

2018 Comprehensive Plan Outline

9-14-17

Vision Statement:

To preserve the rural and community character of Kent county by encouraging the most appropriate use of land, water, and other resources that protects the County's natural, historic, and cultural resources, allows for economic opportunity, preserves farmland, manages growth, and provides a safe sustainable environment in which all citizens may live, work, shop, learn, and play

Guiding Principles

1. Livable Built Environment – Ensure that all elements of the built environment, including land use, transportation, housing, energy, and infrastructure, work together to provide sustainable, green places for living, working, and recreation, with a high quality of life
2. Harmony with Nature – Ensure that the contributions of natural resources to human well-being are recognized and valued and that maintaining their health is a primary objective
3. Resilient Economy – Ensure that the County is prepared to deal with both positive and negative changes in its economic health and to initiate sustainable development and redevelopment strategies that foster business growth and build reliance on local assets
4. Interwoven Equity – Ensure fairness and equity in providing for the housing, services, health, safety, and livelihood needs of all citizens and groups
5. Healthy Community – Ensure that public health needs are recognized and addressed through provisions for healthy foods, physical activity, access to recreation, health care, environmental justice, and safe neighborhoods
6. Responsible Regionalism – Ensure that local proposals account for, connect with, and support the plans of adjacent jurisdictions

Population and Demographics

Overview

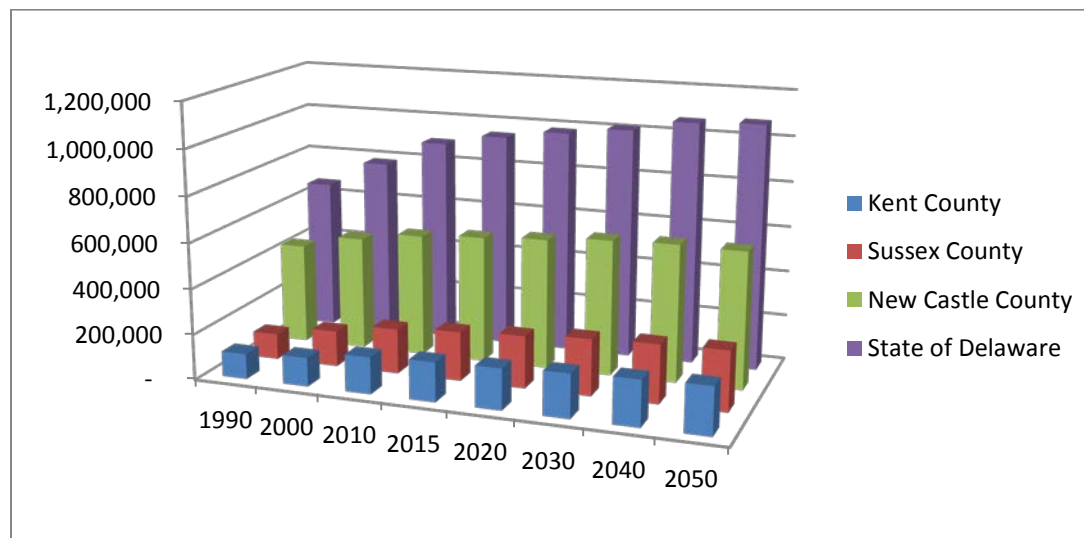
The foundation of comprehensive planning is the people within a community and how they interact with the built environment. Past and current population and demographic trends are analyzed to project what the makeup and subsequent needs of the County will be in the future.

Primary data sources include the 2010 Census, US Census Bureau – American Community Survey, and the Delaware Population Consortium.

Population Growth

Population Projections								
	1990	2000	2010	2015	2020	2030	2040	2050
Kent County	110,993	126,697	162,310	173,529	180,912	193,038	202,731	210,262
Sussex County	113,229	156,638	197,145	215,622	229,479	248,810	258,760	265,370
New Castle County	441,946	500,265	538,479	556,786	572,820	595,664	603,677	601,292
State of Delaware	666,168	783,600	897,934	945,937	983,211	1,014,667	1,065,168	1,076,924

Sources: US Census Bureau and Delaware Population Consortium 2016 Annual Projections



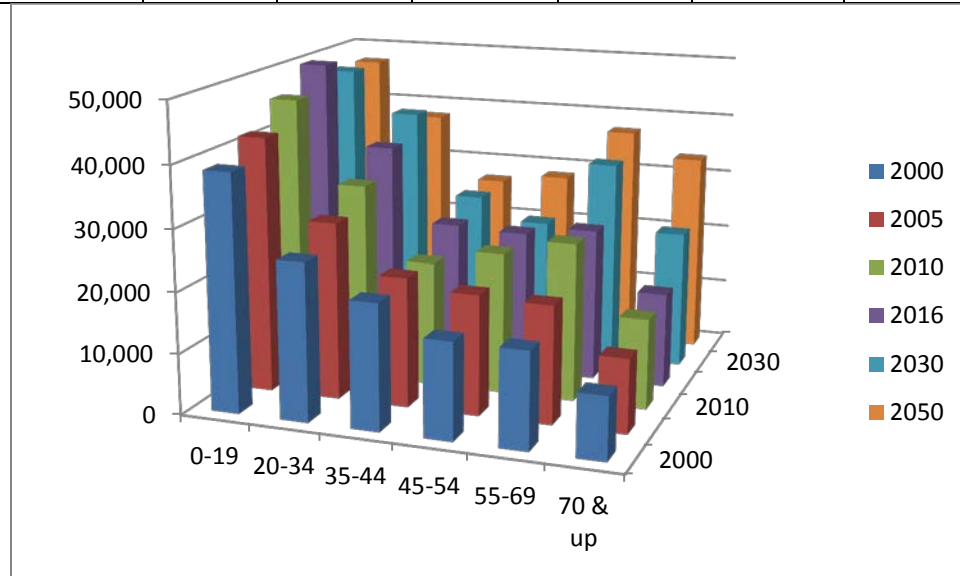
Growth Rate	2015	2020	2030	2040	2050
Kent County	6.9%	4.3%	6.7%	5.0%	3.7%
Sussex County	9.4%	6.4%	8.4%	4.0%	2.6%
New Castle County	3.4%	2.9%	4.0%	1.3%	-0.4%
Delaware	5.3%	3.9%	3.2%	5.0%	1.1%

Sources: US Census Bureau and Delaware Population Consortium 2016 Annual Projections

1. Remain the smallest County
2. Slowing population growth

Age Distribution

	2000	2005	2010	2016	2030	2050
0-19	38,803	41,865	45,924	49,974	47,192	47,141
20-34	25,754	29,021	32,458	36,518	40,247	37,724
35-44	20,616	21,303	20,566	24,127	26,365	26,793
45-54	15,882	19,763	23,227	23,695	22,693	28,272
55-69	15,801	19,330	25,941	25,158	33,752	37,138
70 & UP	10,242	12,176	14,862	15,638	22,789	33,194
TOTALS:	127,098	143,458	162,978	175,110	193,038	210,262



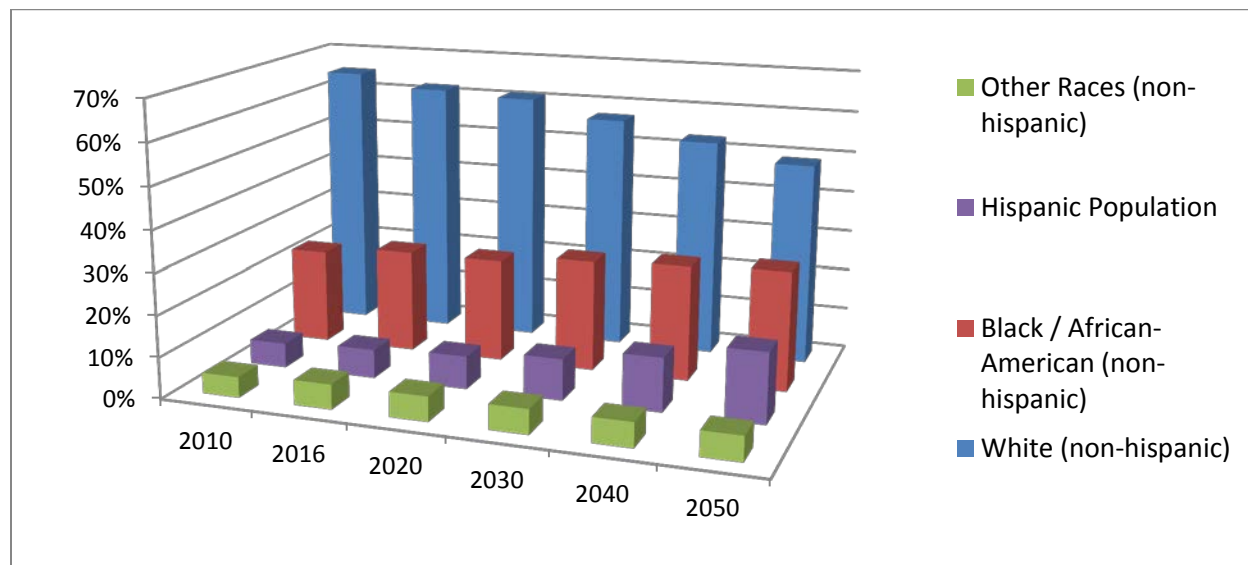
- Population is aging
- Planning Concerns
 - Access to services (alternative modes of transportation, proximity to medical services, shopping, recreations)
 - Alternative housing options (smaller or no yards, multi-family, attached)
 - How to attract working age residents?

Race & Ethnicity

	2010	2016	2020	2030	2040	2050
White (non-hispanic)	106,435	109,172	109,482	109,177	106,620	102,459
Black / African-American (non-hispanic)	38,246	42,904	45,944	51,999	56,707	60,413
Other Races (non-hispanic)	8,881	10,559	11,229	11,997	12,397	12,176
Hispanic Population	9,416	12,475	14,257	19,865	27,004	35,214

Total	162,978	175,110	180,912	193,038	202,728	210,262
Source: Delaware Population Consortium 2016 Annual Projections						

Percentage of Total Population						
	2010	2016	2020	2030	2040	2050
White (non-hispanic)	65%	62%	61%	57%	53%	49%
Black / African-American (non-hispanic)	23%	25%	25%	27%	28%	29%
Other Races (non-hispanic)	5%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%
Hispanic Population	6%	7%	8%	10%	13%	17%
Source: Delaware Population Consortium 2016 Annual Projections						



1. Much like the national trend Kent County is diversifying
2. Greatest increase projected in the Hispanic community (274% between 2010 and 2015)
3. The White (non-Hispanic) population is projected to decrease by 4% between 2010 and 2050

Economic Development

Overview

What is the most important issue currently facing Kent County?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Traffic congestion	8.87%	51

Agricultural preservation	6.26%	36
Environmental protection/preservation of open space	8.17%	47
Creation of local jobs	38.26%	220
Reduction of sprawl type development/growth management	16.52%	95
Revitalization of existing communities	21.91%	126

What do you consider the biggest threat to Kent County?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Uncontrolled growth	27.54%	138
Loss of farmland/open space	26.15%	131
Lack of strength in County's economic base	37.92%	190
Loss of community identity	8.38%	42

An economic development strategy must balance many important interests such as: preserving small-town charm and rural character, promoting the industry of agriculture, preserving historic resources, educational opportunity, maintaining infrastructure, investing in community facilities, and offering employment for a diverse and qualified workforce.

- Business Retention
- Business Expansion
- Business Recruitment and Development
- Support for the Downtown Development District program
- Support and expansion of the agricultural industry through development of the Food Innovation District
- Continual improvement of the permitting process, and successful marketing of Kent County's strengths.

Policy Emphasis

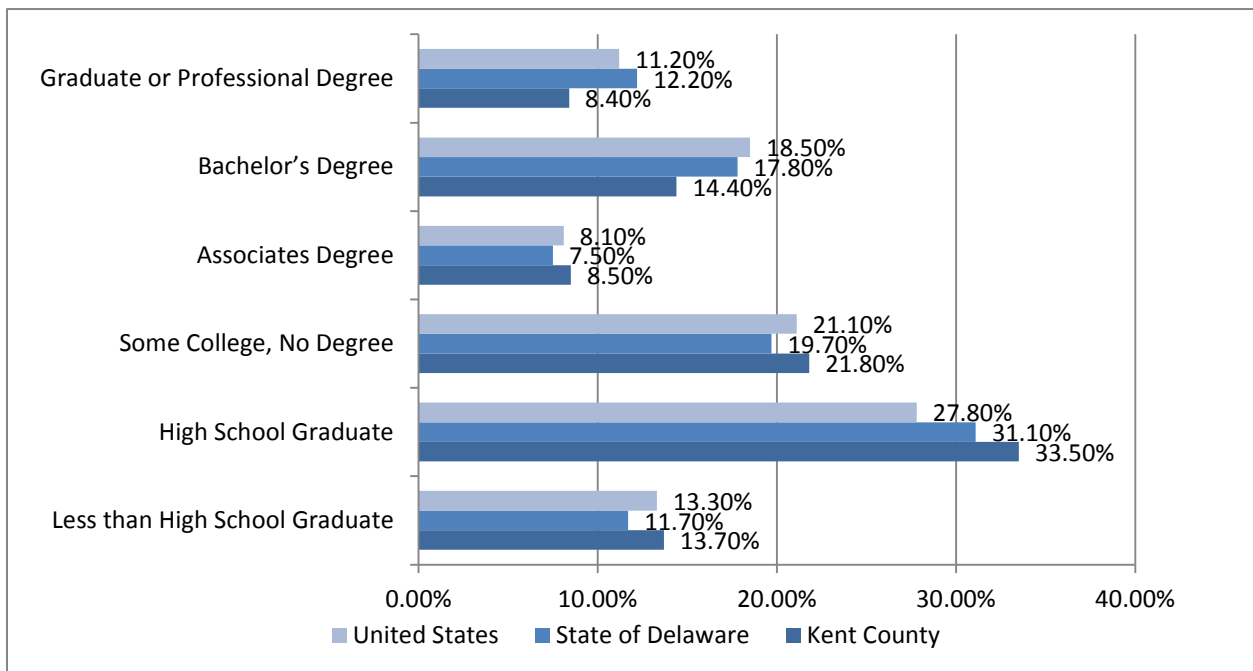
To encourage a strong economy with sustainable economic growth and pursue a balanced economic development strategy that includes attracting new technology and other knowledge-based companies, to provide an influx of higher paying jobs that will keep the community competitive and help retain its young professionals by:

1. Maintaining and attracting a diverse business and industrial base in Kent County;
2. Supporting the economic development efforts of municipalities;
3. Maintaining and fostering the development of a workforce with the resources to maintain high-paying jobs;
4. Ensuring that economic development activities respect those characteristics that make Kent County a unique place to live and work;

5. Seeking to provide Kent County residents with access to a sound and affordable housing market;
6. Seeking to bring public and private stakeholders together for work on economic development opportunities; and
7. Providing Kent County with adequate infrastructure and transportation resources to support economic development opportunities.

Income & Education

Educational Attainment



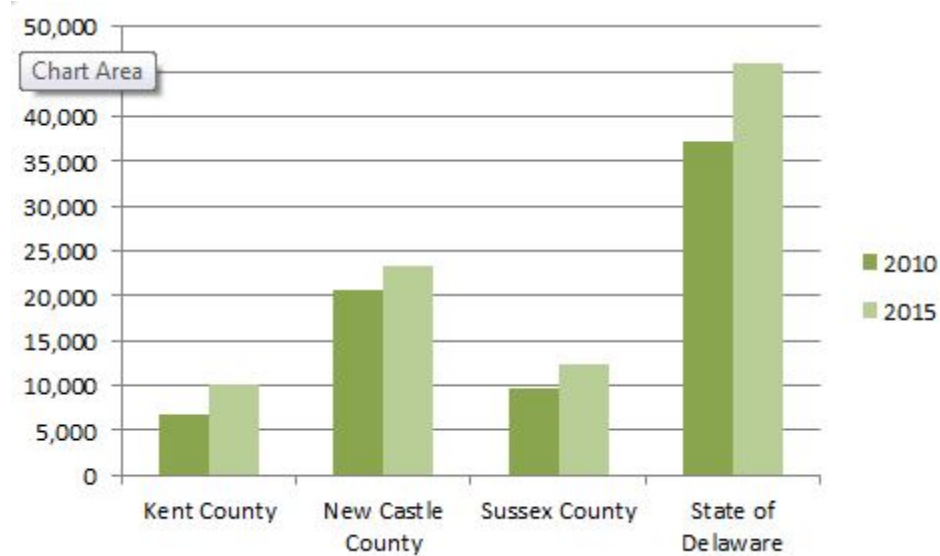
Source: 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Since 2010, Kent County's average median income has grown by 3.37%, which falls behind the state and neighboring counties' growth rates by 2%.

	Kent County	New Castle County	Sussex County	State of Delaware
2010	53,183	62,474	51,046	57,599
2015	54,976	65,476	53,751	60,509
Growth in \$	1,793	3,002	2,705	2,910
Growth %	3.3%	5%	5%	5%

Source: 2015 ACS 1-Year Estimates, 2010 ACS 1-Year Estimates

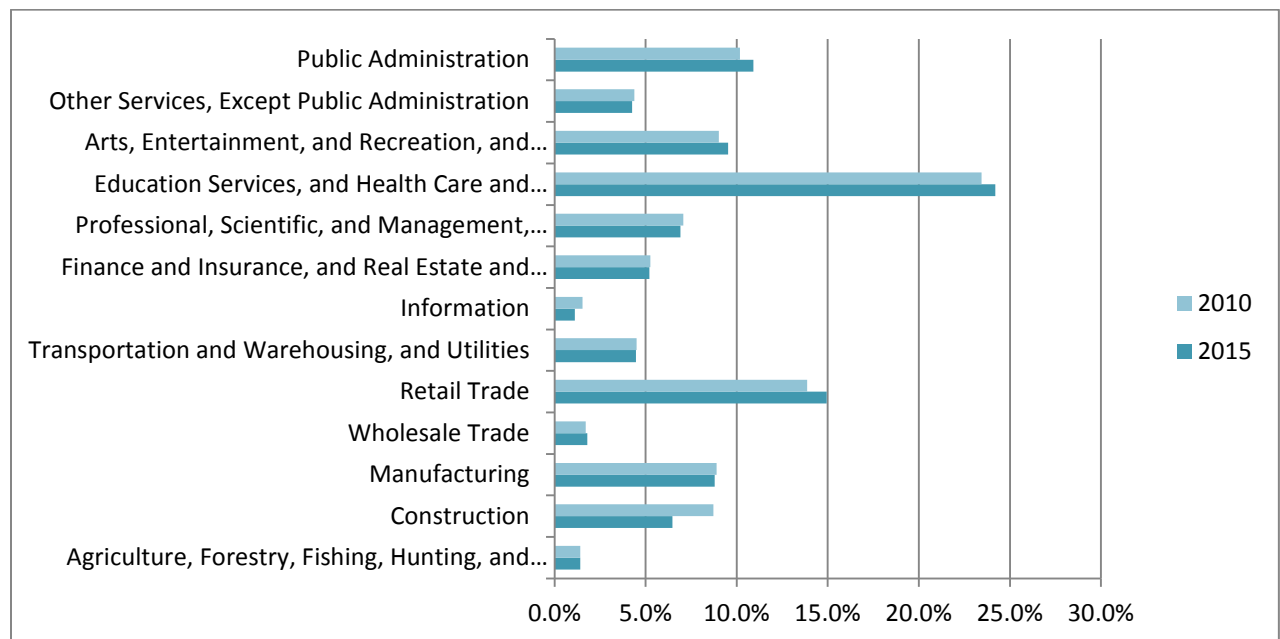
According to census data, as of 2015 13.5% of Kent County's population is considered to be living in poverty, a 2.3% increase since 2010.



Source: 2015 ACS 1-Year Estimates, 2010 ACS 1-Year Estimates

Employment

- The most substantial increase has been in the relatively lower paid retail trade.
- There continue to be losses in the construction sector even with the recovery of the real estate market after the recession.
- Other industries have seen small losses since 2010.



It is also notable that unemployment in Kent County exceeds both the national and state rates.

Unemployment Rate as of July 2017	
Sussex County	4.30%
Kent County	5.90%
New Castle	5.20%
State of Delaware	5.10%
United States	4.30%
<i>DE Department of Labor & U.S. Department of Labor</i>	

There have been more than 200 approvals of home based businesses over the last ten years.

Economic Development Opportunities

Downtown Development Districts

The County has a long history of recognizing the essential role strong towns play in strengthening the economic outlook of the County. Smyrna, Dover, Harrington, Milford have designated Downtown Development Districts enabling property and business owners to leverage both state and county funds for improvements and expansion. Since the inception of the DDD program, the County has invested just over \$98,000 to support 11 commercial and residential projects in the districts.

Food Innovation District

Agriculture remains the largest industry in Kent County and both the State and County have made a significant investment in preserving farmland. The development of the Food Innovation District is an effort to capitalize on and expand opportunities for the agricultural industry. The vision for the District is to:

Create a thriving economy, a sense of place and sustainability for Kent County, the country and the planet through food systems rooted in this region and centered on food that is healthy, green, fair and affordable.

Business Incubator

Emerging Enterprise Development Center (EEDC)

Broadband Expansion

Kent County remains largely rural and low density in nature which presents specific challenges to economic development. One way to support existing businesses and potentially attract new technology dependent business is through expansion of high speed broadband. According to a 2014 study completed by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota entitled [Findings on the Economic Benefits of Broadband Expansion to Rural and Remote Areas](#) small communities and surrounding rural areas with access to high speed broadband realize short and long term economic benefits including:

- ❖ Economic Growth
 - Employment growth
 - New businesses established
 - Existing business growth
 - Increased housing rents
 - Higher average incomes
 - Increased population growth
- ❖ Education and Labor Market Advantage
 - Rural areas can be attractive to business because of lower property and labor costs but there is often a shortage of skilled labor
 - High speed broadband offers opportunities for web based education and job training

Providing Adequate Land for Development

One of the primary responsibilities of Kent County is supporting economic development is ensuring adequate land is available for new commercial and industrial development.

Recommendations

1. Create economic centers of business and commerce around existing infrastructure and identify areas designated for industrial and business parks, large scale commercial uses, and neighborhood commercial uses. The areas designated for commercial and industrial development would meet the existing requirements for rezoning provided the infrastructure is planned for or in place;
2. Understanding that successful municipalities are imperative to the success of Kent County, support the economic development and re-development efforts of the towns including downtown revitalization efforts as well as redevelopment of existing underutilized shopping centers and hotels. Focus economic development as a whole toward areas where infrastructure is existing or is planned for the immediate future;
3. Continue investment in the Downtown Development District grant program;
4. Explore opportunities to partner with utilities providing high speed broadband in an effort to expand access throughout the County;
5. Continue development of the Emerging Enterprise Development Center and expand partnerships to offer support and training services to tenants.
6. Continue to protect and promote agriculture and diversity in agriculture within Kent County including coordination with the Department of Agriculture to develop and promote farm markets and other agri-business opportunities in the County. Continue pursuing opportunities in the Food Innovation District program;

7. Develop a marketing strategy in partnership with the towns as appropriate to effectively advertise the benefits of locating in Kent County;
8. Understanding that business retention is a fundamental component of economic development in Kent County, pursue opportunities to support existing business (both large and small scale) and encourage growth. Develop a comprehensive business retention, expansion, and attraction incentive program that would include financial, regulatory, review, and zoning incentives that target high wage manufacturing and technology jobs as well as the agricultural industry including the continuance of Chapter 191, Article VI, Real Estate Tax Exemption for Industries, of the Kent County Code;
9. Update the portfolios for each of the identified industrial areas including information about existing and planned infrastructure, access to transportation (rail and/or highway) surrounding land uses, and applicable zoning and land development requirements for easy distribution to interested businesses;
10. Continue the positive working relationship between the County and the Dover Air Force Base and maintain zoning requirements that protect the base from incompatible land uses;
11. Zoning Code Revisions -
 - a. to promote development of mixed-use centers in targeted locations
 - b. To review and update industrial, commercial, and office uses in each zoning district
 - c. to provide density incentives within targeted locations within the Growth Zone, especially within the areas identified for Transportation Improvement District Plan;

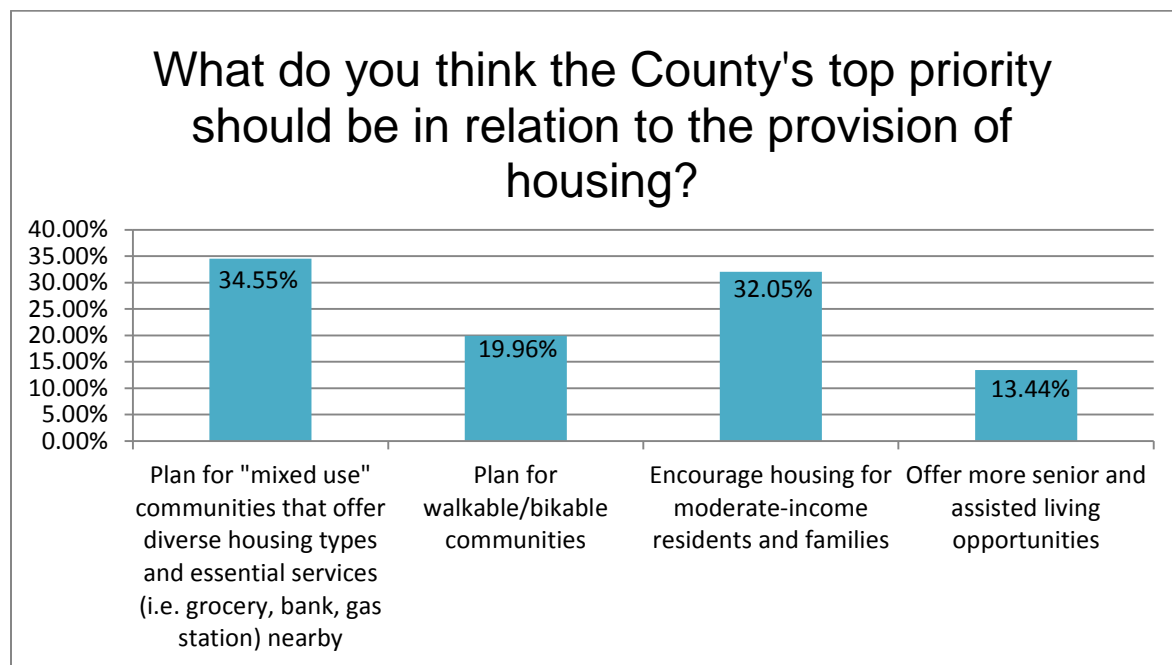
Housing

Overview

Every citizen has the right to safe, decent, and affordable housing. Kent County's policy objective is to enable and encourage well-designed, diverse, attractive, affordable, and convenient housing that meets the needs of all of its residents.

Survey Results

HOUSING: What do you think the County's priorities should be related to the provision of housing? (choose up to three)		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Encourage more diverse housing options	26.75%	107
Plan for walkable/bikeable communities	49.50%	198
Promote affordable housing opportunities, particularly for low-income residents and families	27.25%	109
Provide more age-restricted communities	17.50%	70
Offer more senior and assisted living opportunities	29.25%	117
Encourage housing for moderate-income residents and families	44.50%	178
Plan for "mixed-use" communities that offer diverse housing types and essential services (e.g. grocery, bank, gas stations) nearby	52.50%	210
Plan for "integrated mixed-use" communities where housing is above retail/employment	21.50%	86



Policy Emphasis

To enable and encourage well-designed, diverse, attractive, affordable, and convenient housing community choices for people and families in all stages of life and all income ranges throughout the County by:

1. Ensuring sufficient land for more compact mixed-use development with an emphasis on creating communities rather than subdivisions comprised of a range

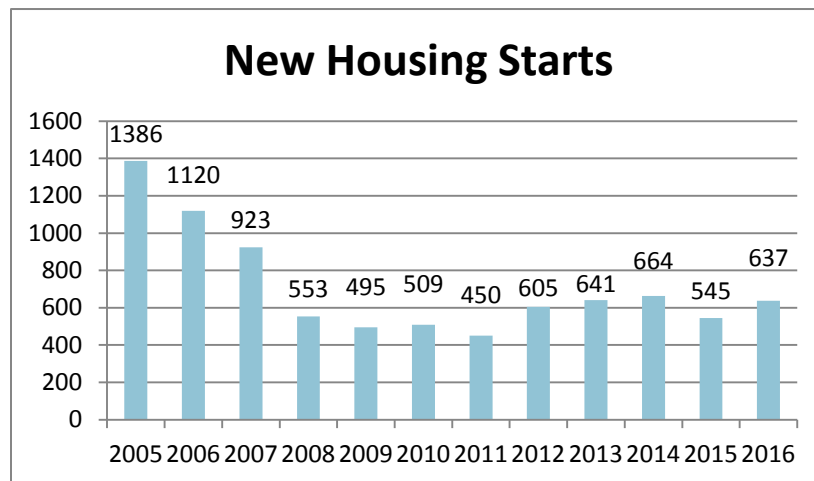
of housing options such as apartments, townhouses, duplexes, and single-family detached dwellings, as well as easy access to goods and services;

2. Fostering multi-modal and transit options enabling those without easy access to automobiles to interact meaningfully within their communities;
3. Encouraging an expansion of housing types, such as apartments, townhouses, duplexes, and single-family detached dwellings, to serve a diverse population;
4. Providing homeownership opportunities for those of low- to moderate-income as well as those at or above the median family income;
5. Coordinating with the State and Federal Governments to provide opportunities to increase the supply of rental housing affordable to extremely low-income county residents; and
6. Maintaining or improving the condition of the housing stock throughout the County without causing displacement.

Housing Stock

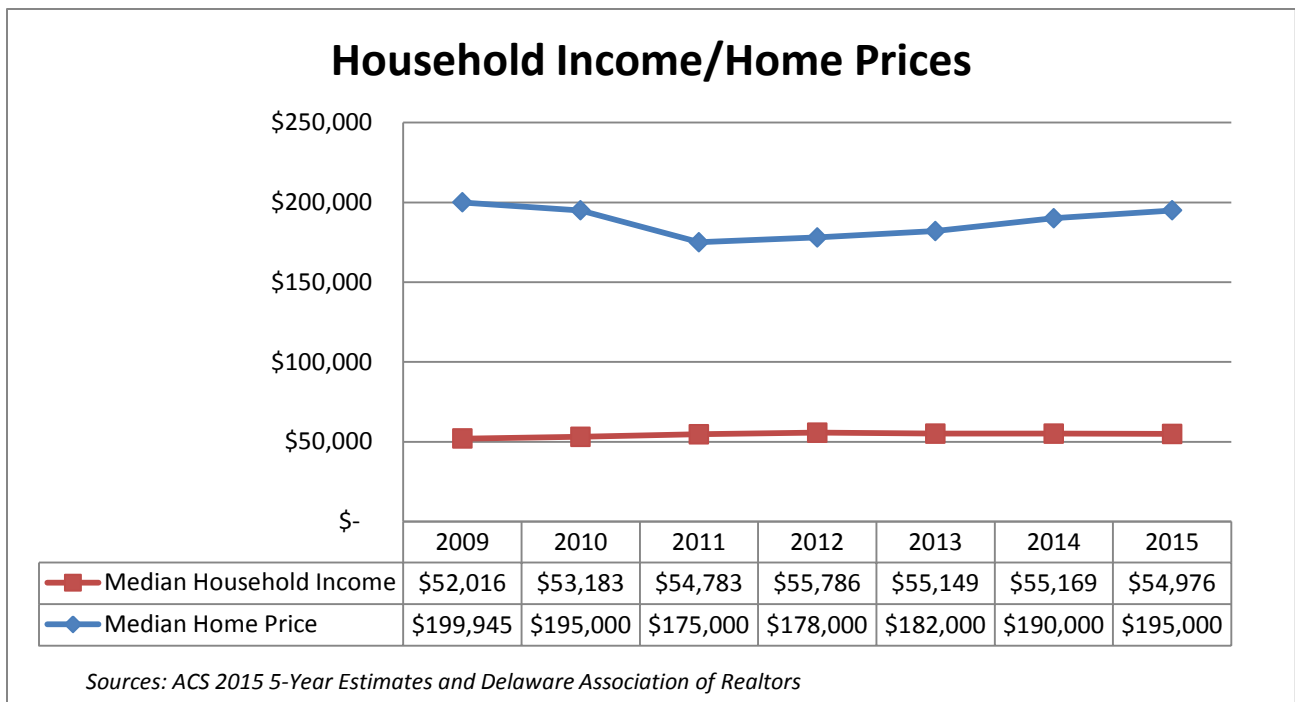
	2000	2010	2015
Total Housing Units	50,481	65,338	68,693
Occupied	93.5%	83.80%	91%
Vacant	6.50%	16.20%	9%
Average household size of owner occupied units	2.66	2.66	2.75
Average household size of renter occupied units	2.49	2.52	2.58
Householder living alone	10,840	14,224	14,994
Householder living alone (over 65)	3,962	5,350	6,560

Source: 2000 & 2010 US Census; ACS 2015 1-Year Estimates

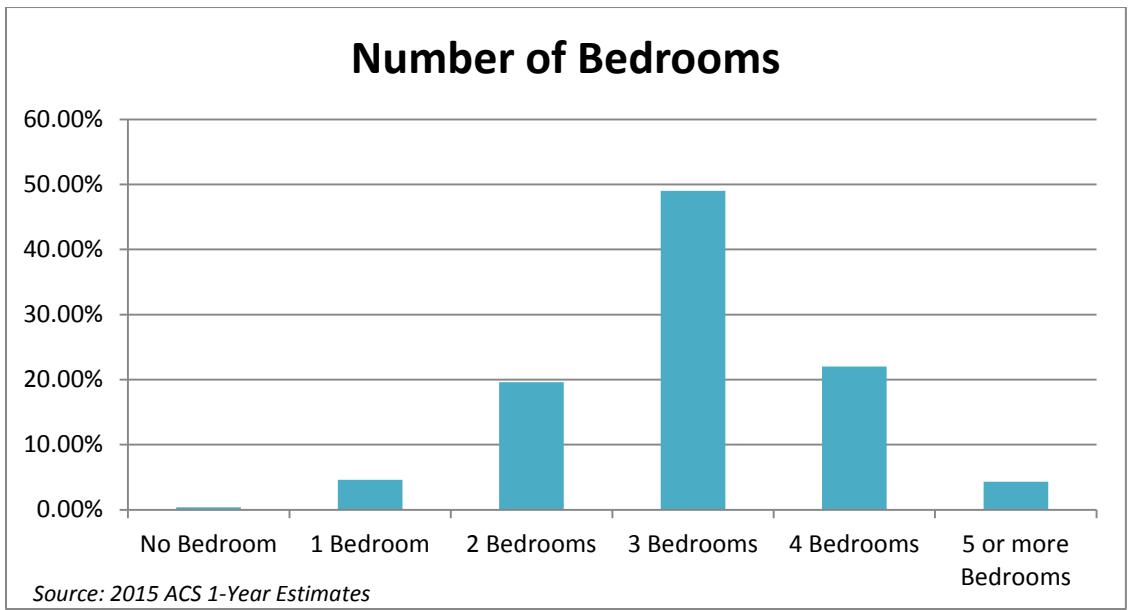
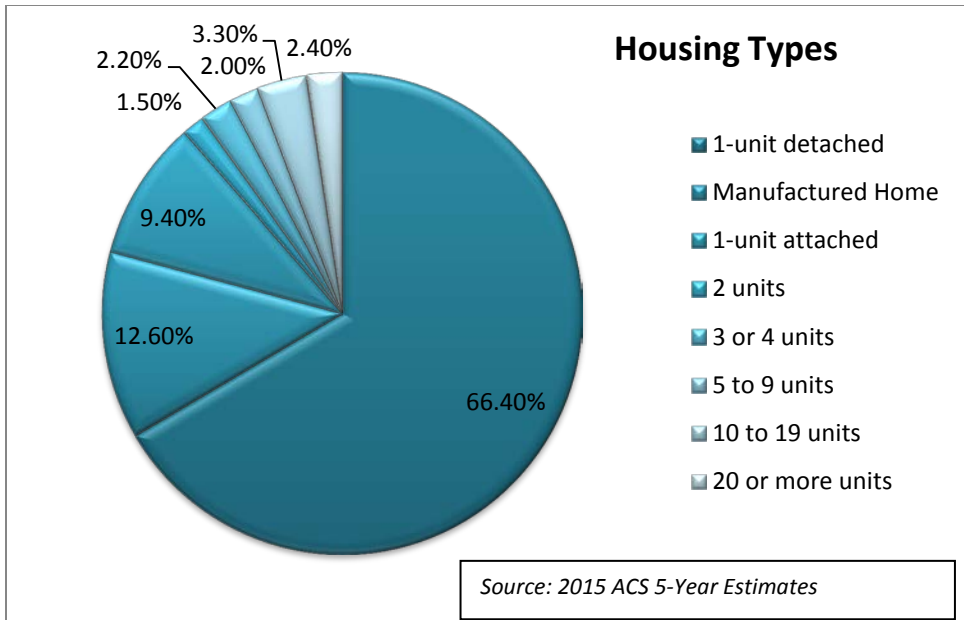


	Major Subdivisions	Number of Lots
2006	34	5234
2007	8	402
2008	3	384
2009	3	170
2010	7	896
2011	1	428
2012	1	35
2013	5	475
2014	-	-
2015	-	-
2016	1	105

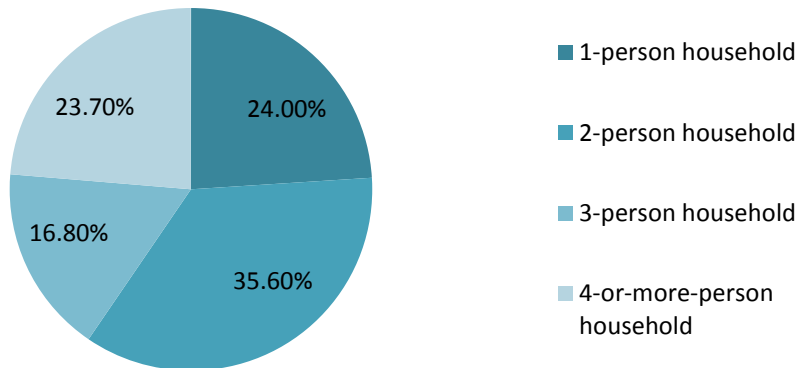
1. There are approximately 8,800 vacant lots within major subdivisions while just over 4,400 lots have been expunged because construction did not commence.
2. Kent County's housing occupancy rate has improved since 2010 as the slow housing recovery has progressed.
3. The median value of owner occupied units has increased from \$206,200 in 2010 to \$215,200 in 2015 which is encouraging for the housing market overall but presents a challenge in affordable housing.
4. The percentage of cost burdened owner occupied units (paying more than 30% of income toward housing expenses) has decreased from 40.6% in 2010 to 28.6% in 2015.
5. The percentage of cost burdened rental households has remained steady at 52% which points to a need for additional affordable rental housing in the County.
6. There are an estimated 77 units within the County that lacking complete plumbing facilities and 232 lacking complete kitchen facilities.



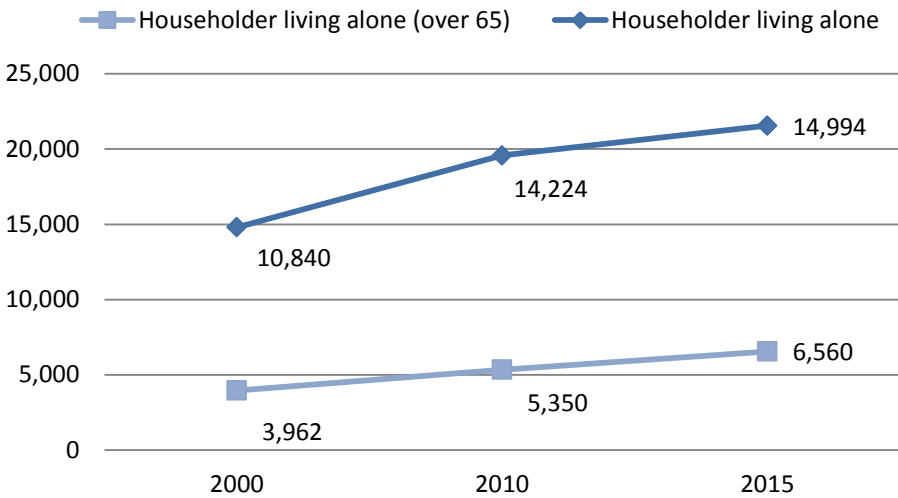
While housing prices have been rebounding since the recession ended, household incomes are relatively stagnant. If housing prices continue to rise but incomes do not, affordability becomes an even greater concern.



Size of Household



Source: 2015 ACS 1-Year Estimates



Source: 2000 & 2010 Census and 2015 ACS 1-Year Estimates

Delaware Housing Needs Assessment

1. In areas of high value, supporting affordable housing opportunities and fair housing initiatives will be most needed.
2. In areas showing initial signs of decline, supporting neighborhood identity, rehabilitating existing housing stock, and supporting homeownership will be important.
3. In distressed neighborhoods, pursuing strategic development projects through public private partnerships, preserving quality housing stock, focusing developing in and around neighborhood anchors, and encouraging socio-economic diversity will help to foster market interest.
4. In highly distressed areas, partnerships with neighborhood organizations, supporting social services, demolishing blight and providing greater housing and job opportunities for existing residents will foster long term benefits.

Affordable Housing & Fair Housing

Each year in conjunction with our Community Development Block Grant Funding, the County resolves to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing (AFFH) in accordance with the Federal Fair Housing Act. In short, AFFH calls for jurisdictions to take meaningful action to:

- Overcome patterns of segregation and foster inclusive communities
- Address significant disparities in housing needs and in access to opportunity
- Transform racial and ethnic areas of poverty into areas of opportunity
- Foster and maintain compliance with civil rights and fair housing laws.

Homelessness

- Based upon the January 25, 2017 Point in Time (PIT) count conducted by the Housing Alliance Delaware, homelessness in Kent County has been steadily increasing.
- The total number of people homeless on the night of the PIT was 1,015, including adults and children. It is estimated that approximately 3,000 people experienced homelessness in Delaware at some point during 2016.
- Of the people who were homeless on the night of the PIT count, 22% were in Kent County. In 2016, 20% of the homeless population was in Kent County and in 2015 the total was 16%.

Recommendations

1. Promote infill and mixed use development in existing developed areas to optimize existing infrastructure investment;
2. Participate in the City of Dover's taskforce established to address homelessness.
3. Focus the provision of affordable housing in areas where reasonable access to goods and services exists or is planned with an emphasis on multi-modal and transit options by identifying areas and sites where a special effort will be made through rezoning, incentives, or other means to provide affordable housing;
4. Maintain the partnership with the Diamond State Community Land Trust to ensure long-term affordable homeownership opportunities and preserve investment permanently as units remain affordable from one buyer to another over time;
5. Establish an affordable housing trust fund potentially funded through a percentage of the "in-lieu" fees paid by developers as part of an inclusionary zoning ordinance or through a building permit surcharge;
6. Continue contributions to housing related nonprofits and the Delaware State Housing Authority as the budget permits;
7. Convene a committee consisting of housing advocates, builders, architects, and individuals with knowledge regarding underwriting housing financing and available funding sources, to advise and assist in implementing the recommendations of this chapter, as well as develop additional incentives that encourage affordable housing;
8. Review all County impact fees and determine the effect of reducing or waiving them for developers and nonprofits seeking to build affordable housing;
9. Identify neighborhoods that would benefit from concentrated Property Maintenance Code enforcement and seek state and federal funds to support the effort; and

10. Identify opportunities for staff, appointed, and elected officials to attend fair housing training;
11. Review the Zoning and Subdivision & Land Development Ordinances to identify barriers to both diverse and affordable housing options.
12. Participate in the state's Assessment of Fair Housing and ensure that the County is fulfilling its obligation to affirmatively further fair housing.

Community Facilities

Overview

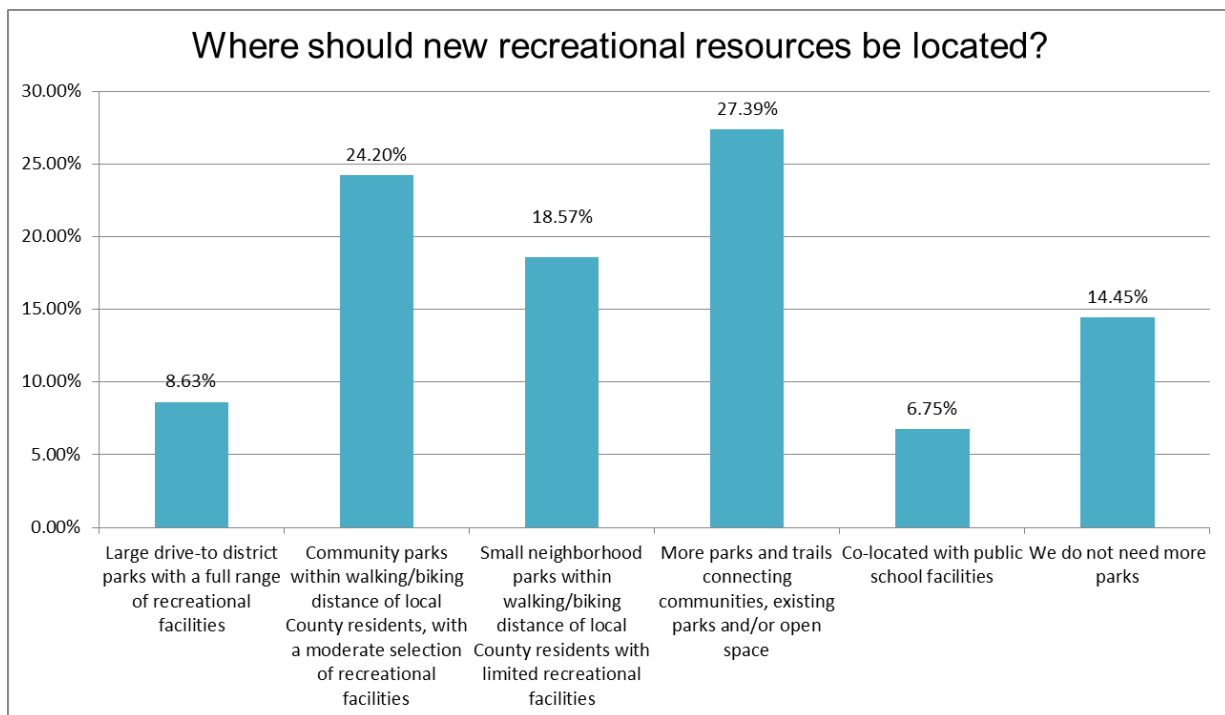
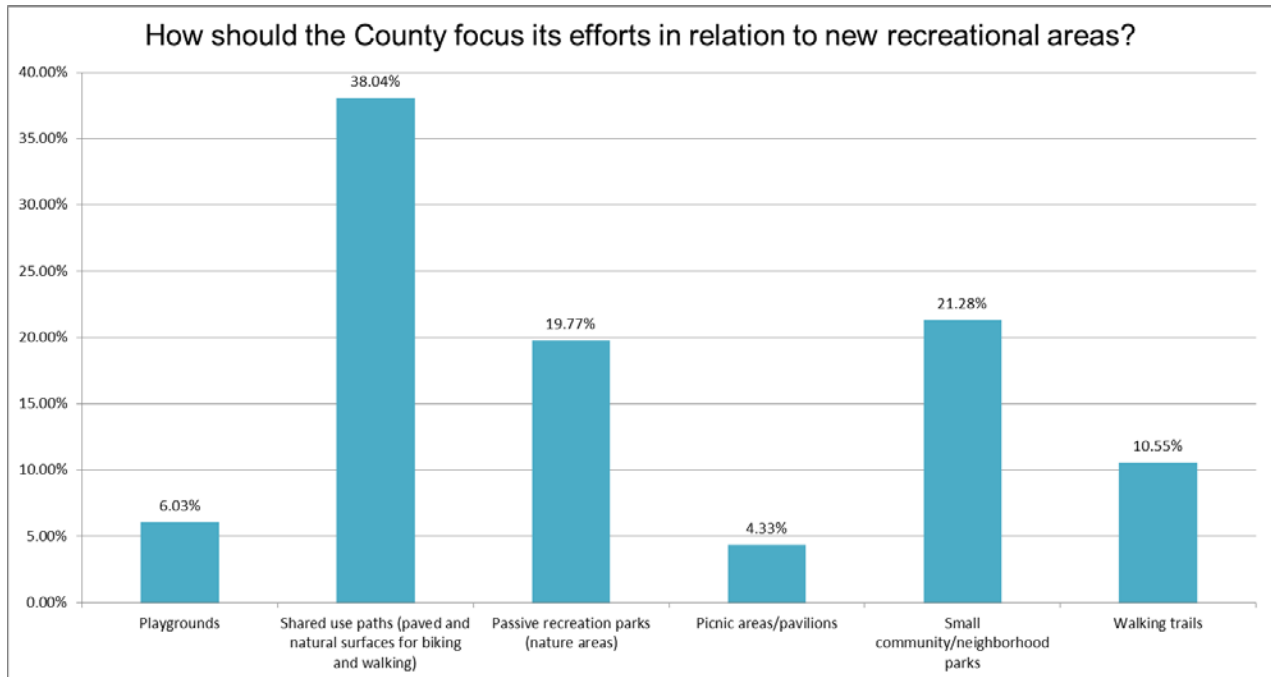
Community facilities and public services are those minimum facilities and services provided for the public good. In Kent County, such services are provided by a combination of public and private agencies. Public facilities include land, buildings, equipment and whole systems of activity provided on behalf of the public. Some facilities, such as clean drinking water and adequate sewerage treatment and disposal are necessities; while others, such as libraries and parks, are highly desirable for cultural and educational enrichment. The quality of public facilities contributes to the quality of life in the County. Indeed, such facilities are essential in creating functional, sustainable communities.

Existing Community Facilities & Services

Educational Facilities

1. Seven school districts
2. Since 2008 over 12 million dollars has been collected through the surcharge.
3. Four colleges and universities

Parks & Recreation



- Identify additional parkland area in locations of greatest need. These include southwest of Smyrna, northwest of Dover, the "Heart of Delaware", and Marydel.
- Parks can be small neighborhood parks of just a few acres that are in close proximity to where people live.

- Provide path and trail linkages between parks and residential communities to minimize automobile usage and encourage increased activity.
- Provide a county owned spray park.
- Coordinate with other agencies to continue the St. Jones Greenway Trail.
- Expand options and facilities in existing parks to support handicap accessibility and inclusion for all persons.
- Update the Community Services Strategic Plan

Emergency Services

- As County citizens are aging and an increasing number of our elderly residents are living alone, the County should investigate the opportunity for Public Safety to establish a check in program. Such a program could entail regular calls to registered residents or a schedule for participants to call in to the call center to check in.
- Kent County's Department of Public Safety has endorsed Mobile Integrated Healthcare – Community Paramedicine as a strategy although it is recognized additional staff resources would be required. The County should pursue discussions with potential service provider partners and identify potential funding sources to support an expanded community EMS mission.
- Continue to evaluate the adopted fire services surcharge and the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance - EMS building permit fee to ensure that these services are being adequately funded to serve the citizens of Kent County.
- Work to create a funding mechanism similar to the APFO for police services to help fund a portion of their increased coverage demands.
- Incentivize or promote development closer to service stations to lower response times.
- Update the Public Safety Master Plan

Utilities

- Water
- Sewer
- Electricity
- Stormwater
 - 21 communities (2000 lots) in the Stormwater Maintenance District
- Broadband
 - Providing for adequate services can be one of the items that potential businesses will look for when locating in a new area.
 - 95.7% of the county has access to broadband speeds higher than 100 mbps, but only 38.6% of that is the most reliable fiber optic coverage. Not one person in the entire state has access to 1 GB data service. What would it take and how would it improve our resources if we could be the first county to have those ultra high speed services?

Recommendations:

1. Recognizing that internet is the key resource in attracting businesses and an educated workforce, the County should strive to facilitate the dissemination of high speed internet service

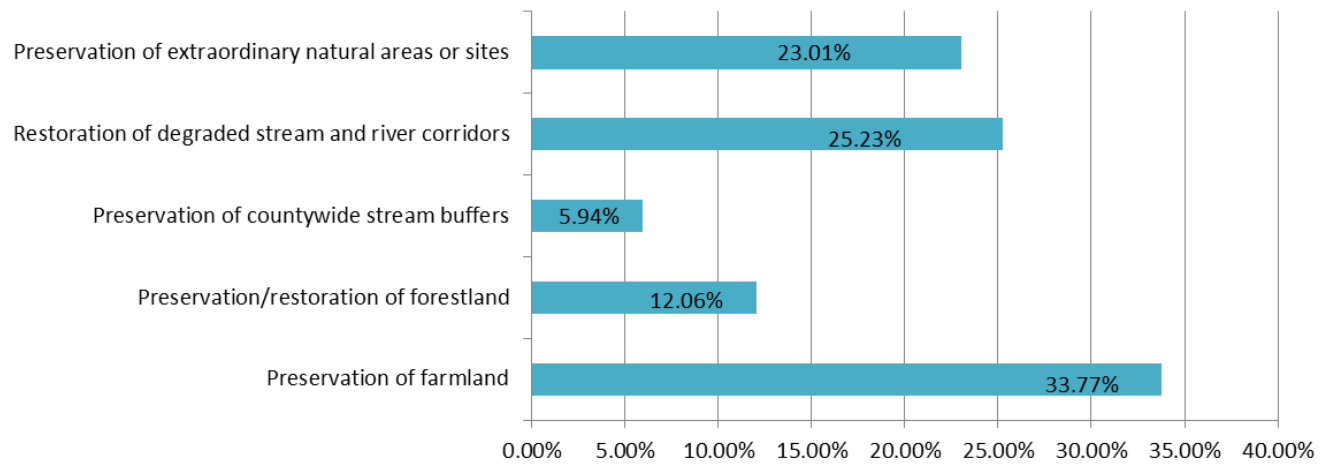
to as many residential properties as possible and, more importantly, all CAIs. The county can help this effort by allowing the base infrastructure to be placed on or through government properties;

2. To allow existing businesses to thrive and to attract new businesses the County must invest in the ability to provide the best most reliable broadband internet service. The County doesn't currently make financial investments in infrastructure beyond central sewer and this is an opportunity to not only expand our service role, but to provide a critical link in the advancement of the county. Partnering with the private sector and other government agencies to support and expand fiber optic internet services will be crucial to the modernization and growth of the county;
3. Require an infrastructure utility plan be submitted as part of a subdivision or land development application;
4. The county should support the use of central water service for as many lots as possible. This will lower the impact on the shallow aquifers and also allow for better treatment and testing to protect the residents of the county;
5. Continue to coordinate site plan approval for water treatment and storage facilities with site plan approval for subdivision and land development;
6. Continue to provide efficient and cost effective sanitary sewer service in the existing sewer district and to new users through expansion of the sewer district in areas identified for development;
7. Ensure that all new commercial development inside of the growth zone overlay is connected to central sewer;
8. Continue and expand remediation programs to assist communities with high percentages of failing septic systems to connect to the public sewer system;
9. Maintain and continually upgrade the existing sanitary sewer conveyance system of pipes, manholes, pump stations, and the wastewater treatment facility to help ensure trouble free operation including a funding strategy implementing a routine infrastructure replacement program;
10. Continue coordination efforts with State agencies (Kent Conservation District and DNREC) to limit and manage stormwater runoff in the most efficient and effective manner while respecting natural features and constraints;
11. Support all stormwater facilities, either commercial or residential, being brought into the Stormwater Maintenance District Program.

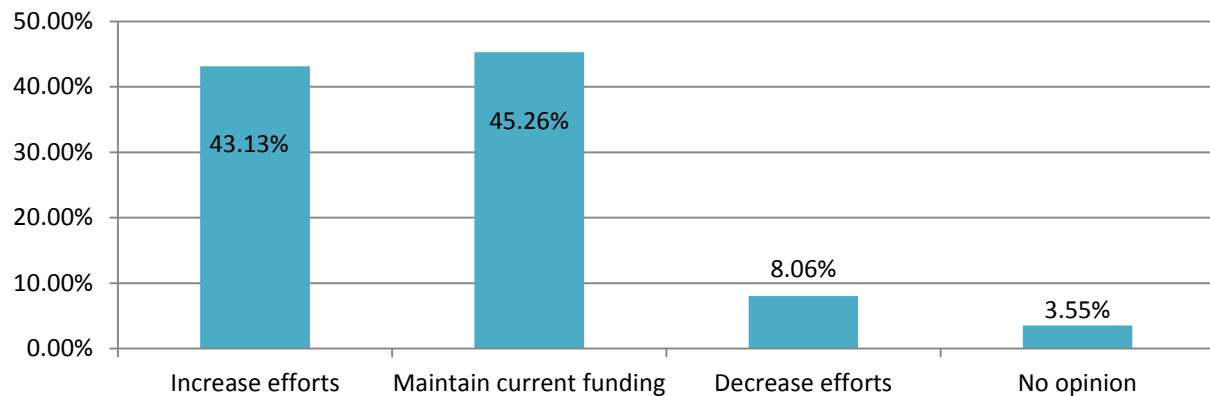
Conservation

Kent County possesses a wealth of natural resources including wetlands, woodlands, floodplains, coastal areas, waterways, underground aquifers, open space, and the animals and plants that inhabit these spaces that affect the overall health and quality of life within the county.

What do you think the County's top priority should be in terms of open space and resource protection?



Levy Court contributes approximately \$100,000 annually toward the State's Agricultural Preservation Program to purchase development rights and permanently protect farmland. Do you support increasing, maintaining, or decreasing funding?



Policy Emphasis

Provide for protection of environmental and agricultural resources of the County, while allowing for development by:

1. Further promoting the conservation of the full array of natural resources found within Kent County (water, land, flora, fauna, and habitats);

2. Ensuring that land use activities on lands designated as State Resource Areas protect the land's unique ecological features while permitting reasonable use of the property;
3. Ensuring that land use activities are conducted in such a way as to minimize the impact on, and reduce the risk of, contamination to, excellent groundwater recharge areas and wellhead protection areas which are a source of drinking water systems throughout the County;
4. Seeking to preserve and enhance wildlife habitat;
5. Promoting the retention of farms and farmland within Kent County;
6. Seeking to strengthen the agricultural sector of Kent County;
7. Developing regulations that will direct development to areas where infrastructure exists or is planned in order to encourage agriculture and maintain the current quality of life for the residents of the County; and
8. Seeking to promote and develop less mainstream agricultural uses such as: horse farms, orchards, organic farming, wineries, sod farms, and aquaculture.

Recommendations

1. Maintain existing environmental standards (wetland protection, floodplain standards, stream buffers, impervious cover limitations) to protect people, property, and the environment.
2. Carefully weigh the costs and benefits of infrastructure investment in areas anticipated to be inundated by sea level rise.
3. Develop a greenway system plan for Kent County and explore the use of waterways and other open space for bicycle and pedestrian interconnections, kayak trails, and nature walks within new developments;
4. Increase the width of non-disturbance areas surrounding wetlands, waterbodies and conveyance systems, including tax ditches, to an average of 100 feet for 80% of the area, to be buffered with a minimum width buffer of 50 feet and, if previously cleared of vegetation, require such riparian buffer be replanted with native species prevalent in riparian areas. Where the slope along a waterbody exceeds 15%, the buffer measurement should commence from the top of bank. Required buffers should be designated as un-subdivided open space;
5. Utilize the passive open space provisions of the Subdivision and Land Development ordinance to require re-introduction of wildlife habitats and upland forests;
6. Promote more compact patterns of development and mixed use development to reduce travel demand and to encourage the expansion of the public transit system;
7. Seek to reduce ozone emissions by directing growth into areas that are immediately adjacent to employment and services;
8. Review existing ordinances for efficacy in meeting Federally required Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirements and make changes where appropriate;

9. Utilize the Wildlife Action Plan, Green Infrastructure, and Source Water Protection maps produced by DNREC in conjunction with Land Evaluation Site Assessment (LESA) scores in ranking properties for County agricultural land preservation funding;
10. Establish incentives such as reduction of impact fees, building permit fees, or density bonuses for environmentally sensitive design practices such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, Energy Star, or green technology best management practices;
11. Work with DNREC and the individual Tax Ditch Organizations to explore the feasibility of establishing landscape buffers along tax ditches in order to reduce erosion along ditch banks, reduce maintenance requirements, and improve water quality. On private ditches, where practical, the buffers should be planted on the south and west side of the ditch to maximize shading and trees and shrubs should be native species. Trees should not be planted within 5 feet of the top of the bank to avoid future blockages from roots. Tree and shrub planting in this manner will provide a shading effect promoting water quality. The buffers as well as the channel banks should be planted with herbaceous vegetation to aid in the reduction of sediment and nutrients entering into the conveyance. Grasses, forbs and sedges planted within this buffer should be native species, selected for their height, ease of maintenance, erosion control, and nutrient uptake capabilities;
12. Promulgate ordinances that will include protections for agricultural uses such as:
 - Establish Agricultural Commercial and Agricultural Industrial zoning districts;
 - Review and expand permitted agricultural uses in the Agricultural Conservation and Agricultural Residential zoning districts; and
 - Assess current regulations and policies to find and correct conflicts with and complements to the State Agricultural Lands Preservation Program.
13. Evaluate current Transfer Development Rights (TDR) program and make appropriate changes to increase its utility and effectiveness; and
14. Continue dedicating funds toward the Agricultural Land Preservation Program as finances permit.

Historic Preservation

Overview

Kent County, Delaware has a unique cultural heritage that is represented on the county's landscape by both architectural buildings and archaeological sites. As the landscape continues to evolve, it is important that cultural resources be protected and preserved from threats such as disturbance, demolition by neglect, and unplanned growth. In this story map, you will learn about Kent County's historic resources, as well as steps we can take to ensure their protection as a county.

Resources

- 130 Listed Buildings / Building Complexes
- 17 Listed Archaeological Sites

- 14 National Register Districts
- 30 Listed Boundary Markers
- 2 National Historic Landmarks
- Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway
- Delaware Bayshore Byway

Threats to Historic Preservation

- There have been 4 individual National Register Properties Demolished and 165 buildings within established National Register Districts Demolished.
- Jehu Reed House, Thomas England House, and Durham Shores House, threats to historic resources have become more apparent in our community.
- New Development - As Kent County's population increases and the landscape continues to evolve, development pressure often leads to the demolition of historic buildings, such as historic farm complexes or properties located along the highway in commercial areas.
- Demolition by Neglect - Often historic buildings are more expensive to maintain or many property owners do not have the knowledge of how to maintain a historic house properly. As historic houses fall under disrepair, demolition due to lack of maintenance is often times an outcome.

Recommendations

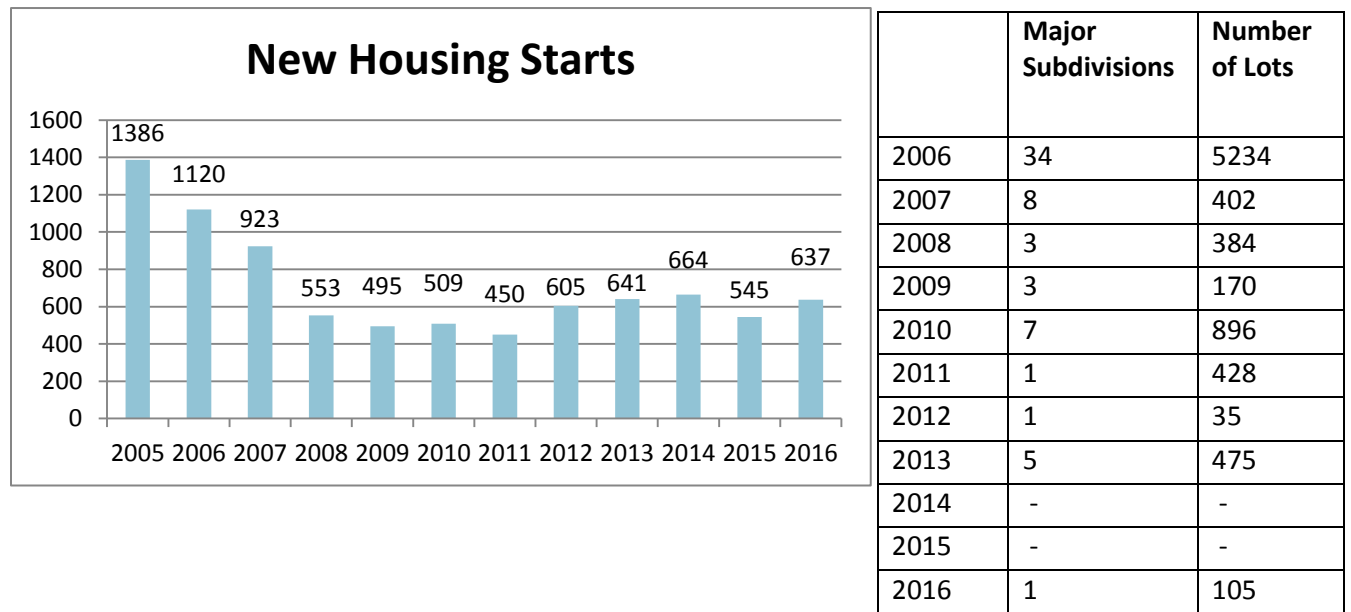
1. Explore incentives to incorporating historic structures into new development;
2. Through partnerships with state and nongovernmental agencies, design education and outreach materials to help property owners maintain their historic structures;
3. Continue to identify, evaluate, and update cultural resources surveys and provide survey data in a variety of formats including digital mapping and through the Kent County website; and
4. Enact ordinances that support the documentation, protection and/or preservation of important cultural and historic resources within the County.

Land Use

Overview

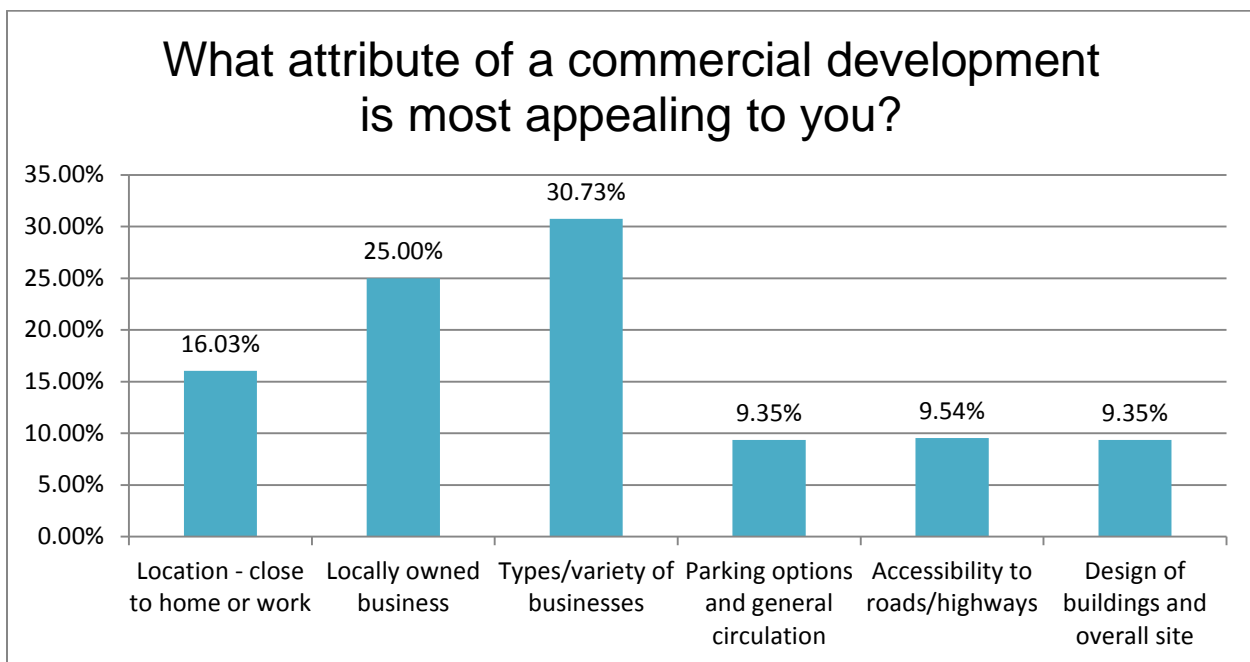
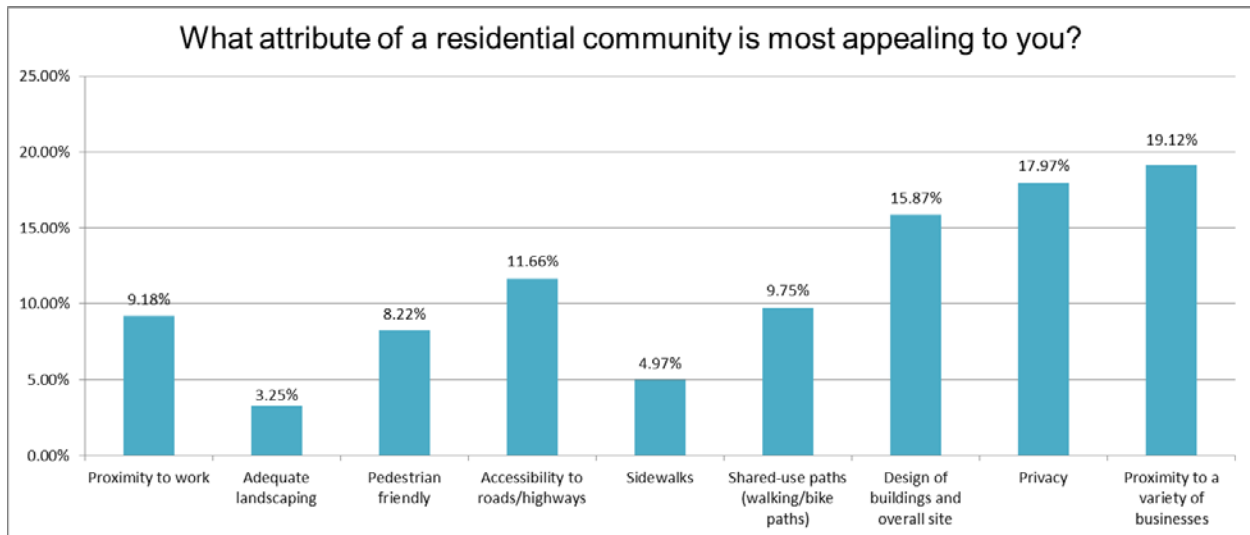
The overall theme of the Comprehensive Plan is the creation of communities, providing adequate infrastructure to those communities, and preserving the rural character and agricultural industry of the County.

Historical Trends & Current Conditions



- There are approximately 8,800 vacant lots within major subdivisions
- Over 4,400 lots have been expunged because construction did not commence
- The trend continues to be that large scale commercial and industrial development occurs within municipalities where infrastructure is available.
- While it is appropriate that large scale retail development is better suited to municipalities, the result is that much of the residential development in the unincorporated area has little access to neighborhood commercial uses, employment centers, and recreation opportunities nearby.

Goals for the Future



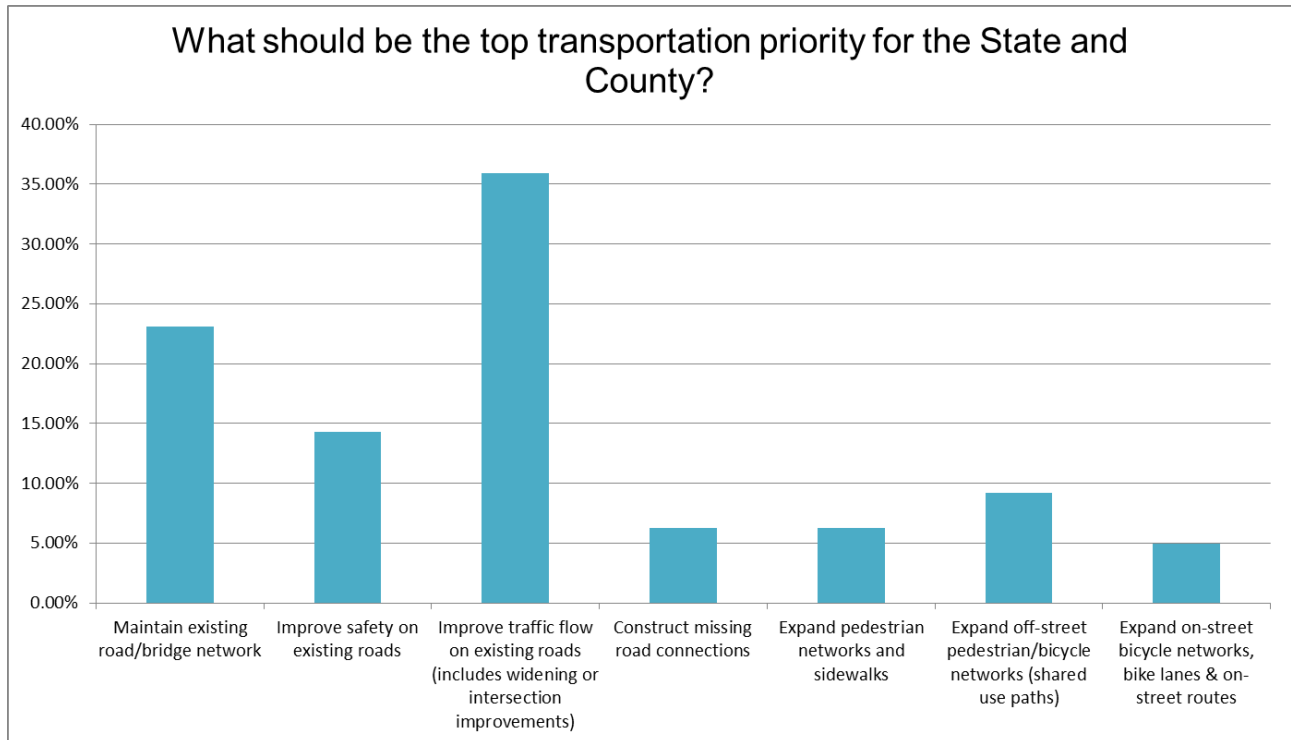
Based upon feedback from community outreach, available data, and emerging land use patterns the goals articulated in the 2008 Plan remain relevant:

Land Use Strategy

- Adequate infrastructure and public services
- Protection of natural resources & rural character
- Preservation of areas for economic development
- Potential Neighborhood Commercial and Highway Commercial Maps
- Emphasis
 - Quality of the public space;

- Variety of uses and building types;
- Connections to people and to daily needs; and
- Places to walk and ride bicycles.
- Town Areas
 - Adjacent to existing towns in areas where demand for growth is evident
 - Connected street network
 - Sidewalks
 - Diverse and integrated housing types
 - Mixed use
 - Neighborhood commercial on local roads
 - Some additional highway commercial on arterials
 - Rezoning to more intense zoning districts as appropriate
 - Appropriate for creation of TDR Primary Receiving Areas
- Village Areas
 - Areas where a concentration of existing approved residential development exists.
 - Encourage needed infrastructure and services in order to create community centers to serve the pockets of residential development.
 - Future development in these areas should consist of medium density residential and neighborhood commercial uses as well as significant investment in infrastructure.
 - The intent is to enable the creation of communities rather than only single-use residential subdivisions.
 - Appropriate for creation of TDR Secondary Receiving Areas
- Potential Zoning Ordinance Revisions
 - Agricultural Zone
 - Outside of the Growth Zone
 - Permit by-right uses that support agriculture and are expected in rural areas
 - Mixed Use Development Option
 - For use in the Town and Village Areas
 - Perhaps utilize form based code standards

Transportation



Policy Emphasis

Create and maintain a transportation system within Kent County that is safe, supports economic development, allows easy access and mobility for people and goods to reach their destination and serves the public's needs while reinforcing the unique character and quality of life of each community and preserving the region and natural resources.

Recommendations

1. Integrate land use with transportation by improving coordination between land use and transportation planning and project development in order to establish and maintain a transportation network that supports anticipated needs within the Growth Zone Overlay;
2. Coordinate with DeIDOT and the MPO to develop Transportation Improvement Districts;
3. Support healthy lifestyles, choices, and opportunities as well as reduce air, water, and noise pollution by requiring facilities such as sidewalks, transit facilities, multi-use paths, and bikeways as part of both transportation and land development projects;
4. Promote improved context sensitivity by developing transportation improvements that minimize environmental impacts and promote improved quality of the environment;
5. Continue to apply access management techniques preserving and improving the operating condition of corridors by regulating the number, spacing, and design of access points;
6. Preserve and allow for expansion of existing rail facilities for both freight and passenger service as well as a new inter-modal freight yard;

7. Provide aesthetic value by incorporating aesthetic and non-vehicular improvements in transportation investments; and
8. Permit a mix of residential and nonresidential development at densities high enough to support transit in the Growth Zone Overlay, particularly in areas near municipalities.

Community Design

Recommendations

1. Revise the Zoning and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances to incorporate performance standards addressing site design and architectural elements as described above rather than rely exclusively on prescriptive requirements;
2. Incorporate an architectural review requirement in the Regional Planning Commission review and approval process including the submission of proposed building elevations;
3. Revise the Zoning and Subdivision and Land Development ordinances to expand the existing Transfer of Development Rights development design criteria to other development types within the County;
4. Chain stores, fast-food restaurants, gas stations and convenience stores, and big-box retailers must design buildings that match the character of the area;
5. Revise the Cluster Development standards to include additional specific standards for natural resource protection, buffering, and preservation of viewscales as well as ensure that proposed cluster developments do not result in any greater impact than a conventional development;
6. Revise the sign standards within the Zoning Ordinance to ensure signage is compatible with the area and remains unobtrusive while still conveying a message;
7. Review and revise the County's parking requirements to ensure that sufficient but not excessive parking is provided for commercial sites and permit flexibility in design; and
8. Require the submission of pattern books in conjunction with higher density and mixed use major subdivision applications within the Growth Zone Overlay; and
9. Ensure that subdivision and street design meet the needs of emergency vehicles while at the same time respecting the pedestrian scale of development.