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REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON PLANNING

SUSSEX COUNTY, DELAWARE

2024-2025

June 24, 2025

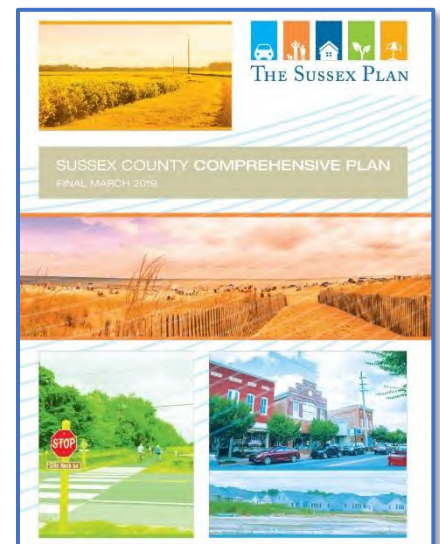
INTRODUCTION

This is the sixth annual report regarding Sussex County's 2018 Comprehensive Plan ("the Plan"), which was adopted by the Sussex County Council on Tuesday, December 4, 2018. The Plan was subsequently certified by Governor John C. Carney on March 19, 2019, as being in compliance with Title 9, Chapter 69, Subchapter II (The Quality of Life Act) of the Delaware Code.

This report is intended to comply with Title 9, Section 6958 of the Delaware Code. Delaware law mandates that all Counties and municipalities have a Comprehensive Plan in place. Counties and municipalities must review and update those plans for State certification every 10 years, while also providing annual updates on the progress of implementation.

NEW INITIATIVES

In the July 2024 to June 2025 reporting year, Sussex County has undertaken a number of initiatives to implement the strategies within the Comprehensive Plan. In accordance with the structure and format of the Comprehensive Plan, the initiatives are summarized below based on the different elements within the Comprehensive Plan.

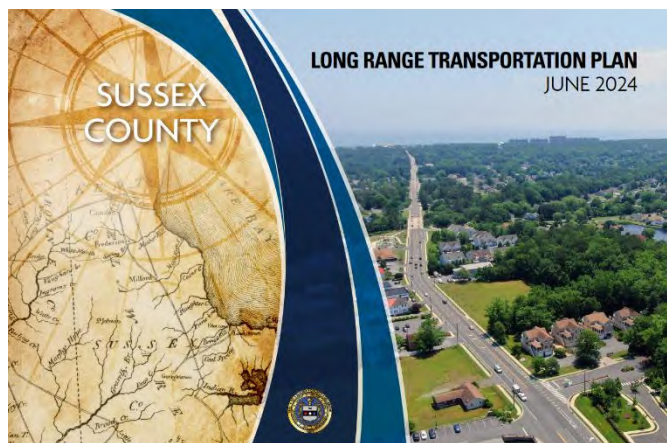


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MOBILITY/TRANSPORTATION

Sussex County Long Range Transportation Plan, 2024

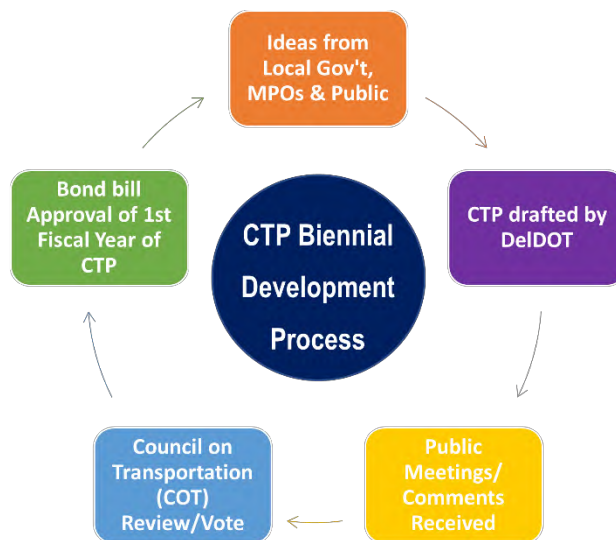
In June 2024, Sussex County and the Delaware Department of Transportation (“DelDOT”), completed the Sussex County Long Range Transportation Plan for Sussex County. This document provides a useful summary of 2020 US Census data, the long-range plan to protect the safety of all roadway users, and ways to increase multi-modal transportation options across Sussex County. The document also considers the emergence of new technologies and ways in which new technologies can be used to increase safety for all roadway users.



The Long-Range Transportation Plan is an important document that will inform the update of the Mobility element in the County’s next 10-year Comprehensive Plan update, which is due to commence in CY 2026.

FY 27-32 Capital Transportation Program (“CTP”) Update for Sussex County

Every two years, the State of Delaware Department of Transportation (“DelDOT”) develops a 6-year Capital Transportation Program (CTP) that identifies anticipated capital investments for the transportation network in Delaware. This program is developed in cooperation with the Salisbury-Wicomico Metropolitan Planning Organization, and Sussex County. The program provides information on various



DelDOT capital and maintenance programs and the estimated cost expenditures for the project phasing of a capital project that are anticipated in each specific fiscal year. Due to the size and scale

of CTP projects that are accepted into the CTP, most CTP projects are multi-year projects that can take several years to design and build. Road maintenance and day-to-day repairs, such as road patching projects, are usually not included in the CTP, as the State of Delaware has separate projects for road maintenance.

A link to an online map showing the CTP Projects, which are currently within the CTP, can be found at the link below:

[Capital Transportation Program \(CTP\) - Delaware Department of Transportation \(delDOT.gov\)](https://delDOT.gov/ctp)

On February 3, 2025, Sussex County invited the public to submit suggestions for the upcoming 2027-2032 Capital Transportation Program request. Submissions for new potential projects were accepted through Monday, March 24, 2025. During this period, the County received 74 ideas from the Public. These were reviewed and, where there were overlapping ideas for the same roads, combined into a condensed list of potential projects. On April 25, 2025, Sussex County submitted its recommendation to DelDOT for those projects that the County wished to be considered for potential acceptance into the next CTP Update.

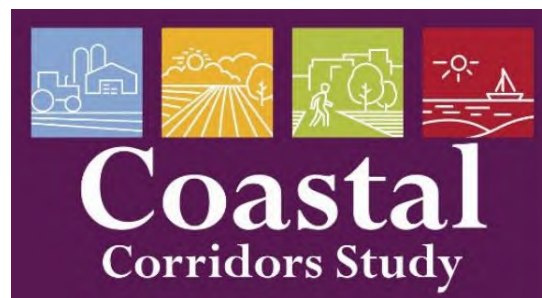
It is anticipated that DelDOT will publish a draft Capital Transportation Program (CTP) in fall 2025, and that public meetings on the draft CTP will follow. Whilst the County has a role in identifying potential new CTP Projects within the County, the final list must be evaluated by the State's Council on Transportation ("COT"). The Council serves in an advisory capacity to the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Directors of the Department of Transportation and the Governor on issues relating to transportation and other matters which may aid the Department in providing the best possible transportation services for the traveling public.

Coastal Corridors Study and Monitoring Committee

The DelDOT Coastal Corridors Study was completed in June 2024, and the Final Report of the Study was published on DelDOT's website. The report can be downloaded using the following link:

[Coastal Corridors Study - Delaware Department of Transportation](https://delDOT.gov/ccs)

DelDOT's Coastal Corridors Study is focused on identifying transportation solutions for east-west routes in Sussex County, including Route 16 and Routes 404/9 between US 113 and SR 1, as well as Redden Road and other local roads in the area. These roadways represent the primary east-west corridors in the northern part of Sussex County that are currently congested or are at risk for congestion based on anticipated growth.



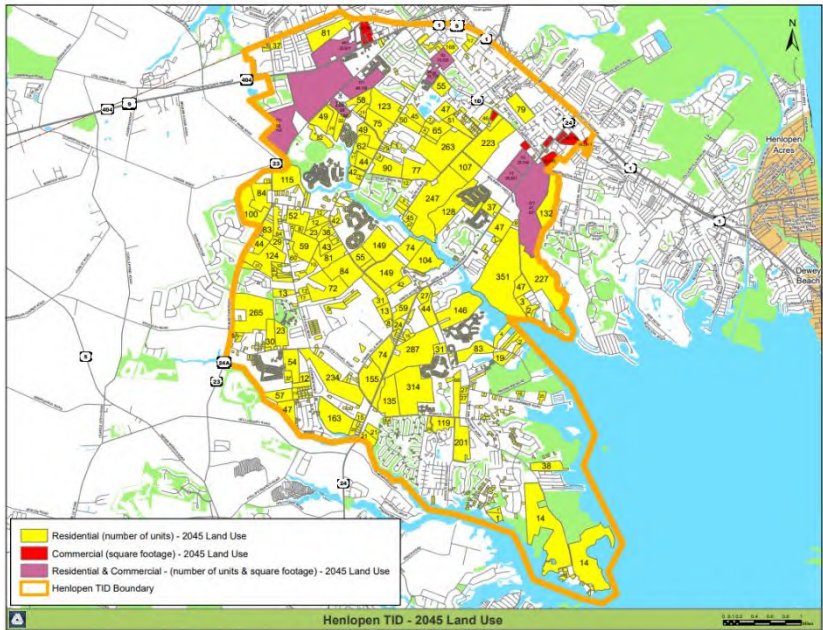
Following the completion of the Final Report of the Coastal Corridors Study, the group continued to meet as part of the Coastal Corridors Monitoring Committee. The most recent meeting of the Monitoring Committee, to which the public was able to participate, was held on June 16, 2025.

The Coastal Corridors Study is an important document that will inform the update of the Mobility element in the County's next 10-year Comprehensive Plan update, which is due to commence in CY 2026. Pages 161-162 of the document contain policy recommendations for consideration in the next Comprehensive Plan update. For example, recommendation G-2 encourages the adoption of specific language in the next Comprehensive Plan to encourage increased interconnectivity in order to improve safety and manage volumes on the roadways of Sussex County.

Henlopen Transportation Improvement District ("TID")

The County has successfully implemented Strategy 13.1.1.2 of the Comprehensive Plan by working with the Delaware Department of Transportation to implement the County's first Transportation Improvement District for the 24 square mile Henlopen area south of Rt. 9 and west of SR.1. The Henlopen TID was adopted on October 29, 2020, and unless a development falls within a specified exemption, is required to contribute to planned transportation infrastructure improvements within the District.

Projects have continued to come forward for consideration during the review period. As of June 2025, the total amount of financial commitments for the Henlopen TID, as reported by the State of Delaware Department of Transportation, now exceeds \$10 million since 2020. The table below illustrates the new commitments that have come forward during the review period.



Project Name	Total Amount (\$)
DGAS	\$11,664.00
Scenic Harbor	\$147,526.00
Chase Oaks	\$895,140.00
Chapel Branch Apartments	\$43,251.32
Brentwood Subdivision	\$486,173.00
Plantations Medical	\$23,738.00
Route 9 Bayside	\$176,321.94
Suncrest	\$23,838.00
Total	\$1,807,652.20

The funds are collected and held by Sussex County, and transferred to DelDOT as part of the implementation of intersection improvements within the Transportation Improvement District.

Potential Roxana Transportation Improvement District

In July 2023, the Sussex County Planning & Zoning Department completed a three-month land-use study to assist the Delaware Department of Transportation with a long-range land-use forecast for a new potential Transportation Improvement District that is being explored. The TID is located in the southeast of Sussex County between Selbyville and the Indian River Bay. The land use forecast will be used by the Delaware Department of Transportation to predict likely infrastructure growth in the study area out to the year 2055.



A map showing the location of the new potential Transportation Improvement District is shown (above). Following the completion of the Land Use Forecast, DelDOT has been undertaking further studies to identify the likely trip generation associated with the land use forecast, so that the required intersection improvements for all intersections inside the proposed TID boundary can be further analyzed. This is a large study, with further updates from DelDOT expected to follow in the 2025-2026 reporting period.

Potential South/South-East Milton Transportation Improvement District

In January 2024, following the adoption of a Transportation Improvement District by the Town, DelDOT and Sussex County began exploring the potential for an additional Transportation Improvement District for the parcels adjoining the Town of Milton. This study, which is being coordinated with the Delaware Department of Transportation, is ongoing, with further updates from DelDOT likely to follow in the 2025-2026 reporting period.

LAND USE ORDINANCES

Perimeter Buffers for Residential Development Ordinance

Objective 4.3.1 of the Future Land Use Element outlines an objective to consider strategies for preserving environmental areas from development and the protection of wetlands and waterways. Objective 4.3.2 promotes new development that incorporates preserved usable open space and mitigates for the protection or replacement of environmental resources in subdivision design. There are multiple strategies within the Comprehensive Plan that flow from these objectives including, Strategy 4.3.2.1 and 4.3.2.2 and 4.4.1.1.

Most notably, Goal 5.1 of the Conservation Element of the 2019 Sussex County Comprehensive Plan states that Sussex County should “Encourage development practices and regulations that support natural resources protection”. With this goal in mind, on March 19, 2024, the County Council introduced a new potential Ordinance to increase the width of perimeter buffers around residential development. The Ordinance also contains language for forest assessment reports to be included in new subdivision applications, along with new penalties for the removal of perimeter buffers following their planting.

The Ordinance was subject to a Public Hearing before the Planning & Zoning Commission at its meeting on May 8, 2024. At the meeting on June 5, 2024, the Planning & Zoning Commission recommended that the County Council adopt the Ordinance, subject to recommended revisions. The County Council held a Public Hearing on the Ordinance at its meeting on June 11, 2024. At the meeting of August 27, 2024, the County Council adopted the Ordinance, with an implementation date of six months from the date of adoption.

On February 27, 2025, the Ordinance came into effect for all new residential development applications.

Changes to Chapter 99-9(C) of the Code of Sussex County

On December 10, 2024, and in furtherance of Objective 4.1.2 and 4.4 of the Comprehensive Plan, the Sussex County Council adopted an Ordinance that clarified the criteria to be considered in the consideration of subdivision applications. Of note is that the Ordinance, which came into effect on June 10, 2025, requires major subdivision applications to include a forest assessment report along with the preliminary plat. If woodlands or mature forests that contain high habitat value are found, these areas are required to be conserved to the maximum extent possible.

Open Space – Change in Definition

On December 10, 2024, and in furtherance of Objective 4.3.2 and Strategies 4.3.2.3 and 3.4.2.4 (“Promote new development that incorporates usable open space and mitigates for the protection or replacement of environmental resources in subdivision design”), the Sussex County Council adopted an Ordinance that further clarifies the definition of “Open Space”. The Ordinance specifically clarifies that clubhouses, community buildings, and recreational facilities, including swimming pools, game courts, tot lots, and playgrounds, are not included in the definition of Open Space. The Ordinance also clarifies that small fragments of land of less than 10,000 square feet in area shall not be counted towards the minimum open space requirement.

Land Use Reform Working Group (2025)

In 2025, the Land Use Reform Working Group was established by the County Council to review land use trends in Sussex County and to provide recommendations to the Council for possible changes in the County Code and Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The ten-member Working Group includes representatives from a diverse group of stakeholders, including representatives from the Sussex County Farm Bureau, the Office of State Planning Coordination, the Delaware Department of Transportation, and Affordable Housing Advocate, and Environmental Group, and a Citizens’ Group.



Photo 1: Showing the First Meeting of the Land Use Reform Working Group on March 27, 2025

The first meeting of the Working Group, to which the Public was able to attend and participate, was held on March 27, 2025. Subsequent meetings were held on April 10, 2025, May 1, 2025, May 19, 2025, and June 12, 2025. The Working Group is currently in the process of preparing draft recommendations to the County Council, with publication of the recommendations likely to follow in fall 2025. Once recommendations are published, these are likely to be considered by the County Council in fall 2025.

LAND USE APPLICATIONS

In the reporting year, there has been a change in the number and type of applications received. Since July 1, 2024, the Planning & Zoning Department has received a total of 57 applications for Conditional Uses and 37 Changes of Zone, compared with a total of 76 and 15, respectively, for the previous 12-month period.

	Change of Zone	Conditional Use
July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020	30	41
July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021	21	55
July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022	42	83
July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023	25	68
July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024	15	76
July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025	37	57

Total Conditional Use and Change of Zone applications by received date

During the reporting year, the total number of Major Subdivision applications has remained constant at 9, whilst the total number of lots collectively proposed has decreased from the previous year, to a total of 2,042 lots, as outlined in the table below:

	Total Number of Applications	Total Number of Lots Proposed
July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020	24	942
July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021	34	1,817
July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022	32	3,334
July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023	19	1,556
July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024	9	2,557
July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025	9	2,042

Total of Major Subdivision Applications by received date

Major subdivisions include applications for the creation of more than 5 lots or on parcels where the permitted number of minor subdivisions has been utilized. The above subdivision totals do not include Change of Zone applications for either Planned Commercial Zoning Districts (C-4), or

Residential Planned Communities (“RPC”s). Both of these types of applications can include residential components.

The County continues to see growth across all sectors, including residential, commercial, agricultural, and industrial. Along with this growth, there has been a recent increase over the past three years in applications for solar arrays and renewable energy-related development. In total, there have been 47 different applications proposed across Sussex County for solar arrays and solar-related development. Six of these applications have been received in the reporting period from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Sussex County continues to experience dynamic changes in economic development, with both long-standing industries and new opportunities shaping growth throughout the region.

Agricultural Highlights

Agriculture remains the backbone of Sussex County’s economy. In 2024, this sector generated over **\$1.2 billion** in market value. The county ranked as the **top U.S. producer of broiler chickens and lima beans**, and among the top 2% of counties nationwide in vegetable production. Approximately 270,000 acres—45% of county land—are dedicated to farming, with 1,374 farms averaging 196 acres each.

Over **35,000 acres** of farmland have been permanently preserved through the Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Program, helping to protect Sussex County’s rural character. In September 2024, the state launched the **Delaware Agricultural Financing Program** to support farmers with expanded lending opportunities.

Agritourism continued to grow, with farms like the Parsons Family operation in Dagsboro offering U-pick fields, farm stores, fall festivals, and field trips. Meanwhile, Delaware farmers’ markets set a record in 2023 with **\$4.14 million** in sales, 52% of which came from fresh produce.

Despite these positive trends, challenges remain, including pressure from development and the need for infrastructure upgrades. Balancing growth and preservation remains a key priority.

Tourism and Workforce Housing

Tourism remains a major economic influence in Sussex County, especially in the beach towns that attract large numbers of visitors each year. However, the industry faces ongoing challenges, particularly with seasonal workforce housing shortages. This issue continues to impact on businesses that rely on summer labor, highlighting the need for innovative housing solutions to support this vital sector.

Community Spotlights – Seaford, Delaware

Seaford is experiencing a dramatic economic transformation, with major investment revitalizing the city's downtown core. Once suffering from nearly 90% commercial vacancy, the area now boasts over 90% occupancy. This turnaround is due in large part to the Delaware Downtown Development District Program and a \$60 million redevelopment initiative.

At the center of the city's resurgence is the **Nylon Capital Center**, a mixed-use project designed to bring jobs, healthcare, and education to western Sussex County. The center features a new Delaware Technical Community College facility focused on workforce training, a TidalHealth medical site to increase access to healthcare, and commercial spaces aimed at supporting small businesses and startups.

Additionally, Strategy 9.2.2.3 of the 2018 Sussex County Comprehensive Plan calls for the exploration of public-private partnerships for the development of additional industrial parks within the County. The **Seaford Business Park** on Route 13 (Tax Map #331-04.00-19.00) is shaping into a major commercial and light industrial hub. The 106-acre site, currently zoned C-2 Highway Commercial, is proposed for partial rezoning to M-1 Light Industrial. Phase I includes a 108,000 SF building and an 86,000 SF building for industrial use, with a projected cost of \$17.4 million. The entire site plan envisions 1.3 million SF of development, with an estimated total investment of more than \$75 million. This project received \$1.9 million in funding from the Delaware Site Readiness Fund and has been supported by Sussex County Economic Development.

Thos. Somerville Co., a wholesale distributor of HVAC and plumbing supplies, opened a 60,000 SF facility in Seaford on November 4, 2024, employing twenty-two people. Located on a 15-acre site at 6095 Whitehurst Drive, the company plans to add a decorative plumbing showroom and certified training center in 2025.

Patriot Aluminum Fence, a veteran-owned manufacturer, relocated from Denton, Maryland to Seaford in early 2025. Now employing thirty-two full-time workers, the company produces high-quality aluminum fencing for residential and commercial customers. Their move was facilitated with assistance from Sussex County Economic Development and represents a significant investment in the county's manufacturing sector.

Community Spotlights – Bridgeville, Delaware

Mountaire Farms has purchased 167 acres of land near the intersection of U.S. Route 113 and Route 404 in Bridgeville, Delaware, for \$8.5 million. The site will be home to a state-of-the-art feed mill with grain storage and packing facilities. The facility is planned to produce up to 30,000 tons of feed per week and will include at least six large silos with a total storage capacity of approximately three million bushels.

A key feature of the project is a rail spur running along the southern edge of the property, capable of accommodating up to 100 rail cars to support efficient grain delivery. The project is expected to create around 250 construction jobs and approximately 84 permanent positions once operational. While a specific construction timeline has not been announced, Mountaire is actively advancing the project through engineering, design, and regulatory approval phases. The investment supports the company's broader strategy to expand its feed production capabilities and optimize grain transportation. This is an important economic driver in Sussex County and Sussex County Economic Development is doing everything to keep this project moving.

The **Bridgeville Warehouse Complex**, located at 20354 Sussex Highway, will bring 132,900 SF of new industrial space across two parcels. One parcel (5.78 acres) includes a 52,900 SF building aimed at a single-user tenant, while the other (8.44 acres) offers approximately 80,000 SF of warehouse space divided into multiple units. The \$12.4 million project is expected to generate 150–250 jobs and has received \$1 million from the Site Readiness Matching Grant. With strong demand for industrial space

along the US 13 corridor, this project is well-positioned to attract small and medium-sized manufacturers. It is supported by Sussex County Economic Development and developed by experienced local partners.

Community Spotlights – Laurel, Delaware

Generations Welding & Contracting, LLC, a family-owned business established in 2017, continues to grow in Laurel. Owner Steve Coleman, along with his wife Carrie and their children, launched the business with strong community relationships and customer service. In 2024, the company acquired an industrial site with a rail spur—formerly the Southern States property—allowing for direct steel deliveries. The purchase was made using financing from the Sussex County Economic Development Offices' ExciteSussex Loan Program. Now with 21 employees, Generations Welding is a model for small business success in Sussex County.

Community Spotlights – Frankford, Delaware

Fisher's Popcorn of Delaware has expanded significantly, moving from a 2,000 SF facility in Fenwick Island to a nearly 10,000 SF facility on Route 20 near U.S. 113. The new space features advanced equipment that has increased production capabilities substantially—from 8 bags per minute to up to 35. The company employs 22 full-time staff and plans to add 20 wholesale jobs over the next three years. With support from Sussex County Economic Development, Fisher's Popcorn received a \$60,000 Jobs Performance Grant and a \$145,500 Capital Expenditure Grant from the Delaware Strategic Fund, totaling up to \$205,500, to support this growth.

Economic Development – Program Highlights

The **Transportation Infrastructure Investment Fund (TIIF)** provides grants to help businesses offset transportation improvement costs. Administered by DelDOT in collaboration with the Delaware Division of Small Business, TIIF has awarded \$12,276,757 to seven projects in Sussex County. Sussex County Economic Development played a supporting role in many of these successful applications.

Sussex County Kitchen Incubator, Georgetown, DE

The Sussex County Kitchen Incubator officially opened on November 7, 2023, with a grand opening event at Delaware Technical Community College's Owens Campus in Georgetown. A soft launch in late April 2023 gave early access to foodpreneurs to begin using the space.

As of June 11, 2025, the incubator has 31 active members, with 21 businesses in the onboarding process and 17 more considering membership. This licensed, shared-use commercial kitchen supports foodpreneurs by offering affordable rental space, technical assistance, and business resources.

The incubator helps remove high-cost barriers to entry, giving small food businesses, farmers, caterers, and food truck operators access to a professional production facility without the burden of building their own. It also offers support in critical areas such as distribution, marketing, branding, pricing, insurance, and financing—empowering local foodpreneurs to start, grow, and thrive while contributing to a stronger regional food economy.

ExciteSussex Loan Fund

Launched in December 2017, the **ExciteSussex Loan Fund** is a strategic public-private partnership between Sussex County Government, Discover Bank, and the Grow America Fund. The fund was created to provide low-interest, long-term financing to support business expansion, job creation, and economic development throughout the county.

Originally launched as a \$4 million fund, and after strong demand led to the Sussex County Council growing the fund —first to \$16 million, and again in December 2024 to **\$25 million**. Importantly, only **25%** of the total loan pool is sourced from County funds, while **75%** is leveraged from private investment through Discover Bank.

As of **June 11, 2025**, the ExciteSussex Loan Fund has issued **\$8,208,000** in loans to **11 businesses**, which collectively employ **251 people**. The **average loan size** is approximately **\$745,182**, and the **County investment per job** created is **\$8,175**. These figures highlight the fund's effectiveness in leveraging limited public resources to support private-sector growth and sustainable job creation.

WASTEWATER

Sussex County continues to increase the availability of central sewer to environmentally sensitive areas of the county. Construction is complete and connections have begun to the final phase of the Herring Creek project. Sanitary sewer collection and transmission systems for Long Neck Communities, Pintail Pointe and Joy Beach Phase 1 are complete, and connections have begun. The Chapel Branch project is complete, removing two large private community onsite systems from the area. The Lochwood vacuum sewer project is complete with all AirVac pods installed awaiting commissioning and subsequent connections. There are several projects in various stages of bidding or construction including Countryside Hamlet, Tanglewood, Oak Acres, Warwick Park Phase 1, and Briarwood. The Wolfe Runne and Blackwater Village projects have been abandoned based on the communities' rejection of the financing packages and resulting sewer assessments. Water quality projects in design include Joy Beach Phase 2, Warwick Park Phase 2, and Slaughter Beach, with Indian River Acres, Bethany Forest, Beaver Dam Road, Cool Spring, Red Fox Run, Bay Oaks, and Love Creek MHC in the planning stages.

The County has entered into a design-build project for the 5.7± mile transmission line from the county's Piney Neck Regional Wastewater Facility to our South Coastal Regional Wastewater Facility (SCRWF) for treatment and disposal. The project will include a tie-in location for a new force main redirecting flow from part of the Town of Frankford collection area to SCWRF. The overall project will eliminate the treatment and disposal at the Piney Neck RWF allowing for repurposing of the facility.

The County-owned and operated regional wastewater facilities are all in various stages of upgrades meeting the 20-year demand. The status summary is as follows:

- South Coastal RWF upgrade to 10.0 MGD was completed in 2023.
- The Inland Bays RWF upgrade to 4.0 MGD is under construction with completion in 2027.
- Wolfe Neck RWF upgrade to 4.0 MGD is in the design stage.

The County continues its effort to utilize private utility infrastructure owned by regulated utilities under bilateral agreement(s) in an effort to prevent the installation of parallel underutilized or redundant infrastructure. One such endeavor is the redirection of County-owned PS207 to the Artesian owned force main that accepts flow to their facility near Milton.

Water

The County is currently under construction of the Winding Creek Village Optimized Water District project. The County Council approved the creation of the optimized area water district in October of 2017. The County is anticipating completion by fall of 2025 with connections immediately following project completion. The County is undertaking upgrades to the water storage approach at the Coastal Airpark and continues connections in the Ellendale water district area.

Millsboro EMS Station 103

Construction was completed on a new state-of-the-art 4,380 SF Paramedic Station 103 in Millsboro in the late Winter 2025 with full staff occupancy occurring in March. The station building includes a dedicated crew area, kitchen, two bunk rooms, bathrooms, office, and a full 2-bay garage. The new station replaces a previous undersized, temporary EMS location in Dagsboro. The station is situated adjacent to additional County-owned property which will allow for future growth if needed.

The station building and site amenities were designed to blend in with the surrounding mix of commercial and residential properties. The new location enhances emergency response capabilities with easier access to both north and southbound routes along the U.S. 113 corridor, contributing to safer and reduced response times, positively impacting patient care.

Green Infrastructure Investments in Sussex County

Sussex County continues to make significant progress in protecting local waterways, reducing flooding, enhancing natural landscapes, and generating alternative floating solar power through innovative green infrastructure projects.

In November 2024, the County completed the Cannon Road/Inland Bays Road Water Quality Improvements Project. This multi-year initiative introduced several nature-based solutions, including a wet pond, a traditional stormwater wetland, two engineered floodplains, over three miles of bioswales, and Delaware's first submerged gravel wetland for wastewater treatment. These features now help treat stormwater runoff from more than 400 acres of farmland and reduce nuisance flooding along Cannon Road.

Looking ahead, the County has secured a grant from the Delaware Forestry Resiliency Fund to reforest over 40 acres of former cropland near the Inland Bays Regional Wastewater Facility. This effort will use native trees like Bald Cypress and Atlantic White Cedar to support local wildlife and create natural screening for nearby neighborhoods.

Sussex County is also wrapping up the first year of its new Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMP) Maintenance Program. This program ensures that all County-owned stormwater facilities are properly maintained and meet state regulations—helping to keep our communities safe and our environment healthy.

In addition, the County has approved a long-term lease with an alternative energy company for the installation of up to 10MW AC power in two of the effluent lagoons at the Wolfe Neck Regional Wastewater Facility. The project is developed under the Delaware Public Service Commission's Community Energy Facility Program. Phase 1 of the facility is scheduled to be online by the end of 2026.

Peterkins Branch Stormwater Improvements Project

Design is underway for a new stormwater management facility near the eastern side of Delaware Coastal Airport. This project is a key part of our ongoing efforts to improve water quality and reduce flooding in the area. Once complete, the facility will treat stormwater runoff from the airport, the Delaware Coastal Business and Industrial Parks, and nearby residential, agricultural, and commercial properties. In addition to filtering pollutants, the system will be designed to manage heavy rainfall events, helping to protect airport infrastructure and reduce the risk of flooding and uncontrolled

runoff into Peterkins Branch. This project reflects the County's commitment to sustainable growth and environmental protection.

Community Improvements

Sussex County continues to coordinate with the State and local communities to complete a wide variety of community improvements initiatives. Over the past year, the Engineering Department team was instrumental in leading and completing a number of different community projects including two Chapter 96 Sussex Community Improvements road projects, a Chapter 95 Streetlighting upgrade project, a Community Transportation Fund (CTF) church parking lot improvement, and a large community infrastructure finish-out project. The Engineering Department also successfully managed the continuation of the Master Plan implementation at the James Farm Ecological Preserve, which included the addition of a 3-season educational center, new maintenance building, paddle sports storage facility, outdoor presentation spaces and related site improvements to complete the campus vision with a design holding true to the agricultural heritage of the property and region.

HOUSING

Sussex County continues to promote fair and affordable housing through the Planning & Zoning Department and the Community Development and Housing Department. In October 2022, Sussex County Council approved an ordinance seeking to provide more affordable rental opportunities for Sussex County residents. This ordinance not only amended Chapter 72 of the Sussex County Code to streamline the existing Sussex County Rental Program (SCRIP) process but also added a new and substantial change to the zoning code to allow "by-right" multi-family housing projects at a density of twelve units per acre if at least thirty percent of those units are set aside as SCRIP units. As of this writing, four applications have been submitted following this Code change, which, if approved, will result in the creation of new SCRIP units on the eastern side Sussex County. This includes the Chapel Branch apartment development that broke ground recently and is currently under construction. Developed by Volker, a national affordable-housing developer, all of the units within Chapel Branch will be affordably priced with 24 of the units participating in the County's SCRIP program. Previously, the first large-scale housing project approved and constructed as an SCRIP project known as Coastal Tide was expanded in 2023. To date all 32 SCRIP units within that apartment project are occupied by

eligible tenants earning less than 80% of Area Median Income for Sussex County. In addition, the application at Cool Spring Crossing, which is currently under consideration, proposes 175 units to be included within the County Rental Program Ordinance (“SCRPO”).

The County continues to work with applicants proposing residential developments to explore ways to deliver an increase in affordably priced units within the County.

The Sussex County Housing Trust Fund (SCHTF) was officially launched in April 2022 and has continued to be funded by Sussex County Council dollars. SCHTF includes one main component: a direct homebuyer assistance program. The homebuyer assistance program provides grants of \$20,000 for down payment and closing costs for households below 120% AMI seeking to purchase a home in Sussex County. During the reporting year, the County has provided direct homebuyer assistance to seventeen (17) qualifying households.

During the reporting year, Sussex County exhausted the allocation of \$3.2 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for home repairs, assisting a total of 101 households. With the annual allocation of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME) funding, and Sussex County Council-funded Emergency Repair funding, nearly 250 households were assisted with owner-occupied rehabilitation and emergency repairs, water and sewer hookups for low- and moderate-income households. The County continues to work and partner with the Sussex Housing Group and its affiliates to coordinate public/private partnerships that leverage dollars for community development efforts in impacted communities.

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

Since the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan in 2019, the County has protected the following lands in perpetuity as open space:

- On October 1, 2024, the purchase of a 165-acre property, known as the 'Layfield property,' located just outside the northwest edge of Dagsboro. The County bought the land for \$2.65 million from Riverview Associates III LLC, which reduced the price by over half a million dollars. An image is shown below:



Photo 2: Showing the Layfield Property in 2024

- In May 2023, A 294-acre tract known as the Forest of Broadkill Preserve, bordering Ingram Branch, off Shingle Point Road outside Milton. The property, a mix of fields and wooded areas costing \$1.85 million, will be managed by the Sussex County Land Trust, and is expected to eventually include a publicly accessible trail system;
- In May 2023, An 11-acre assemblage of three wooded parcels, known as the Wright properties, along the Nanticoke River near Seaford. The parcels, costing approximately

\$460,000, will be managed by the Nanticoke Conservancy and feature public access at a later date.

- In 2022, Fifty-one acres known as the Hopkins Preserve, along Sweetbriar Road, just north of U.S. 9, outside Lewes, for a price of \$1.5 million. The property owner, Walter Hopkins, and his family (a fourth-generation farmer), discounted the sale price by 50 percent in exchange for the parcel being used at a later time as open space and a recreational amenity, specifically as part of a trailhead that will be developed and managed by the Sussex County Land Trust for the still-under-construction Georgetown to Lewes Trail;
- In 2022, Forty-seven acres known as the Jones Family tract, for \$650,000, located off Conaway Road adjacent to the State-owned Midlands Wildlife Area, west of Millsboro;
- In 2022, Forty acres, named the Dawson Bros. tract, for a price of \$2.5 million, located along the south side of Del. Route 24, near the Nanticoke Indian Center, east of Millsboro;
- In 2022, Thirteen acres, for a sale price of \$400,000, adjoining a larger parcel acquired by the County in 2020 and collectively known as the Dorman Family Farm Preserve, located along Herring Creek and Sarah Run, near Angola.

Protection of Lands Through the Subdivision Code

The Sussex County Subdivision Code allows applicants to apply under the cluster development option whereby the lot size and lot width requirement of the AR-1 Zoning District is reduced for subdivisions that provide a minimum of 30% of the site area as open space. This option is also available within the Coastal Area.

During the review period, the following areas of open space were approved or recommended for approval under this option (shown on the next page)

County Project Reference Number	Subdivision Name	Total # of Lots/Units	Open Space Retained (in Acres)
2022-33	Wilson's Landing	39	20.91
2023-03	Showell Farm (Estuary Phase 6)	45	8.42
2023-01	Anchor's Run (Expansion)	356	89.11
2023-05	Lockhaven	18	25.22
2023-07	Seaside	359	141.93
2022-10	Westlake (F.K.A Raley Farm)	646	147.9
C/Z 1911	Patriot's Glen Phase 2	128	9.94
C/Z 672	Woods at Angola Beach	90	15.35
C/Z 1991	Sycamore Chase Expansion	176	39.18
TOTAL		1,857	497.96

The total new open space approved during the review period is 497.96 Acres. Land approved as “open space”, as defined by the Code of Sussex County, must be maintained in a predominantly undeveloped or natural state, including lands used for agricultural purposes, promote conservation, protect wildlife, or serve as a buffer between residential and nonresidential areas and/or commercial and noncommercial areas.

The table below illustrates the total amount of open space created over the past 5 years.

Year	Total Open Space Protected
July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021	362.33 ac.
July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022	453.02 ac.
July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023	657.97 ac.
July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024	456.94 ac.
July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025	497.96. ac.
5-Year Total	2,428.22 ac. (3.79 square miles)

The table shows that cumulatively, the total amount of open space protected is significant, and that this number continues to grow each year.

INTER-GOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

In addition to cooperating with State Agencies on various technical matters throughout the year, Sussex County continues to work with the municipalities within Sussex County to share and receive data to provide accurate information to the public. In January 2025, staff provided comments to the Town of Bethel on its proposed draft Comprehensive Plan documents.

In addition to providing comments on emerging Comprehensive Plans, the Planning & Zoning Department has continued to participate in Delaware Department Public Workshops and events held throughout the year, including the DelDOT Five Points group, the Southeast Sussex Study, and the Coastal Corridors Study monitoring committee held between 2024-2025. The most recent meeting of the Coastal Corridors monitoring committee was held on June 16, 2026.

In addition, in the first week of June 2024, the County assisted the Town of Slaughter Beach by providing technical support as part of their FEMA Community Assisted Visit. Following this visit, County staff have continued to provide technical support to the Town, to address any technical matters identified by FEMA. Such visits, which occur approximately every 4-5 years for Counties and Municipalities, allow for FEMA staff to visit each jurisdiction to review the implementation of adopted Flood Codes. Sussex County’s last Community Assisted Visit was in 2019, and the County

received an excellent report following the visit – with the County being formally declared as being in “good standing” with FEMA in terms of its compliance with the adopted Flood Code contained within the Code of Sussex County.

LEGISLATIVE CHANGES IMPACTING COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

As reported in last year's update, during the 2023-2024 reporting period, changes to Titles 9 and 22 of the Delaware Code were considered by the 152nd General Assembly. Senate Bill 237 requires that, with effect from November 15, 2026, New Castle, Kent, and Sussex Counties' Comprehensive Plans contain strategies to increase community resiliency and address the impacts of climate change. Senate Bill 237 also requires that County Comprehensive Plans consider forests, habitat areas, and wildlife corridors, and that the housing element consider anticipated growth areas and encourage new housing growth away from areas vulnerable to inland and coastal flooding.

In May 2025, the University of Delaware presented to the Sussex County Planning & Zoning Commission to discuss the implementation of Senate Bill 237 and the likely implications for the next Comprehensive Plan Update, which is due to begin in the next reporting period.

In addition, on October 3, 2022, Senate Bill 327 was adopted by the 151st General Assembly. The Bill amends Title 9 of the Delaware Code to require that, effective January 1, 2023, all three Counties in Delaware must include an educational element in their next Comprehensive Plan update.

CONCLUSION

The 2024-2025 reporting period has seen solid progress toward the implementation of the Strategies contained within the 2018 Comprehensive Plan. The County looks forward to continuing to implement the Comprehensive Plan during the 2025-2026 reporting period.

Initial work for the 10-year update is due to commence in the 2025-2026 reporting period, with public workshops before both the Planning & Zoning Commission and the County Council anticipated to follow in the 2025-2026, and 2026-2027 reporting periods. Public Hearings on the next Comprehensive Plan Update, along with submittals to the State of Delaware for review by the Office

of State Planning and Coordination, are then expected to follow in the 2027-2028 reporting period, to enable the County to be ready for submittal to the Governor for certification ahead of the 10-year anniversary of the current Comprehensive Plan on December 4, 2028.