

Delaware CEDS

*a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
for the State of Delaware*



Delaware CEDS – a program of the Delaware Economic Development Office
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Sussex Co. LAND USE Facts

I. Relationship of Land Use to Economic Development

Land-Use Policies Impacting Economic-Development Considerations

- Zoning ordinances at the municipal and county level set forth the permitted uses and intensities of uses in Sussex County.
- State-certified comprehensive plans adopted by the County and municipalities establish future land uses for these jurisdictions. Zoning must reflect the future land-use designation in the comprehensive plan.
- The Strategies for State Policies and Spending prioritizes the investment of state funds across Sussex County.

Impact of these Policies on Economic-Development Considerations

- Location: State, county, and municipal land-use policies make certain areas of the county more or less desirable targets for economic-development efforts.
- Character: The desired character of economic-development efforts is often determined through the planning process by considering environmental, infrastructure, and public-opinion conditions with implementation occurring through the formal adoption of land-use policies.

II. Trends and Existing Conditions

- Agriculture has historically been the dominant land use in Sussex County and accounted for nearly 44% of Sussex County's total area in 1997. From 1992 to 1997, just over 10,000 acres of land in Sussex County were converted from agricultural to residential use.
- Sussex County farms account for 109 of the 307 Delaware farms permanently protected through the Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Program, comprising approximately 32% of the 64,830 acres preserved in Delaware.
- Permitted land uses and intensities of use across Sussex County are established by both municipal and county zoning ordinances.

III. Projections and Plans

Delaware Population Consortium: Sussex County Projections

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Population	157,430	175,749	194,615	212,880	229,441	243,392	254,525
Households	62,646	71,645	80,120	88,417	96,144	102,611	107,256

Source: Delaware Population Consortium, Population Projection Series, September 29, 2004.

Plans

- Sussex County's 2003 Comprehensive Plan Update calls for low-density development throughout the vast majority of the county with some agriculture-related industries permitted in these areas. Higher-density development is planned for most of the municipal areas in the

county. The Seaford and Georgetown regions are designated as Employment Centers within the county.

- The area along the Atlantic coast and surrounding the Inland Bays region is designated in the 2003 Sussex County Comprehensive Plan Update as an “Environmentally Sensitive Developing Area.” The plan acknowledges both the heavy development pressure and sensitive natural resources in this area. Development proposals meeting certain thresholds in this area must be accompanied by an environmental-assessment report.
- The Strategies for State Policies and Spending generally prioritizes the most intense state investments (Level 1 and 2) for those areas in and around Sussex County municipalities. The vast majority of other areas in the county are classified as either the least-intense investment area (Level 4) or as Out of Play for development.
- Nearly all of the municipalities in Sussex County are involved in some stage of the comprehensive-planning process. These plans set forth future land uses for municipalities.

IV. Identified Opportunities and Constraints

Opportunities

- Municipalities—Municipalities have outlined their growth plans in comprehensive plans, the state has generally promoted investment in existing communities through the Livable Delaware program, the county has generally targeted higher-density development for municipal areas, and many municipalities have actively reserved appropriately zoned locations for economic-development purposes.
- Agriculture—Agriculture is the largest industry in Sussex County. The existing agriculture sector creates opportunities for the development of expanded and spin-off agriculture-related industries.

Constraints

Sensitive Natural Resources—The environmentally sensitive nature of much of Sussex County inhibits certain intense economic-development efforts in sensitive areas including, but not limited to, the Inland Bays region and the Nanticoke River region.
