

A. Plan Overview

Introduction

The future is full of uncertainty. Future success—as individuals, as families, as a region—depends on how we recognize and respond both to what we know is ahead and to what we can't confidently predict. In other words: how we plan. NCC@2050 is an articulation of New Castle County's plan for success over the next three decades. It has been shaped in consultation with those who'll be most affected by the policies, programs, and projects the plan prescribes. Its foundation is an overarching vision emerging from that collaboration:

OUR VISION FOR NCC@2050:

In 2050, New Castle County is a thriving healthy and equitable community with a clean environment and strong economy. It champions preservation of clean water and the natural environment, and adaptation to climate change, while fostering a prosperous and strong agricultural industry. Residents have equitable access to parks and recreation, a multimodal transportation network, and a robust economy with living wage jobs. The housing stock is diverse in both form and price. Important historic and cultural resources are respected and preserved as part of unique, high quality, walkable places. It is a model for social justice and climate resiliency. Historic overburdening of certain communities with dangerous pollution and health risks has been remediated and regulations are in place to prevent further injustice.

Our 30-year vision recognizes challenges that are interconnected and overlapping. So the plan's strategies must address and leverage interdependencies. This comprehensive approach is critical to our capacity to imagine a wider future perspective, to work together to build on our strengths, and to tackle issues as broad-ranging as the post-Covid-19 recovery, social and environmental justice, new technology's impacts on economic development, and the threats of climate change.

To implement this vision, New Castle County and the community worked together to develop goals, objectives, and strategies. They appear in each of the Comprehensive Plan's elements (i.e., required chapters) to follow:

- [Plan Priorities](#): Page 33
- [Future Land Use and Implementation](#): Page 97
- [Conservation](#): Page 110
- [Open Space and Recreation](#): Page 137
- [Mobility](#): Page 151
- [Utilities, Water, and Sewer](#): Page 190
- [Housing](#): Page 212
- [Historic Preservation](#): Page 226
- [Community Planning and Design](#): Page 240

- [Economic and Community Development](#): Page 274
- [Climate Change, Resiliency, and Hazard Mitigation](#): Page 296
- [Environmental and Social Justice](#): Page 323
- [Capital Improvements](#): Page 353
- [Intergovernmental Coordination](#): Page 360

The plan’s goals, objectives, and strategies address the key issues New Castle County faces now and in the coming decades. They appear in each of the Comprehensive Plan’s elements (i.e. required chapters) and as a table in Appendix B. A subset deemed most essential are featured in the next chapter, “Plan Priorities.”

Pursuant to Delaware’s Quality of Life Act (9 Del. C. §2651 et seq.) 1988, New Castle County is required to prepare and adopt a Comprehensive Development Plan Update once every ten years. NCC 2050 was a 19-month process that began in June 2020, was adopted by New Castle County Council on X, 2022, and certified by the Governor of the State of Delaware John Carney on XXXX.

Six Emerging Themes

A key interim stage in the process identified themes under which policy recommendations could be organized. They address the diversity of the county and integrate goals across the traditionally defined plan elements.¹ The themes can also be thought of as the guiding principles that will keep us on the path toward our vision.

Sustainable Growth



Development, redevelopment, and revitalization occurs in planned growth areas, efficiently using existing and planned infrastructure while limiting the impact on the environment. Growth will also be economically and socially sustainable.

Livable Built Environment for All



All elements of the built environment (e.g., land use, transportation, housing, energy, and infrastructure) work together providing a high quality of life for all our residents.

Conservation and Preservation



Our environment (air, water, land, natural resources, and climate) is protected as part of our thriving county.

Robust Economy



The economy is diverse, strong, and resilient, adapts to change with innovation and collaboration, while ensuring access to local, living-wage jobs.

¹ Subsequent chapters of the plan are organized by the traditional elements as presented in the State’s checklist of plan elements, such as Transportation, Water and Sewer, and Economic Development.

Thriving Places and Community Character



The places we live, work and play are well designed, accessible, and vibrant, with active locations for people to gather. Our communities reflect important aspects of our past and are places in which we take pride.

Diverse Engagement



Our communities are central to our future and the diversity of the county's residents is represented in civic life, engagement, and leadership.

To get to that point and to the priorities for ultimate policy elements, we identified current and future challenges and what they require of our planning over the next 30 years.

Key Conditions, Trends, and Scenario Planning

Ideally situated in the Mid-Atlantic Region, New Castle County is a vibrant and desirable place to live, work, and play. While New Castle County is the smallest county in the State of Delaware by area (426.2 square miles), it has the highest population and population density of any Delaware county and is home to over half of Delaware's population. New Castle County is a maturing county with older and newer communities and populations. County assets include a high quality of life; lower property taxes than surrounding states; ample access to recreational and cultural activities; a large County and State Park system; Delaware's largest employers and industry hubs; and easy access to the New York City, Delaware Valley, and Washington D.C. metropolitan areas. Map A-1 shows New Castle County and its surrounding region.

However, New Castle County is changing every day, responding to influences that originate both within our county and from regional, national, and global trends. As a community we face a variety of challenges and opportunities:

Population

- Challenges:
 - New Castle County's **population is aging, diversifying, and the growth rate is slowing**. With that comes different preferences for housing, healthcare needs, and services.
 - **The impact of immigration is uncertain** as increase and decreases are dependent upon national policy and global economics, which are hard to predict.
- Opportunities:
 - Many of the **community characteristics older adults seek**—walkability, transit accessibility, proximity to shops and services, diversity of housing options—are the same ones that attract younger adults and **make communities more economically vibrant and successful**. These amenities are lacking in many parts of the county.

- While the County’s population is expected to grow at a slower rate, domestic and foreign **migration will add to the population.**
- **Support** in New Castle County for **affordable housing and communities** and for a **diversity of housing types** integrated into areas that support multimodal accessibility to jobs, supportive services, and opportunities to enjoy open space.

Physical Development:

- Challenges:
 - **Disproportionate number of people of color and low-income communities suffer** negative health effects **from undesirable land uses located near their neighborhoods.**
 - Infrastructure is **aging**, leading to **increased maintenance cost**, which is exacerbated by wetter and more severe weather due to climate change.
 - **Job attractors are located primarily in the northern part of the county**, but recent **housing growth has occurred largely in the southern part of the county**, leading to a worsening housing/jobs mismatch.
 - **High level of residential growth in southern New Castle County** has begun to **change the traditionally rural communities** south of the C&D Canal. Much of this growth requires new infrastructure and schools.
 - **Increase in population and developed lands** has come with a corresponding **loss of resource lands.**
 - **Increased impermeable surfaces**, resulting from development, has led to **increased stormwater and flooding.**
- Opportunities:
 - The County can **redevelop existing areas** and better **direct development to growth areas with infrastructure.**
 - **Work-from-home policies**, resulting from COVID-19, **reduce commuting trips.**
 - There is **strong support for mixed-used** development with pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities and open space preservation.
 - Areas such as **North Claymont, the Route 9 Corridor and Concord Pike/US 202** present an extraordinary **opportunity for innovative, adaptive reuse, and reinvestment.**

Economic Development

- Challenges:
 - **Negative overall job growth**, which will impact New Castle County’s **manufacturing industry negatively.**
 - The **gig economy**, a labor market with less job stability and fewer employer benefits, is an industry that is expected to grow.

- There are **disparities in home ownership and unemployment rates between whites and non-whites.**
- Opportunities:
 - **Industries that may grow** include retail, transportation, warehousing, real estate, financial, insurance, and healthcare.
 - **Robust transit system** and transit-supportive infrastructure can help us compete with surrounding states to **attract employers and jobs.**
 - **Diversifying housing types**

Man-made and Natural Factors:

- Challenges:
 - New Castle County is **vulnerable to a wide range of natural hazards** including floods, tornadoes, tropical storms and hurricanes, winter storms, and earthquakes, and their occurrence is inevitable and cannot be controlled.
 - Climate change is causing the weather to become **hotter, wetter, and more severe**, including more common flooding.
 - Delaware is located in the mid-Atlantic coastal region, which is considered a **“sea level rise hotspot”** where levels are rising faster and higher than elsewhere.
 - **COVID-19** has caused **job and income loss.**
 - **Work-from-home policies**, resulting from **COVID-19**, have led to homebuyers and renters **moving farther away from urban areas and traditional job centers.**
- Opportunities:
 - As we advance into the future, **technological change, especially in the transportation and energy sectors**, could dramatically change our carbon emissions.
 - **Work-from-home reduces car commute trips.**

This section summarizes key conditions and trends—including demographic, economic, and physical/environmental, which provide a technical foundation on which this plan was developed. This section also explains the scenario planning tool, which was to better understand possible and likely challenges and opportunities we face as a county, the possible strategies we might use to prepare and respond, and the expected impacts and outcomes. Ultimately, this work in concert with community engagement, informed the plan’s recommendations.

Important note about demographic data:

This plan was produced during the 10-year Census update. Wherever possible, the official 2020 census data was used. In some cases, American Community Survey estimates had to be relied on for the most current data source.

DRAFT

Population / Demographics

Overall

Between 2000 and 2005, New Castle County's population increased by 25,000. This is relatively rapid population growth compared to subsequent years. Since then, population growth slowed but remained steady (*Figure A-1*). Since 2011, the average annual population growth in New Castle County has been 0.54%.² It ranks 4th among 15 counties³ in the surrounding region and is in the 55th percentile for metro counties nationwide. According to the 2020 Census, there are approximately 570,000 people residing in New Castle County. Approximately 52% (288,000) of the population is identified as female and 48% (270,000) as male, according to the American Community Survey 2019, 1-year estimates.

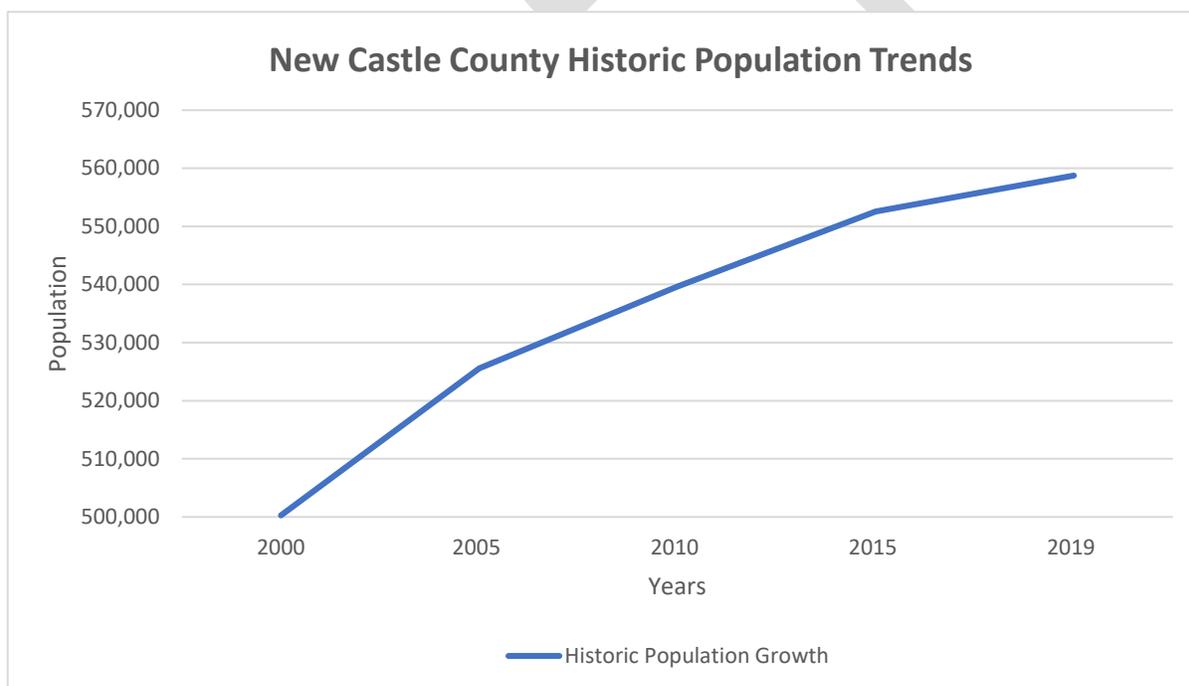


Figure A-1 New Castle County Historic Population Trends; Source: U.S. Census 2019 American Community Survey 1-year data

Between 2030 and 2040, the population is expected to continue to grow at a slower rate. The Delaware Population Consortium projects that deaths begin to outnumber births between 2035 and 2040, at which point the population is expected to decrease due to total deaths outnumbering the combination of births and net migration. Countywide, between 2020 and 2050, the consortium's official projection shows a net increase of 13,000 people. The 2050 population in New Castle County is currently estimated to be 577,814 (See *Figure A-2* and *Table A-1*). Population growth during this time is expected due to domestic and

⁴ New Castle County. "NCC@2050." New Castle County. Spring 2019.

https://nccde.org/DocumentCenter/View/30501/NCC-at-2050_FINAL?bidId=#:~:text=The%20average%20annual%20population%20growth,percentile%20for%20metro%20counties%20nationwide

⁵ Surrounding counties include: Philadelphia (PA), Camden (NJ), Montgomery (PA), Delaware (PA), Chester (PA), Anne Arundel (MD), Sussex (DE), Kent (DE), Harford (MD), Gloucester (NJ), Salem (NJ), Kent (MD), Queen Anne's (MD), and Cecil (MD).

foreign, especially given our location in the middle of the Mid-Atlantic Region. Population growth is anticipated to be most pronounced in Newark, Glasgow, and Middletown.

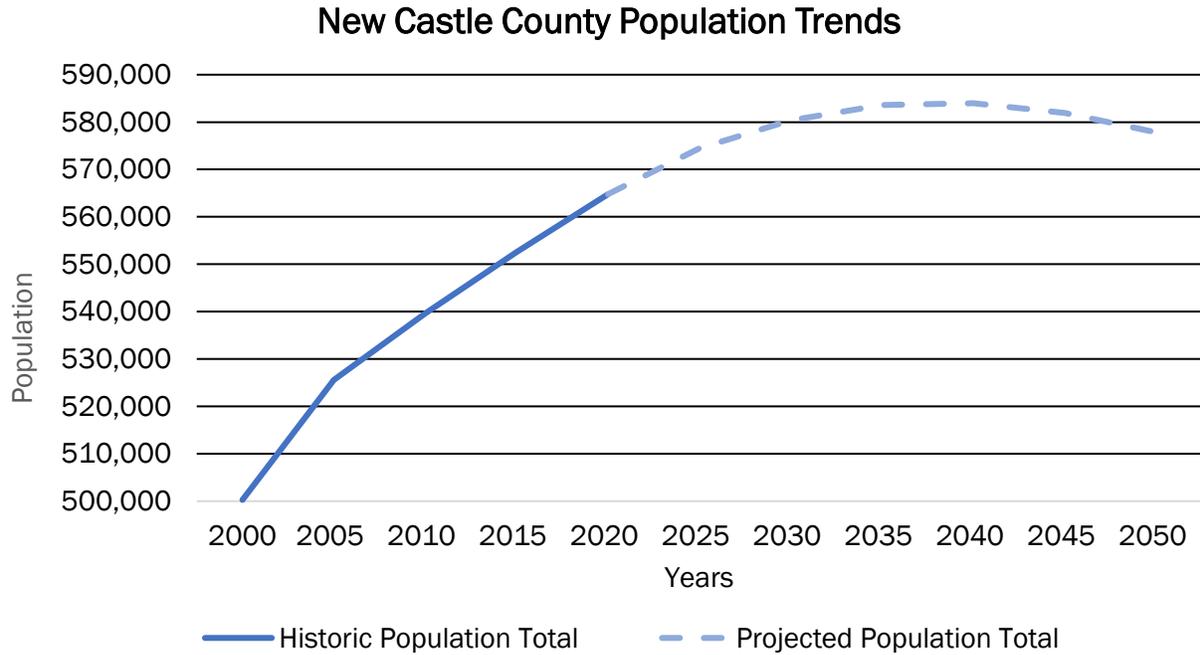


Figure A-2 New Castle County Population Trends; Source: Delaware Population Consortium Population Projection Series, October 2019

Table A-1 Future New Castle County Population Change

Future New Castle County Population Change							
Year	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
Total Population	564,780	574,435	580,351	583,564	583,975	581,937	577,814
Population Change*	9,655	5,916	3,213	411	-2,038	-4,123	N/A
Births*	30,997	29,729	29,201	29,221	28,856	28,053	N/A
Deaths*	26,547	29,004	31,886	34,652	36,599	37,578	N/A
Net Migration*	5,205	5,191	5,898	5,842	5,705	5,402	N/A

*Represents a five-year total beginning with specified year

Source: Delaware Population Consortium Population Projection Series, October 31, 2019

Age and Sex

In 2019, the total number of females in New Castle County slightly exceeded the total number of males. **Figure A-3** demonstrates that New Castle County has an aging population. There is a bulge in the graph between the 45-to-49 age group and the 60-to-64 age group. This includes the Baby Boomer generation, who were born between 1946 and 1964. As these cohorts age, the bulge will climb up the pyramid. This has implications on future

medical needs and aging services. There is a second bulge between the 25-to-39 age group. This is the millennial generation, which makes up the largest workforce of the County.

The average age of County residents is projected to continue to increase in the coming decades. The “55-74” and “75 and older” age cohorts are the only groups projected to increase as a proportion of the overall population. In 2020, about 25% of the population is 65 years or older. By 2050 the proportion is expected to be nearly 33% of the population (See **Figure A-4**). Older populations have different needs, which should be factored into planning our communities for the future.

New Castle County Age Population Pyramid by Sex (2019)

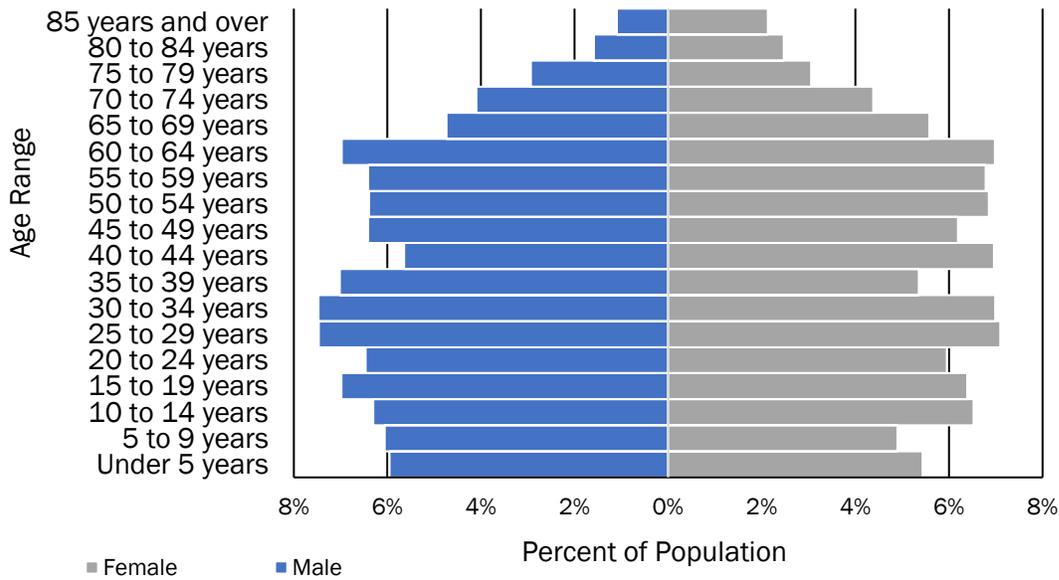


Figure A-3 New Castle County Age Population Pyramid by Sex; Source: U.S. Census 2018 American Community Survey 1-year data

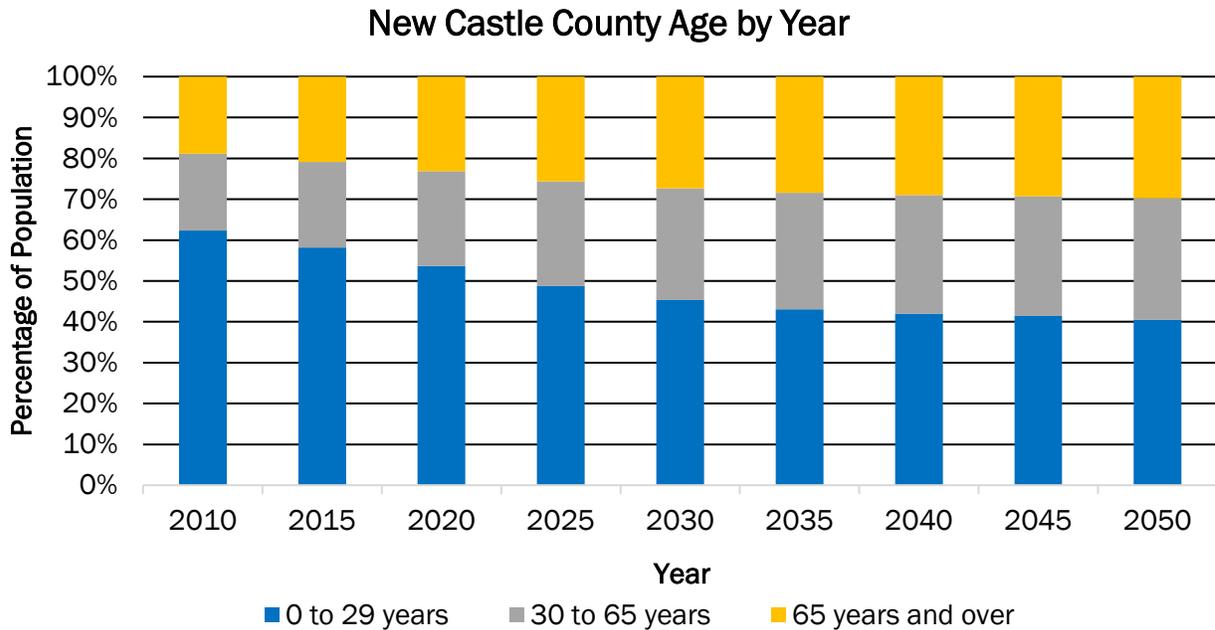


Figure A-4 New Castle County Age by Year; Source: Delaware Population Consortium Population Projection Series, October

Race and Ethnicity

In 2019, almost 65% of the population was White alone, 25% was Black or African American, 6% was Asian, 1.6% was Some Other Race, 0.3% was American Indian or Native Alaskan, and 0.02% was Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (See **Figure A-5**). Ten percent of New Castle County was Hispanic or Latino⁴ of any race (See **Table A-2**).

New Castle County’s population is becoming more diverse. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population identifying itself as “White Alone” decreased since the year 2000, while the Black and Hispanic populations each saw significant increases. By 2050, only 44% of the population of New Castle County is expected to identify itself as “White Alone.” Nearly 12% of the county’s population is foreign-born (American Community Survey, 2019). This percentage of residents born outside the U.S. ranks third highest among surrounding counties in the region and the 84th percentile among metro counties nationwide.

⁴ The United States Census Bureau uses the Hispanic or Latino ethnicity designation to refer to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race and states that Hispanics or Latinos can be of any race, any ancestry, any ethnicity.

New Castle County Race by Percent

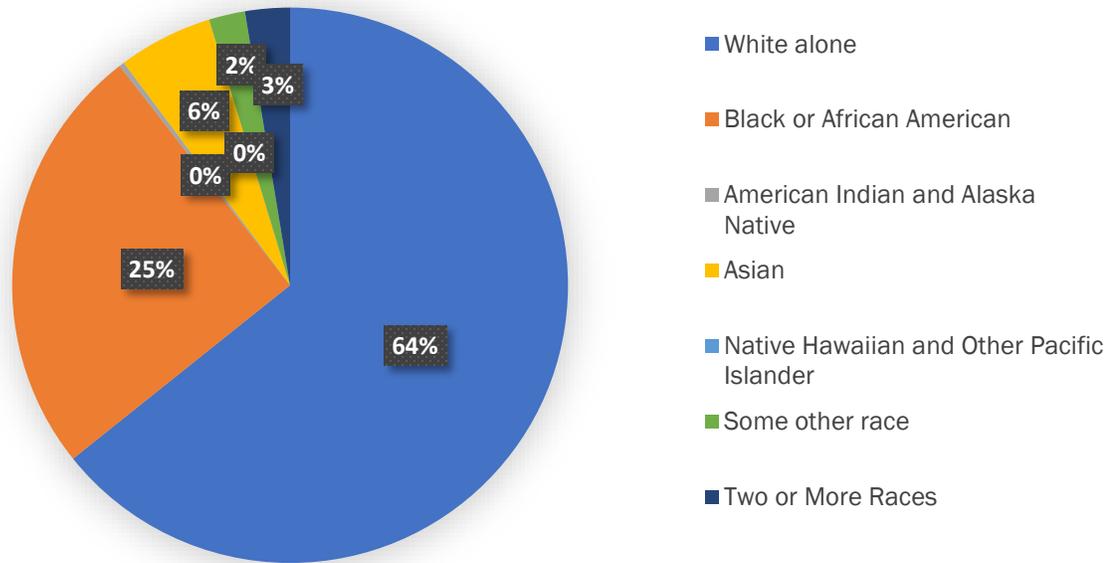


Figure A-5 New Castle County Race by Percent; Source: U.S. Census 2019 American Community Survey 1-year data

Table A-2

New Castle County (2019)	
Hispanic or Latino of any race	9.9%

Source: U.S. Census 2019 American Community Survey 1-year data

New Castle County Race Population by Year

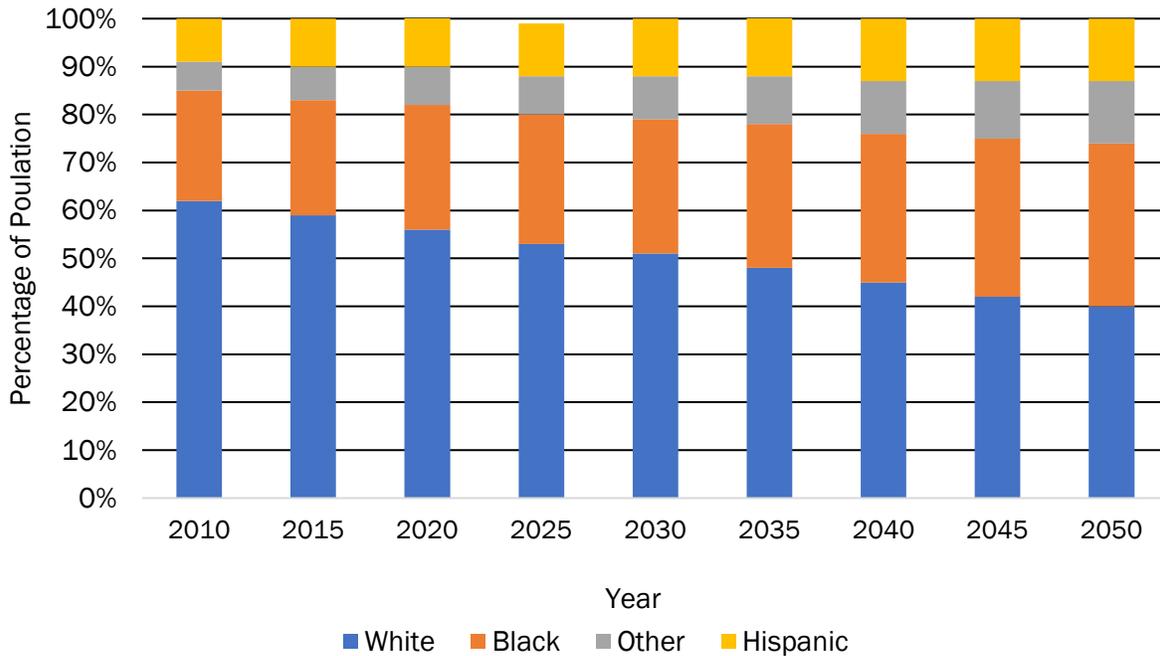


Figure A-6 New Castle County Race Population by Year; Source: Delaware Population Consortium Population Projection Series, October 31, 2019

New Castle County's population will be even more diverse in the year 2050. Planning and decision-making needs to acknowledge and be inclusive of the community's diversity. Changing demographics due to aging population, migration, and birthrates, coupled with the older housing stock in the northeastern portion of the county, is driving a growing need for smaller units and more rental housing, especially in northeastern and southern New Castle County.

Older adults have different health care needs than younger age groups, and this will affect the demands placed on the health care system and services in the future. Many of the community characteristics older adults seek are the same ones that attract younger adults and make communities more economically vibrant and successful. The baby boomers and millennials both share a desire for walkable places that offer a shorter commute, proximity to shops and services, a mix of homes, a mix of incomes, and robust public transit options. A collaborative effort between government and stakeholders to

plan for and bring forth this type of development will not only better align with anticipated future demand and the vision for the future, but walkable, mixed-use (re)development is an

"I'd like to see sustainable mixed-use communities (restaurants, service-based retail, housing, community services and co-working) replicated across the county. Planned communities with an emphasis on attracting families, seniors and singles, diverse ethnicities and incomes and AFFORDABLE housing."

— NCC@2050 Stakeholder Challenge Participant

important component that will be necessary to address greenhouse gas emissions among other important objectives of this plan.

Limited English-Speaking Households

A "Limited English-speaking household" is one where all members 14-years old and over have at least some difficulty with English. In 2019, there were 5,934 Limited English-Speaking Households within New Castle County (See *Table A-3*). A majority of those households are Spanish speaking, followed by Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese).

Table A-3 2019 Limited English Speaking Households in New Castle County by Language

2019 Limited English-Speaking Households in New Castle County by Language			
	LEP Households	% of Total Households	% of LEP Households
Spanish	3,531	1.67%	59.50%
Chinese (incl. Mandarin, Cantonese)	651	0.31%	10.97%
Other Indo-European languages	648	0.31%	10.92%
Other Asian and Pacific Island languages	360	0.17%	6.07%
Korean	270	0.13%	4.55%
French, Haitian, or Cajun	189	0.09%	3.19%
Tagalog (incl. Filipino)	162	0.08%	2.73%
Russian, Polish, or other Slavic languages	89	0.04%	1.50%
Other and unspecified languages	34	0.02%	0.57%
German or other West Germanic languages	0	0.00%	0.00%
Vietnamese	0	0.00%	0.00%
Arabic	0	0.00%	0.00%

Source: U.S. Census 2019 American Community Survey 1-year data tables

Physical Development

The type and location of development within New Castle County is guided by existing development policies and regulations in the County. The Future Land Use Map is a key product of the New Castle County comprehensive plan. This map is the component of the comprehensive plan that hold legal status, according to State law.

The 2012 Future Land Use Map (see Appendix A) designated roughly 45% of the unincorporated portion of the county as Resource & Rural Preservation, about 34% as Very Low to Low Density Residential, about 15% Medium to High Density Residential, about 16% for nonresidential uses and about 6% as New Community (development in the Southern New Castle County sewer service area) (see *Figure A-7*).

We should look for opportunities to be permissive with zoning and regulations so that the private sector can identify market demand and move to meet it. – James Wilson, Executive Director, Bike Delaware, Deep Dive Session 3: Infrastructure: Transportation, Water & Sewer, and Hazard Mitigation, March 17, 2021

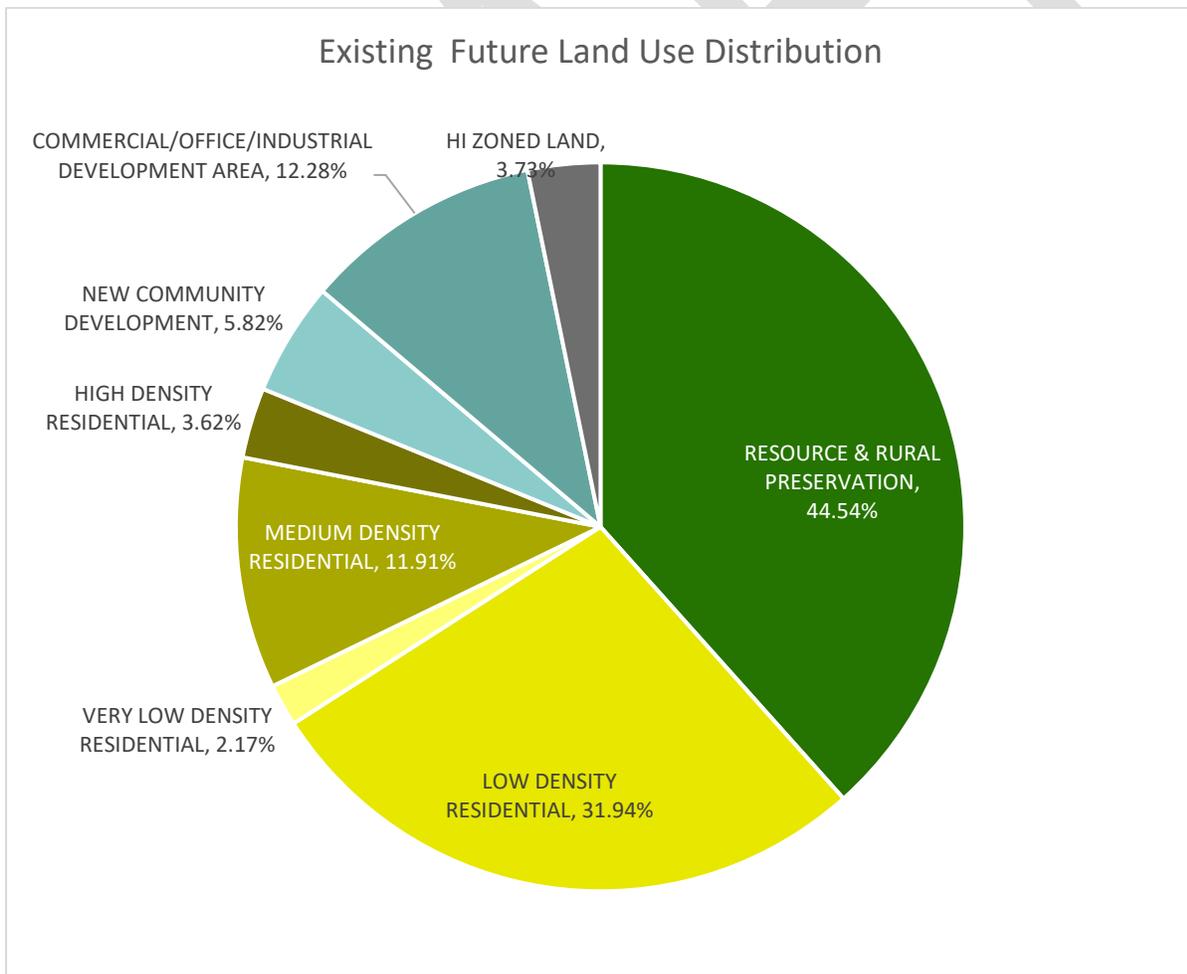


Figure A-7 Existing Future Land Use Distribution

Since the adoption of the 2012 Update to the New Castle County Comprehensive Plan, roughly 565 acres of land have changed future land use designations (see *Table A-4*).

Table A-4: Future Land Use Changes Since 2012

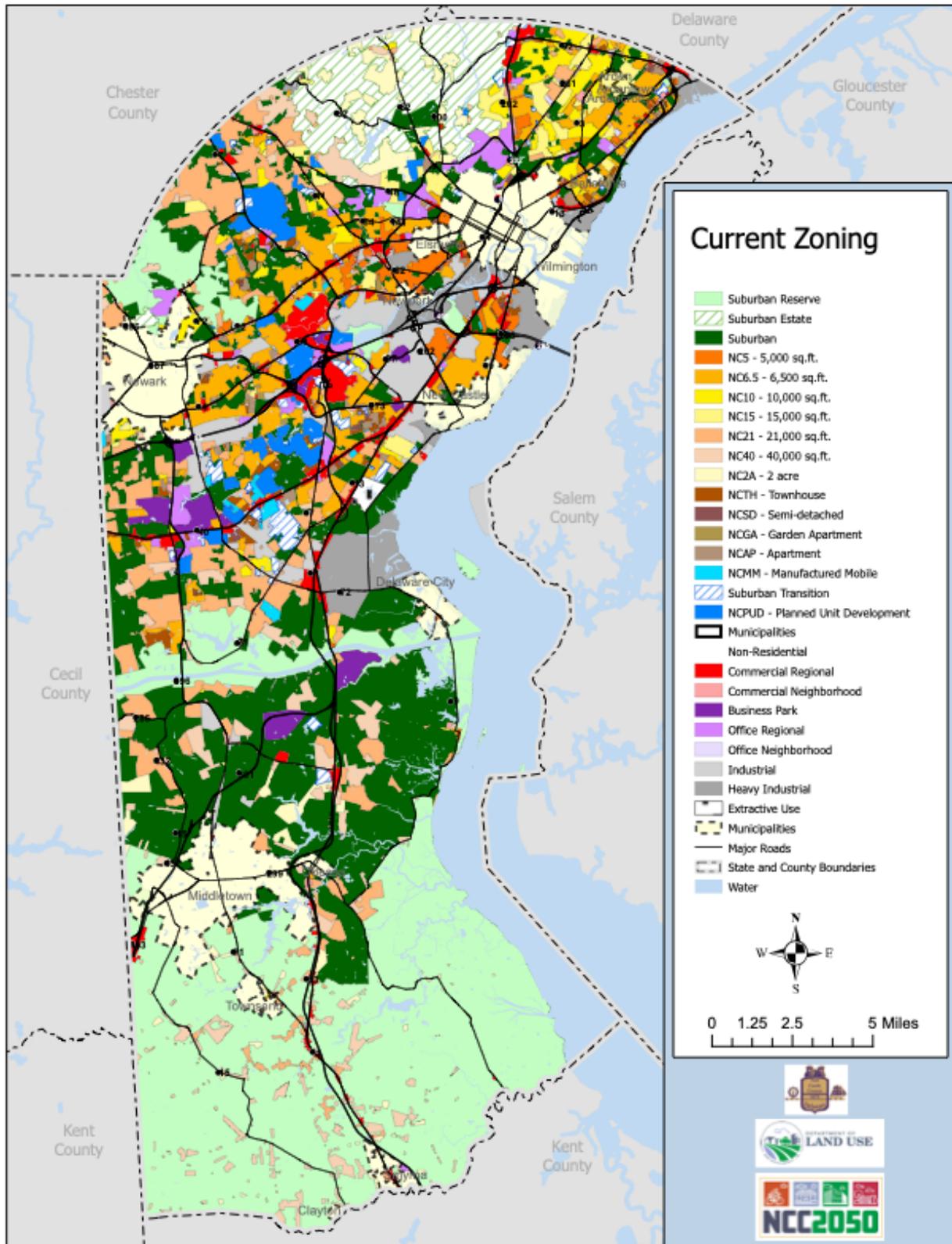
Future Land Use Changes Since 2012		
From	To	Percentage
Commercial/Office/Industrial	Heavy Industry	9.10%
Commercial/Office/Industrial	Rural Resource and Preservation	31.44%
Heavy Industry	Commercial/Office/Industrial	19.70%
Low Density Residential	High Density Residential	2.75%
Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	31.96%
Medium Density Residential	Commercial/Office/Industrial	2.91%
Rural Resource and Preservation	Low Density Residential	2.14%

As depicted in the table above, about 37% of the future land use map changes over the past decade was from lower to higher density residential districts, about 31% from nonresidential to Rural Resource and Preservation, about 23% to permit Commercial, Office or Industrial use of a property and about 9% allow Heavy Industrial uses.

While Future Land Use Map is the spatial embodiment of the Comprehensive Plan's vision, the Zoning Map (see *Map A-2*) is a spatial implementation mechanism prescribing site specific use and intensity (Gross Density for residential uses and Gross Floor Area Ratio for non-residential uses) regulations. The following is a general description of the zoning map. A more detailed description of each zoning district can be found in the [Future Land Use and Implementation element](#).

Considering zoning to create buffers between industry and our neighborhoods and preserve the open space that already exist. – Public Participant, Deep Dive Session 1: Open Space, Conservation, Recreation, Environment, February 3, 2021

Map A-2: Current Zoning



About 28% of the unincorporated New Castle County was developed prior to the adoption of the Unified Development Code and thus has received Neighborhood Conservation designations.⁵ Of the remaining unincorporated land:

- Just under 32% of the county is zoned Suburban Reserve, which for the most part is land located in southern New Castle County, which doesn't have sewer service and is designated in the current Future Land Use Map as Resource and Rural Preservation.
- Suburban Estate zoned land is that which is not intended for sewer service is primarily located to the northeast, amounts to just under 5% of the county-zoned land. Suburban zoned land, just under 22% of the county is largely located in the sewer service area and is land identified for future development when sewer service was available in the 1997 New Castle County Comprehensive Development Plan.
- Suburban Transition zoned land, about 0.9% of the county, has largely been the product of rezoning from the Suburban district to provide for an appropriate transition from higher density residential or higher intensity nonresidential uses to lower density Suburban and Neighborhood Conservation districts.
- Nonresidential zoned land makes up about 13% of the county with roughly 10% designated as Office Neighborhood, Commercial Neighborhood, Office Regional, Commercial Regional, Business Park, Industrial and Extractive Uses (Commercial/Office/Industrial) and just over 3% is zoned Heavy Industrial.

“Density, height, and mixing uses are interconnected, especially when discussing the future growth in a community. How dense and tall something is and mix of uses has an impact on traffic, population, and job centers.” – Joe Kohl, Founding Principal of Dover Kohl and Partners Town Planning; Thriving Places: Community Design and Historic Preservation April 7, 2021, Deep Dive Session Panelist

The policy and regulations discussed above have helped shape growth and development in New Castle County. Throughout much of New Castle County's history, growth and development have been focused in the northern portion of the County. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 225,246 total housing units in New Castle County's unincorporated and incorporated areas in 2019. This is a 3.4% increase in the total number of housing units noted in the 2010 Census (217,632). The 2019 American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau found that 14,431 housing units were built in 2010 or later, accounting for about 5% of New Castle County's entire housing stock.

Since the 1990's, the share of new residential development has been increasing in Southern New Castle County, and in the most recent decade, has shifted to be predominantly in the southern part of the county.

⁵ Neighborhood Conservation districts protect the residential character of existing neighborhoods or planned subdivisions that were or are being developed under previous zoning regulations.

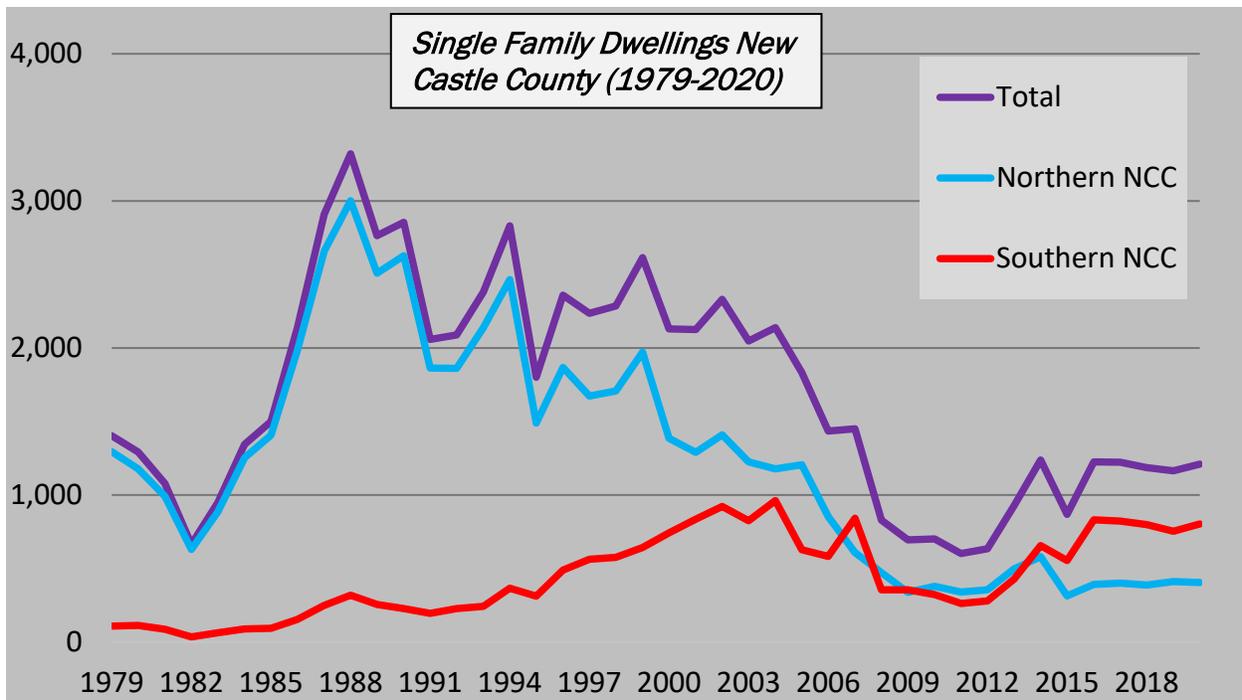


Figure A-8 Single Family Dwellings New Castle County (1979-2020); Source: New Castle County GIS and Assessor's Data

Between 1979 and 1999 there were 42,862 new single-family residential units constructed in New Castle County.⁶ Eighty-seven percent of the units were constructed in the northern portion of New Castle County, while 13% were constructed south of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal (C&D Canal). Between 2000 and 2020, a total of 27,989 new single-family residential units were constructed in New Castle County. Fifty-two percent of them were in the northern portion of New Castle County, while 48% were constructed in the area south of the C&D Canal (See *Figure A-8*). Most of this development was in the Town of Middletown and previously rural areas.

Southern New Castle County's population (including incorporated areas) increased from 19,000 (4% of countywide population) in 1990 to 55,000 (10% of countywide population) in 2016. This high level of sprawling residential growth has begun to change the traditionally rural communities south of the C&D Canal. Notably, the significant increase in population and developed lands has come with a corresponding loss of resource lands, like agriculture lands, forest lands, or wetlands; reliance on cars for trips; and a mismatch between where people live and where suitable job opportunities are located.

The housing stock in New Castle County is dominated by single-family detached units, which account for over 50% of the overall housing stock. The second largest group, single family attached units, make up an additional quarter leaving only a quarter of the housing stock to multifamily units.

⁶ Source: New Castle County GIS and Assessor's Data. Includes incorporated municipalities and represents single family detached, duplexes, and townhomes.

As of 2021, an estimated 217 million square feet gross floor area⁷ of nonresidential development exists in New Castle County’s unincorporated and incorporated areas. When looking at building permits of greater than or equal to 1,000 square feet, there has been an increase of about 12,276,044 square feet of nonresidential gross floor area since 2012 in unincorporated New Castle County.

In terms of land cover, approximately 41% of New Castle County’s land area was developed as of 2017 (See *Map A-3*).

Approximately half of the total county land area (51%) was made up of resource lands including agriculture lands, forest lands, or wetlands. The remaining lands (8%) were categorized as “other”⁸ (See *Figure A-9*).

There are about 74,700 acres of protected lands in New Castle County, which means that about 27% of the County is protected. Protected Lands include parkland, agricultural easements, private open space, and private conservation easements. It does not include all environmental constraints that may impact a parcel’s ability to further subdivide (these are accounted for in the subdivision process).

Accounting for lands already developed or protected, the remaining lands, or “What’s Left?”, can be defined as areas of the county that are currently undeveloped and may be further subdivided into residential development. This land is not already developed nor has any protections from development due to such things as preservation easements or important natural resources, steep slopes, etc. *Map A-4: What’s Left?* displays the areas in the County that are available for residential development.

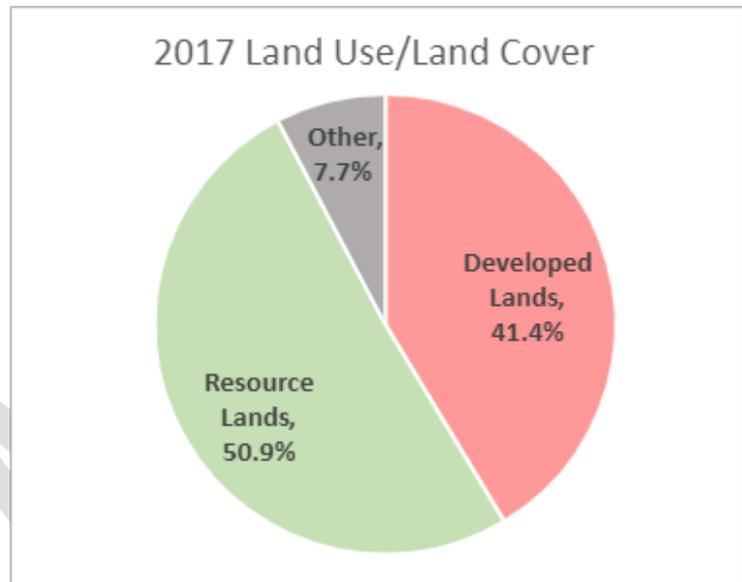


Figure A-9 2017 Land Use/Land Cover

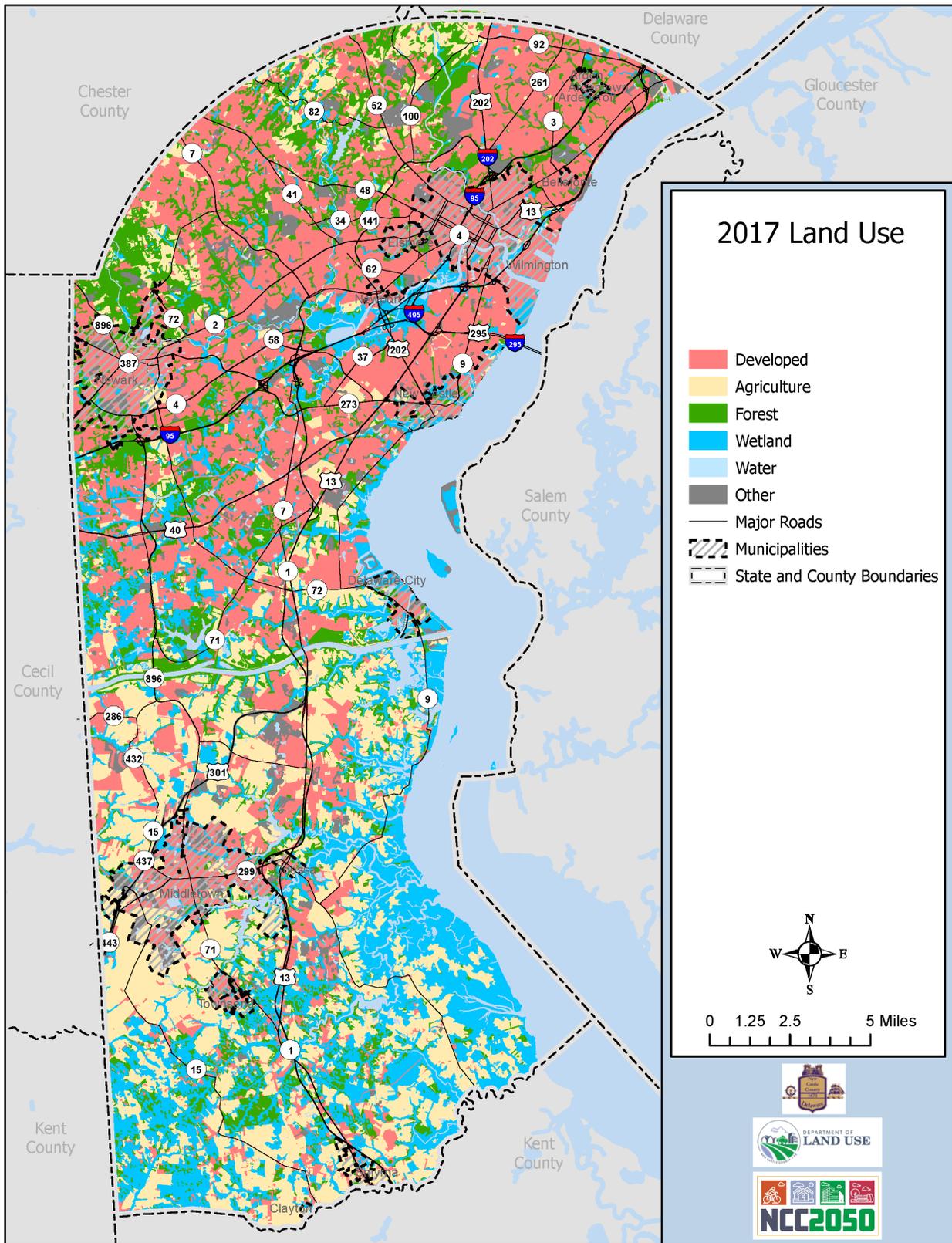
“More preservation of remaining open space (open space tax fund?), especially forested/wetland areas, in southern NCC (some for parks/trails) and along 202 Concord Mall and other areas redevelopment. Create areas to attract employers/wider range of jobs.”
— Community Survey #1 respondent

The County needs to better direct development to growth areas with infrastructure. It also needs to limit development in non-growth areas—including enhancing its land preservation efforts—and partner with the State and other stakeholders to augment existing programs.

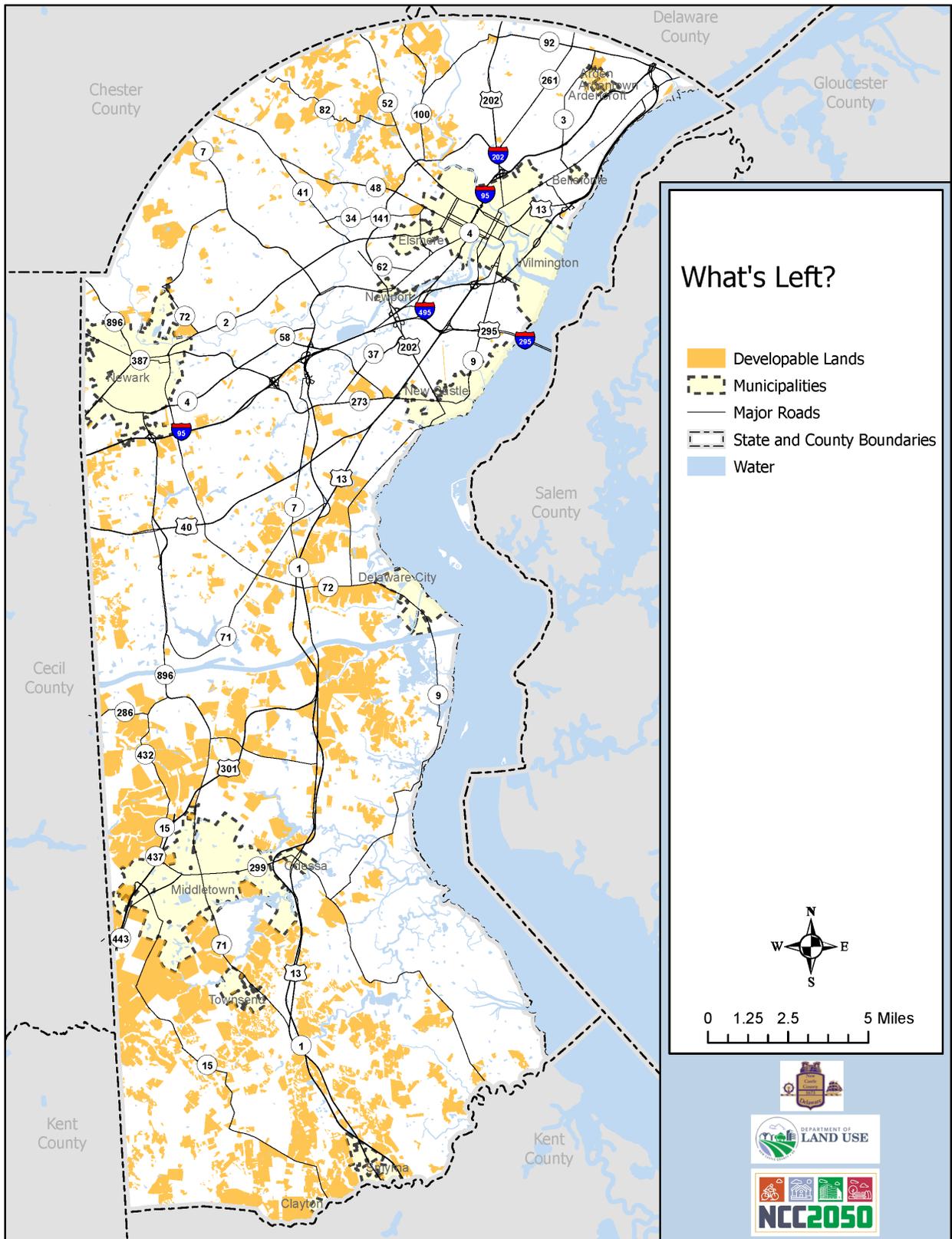
⁷ This figure is based on assessment records.

⁸ State of Delaware 2017 Land Use/Land Cover dataset

Map A-3: 2017 Land Use/Land Cover



Map A-4: What's Left?



Economic Development

Since 2011, annual job growth in New Castle County has been moderate compared to other counties in our region. Today, there are about 300,000 jobs in the county⁹. The majority of jobs are located in the northern part of the county. Recent housing growth has occurred largely in the southern part of the county which has worsened the housing / jobs mismatch and traffic.

The top 10 industries (by employment) in New Castle County¹⁰ are:

- Business Services (20,000 jobs)
- Financial Services (18,000 jobs)
- Distribution & Electronic Commerce (18,000 jobs)
- Education & Knowledge Creation (6,000 jobs)
- Hospitality & Tourism (4,000 jobs)
- Insurance Services (3,000 jobs)
- Information Technology & Analytical Instruments (2,500 jobs)
- Transportation & Logistics (2,000 jobs)
- Marketing, Design & Publishing (2,000 jobs)
- Plastics (1,500 jobs)

Since 2010, the county's median household income has increased by 18%, or \$11,418, compared to 25% and 31% at the state and national level respectively (See **Table A-5**). The County's median household income of \$73,892 is higher than the national median household income of \$65,712. Median year-round full-time earnings increased for females and males as well, however, women earned 84% of what men earned in 2019. The employment rate has remained about the same since 2010. During that same period, the poverty rate for children under 18 has decreased by about 4%.

Table A-5 New Castle County Economic Characteristics

Economic Characteristics	2010	2019
Median Household Income	\$62,474	\$73,892
Poverty Rate (children under 18 in poverty)	15.7%	11.4%
Employment Rate	62.7%	61.4%
Female Median Year-round, Full-time Earnings	\$41,653*	\$50,611
Male Median Year-round, Full-time Earnings	\$51,693*	\$60,359

* IN 2010 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS

Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

⁹ Delaware Population Consortium, 2019

¹⁰ Source: <https://www.clustermapping.us/>

The COVID-19 pandemic caused record job losses and transformed the nation's employment landscape. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, between the start of the pandemic in March 2020 and February 2021, 115 million Americans experienced a loss in employment income. The Census Bureau's experimental Household Pulse Survey found that the loss of employment income resulted in roughly 137 million Americans qualifying for and receiving unemployment insurance during that period. There has been significant toll on particular economic sectors like hospitality, which includes jobs in the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, or food services. In March and April of 2020, 8.3 million Americans lost hospitality jobs, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

According to the Delaware Department of Labor's monthly labor review, New Castle County's unemployment rate was 5.5% in August 2021, down from 5.6% in July 2021. Delaware's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in August 2021 was 5.4%, down from 5.6% in July 2021. The County and State unemployment rate is higher than the U.S. unemployment rate of 5.2% in August 2021 and 5.4% in July 2021. These statistics show a recovery from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic when unemployment reached a high of 25% in May 2020. Between 2015 and 2020, unemployment had been relatively consistently between 3%-5%.

The Delaware Population Consortium projected that jobs in the county will decrease by about 10,000 by 2050. The County should continue its efforts to ensure adequate locations for employment-base land uses, promote attractive development that employers often seek, collaborate toward enhancement and expansion of public transit, bicycling, and walking networks, and implement other work-force focused policies and programs. Although transportation is not a direct responsibility of New Castle County, New Castle County, DeIDOT, and WILMAPCO must work closely on an integrated approach to land use and transportation planning.

Scenario Planning

Based on the data presented in the preceding section, we can summarize several trends that seem more certain and a few that are more uncertain. These are factors of change that are important to keep in mind as we plan for the future:

- Overall job growth is expected to be negative, with shrinking manufacturing and possible increases in retail, transportation and warehousing, real estate, fire and insurance, and health care.
- An increasing portion of workers will be employed in the "gig" economy, with less stability and fewer employer-provided benefits.
- Population is aging and diversifying, leading to different housing preferences.
- Infrastructure is aging, leading to increased maintenance costs.
- Climate change is coming, even if we don't know the full impacts.
- We expect substantial technological changes in transportation and energy, but the specifics are still unclear.
- Significant increases or decreases in immigration are possible based on national policy and global economics, so they are hard to predict.

We are unable to control population and employment changes that come from national or global economic forces, but our local policies have a big impact on where and how we will grow.

Scenario planning is an important tool for exploring how alternative approaches for land use and related policy can help achieve the NCC@2050 community vision and goals. Using data and information about demographic, economic, and environmental trends and possible futures, scenario planning helps the community plan for the uncertain future. Analyzing the outcomes of different scenarios helps us understand the tradeoffs of different strategies and identify how those strategies may present opportunities or challenges depending on how the future unfolds.

The examination of key indicators under different development scenarios helps planners develop informed land use policies and regulations to address critical issues associated with community goals including:

- Regional and local economy
- Aging population
- Environmental and Social Justice
- Housing needs
- Aging infrastructure
- Climate change

Four scenarios were developed ranging from low- to no-growth in population and jobs and retaining our current land use policies to higher levels of population and job growth and more significant change in policies. The scenarios, summarized in *Figure A-10*, were defined based on review of the existing conditions, trends, literature, and known opportunities and threats that our County could likely face in the years to come. These scenarios served to evaluate our potential future opportunities, challenges, and tradeoffs. The results of this analysis were used as to help the planning team, residents and policy makers evaluate likely impacts of possible alternative futures and policy decisions. Collectively, the County weighed the tradeoffs associated with different strategies and ultimately selected those land use policy and regulation decisions that will strive towards meeting the aspirations of our community vision and best support all members of our community.

The future scenarios were based on both adopted projections from the Delaware Population Consortium (2020) as well as Woods & Poole Economics, Inc.¹¹ The scenarios also explored policy alternatives, ranging from a continuation of current polices, to implementation of Community Area Master Plans, to policies that encourage more compact growth countywide.

Scenarios were evaluated using indicators and metrics that relate to the goals and objectives identified in the public planning process. *Figure A-11* illustrates some of the indicators and metrics that were evaluated for each scenario.

¹¹ Woods & Poole Economics, Inc. is a firm that specializes in long-term county economic data and demographic data projections. Woods & Poole's database for all U.S. counties contains projections for every year through 2050 for more than 900 variables. Woods & Poole has been making county projections since 1983.

Scenario Building Blocks

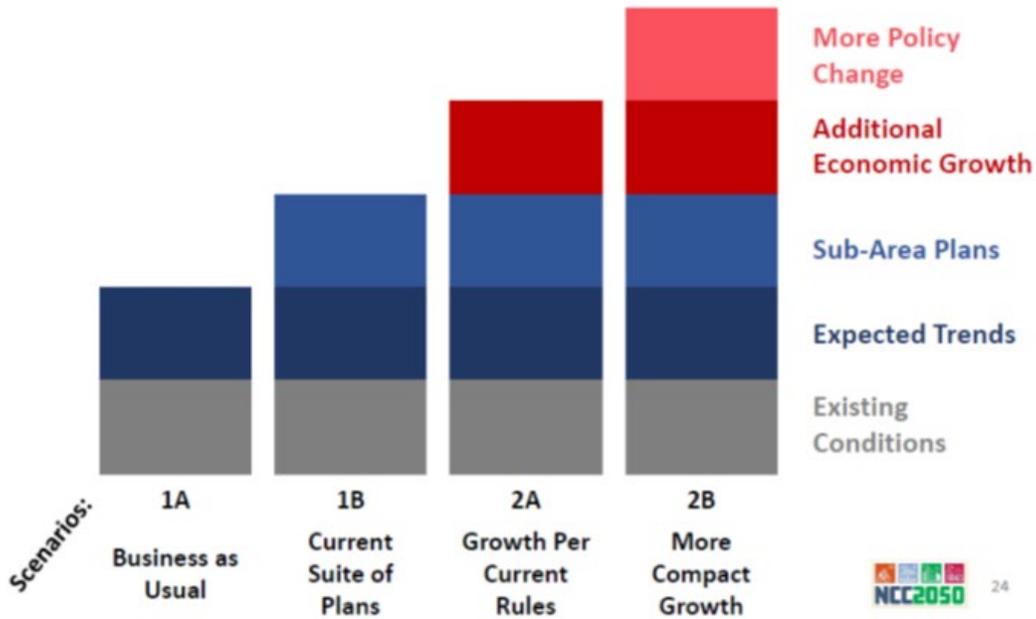


Figure A-10 Scenario Building Blocks

Indicator	Metrics Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mix of uses Diversity, distribution of housing options Access to parks/open space Preserved land Vehicle miles of travel and carbon footprint Fiscal impact Equity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jobs / housing ratio Change in capacity for different housing types, sizes; dispersion versus concentration Households within 1mile access of parks via low-stress, non-motorized routes Acres of land preserved VMT per capita; access in target areas based on VMT and average housing size Tax base, revenue/cost, provision/level of services Analysis at sub-population levels (this indicator/metric relate to all others)

Figure A-11 Scenario Indicators and Metrics

Key findings from evaluation of existing conditions, current trends, and alternative future scenarios confirm opportunities to improve effective and efficient development patterns. Focusing new development toward infill or redevelopment opportunities in “smart location” communities, where substantial investment has already been made by both the public and private sectors, can minimize adverse effects. For many of the key objectives evaluated, the efficiencies embodied in smart locations result in reduction in per-capita use of resources

that can offset the additional consumption of those resources created by higher population and employment totals associated with economic growth. See Appendix E for more detailed

I would like the areas where the houses are smaller, there are lots of trees and sufficient area for home gardens and close to a local park where people can gather, walk, and play and where you can walk to a grocery store or the doctor's office.

- Public participant, Our Places and Spaces

- Let's Talk Workshop, October 21, 2020

information on individual scenarios, methodologies, and findings.

With the results of the scenario planning and data analysis, the expertise of those who live, work, and play in New Castle County, the help of sister agencies and community organizations, NCC@2050 puts forth a comprehensive plan which can be implemented to create sustainable, livable, and thriving communities for all county residents.

Looking Forward

Scenario planning and analytical processes employed in this plan will help us address many important issues that we may face in the future. There are many more complex issues problems that we will face as a county including:

- Impacts of climate change related events
 - Legacy land development and infrastructure investment have occurred in areas susceptible to sea level rise. The county needs to adequately address the impacts of climate change to these existing communities
 - We need to be vigilant that our protections for future development is adequate to address climate change.
- Impacts of COVID-19 and future pandemics
 - While we are living with the near-term impacts of COVID-19 the long-term impacts are largely unknown. We need to be nimble to adjust to those impacts and effectively plan for potential pandemics.
- Government action and in many instances, inaction has led to disparities faced by people of color.
 - We need to adopt land use policies and regulations that strive to eliminate these impacts in Environmental and Social Justice neighborhoods
 - We need to adopt policies and regulations that makes equity and justice a priority.

While it is essential that these and other complex issues are addressed in the subsequent element of the plan, it is perhaps more important that planning for these and other challenges that the county faces be an ongoing and evolving public outreach and planning effort.

NCC@2050 Planning and Public Involvement Process

A successful plan is achieved through the involvement from a wide range of community members. Despite pandemic-related restrictions requiring public involvement activities to occur virtually, community engagement in this planning process has been arguably the most robust in the history of New Castle County. In total, there were thousands of interactions with the community and hundreds of community members participating in NCC@2050 public events. The NCC@2050 planning team ensured these virtual engagements were accessible and inclusive by recording the engagement opportunities and placing summaries and video recordings online for those who were unable to attend live. Community members provided input on a wide range of topics ranging from environmental justice and climate change to economic development and transportation. (Full details of New Castle County's planning public involvement process and activities can be found in Appendix C.)



Figure A-12: Community Engagement Results

Planning Process

This comprehensive plan is the product of a detailed and collaborative process over many months. Throughout the five phases of plan development, NCC@2050 compiled all of the public input and engagement with data analysis to create a plan to help us to build a more successful, resilient, and sustainable New Castle County.

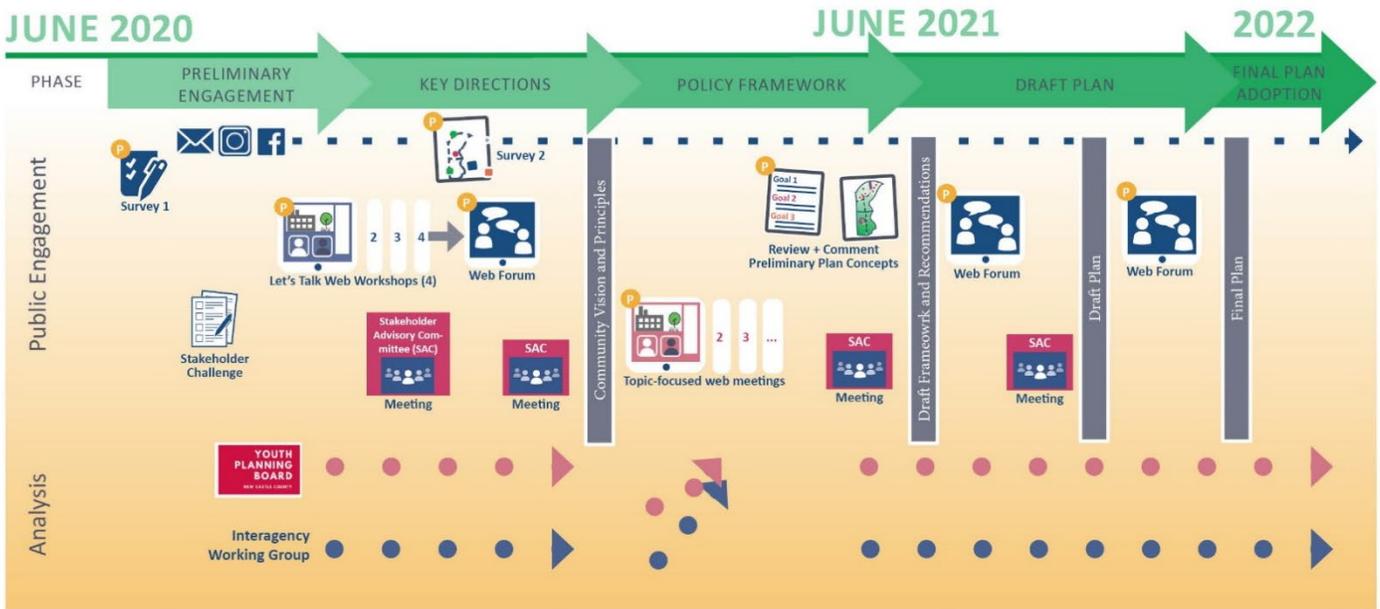


Figure A-13: NCC@2050 Planning Process

Phase 1: Preliminary Engagement

Phase 1 focused on existing conditions analysis, building awareness and involvement, and gathering perspectives on New Castle County as it is today and the issues that are important to the future.

What these community conversations produced was a list of issues of concern and consensus-supported goals, objectives, and strategies to address them. Here are the 17 goals that emerged:

1. New Castle County has a connected, well-maintained, and well-loved network of open space (natural lands and recreational resources) that benefits all residents.
2. The natural environment of the county continues to be a distinguishing characteristic of our community, and the quality of our natural resources—air, water, land, ecosystems (plants and animals)—are continually improving and meeting the needs of present and future generations. Development/redevelopment patterns that consume less unbuilt “greenfields” and resource lands support conservation of our important natural resources.
3. Clean water is available to all residents now and in the future.

Residents play an equal role in this plan and I think this is great because in the chat, it has not only professional people but community people that have made points that are important to them and professionals as well. I hope that whatever is put in place is for the welfare of all.
 – Dora Williams, Community Representative, Route 9 Monitoring, Deep Dive Session 1: Open Space, Conservation, Recreation, Environment, February 3, 2021

4. Healthy, safe, inclusive housing options throughout the County are diverse, meeting needs of all people while maintaining building design/form that integrates with existing communities.
5. New Castle County is a strong, resilient hub of the regional economy that provides a range of jobs and services to County residents.
6. All residents have the ability to participate in the economy and have access to living-wage jobs. Delaware's workforce is strong and positioned for emerging industry and jobs as well as applying innovation and adaptation in traditional industries.
7. Farming continues to be as a viable way of life and contributes to economic resiliency and healthy communities (for its provision of food access and security, its preservation of farmland, and contribution toward community character).
8. All New Castle County residents will have safe, efficient, inclusive access to employment, retail services, parks, and other daily needs including by walking, bicycling, public transit, and emerging modes. The transportation and land use systems are integrated and support each other to create livable places and a vibrant county.
9. Transportation of people and goods is efficient and fair. The transportation system and land use/development are coordinated; development occurs in areas with ample existing or planned transportation infrastructure (and other infrastructure) and decisions are fiscally sound, inclusive, and fair for present and future generations.
10. Land uses, transportation, and other infrastructure complement each other, and neighborhoods and areas across the county are distinctive, attractive, functional, comfortable, and human scale. The physical environment is high quality, inclusively designed, retains value, and is fiscally sustainable.
11. The built environment and streetscapes promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles including options for walking and biking. All residents have safe, inclusive access to lead physically active and healthy lifestyles (see also [Mobility](#)).
12. The value and significance of the historic, prehistoric, and cultural resources in the county are known and promoted; significant resources are preserved for the benefit of residents and visitors.
13. Environmental protection, climate change mitigation, and adaptation are important considerations in all county policies. Our community's collective built environment—infrastructure, transportation, nature, and development patterns—are designed in a way that limits greenhouse gas emissions and protects our people and critical infrastructure from impacts of climate change.
14. Pursue a net zero built environment by following emerging technologies, and alternative regional and individual energy sources.
15. New Castle County's infrastructure and economic and social systems are strong, and our communities are prepared for future climate-related and man-made/natural events; all residents will live in neighborhoods that are protected from negative impacts of incompatible non-residential land uses/activity and other hazards such as flooding (discrete and cumulative); and economic growth, prosperity and change in New Castle County is equitable and accessible by all.

16. Participation in planning and development represents the full diversity of the county.

17. Development, infrastructure, and change is well-planned and coordinated, achieving sustainable and effective public investment in our communities.

NOTE: The goals, along with objectives and strategies assigned to them, are available in detail in dedicated Appendix B. Their components are integrated into the relevant topic-specific chapters to follow.

Existing conditions and trends were integral in developing the County’s potential future scenarios that were evaluated in Phase 3 Policy and Framework (below).

Phase 2: Key Directions

“Beautiful and safe neighborhoods that are safe, environmentally friendly and a lot of green spaces with tasteful businesses built with well-designed urban planning.”
– Public Participant, *Our Homes and Neighborhoods*
– *Let’s Talk Workshop, October 7, 2020*

Phase 2 engagement focused on building further awareness and involvement and sharing what was learned with stakeholders and the public. The results of the preliminary engagement were used to craft a county-wide Vision Statement.

Data collection and analysis continued on a range of attributes, amenities, issues, and concerns that were identified in Phase 1 Preliminary Engagement.

Phase 3: Policy and Framework

During Phase 3, two surveys were conducted to better understand the issues that people feel are important for the Comprehensive Plan to address as well as preferred growth patterns for future development. The results of these surveys helped to guide the policy framework for the plan.

During this phase, the County refined the goals, objectives, and strategies for the plan. The County also evaluated a variety of scenarios against the goals of the plan. (The scenario planning work is described in full detail in Appendix E.)

Phase 4: Draft Plan

Drawing on the assets, issues, and goals identified in the previous three phases, each element of the Plan was prepared in draft form with accompanying goals and strategies. The draft elements were assembled into the overall Draft Comprehensive Plan. The Draft Comprehensive Plan was presented to the public for comment in December 2021.

Phase 5: Review and Adoption **FORTHCOMING**

Revisions to the Draft Comprehensive Plan were made in coordination with County Council, County staff, and the public, resulting in the Final Draft Comprehensive Plan document. This document was submitted to the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination for review and comment as part of the Preliminary Land Use Service (PLUS) approval process.

The County replied to state comments in writing and submitted a revised plan to the Office of State Planning Coordination for review.

The Final Draft Comprehensive Plan will be presented to County Council, key stakeholders, and the general public during a formal Public Hearing on [Date TBD]. On [Date TBD], County Council will take formal action to adopt the Final Comprehensive Plan. Governor John Carney will issue a certification letter to New Castle County on [Date TBD].

DRAFT