owners also add character and charm. Buildings in the commercial center are generally built up to the sidewalk, anchor the intersection corners, and are within close proximity of each other. All of these factors contribute in defining the streetscape as a public realm and create a more interesting and pedestrian-friendly environment.



**A. Gateway Locations**  
 These areas were deemed priority redevelopment areas with recommended "gateway" improvement in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan. The portions directly adjacent to the Historic center are within the DDD boundary.



**Figure 20: Gateway & Streetscape Character**  
 There are many good examples of signage and streetscape amenities in the District that can be extended to other areas.

**B. Wayfinding Signage on Delaware Street**

Directional signage helps guide visitors to the City's main attractions.



**C. Streetscape Amenities on Delaware Street**

Includes pedestrian scale lighting, plantings, parking and wayfinding signs.



**D. Storefront Amenities on Delaware Street**

Shop owners can contribute to the Downtown character by adding plantings, sandwich board signs, and attractive window displays.



**E. 7th Street**

Although recent improvements have included striping, a bike lane and new sidewalks, street trees and lighting would improve the gateway and streetscape character.



**F. Ferry Cut-Off**

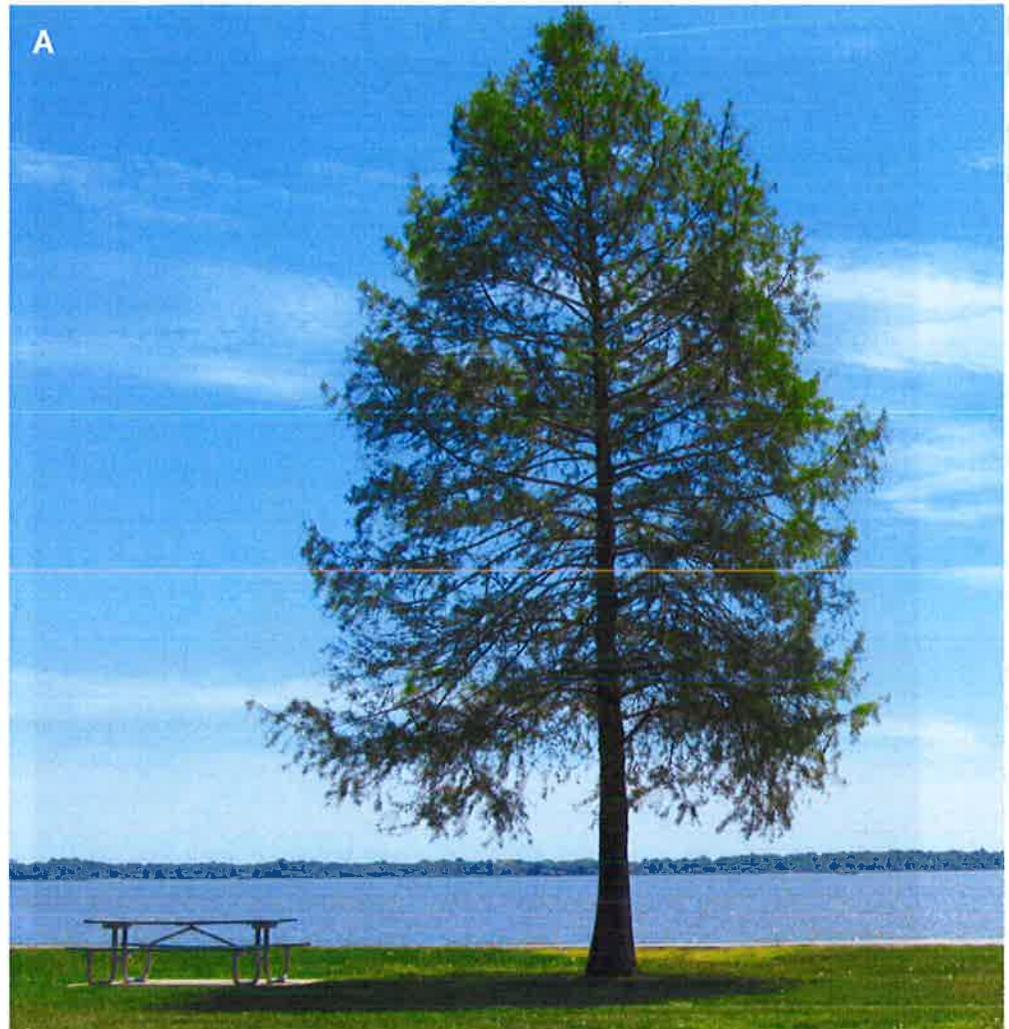
Street trees, pedestrian scale lighting and other amenities would improve the streetscape character and walkability.

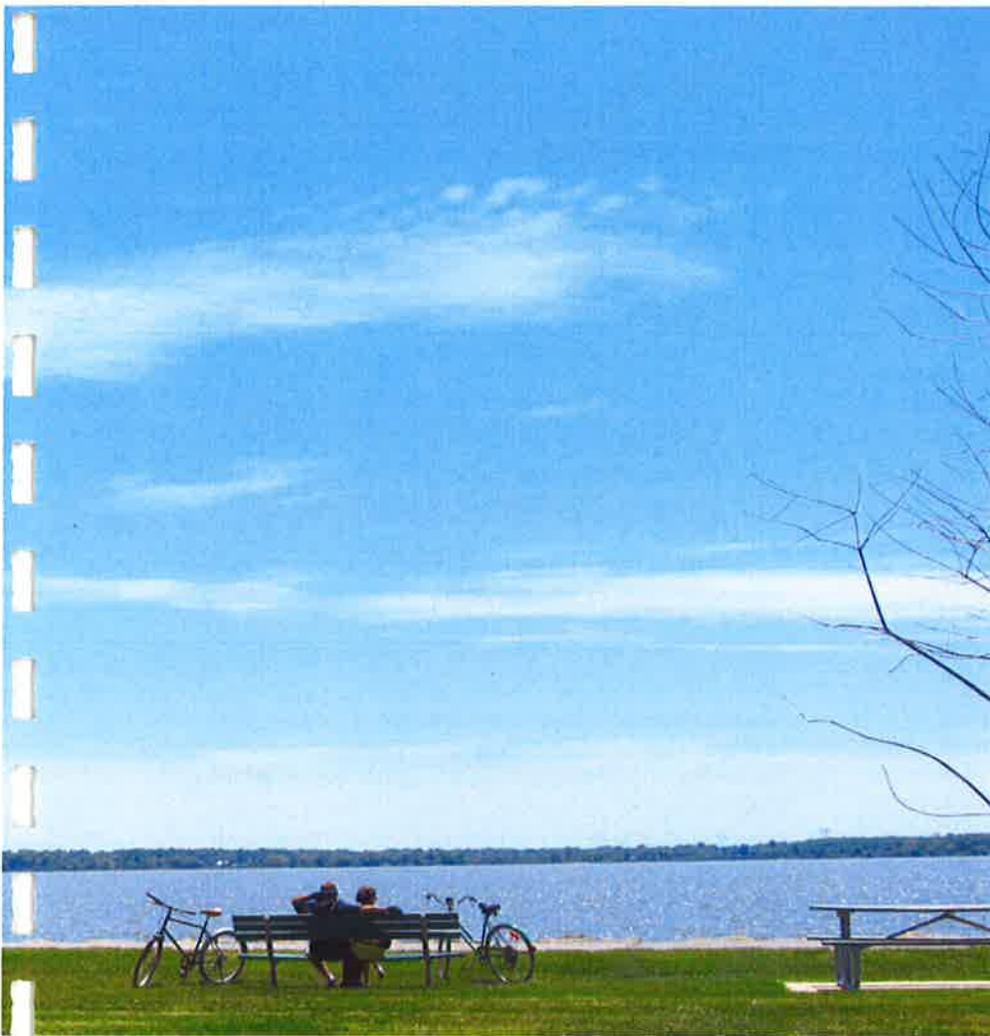
## PUBLIC SPACES

New Castle's extensive and unparalleled park and open space network help define the City's physical form and reinforce its unique character. There are many designated open space and recreational areas in the downtown area. The most prominent are directly adjacent to the District, which are Battery Park, The Green, the Wharf, and New Castle Commons. These lands can never be developed, other than with ancillary recreational equipment and other uses consistent with recreation and leisure. The District is also connected to the recently built Heritage Greenway Trail / Industrial Track Trail which will link the Downtown and Battery Park to the Wilmington River Walk and the East Coast Greenway.

These parks, greens and trails are essential components of a healthy and vibrant community, and contribute significantly to maintaining and enhancing the value and attractiveness to the adjacent neighborhoods. They provide play areas and space for leisure and recreation, and perform an important community-building function by supporting social interaction.

They are key assets and opportunities for the District that could be one of the catalysts for overall community and economic development. They are an integral component of the City's cultural and heritage tourism industry, and further serve as a destination public gathering space for the region and space for community events and programs. The network provides an enormous attraction and incentive to live and work in Downtown New Castle, and is a testament to the City's green and community wellness initiatives to improve community health.





**Figure 21: Parks, Greens & Trails**

Essential components of a healthy and vibrant community, and further provide incentive to live and work in Downtown New Castle.

**A. Battery Park**

Adjacent to the District Boundary, Provides residents and visitors a public gathering space for community activities, events and programs.

**B. Battery Park**

Some responses in the District Survey noted the need for a dog park.

**C. Delaware River**

With pier and shoreline improvements, there is an opportunity to reconnect people to the River and restore its maritime heritage.

**D. Battery Park Trail**

There is an opportunity for redevelopment within the 7th and South Street to connect to Battery Park and the trail.

**E. The Green**

Prime historic space for leisure, gatherings, or community activities, events and programs.

**F. East Coast Greenway and Delaware Outdoor Trail**

Wayfinding signage guides trail users.

**G. Heritage Greenway Trail / Industrial Track Trail**

Connects the Downtown to Route 13. Future phases will link to the Wilmington River Walk and the East Coast Greenway.

**H. Public Space on 2nd Street**

With an information kiosk and bench, offers strollers a place to rest, regroup, and seek shade.

**I. Young Street Park**

Located at the terminus of the Heritage Greenway Trail at the edge of the District boundary. There is an apparent need and opportunity for improvements.



## PARKING

Parking in the Downtown is through off-street parking, both private and public, and on-street parking. There are a few large, private non-residential parking areas in the historic center, along Delaware Street. Most parking lots are situated on the same lot as the buildings they serve, and there are few shared and satellite parking areas. In addition, many of the streets in the District have available on-street parking. There are three municipal lots largely serving the recreational purposes of Battery Park. The lots are located at the terminus of 3rd Street, the intersection of South Street and 3rd Street, and the Delaware Street Pier. Public parking is also provided on the streets, including Delaware Street, 2nd Street and Market Street.

The Planning Commission formed a Parking Sub-Committee, which is comprised of volunteers. The Committee evaluated parking issues and needs, prepared a report with recommendations, and presented their findings to the Planning Commission. The Committee set forth parking goals and principles to guide parking-related decisions, as well as implementation strategies to achieve these goals.

One goal was to address the needs for residents and local commerce in the historic center in a variety of demand situations including typical usage on week days and weekends, high volume usage on seasonal weekends, and peak usage on special community events. The Committee's guiding principles included improving the utilization of existing parking spaces before creating new parking spaces, and minimizing vehicular traffic to reduce impacts to businesses and residences within the historic center. Other guiding principles included minimizing environmental impact when locating any new parking facilities, as well as enhancing the pedestrian and bicyclist experience and the overall community character. These principles guided the following implementation strategies:

- Review current parking practices/policies/ordinances
- Inventory existing parking availability and include a process for public dialog
- Provide support for appropriate business mix for economic development
- Provide adequate and appropriate wayfinding and directional signage
- Enhance the pedestrian and bicyclist experience by improving facilities
- Develop de-centralized parking options to distribute parking resources among many destinations

The Parking Sub-Committee and the City have made significant progress towards accomplishing the aforementioned goals and strategies. For instance, a

Parking Usage Inventory was conducted and identified on-street parking use in the historic center. According to this inventory, the following areas were found to be over-capacity at peak times:

- Thursday and Saturday
  - Delaware Street between 3rd Street and the Wharf
  - 2nd Street between Delaware and Harmony Streets
  - 3rd Street between Delaware and South Streets
  - 3rd Street parking lots
- Thursday only
  - Delaware Street between 4th and 6th Streets
- Saturday only
  - Delaware Street between 6th and 3rd Streets

It is noted that during these peak times and during large community events, visitor parking generally overflows onto the residential streets of 3rd and 4th Streets and The Strand.

The Parking Sub-Committee, along with WILMAPCO, conducted an opinion survey of City residents, businesses, museums, churches and visitors to seek information on usage, opinions on existing conditions, and support for potential strategies in the historic center. The majority thought current parking conditions were fair. There was strong support for a residential parking permit program, improving existing public lots, and constructing new parking lots. There was also strong support for improving directional signs, pedestrian facilities, and providing bicycle racks, as well as encouraging use of lots on the edges of the historic center for employees and during community events. These lots are now being used for major events. Other progress includes the creation of a wayfinding map and signage, and the adoption of additional placemaking parking design standards in the Downtown Gateway District.

There are expansive private parking areas in the 7th and South Street and Ferry Cut-Off Areas. A good amount of the parking areas in the 7th and South Street Area are not improved or maintained with pavement, striping, curbing, and landscaping. The parking areas in the Ferry Cut-Off Area surround the main intersection at Route 273 and Delaware Street, and are some of the first images travelers see when entering New Castle.

It is intended that as the area develops, the visual impact of these parking areas will be ameliorated since redevelopment will be required to meet the standards of the DG District. The parking standards require parking lots to be behind or to the side of the primary structures, require connections from public sidewalks to parking lots, and in some cases require vehicular connections between adjacent lots. Parking lots are also required to have screening and landscaping. Mixed-use developments

also must address the parking needs of the different users through design measures such as shared parking with time provisions.

Based on the Downtown Survey results, there are perceived parking issues in the Downtown. Only 17% of respondents stated that a major advantage to the Downtown is that it is easy to find parking, and 40% stated lack of parking is a major disadvantage (Questions 9 and 10). Fifty-four percent stated that improved parking would help the Downtown area, which ranked third of fourteen potential choices (Question 15). It is noted that only 55% of respondents, ranking tenth out of twelve choices, stated they agree that convenient parking is what attracts them to a shopping and business area (Question 7)

When asked if there was one thing that could change about the Downtown (Question 18) and for ideas on how to attract residents, businesses, and visitors to the Downtown (Question 19), improving the parking was the number one response for both questions. The merchant portion of the Survey revealed that 25% of merchants would need more parking in order to expand, which represented the second rated response (Question 22). In addition, parking was the highest ranked response (tied with not enough customer traffic) as a major barrier or obstacle facing their business (Question 34).



**Figure 22: Existing Parking**

Many respondents to the Downtown Survey stated they want improved parking conditions.

**A. Off-street parking lot on 3rd and South Streets**

One of the few public parking lots in the downtown area.

**B. Off-street parking lot at Battery Park**

One of the few public parking lots in the downtown area.

**C. On-street parking on The Strand**

Parking at peak times, including community events, typically spills over onto residential streets.

**D. Parking lot in Ferry Cut-off Area**

Some parking lots in highly visible areas of the DDD would benefit from the physical and aesthetic improvements that are now required in the Downtown Gateway zoning district.

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

Given its historical and cultural significance and the amount of public space, the City is host to numerous events. These community events are an effective way to draw people from the larger part of the City and region to the Downtown, who also tend to stay and patron Downtown establishments. It is an opportunity for businesses to advertise and gain new customers, as well as extend business hours. The following provides a list of some events:

- Annual Art on the Green. An annual arts and crafts show that takes place in Battery Park. Over 200 artists, crafters, and food vendors are present.
- May Market. The Arasapha Garden Club's annual event provides plants, herbs, and flowers. Proceeds support the Arasapha Garden Club's work in the historic gardens of the Amstel House and Dutch House.
- A Day in Old New Castle. Commonly known as America's oldest house and garden tour. The Amstel House and Dutch House are open for tours to ticket holders. The New Castle Historical Society Gardens at Amstel House, Dutch House and the Old Library are also open to view as part of the event.
- Annual Garden Party. Welcomes the beginning of summer in the Dutch House gardens.
- Separation Day. Celebrates the Colonial Assembly proclaiming the lower three Counties' of New Castle, Kent, and Sussex independence from Great Britain.
- First Friday Art Loop. Occurs on the first Friday of the month, and encourages residents and visitors to walk through Downtown, visiting galleries and shops while snacking and sipping wine.
- The Spirit of Christmas. This City-wide celebration, sponsored by the New Castle Presbyterian Church

and the New Castle Visitors' Bureau, presents private homes and churches decorated for the season, museum tours, events at the New Castle Court House, and musical performances and entertainment throughout the day.

- River Towns Ride & Festival. A joint festival held between New Castle and Delaware City. The two towns are 10 miles apart and connected by the bike-friendly corridor of Route 9. The event encourages riders of all abilities to bike between the two destinations. Festivals are held in each town's main square: The Green in Historic New Castle and Battery Park in Historic Delaware City. Activities include live music, rides, attractions, games, tours, vendors, food and drink, highlighted by a craft beer festival.
- Other notable events include, but are not limited to Small Business Saturday, a Dickens Experience, Holidays at the Amstel and Dutch Houses, Hauntings in History Walking Tours, etc.

New Castle's Historic District, The Green and Battery Park are premier public gathering spaces for community events and programs. While the City has numerous events that are well attended, there is still an opportunity to promote the Downtown and to encourage events that may serve the types of businesses that the community wishes to see in the Downtown. In the Downtown Survey, when asked what types of arts and cultural events are best suited for the Downtown, respondents answered outdoor concerts (83%), seasonal and holiday festivals (83%) and food festivals (79%) as their top three events (Question 14). Events in the City that were most well attended by survey participants in the past three years were Separation Day (84%), A Day in Old New Castle (73%), holiday events such as A Dickens Experience (70%), and the Annual Art on The Green (68%).

Separation Day



Board of Trustees' Button advertising Battery Park for events



## ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The City of New Castle possesses a diverse local economy, including locally owned businesses, offices, industrial operations, and residents. While the City has generally maintained a stable economic base, there is an opportunity to recruit a greater mix in uses to serve both visitors and residents. As noted in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan Update, a major issue is the significant loss of neighborhood retail in the City as a result of changing trends, including the continuing evolution of the Downtown from a local service to a tourist economy, and the elimination of commercial zoning in the City's neighborhoods.

In an effort to seek a greater understanding of the economic conditions and needs of the City and its Downtown, the planning team conducted a District Survey, as described in Section 1- Introduction. The Survey results help to evaluate the frequency and purpose of consumer activity in the New Castle Downtown, the factors that influence local consumer shopping decisions, and the needs of local business owners and operators. The Survey results further help to identify current and future market opportunities and the types of uses and businesses that participants want to see come to their Downtown.

When reviewing the Survey results with the Task Force, a member remarked that the historic center and the neighboring gateway commercial areas offer very different shopping experiences. The historic center offers pedestrians a leisurely shopping, dining, and educational experience in an historic setting, while the shopping centers and malls are typically more auto-oriented, "in and out", and 'transactional' in nature. When asked about shopping frequencies (Question 2), respondents reported that the Ferry Cut-Off Area was their top shopping destination for frequent trips. In terms of meeting, the Ferry Cut-Off Area received the highest rank in terms

of meeting daily shopping convenience needs as 10% stated that they shop there 5+ times a week and 28% said 2 to 4 times per week. The historic center was also a top shopping destination for frequent trips as 28% stated that they shop there once a week. The highest percentage of the less frequent trips, including once every few months, occurred outside of the DDD boundaries at the Christiana Mall, Newark, Wilmington, and the shopping centers along Route 13 and Route 40. The lowest frequented area per the Survey is the 7th and South Street Area. See Table 7: Shopping Frequencies.

Participants further ranked restaurants (91%) and Battery Park (81%) as their top destinations in the Downtown District. About 40% stated the most common time they shop in the Downtown is on weekdays before 5:00 p.m. Only 6% stated they visit Downtown after 5:00 p.m. any day of the week. In the Merchant Survey, most business owners stated that they are not open pass 5:00 p.m.; however, they are generally receptive to expanding store hours if they were confident their sales would increase.

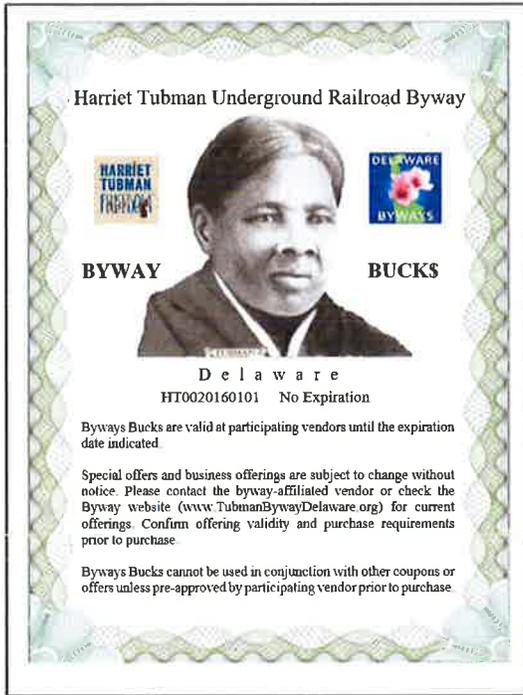
In an effort to understand residents' and visitors' retail and shopping desires and motives, and then compare them to what New Castle has or is lacking, the Downtown Survey asked participants the following three questions:

- What attracts you to a shopping/business area? (Q7)
- What are the major advantages of New Castle's Downtown? (Q9)
- What are the major disadvantages of New Castle's Downtown? (Q10)

The majority stated they are attracted to friendly customer service, convenience, having a place to eat nearby, having a sense of place, independently-owned stores over chains, pedestrian safety and convenience, and a variety of quality products and services. Attributes typically associated with

**Table 7:** Shopping Frequencies

	5+ times / week	2-4 times / week	Once a week	Once a month	Once every few months	Never
Delaware Street	5%	13%	28%	23%	23%	9%
7th and South Street Area (Route 9)	3%	6%	11%	18%	19%	43%
Ferry Cut-Off (e.g. River Plaza Shopping Center)	10%	28%	30%	16%	8%	7%
Route 13 Corridor (e.g. Airport Plaza, Penn Mart Shopping Center)	4%	16%	27%	20%	20%	14%
Route 40 Corridor (e.g. Governor's Square Shopping Center, Eden Square)	3%	6%	19%	18%	27%	26%
Christiana Mall	1%	3%	11%	27%	47%	11%
Newark	3%	5%	5%	17%	45%	24%
Wilmington	6%	10%	11%	20%	29%	24%



suburban malls and "big box" retail stores, including price, convenient parking, and having a variety of products in one store all ranked as less important. As follow up questions that coincide with what people seek in a Downtown, the participants were asked what are the major advantages and disadvantages of New Castle's Downtown. The City's historic character, supporting local businesses, within walking distance and convenience, and friendly customer service were all advantages of New Castle. Having a lack in variety of goods and services was the highest ranked disadvantage by a large margin.

Taking it a step further, the Survey asked what types of goods and services they would like to see Downtown. The need for more variety in businesses was a reoccurring theme throughout the Survey responses. The following are the types of general service businesses the participants would like to see (Question 12):

- Specialty retail (antiques, plants/flowers, gift shops)
- Public and civic (park, community center, community garden, gallery)
- Convenience store
- Personal service (health club, beauty, tailor, dry cleaning, jewelry, household repair)
- Commercial retail (general merchandise, clothing, hardware, household supplies and furnishings)

The following are the types of food related businesses that the participants would like to see (Question 13):

- Locally-owned restaurants
- Specialty food (bakery, butcher, ice cream)
- Farmers' market/produce stand
- Outdoor restaurant/café
- Tavern and grill
- Evening dining
- Breakfast/lunch dining
- Coffee shop

As revealed through Question 19, respondents thought the best ways to help attract people to Downtown would be through a strong marketing campaign that could be used by the City and businesses, and better promotion of City festivals and events. Some specific comments include:

- *More advertising. So many people in Delaware aren't aware of historic New Castle. When they hear "New Castle", they think only of the Rt. 13 corridor. We need to change that.*
- *An ongoing comprehensive advertising program.*



Figure 23: Examples of Brochures

- *Create a unified vision to market the downtown area - currently, the district is promoted primarily through the efforts of individual groups publicizing their events (Day in Old New Castle, Spirit of Christmas).*
- *Target marketing is key in promoting to visitors. I've been told by the Greater Wilmington Convention & Visitors Bureau that most visitors in our area arrive from a three hour radius.*
- *Better City promotion and marketing.*
- *Increased marketing and promotion to not only visitors but investors. More events (proven to attract visitors)*
- *Promotion of the community through events; central hub for visitors through a welcome center or visitor center; city maps for visitors.*

Merchants were asked if they could use information or assistance on potential business development programs including, but not limited to marketing, planning, financial management and training (Question 25). Marketing, branding and advertising ranked as the most useful.

The merchants were split on the need to expand their business (Question 21), and most said they would need the physical available space and parking to do so (Question 22). The majority of merchants stated they would be interested in an incentive program (Question 24). In addition, the majority of merchants said that if financial assistance were available, they would consider making improvements (Question 27). Similarly, merchants were asked if certain services, including marketing, event coordination, façade grants, among others, would be useful to their business. Again, marketing and advertising ranked as most important or beneficial (Question 26).

Per Question 33, merchants ranked regional residents ages between 45 and 64 as the consumer segments that are most important to their business. Per Question 35, merchants currently reach potential consumer segments mostly through referrals, word of mouth, and the Internet.

Analyzing the District Survey results, there is a clear need for a greater variety of businesses. There appears to be a need to identify what types of businesses the market will support and to further have an organized approach to target and recruit those businesses. A market analysis would gather and assess consumer market data, project future market demands, and identify the specific types of goods and services needed. Once the market for the Downtown is more fully understood through the market analysis, the City and its partners can begin to develop a clearer identity and brand for Downtown. The identity development would be based on the market analysis as well as the numerous historical, cultural, and natural qualities that distinguish New Castle as an authentic and unique place.

The market demands and the developed identity would be used in the City's and stakeholder's marketing, branding, and recruitment strategies. Based on the Survey results, it is clear that marketing and additional branding efforts are needed to promote Downtown businesses, organizations and community events. There appears to be an opportunity for businesses throughout the District to be more organized and set forth joint marketing and promotion efforts that will increase the heritage tourism industry and attract local and regional residents to frequent Downtown businesses and establishments. Effective means of marketing and promoting a Downtown is through advertising, brochures, newsletters, social media, and Downtown-sponsored sales promotions and community events.

The City's Downtown benefits from regional marketing efforts, such as those for the First State National Historical Park, the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad, and the Delaware Bayshore Byways, as well as through tourism agencies such as the Wilmington Convention and Visitor's Bureau. There is an opportunity to build upon and expand the coordination and marketing efforts among the City, its stakeholders and partners such as the New Castle Community Partnership. There is potential for a more focused joint marketing campaign with these organizations to position the City as a premier tourist destination and attract regional visitors. One example opportunity for Downtown businesses in New Castle is the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway's "Byway Bucks" promotion program. Per the Byway's website, the Bucks are coupons that entitle the holder to special consideration regarding local goods and services along the Byway. The program directs travelers to participating businesses who display the FREEDOM™ logo in their store and provides discounts and other offerings to byway travelers.

Through designation, the City would have more incentives to leverage and expand current promotion, marketing and recruitment programs, as well as execute a comprehensive marketing and branding campaign.

## CONCLUSION

As evident throughout the Existing Conditions Analysis, the proposed Downtown Development District presents numerous challenges to be overcome as well as many exciting economic, recreational, and entertainment opportunities to capitalize upon in advancing New Castle's status as a thriving, healthy and vibrant downtown community.

# 03



Delaware Street in the Historic Center

# Goals, Objectives & Strategies



Delaware Street looking southeast to the river



# 03 GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

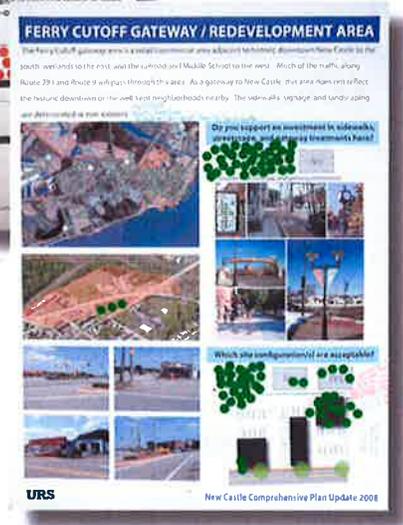
- Overview
- Housing
- Code Violations & Crime
- Land Use, Zoning & Redevelopment
- Flood Hazards
- Historic Resources
- Connectivity & Walkability
- Placemaking
- Parking
- Community Events
- Economic Development

## OVERVIEW

For decades, the City has been actively planning to create a more healthy and vibrant community while respecting the Downtown's rich historic fabric. Planning efforts have included extensive community outreach and public involvement programs which have consistently voiced the goals, objectives and strategies outlined in this section. Protecting its historical assets, redeveloping and connecting adjacent neighborhoods, attracting retail diversity, and balancing the diverse needs of residents, businesses, and tourists are the key components of the City's community and economic development initiatives.



Public Outreach from the Comprehensive Plan Update



*This District Plan is the continuation of decades of planning, including preserving the historic center, connecting the adjacent neighborhoods, and improving housing conditions. This Plan provides goals, objectives and strategies that are more focused on unifying these areas as one Downtown Development District.*

## HOUSING

### Goals

- Build a stable community of long-term residents by improving housing conditions and home values.
- Improve housing opportunities with quality and affordability for all residents.

### Objectives

- Improve the integrity of the housing stock through rehabilitation.
- Provide appropriate mix of residential and a non-residential uses.
- Provide for housing types to accommodate aging baby boomers and millennials seeking a more walkable and urban living experience.

### Strategies

- Publicize programs and funds available to rehabilitate homes.
- Provide housing and property maintenance code guidance to residents, particularly regarding historic residences.
- Continue to strictly enforce the housing and property maintenance code and the rental inspection program in areas of highest concentrations of violations.
- Adopt City sponsored programs to incentivize housing rehabilitation and homeownership.

## CODE VIOLATIONS & CRIME

### Goals

- Reduce incidents related to code violations and crimes against property.

### Strategies

- Continue to strictly enforce the housing and property maintenance code and the rental inspection program in areas of highest concentrations of violations.
- Continue to support the needs of the Building and Zoning Department for code enforcement.
- Continue to support the needs of the Delaware City Police Department for crime prevention.
- Support applications for funding that help meet training, equipment, programs, administrative support, and staffing needs. An example program is the Neighborhood Building Blocks Fund (NBBF) through the Delaware Economic Development Office.

## LAND USE, ZONING & REDEVELOPMENT

### Goals

- Promote a balanced mix of service, restaurant, retail, public and residential uses within the DDD.
- Promote standards that foster adaptive reuse of existing structures as well as compatible and context-sensitive infill development on vacant and underutilized areas that emulates the City's historical downtown setting.

### Objectives

- Unify the historic center with the surrounding neighborhoods while recognizing the areas have different issues and opportunities.
- Design for commercial and mixed-use buildings will be sensitive to the City's historic character.
- Design for commercial and mixed-use buildings will be human-scaled and pedestrian-friendly helping to stimulate an active and successful Downtown commercial district.

### Strategies

- Promote and market the identified priority redevelopment areas as catalyst projects to spur future redevelopment.
- In the next Comprehensive Plan Update:
  - Refine the long-term redevelopment vision plans for the 7th and South Street Area.
  - Review the zoning district requirements and amend, where appropriate, to make it conducive toward creating a vibrant, traditional mixed-use and walkable Downtown.
  - Evaluate the future land use designation and zoning of the parcels on the east side of Delaware Street between 3rd Street and 5th Street, which are currently zoned HR- Historic Residence.

## FLOOD HAZARDS

### Goals

- Reduce New Castle's vulnerability to natural hazards, particularly flooding and sea level rise.

### Objectives

- Natural hazards will be considered in development plans and approvals.
- Financial and technical assistance will be available to elevate or floodproof buildings in flood prone areas.

- Residents will understand how to get information about natural hazard events and will have information about shelters and evacuation routes.
- Promote green infrastructure principles and practices.

## Strategies

- Publicize Delaware's green infrastructure initiatives.
- Enforce safeguards to minimize risks to flood hazards.
- Evaluate measures to ensure that new development is resistant to current and future hazards and minimizes stormwater run-off to flood water receiving areas.
- Provide public awareness and outreach to current residents, developers, and prospective homebuyers on flood hazards and sea level rise risks, and flood protection measures.
- Implement the recommended actions and activities set forth in the City's 2018 Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan.

## HISTORIC RESOURCES

### Goal

- Protect and enhance the Downtown's historic and unique character.

### Objective

- Historic assets will be restored, rehabilitated and preserved rather than being demolished and replaced.

### Strategies

- Encourage appropriate reuse of older buildings, particularly including rehabilitation of historically or architecturally significant buildings.
- Identify historical and architecturally significant buildings within the District in need of repair and rehabilitation.
- Publicize programs and funds to rehabilitate historic structures such as the State Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program.
- Enforce Historic Area Commission ordinances and design guidelines.
- Continue to provide architectural and historic preservation / rehabilitation guidance to property owners in the Historic District.
- Partner with the Trustees, the New Castle Historical Society, Delaware Historical Society, National Park Service, State of Delaware and others to continue efforts to protect and promote the City's historical and cultural assets.

## CONNECTIVITY & WALKABILITY

### Goal

- Promote health and wellness through an active and vibrant Downtown that focuses on high connectivity, pedestrian-oriented design, and public gathering spaces.

### Objectives

- Improve opportunities throughout the Downtown for safe bicycle and pedestrian travel, carpooling, and public transit.
- Work to control and divert heavy truck traffic, through-traffic and higher-speed traffic from the Downtown.
- Enhance traffic calming measures and transportation improvements that offer bikers and pedestrians comfort, safety, and convenience.

### Strategies

- Identify, enhance, and maintain appropriate traffic calming and pedestrian safety measures for streets in the Downtown.
- Support the future phases of the Heritage Greenway Trail / Industrial Track Trail to link the Downtown and Battery Park to the Wilmington River Walk and the East Coast Greenway.
- Partner with Bike Delaware and WILMAPCO to promote trail expansion and connections in the City and region.
- Coordinate state and local transportation improvements to achieve better pedestrian linkages between the District and adjoining neighborhoods.
- Identify desirable physical improvements such as new neighborhood streets in the 7th and South Street redevelopment area and partner with others such as state and developers to fund.
- Work with DeIDOT and WILMAPCO to create a long-range master plan for the Ferry Cut-Off Area that includes pedestrian improvements, intersection improvements, as well as improvements to Route 9. To the extent previously designed but unfunded projects address the issue to the City's satisfaction, work with DeIDOT and other state officials to provide funding.

## GATEWAYS & STREETScape

### Goals

- Foster a sense of place, civic pride and belonging for all members of the community.
- Reinforce community identity with attractive gateways at the Downtown's edge.

### Objective

- Improve the physical appearance of the streetscape and building facades to make them more inviting.

### Strategies

- Identify, prioritize, and construct placemaking improvements along streets and gateways.
- Identify opportunities and seek funding to expand and improve walkways and bikeways that connect to parks, historical features, and Downtown.
- Encourage WILMAPCO to expand the Route 9 Corridor Management Plan into the Ferry Cut-Off Area and program transportation and pedestrian improvements that coincide with the City's goals for this area.

## PARKING

### Goal

- Optimize the existing parking supply and seek new parking opportunities.

### Objectives

- Provide a sufficient amount of parking within the Downtown and ensure the use is properly managed.
- Encourage businesses and other entities in the Downtown to share parking.
- Seek to convert vacant, underutilized or under maintained buildings and parking areas that offer an opportunity for higher and more beneficial uses that better fit the Downtown context and character.

### Strategies

- Coordinate with the Parking Sub-Committee towards implementing the Committee's recommendations.
- Continue to provide temporary special event parking, including shuttle services to and from remote parking areas and publicize the location of parking areas to be used for special events held in the Downtown area.
- Consider a parking management program to maximize available parking in the areas of the highest demand.

- Improve pedestrian connections between areas with high visitor volume (such as Courthouse and Battery Park areas) to access underutilized parking areas.
- Review and amend the parking standards for all zoning districts in the Downtown to ensure that the requirements are more conducive to a walkable, mixed-use Downtown environment versus an auto-oriented commercial environment. The code could set a maximum number of spaces permitted, incentivize shared parking, require connections from public sidewalks to parking lots, and require sufficient landscaping and pedestrian scale lighting.
- Consider the construction of a parking structure in a strategic Downtown location.
- Continue to improve existing wayfinding signage and parking logos to guide drivers to parking areas.
- Provide merchants, website visitors and tourist bureaus with a Downtown map showing businesses, points of interest, restrooms and parking.

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

### Goal

- Continue to provide quality community events of interest that attract a variety of audiences and ages.

### Objective

- Community events will help promote and market Downtown businesses and establishments.

### Strategies

- Partner with organizations to expand community events and develop new events specific to Downtown.
- Partner with others organizations to enhance the promotion and notification of community events.
- Continue to market and promote Downtown, the Green and Battery Park as premier public gathering spaces for community events and programs.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Goals

- Strengthen Downtown as a business, civic, cultural, entertainment, and recreational center for the region, building upon its historical significance.
- Encourage growth and diversity of businesses at the neighborhood scale and context.
- Capture regional traffic to support Downtown businesses and establishments.

- Increase variety of goods and services to support local residents and visitors.
- Position the City to be a premier tourist destination.
- Create a vibrant and economically sustainable Downtown that serves the needs of area residents, business owners, and encourages greater visitation.
- Create local jobs, raise incomes and increase property tax base through economic development.

## Objectives

- Generate sufficient tax revenues and wider employment opportunities.
- Increase visitation to support tourist industry and Downtown businesses and establishments.
- Increase participation at community events to share in our rich history, which would also increase visitation to City businesses and establishments.
- Increase the employment opportunities and the number of residents who work in the City.

## Strategies

- Perform a market analysis to identify the types of goods and services for which there is strong market demand in New Castle. Seek to recruit businesses and entrepreneurs to the District through a coordinated marketing campaign.
- Build upon and expand the coordination and marketing efforts among the City, the New Castle Community Partnership, New Castle Historical Society, National Park Service, State of Delaware, Wilmington Convention and Visitor’s Bureau and others to create and implement an overall marketing plan for the Downtown, including the historic center and the gateway areas.
- City and stakeholders to jointly fund expenses and employee/contractor to provide leadership for marketing and economic development activities and strategies. (Examples: Business development assistance, including compiling and distributing potential funding source information, and working with the City to create economic development incentives, and steer promotions, special events and programs).
- Market New Castle public parks, greens, trails, and recreational assets as an attraction and incentive to live and work in the City.
- Seek USDA Rural Community Development Initiative grants.
- As a designated Discovery Zone along the Delaware Bayshore Byway, partner with Delaware Greenways and DelDOT to implement the Corridor Management Plan recommendations.

- As a site on the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway, capture opportunities to promote Downtown establishments with DelDOT and other partners.
- Capitalize on expected I-95/I-295 and the Bayshore and Harriet Tubman Byways with wayfinding signage to the National Park and Historic District.
- Consider additional joint initiatives with other communities along the Bayshore and Harriet Tubman Byways that share common interests to increase tourism and promote their Downtowns. A current example of this cross promotion is the River Towns Ride & Festival, where cyclists can ride between festivals in New Castle and Delaware City.
- Build a New Castle brand.

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“ More advertising. So many people in Delaware aren't aware of historic New Castle. When they hear “New Castle”, they think only of the Rt. 13 corridor. We need to change that.”

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District Survey Respondent (Question 19) ”

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“ Better advertising . When we first moved here five years ago, we lived in Newark, and didn't know New Castle existed for a year.”

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District Survey Respondent (Question 19) ”

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“ Create a unified vision to market the Downtown area - currently, the district is promoted primarily through the efforts of individual groups publicizing their events.”

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District Survey Respondent (Question 19) ”

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# 04



Statue of William Penn in  
New Castle Commons

## Implementation Plan





**New Castle Opera House Building**  
(In 2008)

## 04 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Leadership Role  
District Strategies  
District Incentives

### LEADERSHIP ROLE

The Downtown goals and objectives have been established through an extensive public and stakeholder outreach process including the Downtown Survey, a community event, and the Task Force meetings. Through this process, New Castle's assets, challenges, and opportunities for improvement have been identified. The next step is to outline recommendations for the City to move forward and implement these recommendations. It will take continuous work to put this plan into action. There is no one fix or solution to the challenges in the Downtown; instead it will take many short-term actions with a long-range perspective.

This District Plan represents further implementation and refinement of the City's 2009 Comprehensive Plan Update, which envisioned the linkage of the downtown gateway districts with the historic center. As with the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, the City will play the primary role in implementing the strategies and incentives, ensuring new and redevelopment is consistent with the regulations, and determining that local facilities and services are in place to accommodate and facilitate the development.

This section is intended to function as an implementation summary and tool for the District Plan. Given the number of stakeholders and government agencies that have shared interests and that play a key role in the implementation, the City will serve as primary facilitator and coordinator to ensure that the plans and programs for the various entities strive to achieve the shared vision. Aligning goals and efforts with agencies, organizations and partners may include seeking technical guidance and assistance, securing funds, seeking approval, and coordinating physical improvements. This section will assist City officials and staff in coordinating planning actions and guide decisions in a systematic manner.

### DISTRICT STRATEGIES

Table 8: Implementation Plan lists the recommended strategies in this District Plan, identifies the responsible party to lead the task, identifies potential partners to coordinate with, and prioritizes the strategies. It also identifies potential programs and financial sources to fund the recommended task or project.

The recommendation priority levels are grouped into four categories: Short-term, Medium-term, Long-term, and Ongoing. The City should act on the short-term priority levels immediately in order to leverage, benefit from, and work in conjunction with the State's DDD incentives and the City's local incentives. The medium-term and long-term are secondary priorities and may require further analysis and discussion in the next Comprehensive Plan Update. Ongoing items are recommendations that will occur as part of the routine planning process. Criteria for selecting the priorities include the following: 1) level of importance towards achieving Downtown development goals; 2) realistic expectation to achieve in a certain time frame; 3) logical order to implement a task prior to the implementation of other tasks; 4) feasibility in consideration of resources, available funding, and time; 5) City's capacity to take on a lead role; and 6) ability to work concurrently with State and local incentives. This table will further serve as a checklist for the City in implementing the District Plan recommendations.

“ I believe that if your main street is not healthy that this filters through to the rest of the community. Once we have a healthy main street, additional density and marketing efforts, we then can begin to increase our property values and become an area that is coveted as opposed to being described by our museum docents as a “sleepy town.”

District Survey Respondent (Question 19)



**TABLE 8: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

STRATEGY	RESPONSIBLE PARTY / POTENTIAL PARTNER	PRIORITY LEVEL	PROGRAM, FUNDING SOURCE, MECHANISM
<b>HOUSING</b>			
Publicize programs and funds to rehabilitate homes.	City staff / DE State Housing Authority, USDA Rural Development	Medium-term, Ongoing	DSHA Affordable Housing Resource Center; USDA Rural Repair and Rehabilitation Loan Program, Housing Development Fund
Provide housing and property maintenance code guidance to residents, particularly regarding historic residences.	City staff, Historic Area Commission	Medium-term, Ongoing	City of New Castle
Continue to strictly enforce the housing and property maintenance code and the rental inspection program in areas of highest concentrations of violations.	City staff	Ongoing	City of New Castle
Adopt City sponsored programs to incentivize housing rehabilitation and homeownership.	City staff, City Council	Short-Term	City of New Castle
<b>CODE VIOLATIONS &amp; CRIME</b>			
Continue to strictly enforce the housing and property maintenance code and the rental inspection program in areas of highest concentrations of violations.	City staff	Ongoing	City of New Castle
Continue to support the needs of the Building and Zoning Department for code enforcement.	City staff	Ongoing	City of New Castle
Continue to support the needs of the Delaware City Police Department for crime prevention.	City staff, City Police Department	Ongoing	City of New Castle
Support applications for funding that help meet training, equipment, programs, administrative support, and staffing needs.	City staff, City Police Department	Medium-term, Ongoing	City of New Castle, Neighborhood Building Blocks Fund
<b>LAND USE, ZONING &amp; DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL</b>			
Promote and market the identified priority redevelopment areas as catalyst projects to spur future redevelopment.	City staff, New Castle Community Partnership/ Division of Small Business	Short-Term	Customized Program
Refine the long-term redevelopment vision plans for the 7th and South Street Area.	City staff, Planning Commission, City Council / WILMAPCO, DeIDOT	Short-Term	Comprehensive Plan Update, Neighborhood Building Blocks Fund, DE Community Redevelopment Fund
Review the zoning district requirements and amend where appropriate to make it conducive toward creating a vibrant, traditional mixed-use and walkable Downtown.	City staff, Planning Commission, City Council	Short-Term	Comprehensive Plan Update, City of New Castle
Evaluate the future land use designation and zoning of the parcels on the east side of Delaware Street between 3rd Street and 5th Street, which are currently zoned HR.	City staff, Planning Commission, City Council	Short-Term	Comprehensive Plan Update, City of New Castle

STRATEGY	RESPONSIBLE PARTY / POTENTIAL PARTNER	PRIORITY LEVEL	PROGRAM, FUNDING SOURCE, MECHANISM
<b>FLOOD HAZARDS</b>			
Publicize the State of Delaware's green infrastructure programs and incentives.	City staff / DNREC	Medium-term	Green infrastructure and stormwater infrastructure loans
Enforce appropriate safeguards to minimize risks to flood hazards.	City staff / DNREC Coastal Programs, DE Emergency Management Agency	Medium-term, Ongoing	DE Flood Mitigation Program, DE Coastal Management Assistance Program, FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grant programs
Evaluate measures to ensure that new development is resistant to current and future hazards, and minimizes contributing stormwater run-off to flood water receiving areas.	City staff / DNREC Division of Watershed Stewardship	Medium-term	DNREC Surface Water Matching Planning Grants, Clean Water State Revolving Fund, City Floodplain Ordinance
Provide public awareness and outreach to current residents, developers, and prospective homebuyers on flood hazards and sea level rise risks, and flood protection measures.	City staff / DNREC Coastal Programs / City Preparedness Task Force	Medium-term, Ongoing	City of New Castle, DE Coastal Management Assistance Program
Implement the recommended actions and activities set forth in the City's 2018 Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan.	City staff / DNREC Coastal Programs / City Preparedness Task Force	Medium-term, Ongoing	City of New Castle, DE Coastal Management Assistance Program
<b>HISTORIC RESOURCES</b>			
Encourage appropriate reuse of older buildings, particularly including rehabilitation of historically or architecturally significant buildings.	City staff / New Castle Historical Society, DE Historical and Cultural Affairs, Preservation DE	Medium-term, Ongoing	Housing-Rehabilitation Loan Program, Historic Preservation Tax Credits, First State Preservation Revolving Fund, DE Preservation Fund
Identify historical and architecturally significant buildings within the District in need of repair and rehabilitation.	City staff / New Castle Historical Society, DE Historical and Cultural Affairs, Preservation DE	Medium-term, Ongoing	Housing-Rehabilitation Loan Program, Historic Preservation Tax Credits, First State Preservation Revolving Fund, DE Preservation Fund
Publicize programs and funds to rehabilitate historic structures.	City staff / New Castle Historical Society, DE Historical and Cultural Affairs, Preservation DE	Medium-term, Ongoing	Housing-Rehabilitation Loan Program, Historic Preservation Tax Credits, First State Preservation Revolving Fund, DE Preservation Fund
Enforce Historic Area Commission (HAC) ordinances and design guidelines.	City Staff / Historic Area Commission	Medium-term, Ongoing	City of New Castle
Partner with the Trustees, the New Castle Historical Society, Delaware Historical Society, National Park Service, DE Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs and others to continue efforts to protect and promote the City's historical and cultural assets.	City staff / Trustees, New Castle Historical Society, DE Historical Society, DE Historical and Cultural Affairs, National Park Service, Preservation DE	Medium-term, Ongoing	Housing-Rehabilitation Loan Program, Historic Preservation Tax Credits, First State Preservation Revolving Fund, DE Preservation Fund

STRATEGY	RESPONSIBLE PARTY / POTENTIAL PARTNER	PRIORITY LEVEL	PROGRAM, FUNDING SOURCE, MECHANISM
<b>TRANSPORTATION, CONNECTIVITY &amp; WALKABILITY</b>			
Identify, enhance, and maintain appropriate traffic calming and pedestrian safety measures for streets in the Downtown.	City staff, Planning Commission, City Council / WILMAPCO, DeIDOT	Short-Term	Municipal Street Aid, CDBG, Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)
Support the future phases of the Heritage Greenway Trail / Industrial Track Trail to link the Downtown and Battery Park to the Wilmington River Walk and the East Coast Greenway.	City staff / East Coast Greenway, County, DeIDOT, Delaware Greenways, WILMAPCO	Long-term	WILMAPCO Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), DeIDOT Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
Partner with Bike Delaware and WILMAPCO to promote trail expansion and connections in the City and region.	City staff / Bike Delaware, WILMAPCO, DeIDOT	Long-term	WILMAPCO UPWP, DeIDOT TIP
Coordinate State and local transportation improvements to achieve better pedestrian linkages between the District and existing adjoining neighborhoods.	City staff, Planning Commission, City Council / WILMAPCO, DeIDOT	Medium-term, Ongoing	
Identify desirable physical improvements such as new neighborhood streets in the 7th and South Street redevelopment area and partner with others such as State and developers to fund.	City staff, Planning Commission, City Council / WILMAPCO, DeIDOT, Developers	Short-term	WILMAPCO UPWP, DeIDOT TIP, Private Funding
Work with DeIDOT and WILMAPCO to create a long-range master plan for the Ferry Cut-off Area that includes pedestrian improvements, intersection improvements, as well as improvements to Route 9. To the extent previously designed but unfunded projects addresses the issue to the City's satisfaction, work with DeIDOT and other state officials to provide funding.	City staff, Planning Commission, City Council / WILMAPCO, DeIDOT	Short-term	WILMAPCO UPWP, DeIDOT TAP, DeIDOT TIP
<b>GATEWAYS &amp; STREETScape</b>			
Identify, prioritize, and construct placemaking improvements along streets and gateways.	City staff, Planning Commission, City Council / WILMAPCO, DeIDOT	Short-term	WILMAPCO UPWP, DeIDOT TAP, DeIDOT TIP, City of New Castle CIP
Seek to incorporate the development of a public recreation pier in future development activities along the waterfront.	City staff, Planning Commission, City Council / DNREC Division of Parks and Recreation	Long-term	Delaware Land and Water Conservation Trust Fund (DTF)
Identify opportunities and funding to expand and improve walkways and bikeways that connect to parks, historical features, and the Downtown.	City staff / WILMAPCO, DeIDOT	Short-term	WILMAPCO UPWP, DeIDOT TIP, City of New Castle CIP
Market New Castle public parks, greens, trails, and recreational assets as an attraction and incentive to live and work in the City.	City staff / Trustees of New Castle Commons, New Castle Community Partnership	Medium-term, Ongoing	
Encourage WILMAPCO and County to expand the Rt. 9 Corridor Master Plan into the Ferry Cut-Off Area, and program transportation and pedestrian improvements that coincide with the City's land use objectives. Connect residents to the Rt. 9 Innovation District.	City staff / WILMAPCO, DeIDOT, New Castle County	Short-term	WILMAPCO UPWP

STRATEGY	RESPONSIBLE PARTY / POTENTIAL PARTNER	PRIORITY LEVEL	PROGRAM, FUNDING SOURCE, MECHANISM
<b>PARKING</b>			
Coordinate with the Parking Sub-Committee towards implementing the Committee's recommendations.	City staff, Planning Commission, City Council	Short-term	City of New Castle CIP
Continue to provide temporary special event parking, including shuttle services to and from remote parking areas and publicize the location of parking areas to be used for special events held in the Downtown area.	City staff / Private landowners, New Castle Community Partnership, Event Organizers	Medium-term, Ongoing	New Castle Community Partnership Brochures and Website
Consider a parking management program to maximize available parking in the areas of the highest demand.	City staff, Planning Commission, City Council	Short-term	
Improve pedestrian connections between areas with high visitor volume (such as Courthouse and Battery Park areas) to access underutilized parking areas.	City staff, Planning Commission, City Council / National Park Service, Trustees of New Castle Commons	Short-term	Neighborhood Building Block Fund, Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)
Review and amend the parking standards for all zoning districts in the Downtown to ensure that the requirements are more conducive to a walkable, mixed-use Downtown environment versus an auto-oriented commercial environment. The code could set a maximum number of spaces permitted, incentive shared parking, require connections from public sidewalks to parking lots, and require sufficient landscaping and pedestrian scale lighting.	City staff, Planning Commission, City Council	Short-term	City of New Castle
Consider the construction of a parking structure in a strategic Downtown location.	City staff, Planning Commission, City Council / National Park Service	Long-term	Federal Funding
Continue to improve existing wayfinding signage and parking logos to guide drivers to parking areas.	City staff	Medium-term	New Castle Community Partnership Brochures and Website
Provide merchants, website visitors and tourist bureaus with a Downtown map showing businesses, points of interest, restrooms and parking.	City staff / New Castle Community Partnership	Short-term	New Castle Community Partnership Brochures and Website
<b>COMMUNITY EVENTS</b>			
Partner with others organizations to expand current community events and develop new events specific to the Downtown.	City staff / Community Partnership, Trustees, Wilmington Convention and Visitor's Bureau	Medium-term, Ongoing	
Partner with others organizations to enhance the promotion and notification of community events.	City staff / Community Partnership, Trustees, Wilmington Convention and Visitor's Bureau	Medium-term, Ongoing	
Continue to market and promote the Downtown, the Green and Battery Park as premier public gathering spaces for community events and programs.	City staff / Community Partnership, Trustees, Wilmington Convention and Visitor's Bureau	Medium-term, Ongoing	

STRATEGY	RESPONSIBLE PARTY / POTENTIAL PARTNER	PRIORITY LEVEL	PROGRAM, FUNDING SOURCE, MECHANISM
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>			
Perform a market analysis to identify the types of goods and services for which there is strong market demand in New Castle. Seek to recruit businesses and entrepreneurs to the District through a coordinated marketing campaign.	City staff / New Castle Community Partnership, Division of Small Business	Short-term	Division of Small Business, Downtown Delaware
Build upon and expand the coordination and marketing efforts among the City, the New Castle Community Partnership, New Castle Historical Society, National Park Service, State of Delaware, Wilmington Convention and Visitor's Bureau and others to create and implement an overall marketing plan for the Downtown, including the Historic Downtown and the gateway districts.	City staff / New Castle Community Partnership, Division of Small Business, New Castle Historical Society, National Park Service, Wilmington Convention and Visitor's Bureau	Short-term	Division of Small Business, Downtown Delaware
Continued dialogue between City of New Castle and New Castle Community Partnership on most appropriate approach and structure to seek Main Street designation.	City staff / New Castle Community Partnership	Short-term	Division of Small Business, Downtown Delaware
City and stakeholders to jointly fund expenses and employee/contractor to provide leadership for marketing and economic development activities and strategies. (Examples: Business development assistance, including compiling and distributing potential funding source information, and working with the City to create economic development incentives, and steer promotions, special events and programs).	City staff / New Castle Community Partnership, Division of Small Business, New Castle Historical Society, National Park Service, Wilmington Convention and Visitor's Bureau	Short-term	
Seek USDA Rural Community Development Initiative grants.	New Castle Community Partnership, USDA	Medium-term	USDA Rural Community Development Initiative grants
As a designated Discovery Zone along the Delaware Bayshore Byway, partner with Delaware Greenways and DeIDOT to implement the Corridor Management Plan recommendations.	Delaware Greenways, DeIDOT, WILMAPCO	Medium-term	
As a site on the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway, capture opportunities to promote Downtown establishments with DeIDOT and other partners.	DeIDOT, WILMAPCO	Medium-term	
Capitalize on expected I-95/I-295 and the Bayshore and Harriet Tubman Byways with wayfinding signage to the National Park and Historic District.	Delaware Greenways, DeIDOT, WILMAPCO	Medium-term	

## DISTRICT INCENTIVES

If the City of New Castle is selected for Downtown Development District designation, the City will provide a suite of incentives to complement the DDD grants available from the State for Qualified Real Property Investments. The City is also aware of other various grant and technical assistance opportunities such as those described in the Funding and Technical Assistance Handbook for Delaware Local Governments, published by the University of Delaware Institute for Public Administration, dated February 2016, and will make the same information available to property owners and prospective developers so that the City's incentives can be leveraged to the maximum extent possible.

The City carefully considered various incentives to complement the DDD application, and approved the following. These incentives are meant to work to decrease the costs of developing and/or operating a business within the DDD by reducing taxes and fees and by reducing the time to receive approval. The incentives also include a waiver of the City Realty Transfer Tax for first-time homebuyers to encourage home ownership.

A description is provided on how each incentive will work, in concert with the State incentives, to encourage economic and community development.

### Current

#### ***Downtown Gateway (DG) District***

The DG District allows for a range of uses including multi-family development, non-residential development and mixed uses. This zoning category encourages economic development and revitalization by implementing the visions of the 2009 Comprehensive Plan and this District Plan by allowing flexibility in uses while also requiring new and redevelopment to be in accordance with design guidelines consistent with the historic downtown. Details for the DG District can be found in Section 230 of the City Code.

#### ***Historic Commerce (HC) District***

Similar to the DG District, but on a smaller scale, the HC District allows for a range of uses including small scale retail and services uses, as well as single-family detached and attached dwellings, including multiple dwellings. This zoning category encourages economic development and revitalization by implementing the visions of the 2009 Comprehensive Plan and this District Plan by allowing flexibility in uses while also requiring new development and redevelopment to be in accordance with the City's Historic District Design Guidelines and Standards. Details for the HC can be found in Section 230 of the City Code.

#### ***Municipal Services Commission Electric and Water Economic Development Rate***

The Municipal Services Commission of New Castle (MSC) is an agency of the Mayor and Council of New Castle established in 1921 to furnish water and electric service to the residents of New Castle. The MSC has the ability to offer commercial customers who are considering locating their business within the service territory of the MSC an Economic Development Rate. The terms of the rate and its duration are negotiable and are outside the MSC's normal published tariff. The terms will be spelled out in a contract between the customer and the MSC. The purpose of the Economic Development Rate is to encourage new job creation that would otherwise not locate in the service territory of the MSC. The potential for the application of the Economic Development Rate is established in the MSC's Electric and Water Tariff adopted June 6, 2006. The DDD is within the service territory of the MSC.

#### ***Historic District Design Guidelines and Standards***

The City's Historic District Design Guidelines and Standards were recently amended by City Council to permit certain minor improvements to structures in the Historic District to be approved by the City Building Official without requiring review by the Historic Area Commission. Such improvements must be in-kind repairs in accordance with the Design Guidelines. The adoption of the revised guidelines encourages economic development and revitalization by streamlining the review of such improvements thus reducing costs and adding more surety to the approval process.

### Proposed

#### ***Streamlined Review Process***

The City will adhere to a streamlined review process for development in the DDD. The adoption of the amended Historic District Design Guidelines mentioned earlier has already streamlined the review of certain improvements in the Historic District. The City commits to streamlining other types of projects in the DDD by expediting review of development plans being reviewed by City staff, City planning and engineering consultants and the Planning Commission and/or Board of Adjustment. The streamlining and expediting of the review of development projects in the DDD will encourage economic development and revitalization by shortening the time period between project initiation and project completion.

**Business License Fee Waiver**

The City will waive the Business License Fee for one year for businesses moving into an existing building in the DDD and for three years for businesses moving into new buildings in the DDD. This will encourage economic development and revitalization by reducing the ongoing costs of maintaining a business in the DDD.

**Building Permit Fee and Historic Area Commission Fee Waiver**

The City wishes to incentivize certain types of improvements that may not increase the assessed value of the property and thus not be able to take advantage of the property tax abatement described earlier. As such, the City will waive building permit fees and the Historic Area Commission Review Fee for the following:

- New or replacement signage in the DDD; and/or
- Façade improvements in the DDD; and/or
- Installation of underground utilities; and/or
- Sidewalk improvements

These fee waivers will encourage economic development and revitalization by reducing the costs of making improvements to properties in the DDD including general maintenance, beautification and site work.

**City Realty Transfer Tax Waiver for First Time Homebuyer**

To encourage home ownership, the City will waive the City Realty Transfer Tax for first time homebuyers where the owner/buyer will reside in the dwelling. This will encourage economic development and revitalization by reducing the cost of home ownership for first time buyers.

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# Maps

Map 1: District Boundary

Map 2: State Strategies

Map 3: Existing Land Use

Map 4: Zoning

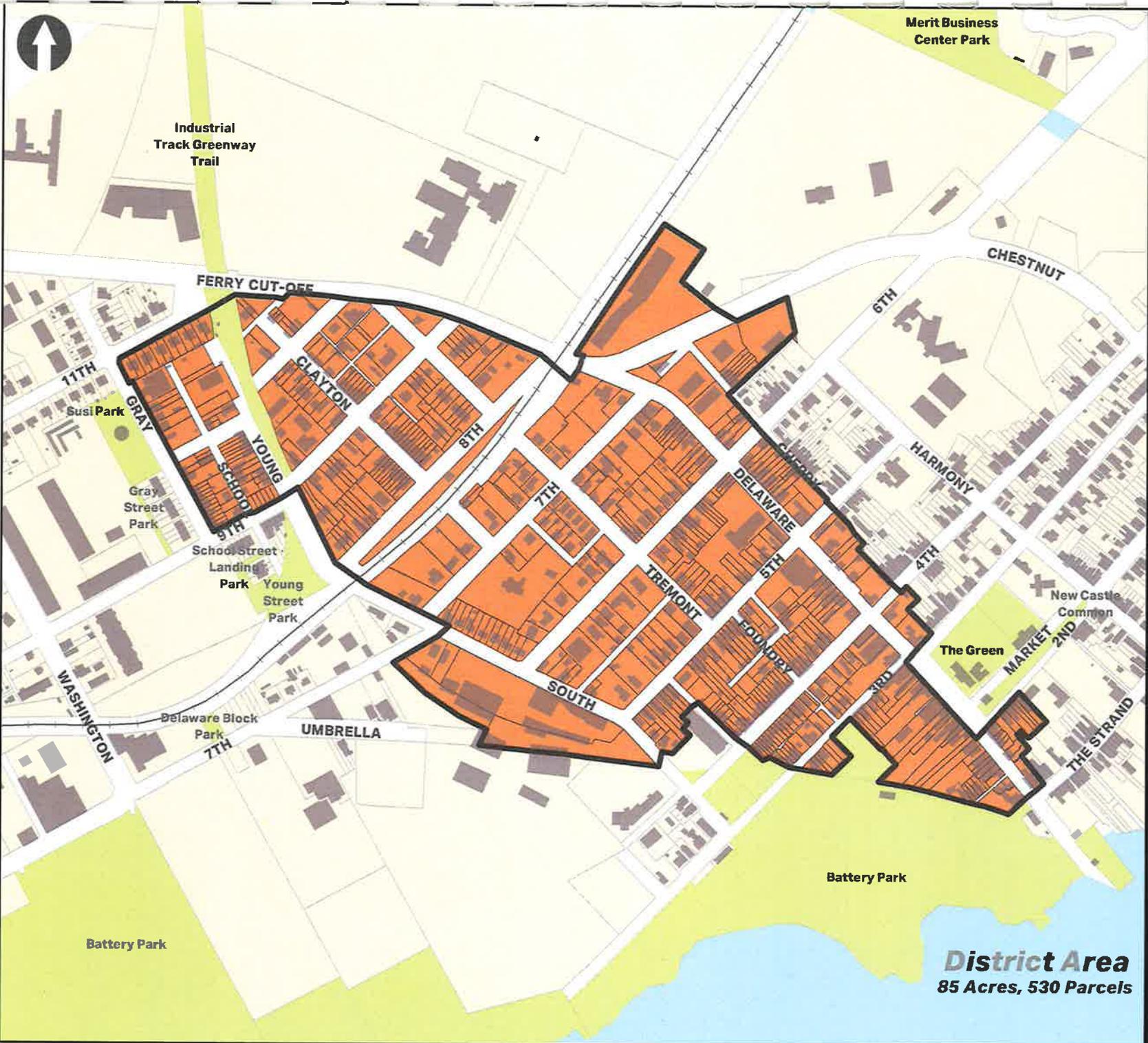
Map 5: Vacant Property

Map 6: FEMA Flood Hazard Zones

Map 7: Historic Resources

Map 8: Transportation

Map 9: Projects & Investments



**PROJECT**

**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT**

City of New Castle  
New Castle County, Delaware

**MAP 1**

**DISTRICT BOUNDARY**

**LOCATION MAP**



**LEGEND**

-  DDD
-  Parcels
-  Protected Land

**DATA SOURCES**

Parcels - New Castle County

**SCALE**

1 inch = 500 feet

**AECOM**

Sabre Building, Suite 300  
4051 Ogletown Road  
Newark, DE 19713  
302.781.5900 tel  
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**SHEET NUMBER**

1 OF 9

**District Area**  
85 Acres, 530 Parcels



**PROJECT**

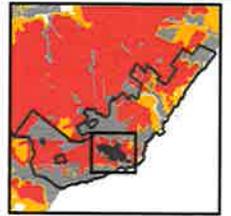
**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT**

City of New Castle  
New Castle County, Delaware

**MAP 2**

**STATE STRATEGIES**

**LOCATION MAP**



**LEGEND**

District Boundary

Parcels

**State Strategies 2015**

Level 1

Level 2

Out of Play

**DATA SOURCES**

Parcels - New Castle County  
State Strategies - Office State  
Planning Coordination

**SCALE**

1 inch = 500 feet

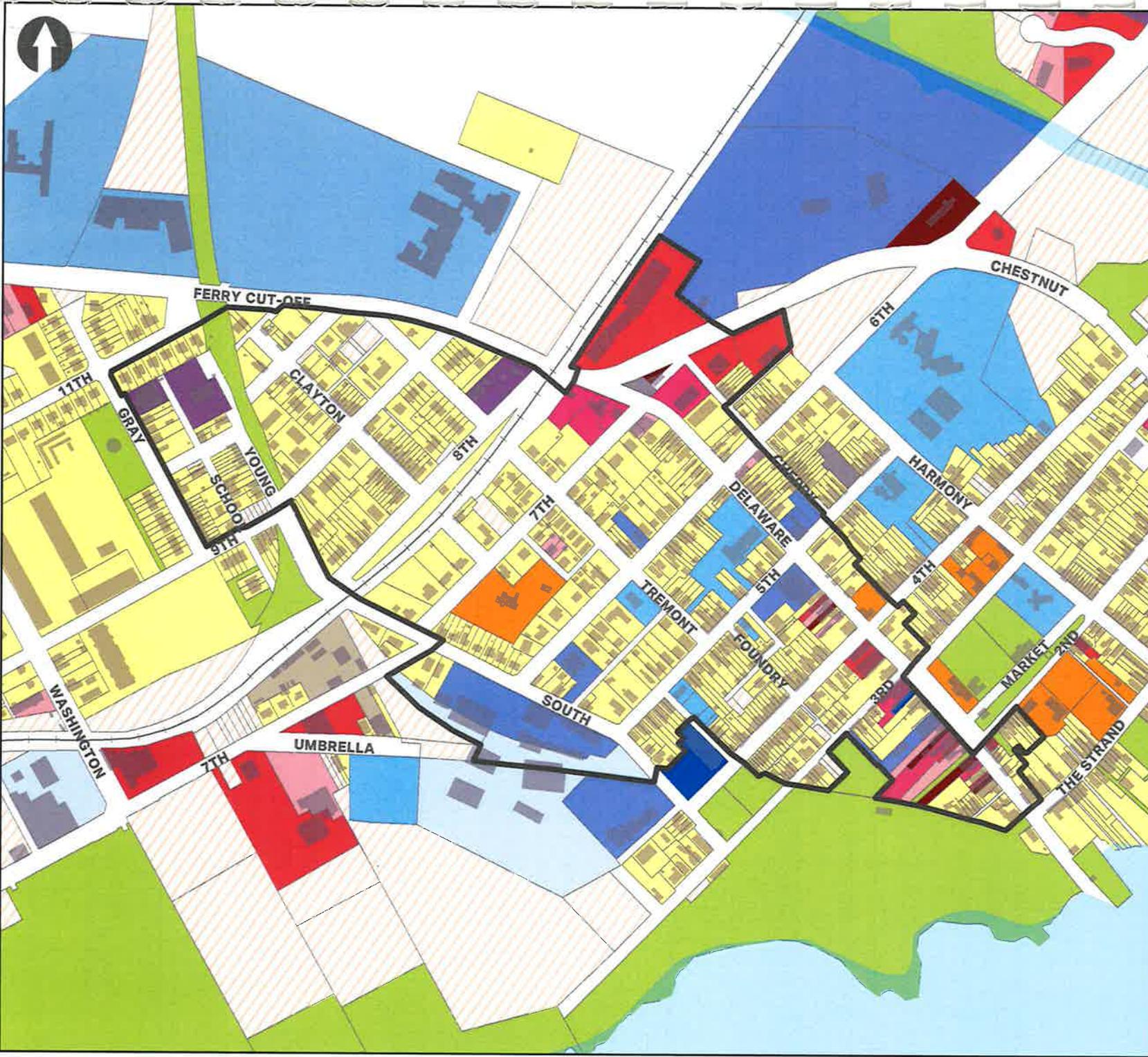
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2 OF 9

ANSI A B 5 x 11" Project Manager: CR GIS/CAD: RM Last Saved: 5/2/2018 File Path: V:\Projects\1551\DE\_NewCastle\60549769\GIS\_Existing\landUse.mxd



**PROJECT**  
**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT**  
City of New Castle  
New Castle County, Delaware

**MAP 3**

**EXISTING LAND USE**

**LEGEND**

- District Boundary
- Existing Land Use**
- Residential
- Commercial - Restaurant
- Commercial - Retail
- Commercial - Service
- Historic
- Institutional - Fraternal
- Institutional - Education
- Institutional - Government
- Institutional - Religious
- Institutional - Service
- Manufacturing
- Office - Business
- Open Space and Recreation
- Parking
- Storage/Warehouse
- Vacant

**DATA SOURCES**

Parcels - New Castle County  
Land Use - City, AECOM

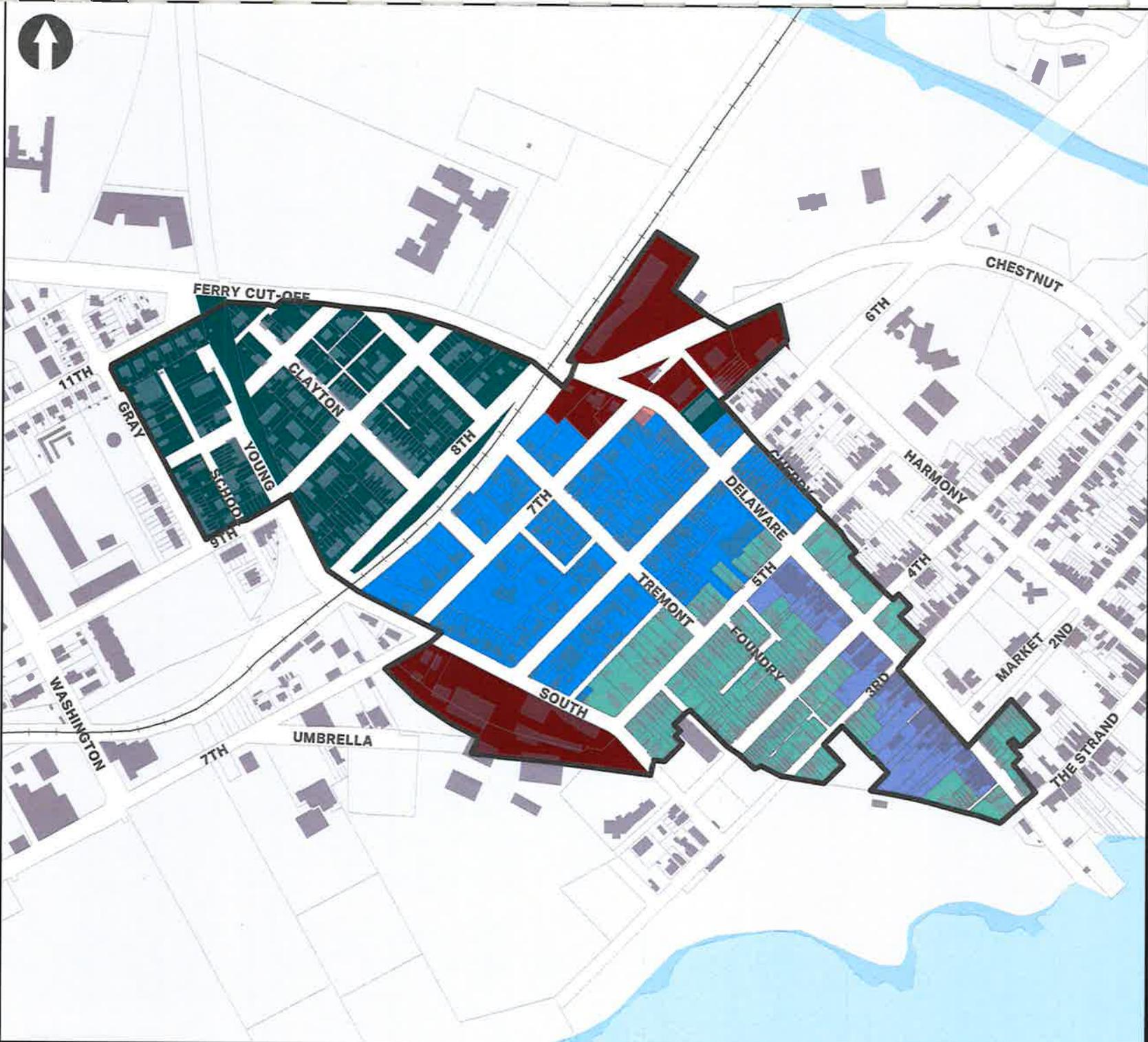
**SCALE**

1 inch = 500 feet

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**PROJECT**

**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT**

City of New Castle  
New Castle County, Delaware

**MAP 4**

**ZONING**

**LEGEND**

- District Boundary
- Parcels

**Zoning**

- DG - Downtown Gateway
- HC - Historic Commerce
- HR - Historic Residence
- OS&R - Open Space & Rec
- RC - Retail Commercial
- R-2 - Residential
- R-3 - Residential

**DATA SOURCES**

Parcels - New Castle County  
Zoning - City

**SCALE**

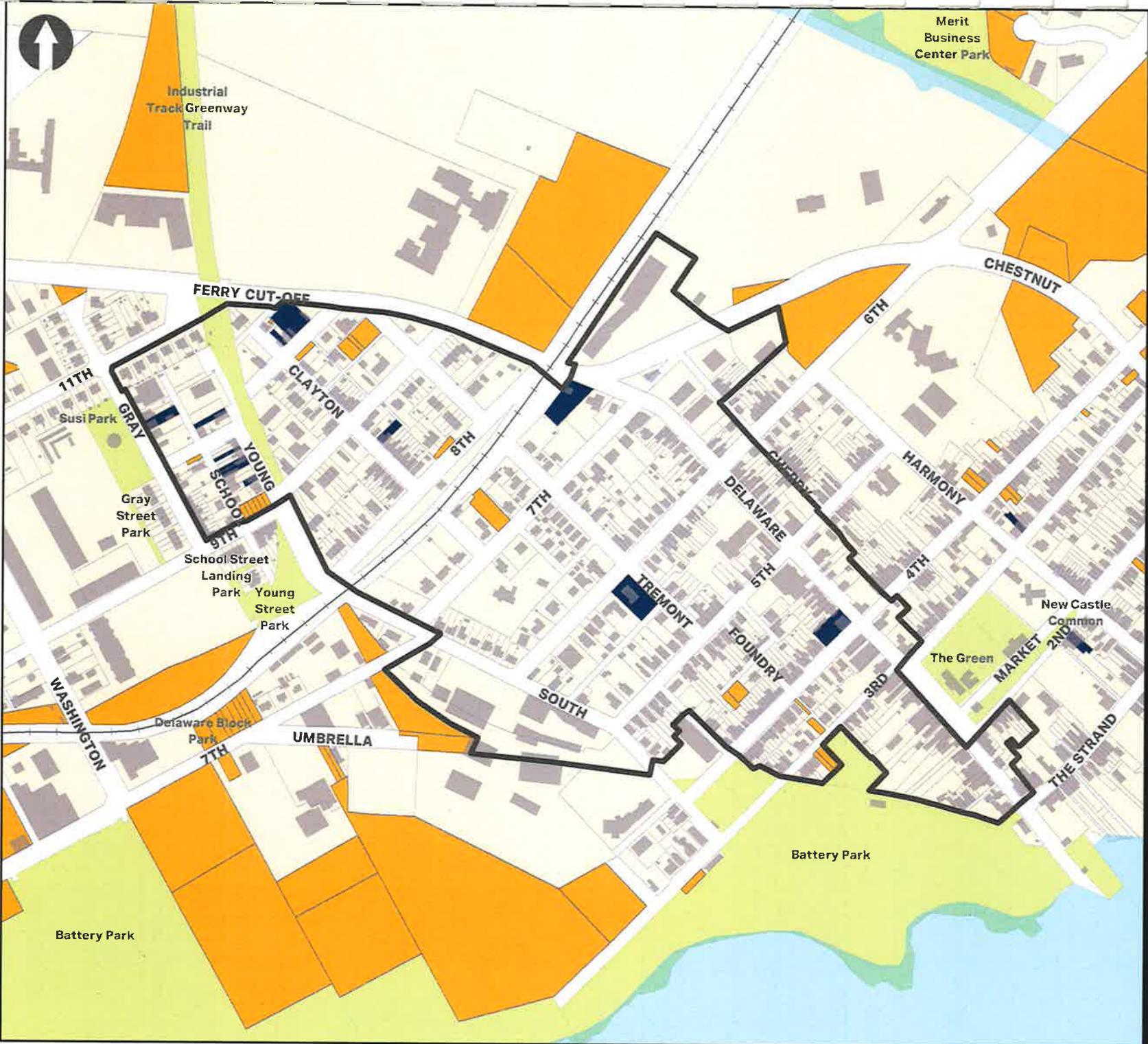
1 inch = 500 feet

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**PROJECT**

**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT**

City of New Castle  
New Castle County, Delaware

**MAP 5**

**VACANT PROPERTY**

**LEGEND**

- District Boundary
- Parcels
- Protected Land
- Vacant Buildings
- Vacant Land

**DATA SOURCES**

Parcels- NCC Map Viewer, Aug 2017  
Vacant Buildings- City of New Castle, Oct 2017  
Vacant Land- NCC Map Viewer, Aug 2017  
Updated by AECOM Oct 2017

**SCALE**

1 inch = 500 feet

**AECOM**

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5 OF 9



**PROJECT**  
**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT**  
City of New Castle  
New Castle County, Delaware

**MAP 6**  
**FEMA FLOOD HAZARD ZONES**



- LEGEND**
- District Boundary
  - Parcels
  - FEMA Flood Zone, BFE**
  - AE
  - AE, 8
  - AE, 9
  - AE, 10
  - VE, 12
  - VE, 13

**DATA SOURCES**

Parcels - New Castle County  
Flood Zone - FEMA  
BFE = Base Flood Elevations (feet)

**SCALE**

1 inch = 500 feet

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**PROJECT**

**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT**

City of New Castle  
New Castle County, Delaware

**MAP 7**

**HISTORIC RESOURCES**

**LEGEND**

- District Boundary
- Parcels
- Protected Land
- National Register District
- National Register Properties

**DATA SOURCES**

Parcels- New Castle County  
National Register of Historic Place  
- National Park Service

**SCALE**

1 inch = 600 feet

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**PROJECT**

**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT**

City of New Castle  
New Castle County, Delaware

**MAP 9**

**PROJECTS & INVESTMENTS**

**LEGEND**

- District Boundary
- Parcels
- Recent Improvements**
- Streetscape
- Trail
- Proposed Improvements**
- Pedestrian and Bicycle
- Streetscape and Traffic Calming
- Intersection

**DATA SOURCES**

Parcels - New Castle County  
Transportation -  
FirstMap Feature Server

**SCALE**

1 inch = 600 feet

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**SHEET NUMBER**

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**Appendix A- Downtown Development  
District Task Force Members**

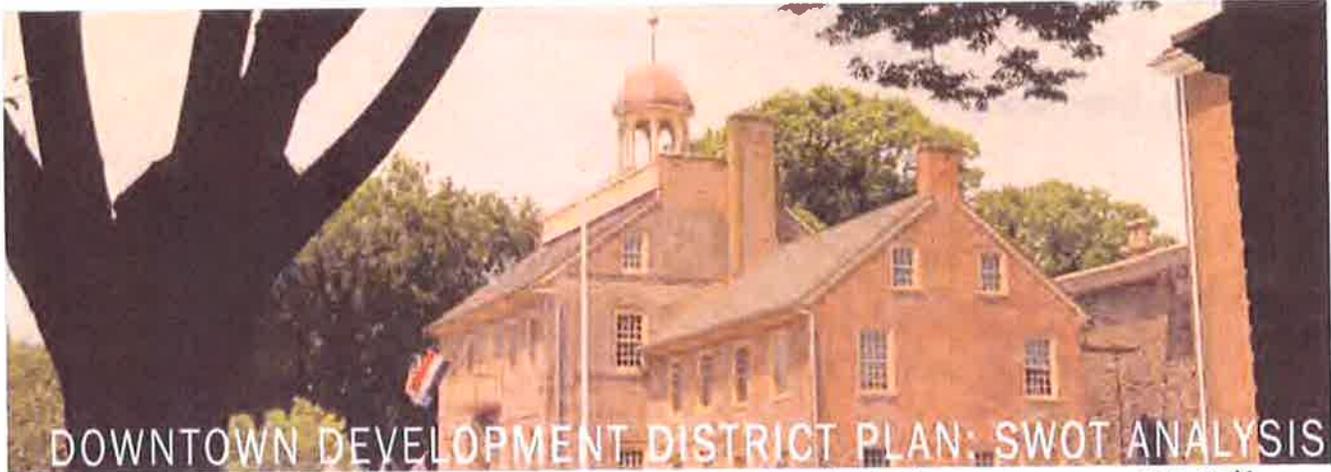


City of New Castle  
Downtown Development District  
Task Force Contact List



First Name	Last Name	Representing
Linda	Ratchford	Council President
Bill	Barthel	City Administrator
Dave	Baldini	Planning Commission Chair/DE St.
Kim	Moore	W. 4th St/Asst Pastor Bethany AME
Cynthia	Snyder	NC Courthouse Manager
Valarie	Windle Leary	NCCP Main St Pres/Harmony
Kat	Zane	W 5th/Senior Ctr Board/Bus Owner
Michelle	Quaranta	DE St/Business Owner/Realtor
Julie	Kirk	E 6th St/Library Director
Janice	Henshaw	E 4th St
Daniel	Citron	Executive Director NCHS
Ethan	McKinley	MPS First State Superintendent
Scott	Morris	W 3rd St/Pres. Wilmington Fibre
Marty	Wright	7th St/Retail Business Owner
Justin	Day	DE St. Restaurant
Stephen	Weick	W. 5th St. Renter
Marco	Boyce	Harmony St/NCC Planner/Tree Com
Kelly	Koczak McCurdy	DE St/Arasapha Garden Club Bd
Mark	Zitz	E. 2nd St/Principal St. Peter's School
Jack	Garniewski	Café & West India Brewing Co.
Joseph	Day III	W 3rd St/Bd of Health/NCC Land Use
Jason	Mellinger	E. 4th St.

## **Appendix B- SWOT Results**



# DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT PLAN: SWOT ANALYSIS

history  
 River  
 Small area  
 close to dense pop.  
 Walkable  
 Res. close to comm.  
 Quaint  
 NO RR next to river  
 Private schools  
 Corp fees offset taxes  
 # of museums  
 no sales tax  
 home prices  
 diversity  
 Day in older NC  
 NPS site  
 proximity to major roads  
 walking paths  
 Battery Pl  
 # of events  
 engaged residents  
 strong community

growing art comm  
 businesses - strong  
 safe env  
 strong city svcs  
 Pol will  
 safe - emer. svcs  
 close to airport/train  
 strong vol. base  
 historic pres  
 "most beaut. cities"  
 authentic char  
 presence of Trustees  
 strong partnerships  
 PO, Lib - comm svcs  
 don't need a car  
 in prox to 5th largest city  
 in US - 2 hrs to  
 anywhere  
 bus. owners live in comm

bus. don't feel city is pro-bus.  
 bus. - lack of working capital  
 ltd activities for visitors  
 lack of mkt - City + bus  
 pkg - lack + sign - purc. + real  
 lodging  
 brick sidewalks can be unsafe  
 ADA accessibility - infr + non con  
 easily bypassed by travelers  
 lack of pier/dock // water attraction  
 Qual of walkways - safety  
 directional signage  
 limited business  
 visitors can't open ev day  
 no fine dining  
 no hearty food store  
 lack of pub restroom  
 res. next to comm.  
 high densities don't have reason to come at  
 lack of avail funds  
 visual appeal / near ferry cutoff  
 lack of cohesive branding

pov. rate  
 zip code bias  
 city / city - same name  
 nothing to prevent demo by neg.  
 NPS lack of funding / commitment  
 lack of local partnerships  
 don't want to invest in lge hist home  
 flood ins  
 lack of amen for children  
 Col Sch Dist rep. shuts down @ 5  
 lack of event space

## STRENGTHS

## WEAKNESSES

## OPPORTUNITIES

## THREATS

potential for bus. growth  
 gateway impts  
 signage  
 destination advertising  
 NPS  
 waterfront  
 bike trails  
 exp. of real  
 vacant store fronts  
 MF growth  
 visitor ctr  
 waterfront rest  
 outdoo dining  
 pier  
 Best of \_\_\_\_\_ events  
 leverage Pol way  
 birding  
 cup of attraction amenities  
 wine + ale trail  
 marketing of sites/amenities

Branding  
 endorsements  
 play on arts/cult  
 facil for gall/show/  
 event  
 imprv sense of place  
 brewery

demo by neglect  
 DuPont announcement  
 SLR / FP  
 crime in environs  
 vacancy rates  
 vocal NIMBY group  
 traffic  
 impress - HD vs everything else  
 regulatory mandates

**Appendix C- Downtown Development  
District Survey**

**SURVEY RESULTS**

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

**AECOM**

**SURVEY RESULTS**

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

**300+**  
Total Responses

**Who Filled Out the Survey**

Category	Percentage
Residents	48%
Property Owners	23%
Visitors	17%
Employee	7%
Business Owners	5%

Category	Percentage
New Castle (19720)	81%
Wilmington Newark, Bear	14%
PA or MD	2%
Out of Country	2%
Kent or Sussex County	1%

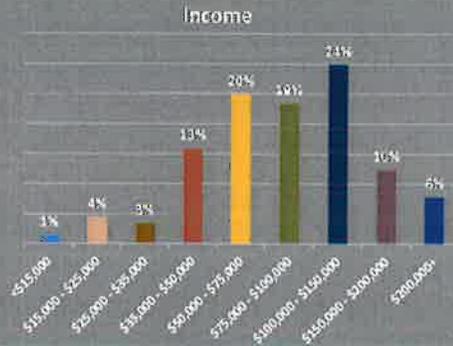
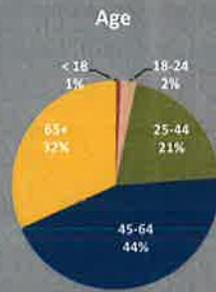
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# SURVEY RESULTS



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

## Who Filled Out the Survey



AECOM

# SURVEY RESULTS RESIDENT / VISITOR



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

## Q2 Shopping Frequencies

	5+ times a week	2-4 times a week	Once a week	Once a month	Once every few months	Never
New Castle's Central Business District (e.g., Delaware Street)	5%	13%	28%	23%	23%	9%
New Castle's Southern Gateway (e.g., South Street, Route 9)	3%	6%	11%	18%	19%	43%
New Castle's Ferry Cut-Off Area (e.g., River Plaza Shopping Center)	10%	28%	30%	10%	8%	7%
Route 13 Corridor (e.g., Airport Plaza, Penn Mart Shopping Center)	4%	16%	27%	20%	20%	14%
Route 40 Corridor (e.g., Governor's Square Shopping Center, Eden Square)	3%	6%	19%	18%	27%	26%
Christiana Mall	1%	3%	11%	27%	47%	11%
Newark, DE	3%	5%	5%	17%	45%	24%
Wilmington, DE	6%	10%	11%	20%	29%	24%

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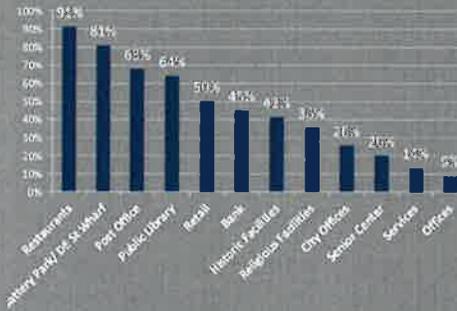
# SURVEY RESULTS

## RESIDENT / VISITOR

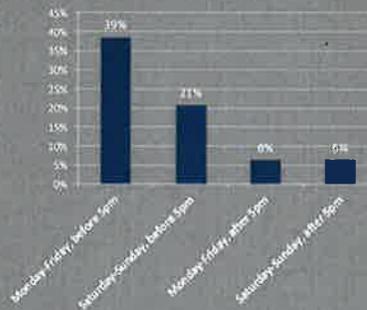


DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

### Q3 Where Visiting in the Downtown



### Q4 Time Visiting



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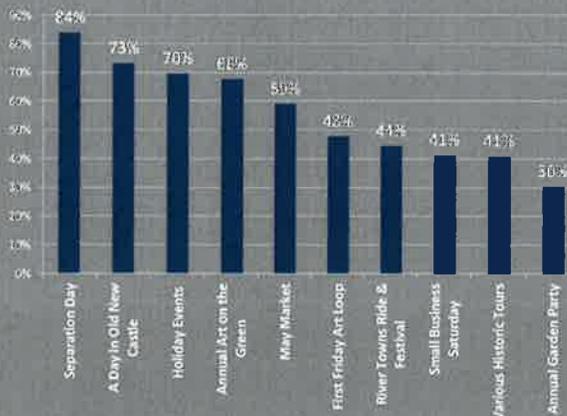
# SURVEY RESULTS

## RESIDENT / VISITOR



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

### Q5 Downtown events attended in past 3 years



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# SURVEY RESULTS RESIDENT / VISITOR



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

## Q6 How they get to the Downtown



## Q8 Do you feel safe in the downtown during the day & night?

Day: **99%** Yes  
Night: **93%** Yes

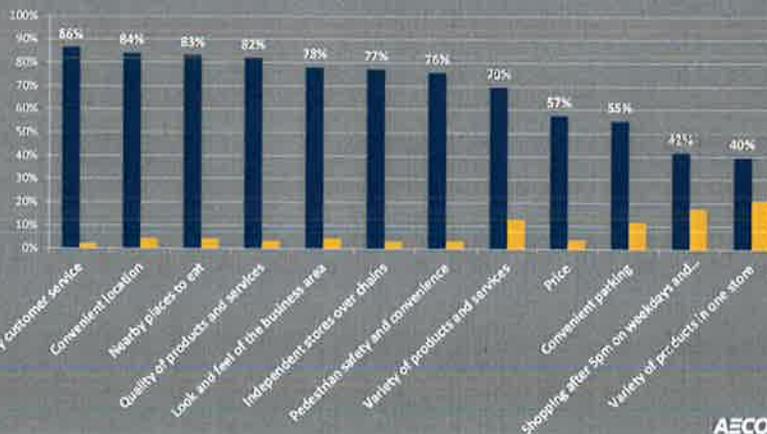
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# SURVEY RESULTS RESIDENT / VISITOR



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

## Q7 What attracts them to a shopping or business area



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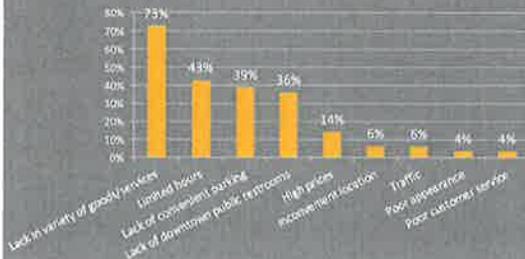
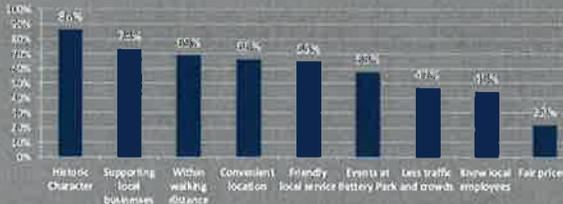
# SURVEY RESULTS

## RESIDENT / VISITOR



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

### Q9 Major Advantages



### Q10 Major Disadvantages

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# SURVEY RESULTS

## RESIDENT / VISITOR



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

### Q11 Imagine the downtown in 10 years...

	Very Appealing	Somewhat Appealing	Not Appealing	No Opinion
<b>1</b> An aesthetic blend of green space, natural elements, and pedestrian amenities with an historic flavor	86%	11%	1%	2%
<b>2</b> A meeting place and the center of community activities with a mix of shopping, restaurants, cultural, and recreation spaces	72%	23%	4%	1%
A niche destination place where specialty retail stores and restaurants attract visitors from out of town	58%	28%	10%	4%
An attractive place to call home with a mix of residential styles (e.g., single-family, townhouses, apartments) that appeal to a variety of ages and incomes	50%	30%	14%	5%
A place where locally owned stores/service shops for personal errands and dining/entertainment opportunities serve mainly the residents of the New Castle area	40%	29%	26%	6%
A place with new professional offices and businesses that provides jobs and employees who patron other establishments in the downtown	30%	37%	26%	7%
A regional destination retail center attracting people from a distance with a mix of retailers	28%	27%	36%	9%

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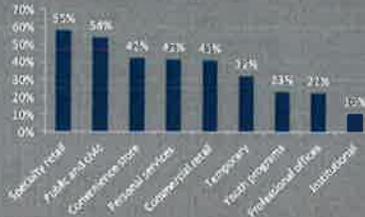
# SURVEY RESULTS

## RESIDENT / VISITOR

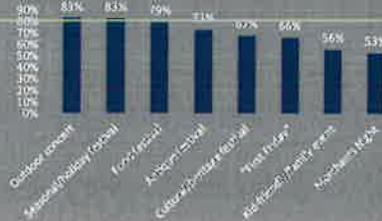
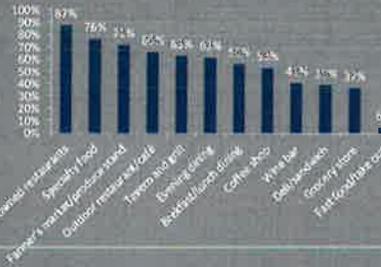


DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

### Q12 General Service Businesses



### Q13 Food-Related Businesses



### Q14 Arts and Cultural Events/Activities

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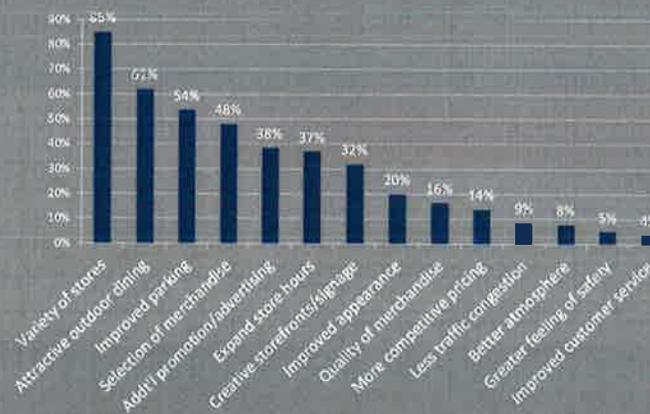
# SURVEY RESULTS

## RESIDENT / VISITOR



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

### Q15 Improving Downtown



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## SURVEY RESULTS RESIDENT / VISITOR



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

### Q16 Communities to Learn From

- |                        |      |
|------------------------|------|
| 1. Lewes, DE           | (26) |
| 2. Chesapeake City, MD | (16) |
| 3. Kennett Square, PA  | (13) |
| Annapolis, MD          | (13) |
| Alexandria, VA         | (13) |



LEWES

- Also Mentioned:**
- |                   |      |
|-------------------|------|
| Chestertown, MD   | (12) |
| New Hope, PA      | (8)  |
| Delaware City, DE | (5)  |
| West Chester, PA  | (4)  |
| Berlin, MD        | (4)  |



CHESAPEAKE CITY

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## SURVEY RESULTS RESIDENT / VISITOR



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

### Q17 How Should Vacant Lots and Buildings be Used?

- Shops & Businesses (50)
- Restaurants (37)
- Parks, Open Space, Gardens (35)
- Grocery Store (18)
- Residential Housing (15)
- Farmers' Market (7)
- David Finney Building (11)

### Q19 What would help attract people to the downtown?

- Improved Parking (29)
- Marketing (21)
- Pier (11)
- Specialty Retail (6)
- Riverfront (5)

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## SURVEY RESULTS

### RESIDENT / VISITOR



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

Q18. One thing you would keep the same about downtown, and one thing you would change...

Keep:

- Historical Look & Atmosphere (83)
- Continue with Pier project (8)

Change:

- Greater Variety (26)
- Improve Parking (26)
- More Restaurants (14)
- Improve Sidewalks (3)
- Opposition to Pier (3)

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## SURVEY RESULTS

### MERCHANT



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

Q21. Need to expand?

Yes	5
No	7
Maybe	1

**14**

Responses

Q22. What would you need to expand?

Available space	5
Parking	3
Capital funding	2
Localized incentives	2
New Building	0

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## SURVEY RESULTS MERCHANT



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

**Q23 Are you committed to keeping your business in the downtown?**

Yes	11
No	3

**Q24 Are you interested in an incentive program?**

Yes	10
No	3

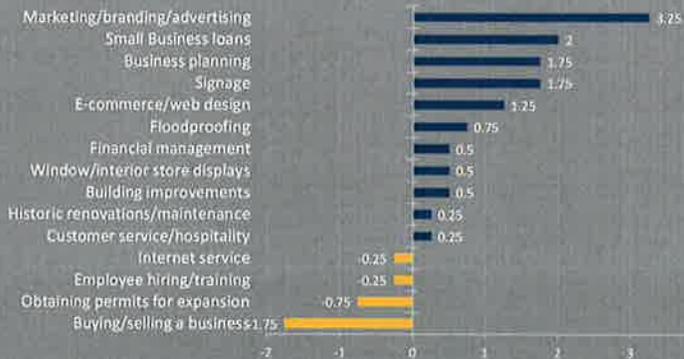
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## SURVEY RESULTS MERCHANT



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

**Q25 If programs were available, could your business use information on or assistance with the following?**



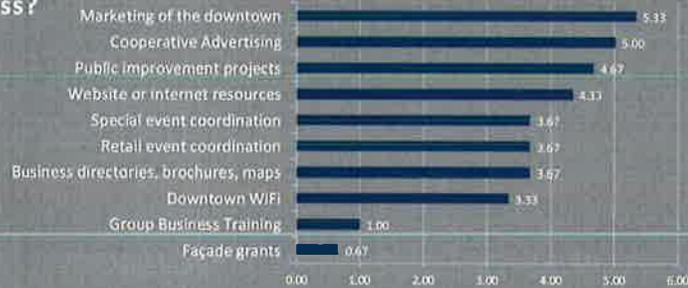
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## SURVEY RESULTS MERCHANT



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

**Q26 How useful would the following services be to your business?**



**Q27 If financial assistance were available, would you consider making improvements?**

Yes	9
No	3

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## SURVEY RESULTS MERCHANT



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

**Q29 What are your business hours of operation**

Generally, 8-5

**Q30 What are your thoughts on store hours?**

I would be open more if I were sure of sales	6
Open as late as I need to be	4
I would like to be open hours but cant find/afford the good staff	2
I can't be open more hours for personal reason	0
I would be open more hours if everyone else were	0

**Q31 Are you interested in expanding your hours for events?**

Yes	4
No	3
Already am	5

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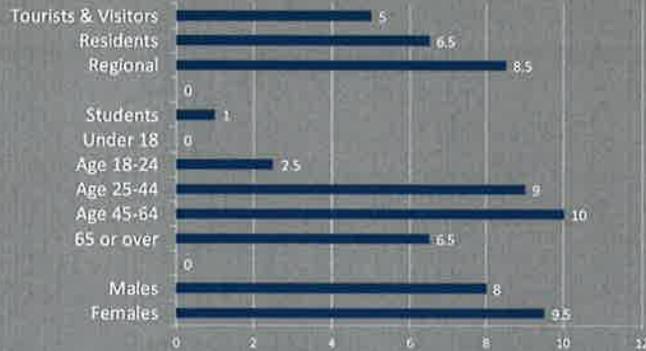
# SURVEY RESULTS

## MERCHANT



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

### Q33 Importance of consumer segments?



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# SURVEY RESULTS

## MERCHANT



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

### Q34 Major barriers facing your business?



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# SURVEY RESULTS

## MERCHANT



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

### Q35 How do you reach potential customers?

Referrals	(12)
Internet	(11)
Word of Mouth	(10)
Window Displays	(8)
Newspapers	(6)
Local Service Organizations	(5)
Magazines	(4)
Direct Mail	(3)
Radio	(2)
Television	(1)
Yellow Pages	(1)

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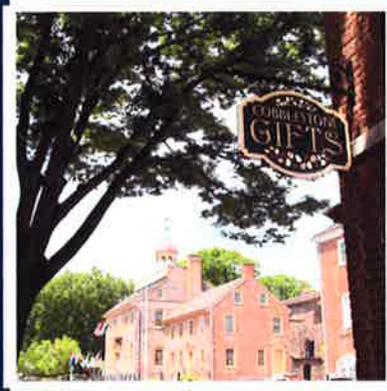
Shawtown Neighborhood



7th & South Street Area



Ferry Cut-Off Area



Historic District

This Plan was prepared by the Town of New Castle with financial assistance provided by The Neighborhood Building Blocks Fund (NBBF) through the Delaware Economic Development Office



New Castle  
Downtown Development  
District Task Force



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