



DELAWARE COUNTY 2035

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

INNOVATE | DIVERSIFY | ADAPT

Executive Summary



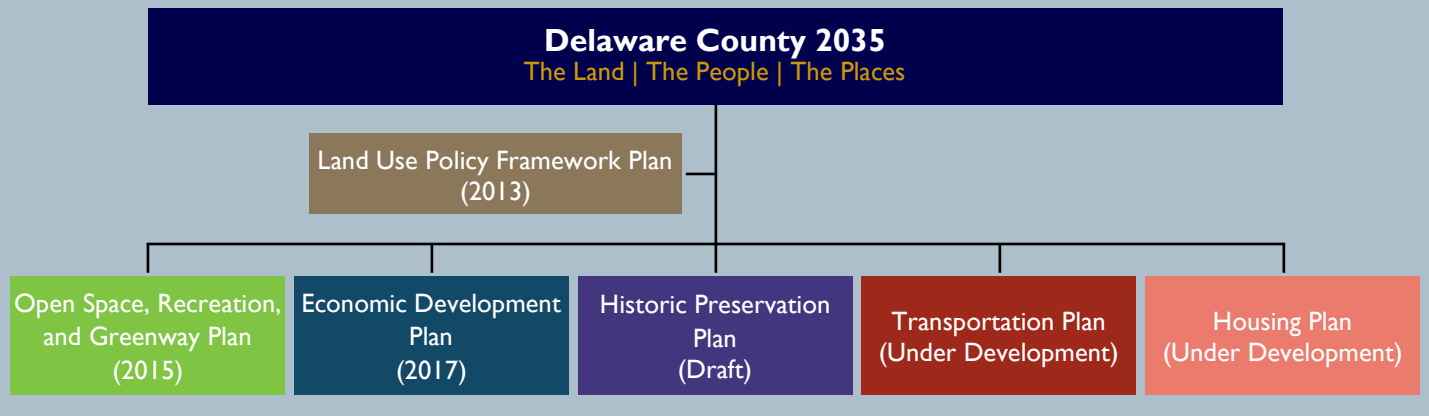
The diverse character of communities is one of Delaware County’s strongest assets. From the historic architecture of Mature Neighborhoods and the rolling hills of Growing Suburbs to the cultural attractions of Central Places and Activity Corridors, the diverse characteristics of Delaware County play an important role in economic development.

The *Economic Development Plan* outlines a long-range, place-based strategy that builds upon these unique features. It identifies trends in industry, employment, and housing that affect the markets of the twenty first century and connects them to an action plan tailored to the different types of places. The plan emphasizes the importance of maintaining the unique sense of place across the County as communities address the changing needs of a twenty-first-century economy.

This plan is a component of Delaware County 2035, the County’s comprehensive plan, and directly correlates with *Growing from Within*, the County’s 10-year economic development strategy.

Delaware County 2035

Delaware County 2035, the County’s comprehensive plan, establishes a long-range vision for the County and provides municipalities with a framework for local planning efforts. It is a network of plans comprised of a *Land Use Policy Framework Plan*, which established broad policies, and more detailed component plans which provide *specific* goals, objectives, and actions.



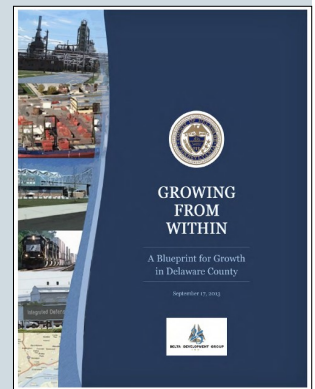
BACKGROUND

The character of communities in Delaware County plays an important role in the economic development strategy. The *Economic Development Plan* uses the community framework established for Delaware County 2035 to organize the place-based strategy.

The Delaware County 2035 community framework organizes the diverse place types of the County into an array of Character Areas, which are broad areas with similar development patterns and characteristics. The two primary types of Character Areas are **Mature Neighborhoods** and **Growing Suburbs**. Mature Neighborhoods are those that are essentially built-out; current development generally occurs in the form of infill of unused or vacant sites or in the redevelopment or renovation of older properties. Growing Suburbs, however, still have undeveloped lands, making them attractive for new development; the majority of new development proposed in Delaware County since 2000 has been located in Growing Suburbs. The majority of communities in the County exist in the array between Mature Neighborhoods and Growing Suburbs and have elements of both.

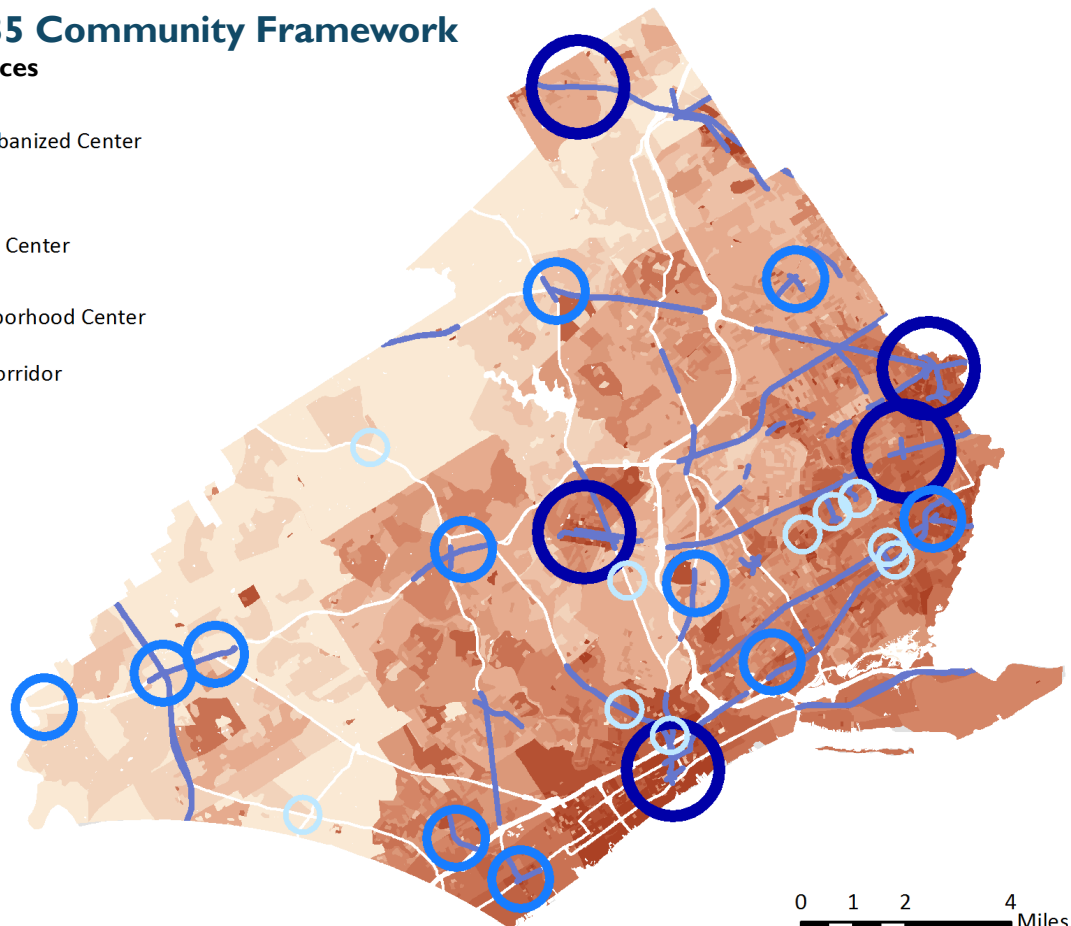
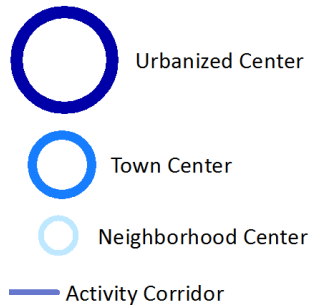
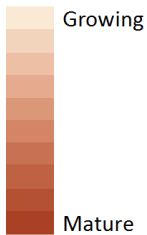
The community framework of Delaware County 2035 also identifies **Central Places** and **Activity Corridors**, which are community focal points that reinforce or establish a sense of place and which differ depending on the underlying Character Area. Central Places are the “downtown” and “main street” areas of the County and can vary in scale. Activity Corridors are linear-shaped places that flank major transportation corridors or highway interchanges with intensive development. Examples, but not an exhaustive list, of Central Places and Activity Corridors are shown on the map below.

The *Economic Development Plan* serves as a link between *Growing from Within*, the County’s 10-year economic development strategy, and the County’s long-range vision identified in Delaware County 2035. *Growing from Within* included extensive outreach and coordination with local officials and business leaders. As such, the broad strategy outlined in that plan, in combination with the *Land Use Policy Framework Plan* of Delaware County 2035, served as the foundation for the *Economic Development Plan*.



Delaware County 2035 Community Framework

Character Areas Central Places



OVERVIEW

The *Economic Development Plan* is a long-range strategy to build on the unique places of Delaware County by recognizing their needs and opportunities. It identifies and compiles information on trends in the economy at the local, regional, and national levels and connects these trends with the place types of the community framework. Several trends were revealed from this analysis, including a strong desire for transit-accessible housing in walkable neighborhoods. It also shows that a significant increase in online retail has created a desire for shopping to incorporate elements of leisure and entertainment. Additionally, the plan identifies the impact that growing competition for employee talent, along with new technology that provides more flexibility for location of work places, has on the community. Companies are increasingly locating offices in places that will help to attract and retain employees.

A place-based strategy for economic development was developed because these economic trends are interwoven with the built environment. This approach provides a strategy for communities to build on their unique character while capitalizing on and adapting to changing economic trends. Key attributes which describe the features of a community that will thrive in the future were identified for each type of place.

While the plan uses the community character to organize the place-based strategy, communities can consider a mix of these place-based strategies based on their vision and as opportunities and needs change over time.

GOALS

As part of the planning process, three overarching goals were identified to guide the economic development planning efforts in the County. They are the result of the research and analysis compiled for this plan and guided by both Delaware County 2035 and *Growing from Within*. The goals of the *Economic Development Plan* are:

INNOVATE

Innovate business recruitment and retention strategies to attract new employers.

DIVERSIFY

Diversify the built environment to attract a range of people and foster new businesses.

ADAPT

Adapt to and anticipate changing market needs of businesses.

Five objectives, each with its own list of actions, were established to guide the implementation of the place-based economic development strategy in line with the three over-arching goals. The five objectives are:

OBJECTIVES

1

Support the economic competitiveness of **Delaware County's** communities through place-based investment, promotion, and outreach.

2

Strengthen and preserve **Mature Neighborhoods** through investments and redevelopment that foster their unique character.

3

Support **Growing Suburbs** as communities for regional growth while maintaining current assets that make them attractive places.

4

Cultivate **Central Places** as mixed use destinations to live, work, and play.

5

Enhance **Activity Corridors** to improve community character and provide safe multimodal connections that attract investment.

PLACE-BASED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

I. Countywide

While this plan emphasizes place-based economic development strategies, it also identifies several strategies that are countywide in scope.

Several of the most prevalent countywide strategies include:

- Continue and diversify marketing and branding efforts that establish and highlight the County's identity as a strategic, high-value location for commercial enterprise;
- Maintain and innovate business retention and recruitment through ongoing communication and collaboration; and
- Continue to identify and support efforts to enhance global trade and to maximize the commercial and recreational potential of the Delaware River.



2. Mature Neighborhoods

Mature Neighborhoods are poised to attract a diverse group of businesses and residents in the coming decades. Their traditional neighborhood development patterns provide the unique community and town characteristics that developers are attempting to replicate in new developments.

Key attributes that will make Mature Neighborhoods of the future thrive:

- Market their unique assets and community character;
- Contain flexible and affordable working spaces that maximize proximity to other businesses and institutions of higher learning to encourage innovative new enterprises;
- Capitalize on existing buildings by retrofitting them to meet changing market needs while maintaining their unique character; and
- Incorporate infill development that is compatible with existing neighborhood form or a community-created vision of the neighborhood's future.



3. Growing Suburbs

Growing Suburbs have flourished over the past two decades, due in part to the combination of large amounts of open space in proximity to the regional transportation network. In order to remain competitive, Growing Suburbs will need to be diverse and adaptable to changing market trends.

Key attributes that will make Growing Suburbs of the future thrive:

- Provide a range of quality housing options for a variety of incomes and family types;
- Connect residents, employees, and customers to multiple transportation options;
- Develop around concentrated business and civic development in uniquely designed Central Places that build on existing infrastructure; and
- Balance the demands of continued growth with the preservation of scenic and natural resources that serve as key assets to the quality of life in these communities.



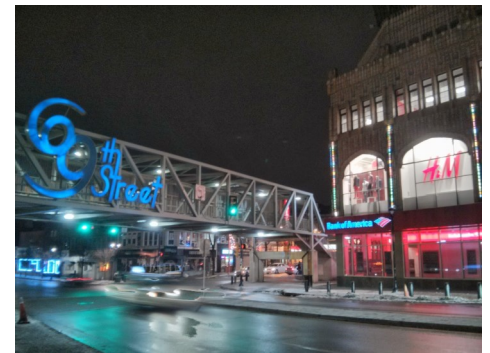


4. Central Places

Central Places historically developed as the heart of communities, with business and major civic uses growing here. The existing infrastructure provides the opportunity for cost-effective growth and redevelopment, but Central Places must encourage diverse uses and programming to fully take advantage of their potential.

Key attributes that will make Central Places of the future thrive:

- Consist of walkable, connected places with vibrant street life;
- Encompass a mix of uses, including residential when appropriate, that serve the surrounding neighborhoods;
- Provide a range of quality housing options for a variety of incomes and family types;
- Continue to be hubs of community facilities and institutional and civic services while building on market opportunities from these uses;
- Build around existing infrastructure and maintain and improve the systems to remain effective and efficient; and
- Incorporate infill development that fits with the existing neighborhood form or a community created vision of the neighborhood's future;



5. Activity Corridors

Activity Corridors take on many of the characteristics of the underlying Character Areas. As such, conditions vary across the different Activity Corridors. Increasing the safety for all users will help Activity Corridors to adjust the desire for more walkable and enjoyable shopping destinations.

Key attributes that will make Activity Corridors of the future thrive:

- Offer a range of travel options as part of a safe and complete, multimodal transportation network;
- Connect to adjacent commercial developments and surrounding neighborhoods;
- Promote natural and historic assets near the corridor to create a sense of unique place;
- Encompass a mix of uses, including residential when appropriate, that serve the surrounding neighborhoods;
- Build around existing infrastructure and maintain and improve the systems to remain effective and efficient; and
- Coordinate placemaking and economic development with surrounding communities to improve consistency and cost efficiency.



NEXT STEPS

As a component plan of Delaware County 2035, the *Economic Development Plan* will be used to guide the County's economic development projects and priorities. The objectives and actions listed throughout the plan provide the path for the County to meet the overarching goals of **Innovate**, **Diversify**, and **Adapt**.

The plan is intended to serve as a resource for local governments. Municipalities should reference this plan when developing their own comprehensive and economic development plans and incorporate the countywide vision as appropriate.

It will take the combined efforts for many government agencies, organizations, officials, and motivated citizens to implement the ideas and actions in this plan.

PARTNER



Strengthen partnerships with state and local agencies, local institutions, and non-profits to address community economic development needs.

IMPLEMENT



Work together to implement the objectives and actions identified in the Economic Development Plan.

EVALUATE



Periodically evaluate progress, needs, and opportunities in order to best meet the goals of the community.



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