



2026 Annual Report on **State Planning Issues**

*Prepared for Governor Meyer and the 153rd Delaware General Assembly
Prepared by the Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues*

This report was prepared by the Office of State Planning Coordination (OSPC), on behalf of the Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues (CCSPI), in accordance with Delaware Code (29 Del. C. c. 91). The Cabinet Secretaries and agency staff provided data, project updates, and comments to OSPC staff in the preparation of this report.

Cover image: New Road looking west, Lewes

Acknowledgements

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Many thanks to our budget analysts who provided the fiscal year 2026 budgetary data.

University of Delaware Institute for Public Administration

Special thanks to Andrew Homsey, Jennifer Reitz, and Cassandra Valcourt for their contributions with data analysis.

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Introduction

The Office of State Planning Coordination (OSPC) presents this report on behalf of the Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues (CCSPI).

Governor Meyer’s administration believes that growth and preservation reinforce each other when the right tools are in place. That’s what smart growth means, and it drives all of our work. Given this year’s significant accomplishments, I truly believe that this has been the most transformative time for State planning policy since the early 2000s.

In January, Governor Meyer implemented the 2025 Delaware Strategies for State Policies and Spending through his Executive Order #16. This Executive Order not only implemented the Strategies, but it also challenged us to create a new vision for Smart Growth for the future. As you’ll read in the “Smart Growth Visioning” section, an OSPC-led stakeholder engagement effort has resulted in an ambitious multi-year plan to implement a statewide vision for smart growth, improve our mapping of growth and preservation areas, enhance our engagement with local governments, and update the Strategies annually to reflect ongoing changes in real time.

The State Strategies Visioning process is informed by other consequential actions by the Meyer administration and the legislature. The first is Governor Meyer’s commitment to streamline State permitting processes to incentivize growth that is consistent with the State Strategies. Executive Orders #4 and #18 have led to the “Jobs First – Permitting Accelerator” program. This pilot enables State agencies to test a single permit application for all agencies, a concurrent review process and a shared timeline for action. The results will help direct growth to areas where State and local governments are ready for it, allowing Delaware to become more economically competitive at the same time.

While the administration builds out the Jobs First program, the legislature passed SB23, the Housing for Every Delawarean Act and HB 450, the ROADS-DE Act. SB23 requires municipalities with more than 2,000 residents to prepare detailed affordable housing plans along with their comprehensive plans, and HB450 replaces the Traffic Impact Study Process with an impact fee for most projects. HB450 also complements SB23 by requiring minimum residential standards in “growth zones” defined by local comprehensive plans and State Strategies Investment Levels 1 and 2. Combined, these legislative initiatives will help

implement the State Strategies framework, result in more efficient infrastructure investments, create more opportunities for affordable housing, and support climate resilience.

Finally, one more change deserves mention. During the Smart Growth Visioning workshops we again heard a frequent criticism of the State Strategies: that it lacks the “teeth” to compel local governments to act in concert with Statewide planning goals and policies. Tucked into SB23 is a consequential change in how comprehensive plans are reviewed and approved.

The bill requires that local comprehensive plans must be adopted and certified by the Governor. This change compels a level of collaboration and coordination between State and local government that is equal to their shared responsibilities for land use, infrastructure and services.

Enjoy reading about these changes, and other initiatives and data, in this Annual Report.

—David Edgell *Director, OSPC*



White Clay Creek, New Castle County

State Strategies Implementation



The Riverwalk in Milford

Development Trends

Monitoring development activity allows state agencies to track the progress of State Strategies implementation. Insights from this year's data collection follow.

Introduction

Growth management in Delaware is a collaborative effort between the state and all 60 local jurisdictions. Every year, local governments collect building permit and development application data and submit them to the Office of State Planning Coordination (**OSPC**) for analysis. Residential and non-residential land-use actions are mapped to determine the location and intensity of development over time. By overlaying development activity with State Strategies Investment levels, it is possible to gauge the effectiveness of State Strategies implementation. The results can help agencies create strategies for managing growth.

The importance of adhering to a growth strategy in our state is evidenced by the Department of Safety and Homeland Security (**DSHS**), which reports that the Delaware State Police has seen a surging complaint load. Increased policing needs will have fiscal impacts on the state's budget and a sprawling growth pattern will make it more difficult to improve response times.

Residential Trends

The numbers of dwelling units in approved development applications and building permits issued by local governments are used to interpret residential development trends. Since 2023 statewide residential development applications have increased and reached a new high in 2025. Applications for 8,980 units were received, up 19% from 2024 and 58% over 2021 (**Figure 1**).

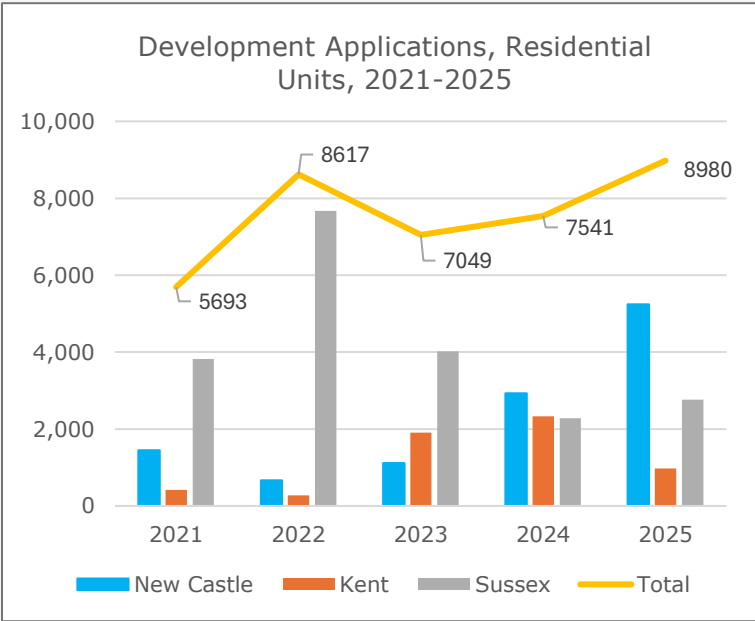
In contrast, statewide residential permits trended downward from a high of 8,485 in 2021 to 7,557 in 2025. Despite a slight



The Green in Dover, Delaware

increase in 2024, the 2021 peak of 8,485 units has not been reached or surpassed during this time. This represents a 10.94% decrease over the 5-year period (2021–2025).

Figure 1: Residential Development Applications over 5 Years



Since 2022, residential development applications in New Castle County have continued to increase, reaching a five-year high of 5,239 units, up from 2,931 units in 2024 (Table 1). In contrast, Kent County experienced a 58 percent decrease in residential applications from 2024, although applications remain higher than levels reported in 2021 and 2022. Sussex County applications increased slightly from 2024 but remain more than 60 percent below 2022 levels. Combined increases in New Castle and Sussex counties contributed to a five-year statewide high in residential development applications.

Table 1: Annual Change in Potential Dwelling Units

Residential Development Applications (# potential units)

County	2024	2025	Change (%)
New Castle	2,931	5,239	+79%
Kent	2,329	974	-58%
Sussex	2,281	2,767	+21%
Total	7,541	8,980	+19%

In New Castle County, residential permitting has remained relatively stable. Despite a decline in 2022, the 2,217 housing units permitted in 2025 were nearly identical to the 2,221 units permitted in 2021.

Kent County also experienced stable permitting activity. While the 1,133 housing units permitted in 2025 represented a five-year high, annual variation over the five-year period was less than 200 units, indicating relatively consistent residential permitting activity.

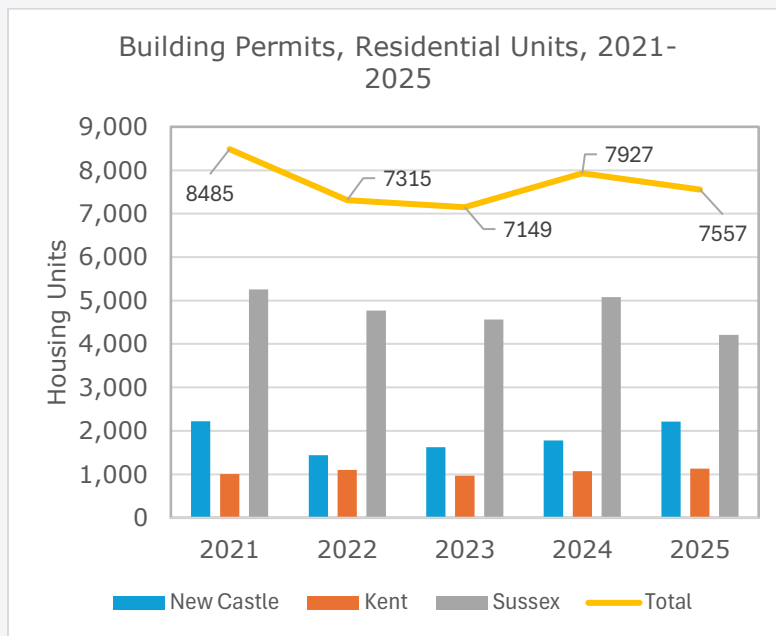
In contrast, Sussex County experienced a 17% decline in residential permits from 2024, with 4,207 units permitted in 2025—the lowest level in five years (Table 2).

As in 2024, increases in New Castle and Kent counties partially offset the decline in Sussex County. However, these increases were not enough to fully offset the decrease in Sussex County, resulting in an overall decline in statewide residential permitting activity.

Table 2: Annual Change in Dwelling Units

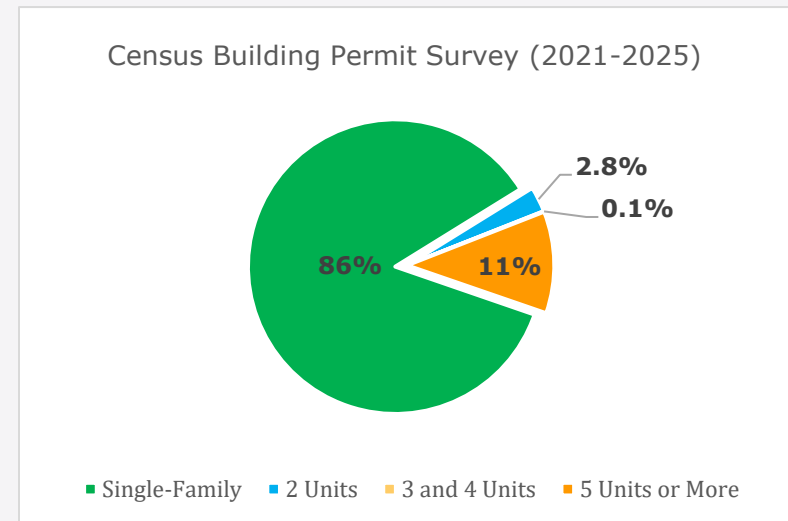
Residential Building permits (# units)

County	2024	2025	Change (%)
New Castle	1,776	2,217	+25%
Kent	1,071	1,133	+6%
Sussex	5,080	4,207	-17%
Total	7,927	7,557	-5%

Figure 2: Residential Building Permits over 5 Years

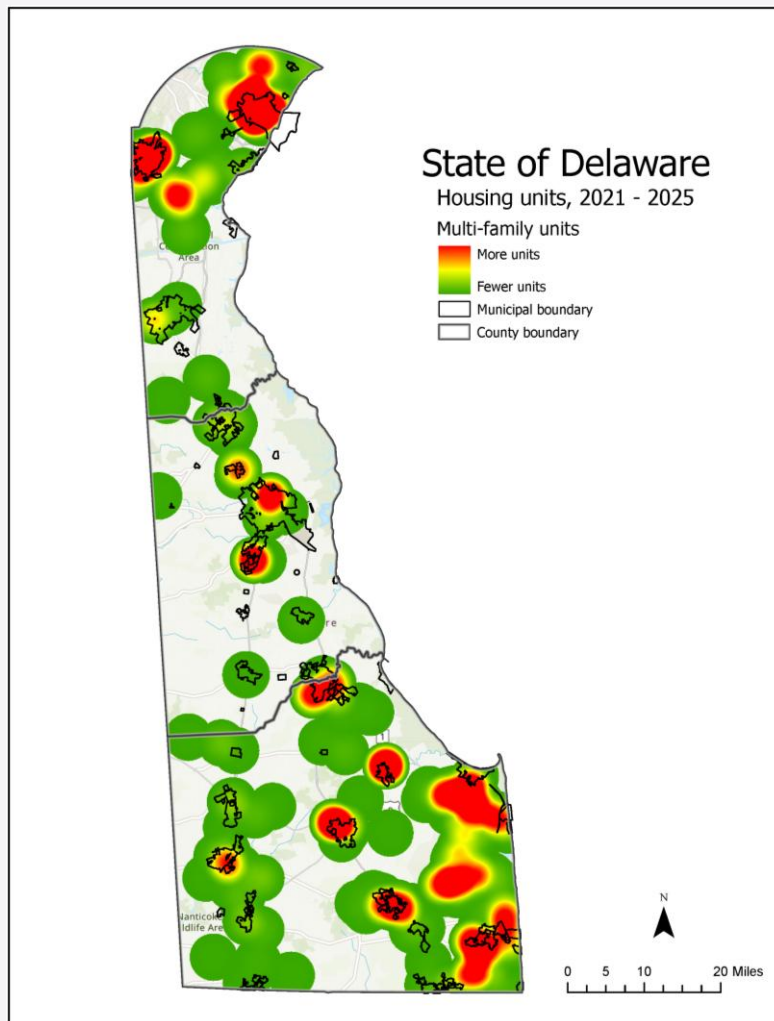
According to the US Census Bureau's Permit Survey Data, the total number of statewide building permits from 2021 to 2025 in Delaware is 34,291 units. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau provides greater detail by further breaking down

multifamily housing units into specific categories. The data shows a ratio of 86% single-family and 14% multi-family for the same time period. (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Residential Building Permits by Type*Windward Ridge Development, Dover*

When these units are mapped, it becomes apparent they are geared toward specific segments of the market and are not necessarily affordable to the broader market (**Figure 4**). A significant concentration continues to exist in the resort area.

Figure 4: Concentrations of Multi-Family Development
(including condos and other land-lease communities)

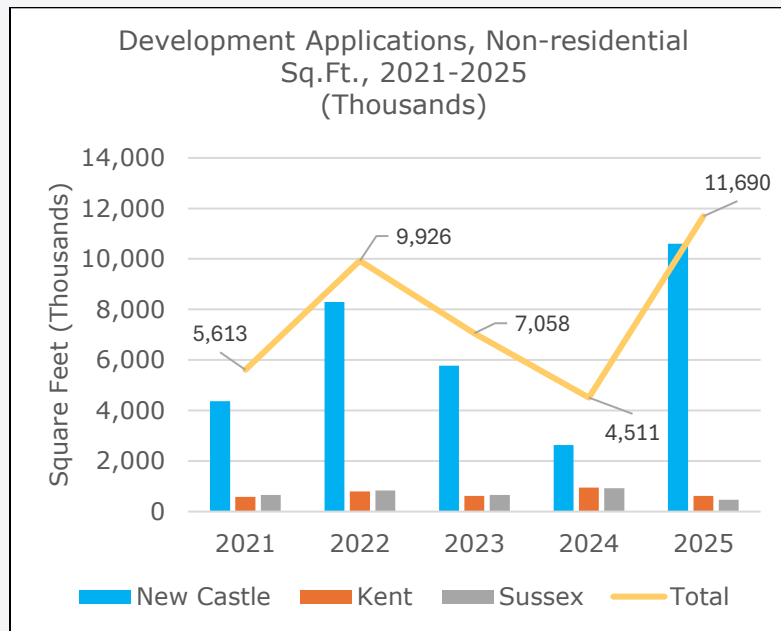


Non-Residential Trends

Total building square footage in approved development applications and building permits issued by local governments are used to interpret non-residential development trends for commercial, office, industrial, and institutional uses. Statewide non-residential development remains highly variable, largely due to the size of a single development proposal. In 2025, this related directly to the e-commerce distribution center application in New Castle County, which accounts for nearly half of the total square footage proposed across the state. The total square footage proposed in 2025 (11,691,215 sq ft) is more than 159% higher than the 4,511,217 sq ft in 2024. The amount of square footage permitted has increased by 66% from 3,819,002 sq ft in 2024 to 6,624,737 sq ft in 2025.

County-specific development approval data continues to show that New Castle County has the most potential square footage for non-residential projects (**Table 3**). Both Kent and Sussex experienced sizeable decreases in proposed square footage (-34% and -49% respectively) while the Proposed square footage in New Castle County tripled since 2024. Despite the decrease in Kent and Sussex, the increase in NCC still accounted for 159% statewide increase.

See more on the Development Trends Dashboard!
devtrends.stateplanning.delaware.gov

Figure 5: Total Square Footage Over 5 Years*New Kent County Family Courthouse, Dover***Table 3: Annual Change in Potential Square Footage**

Non-Residential Development Applications
(potential ft² in thousands)

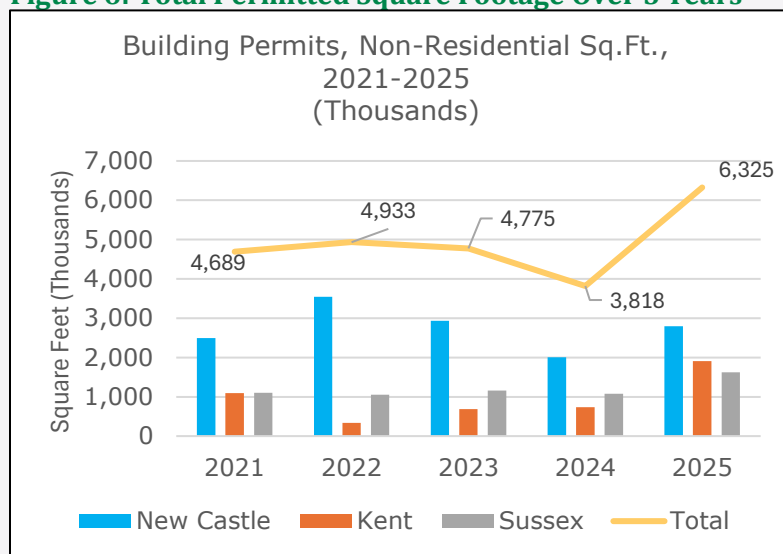
County	2024	2025	Change (%)
New Castle	2,629	10,594	303%
Kent	953	624	-35%
Sussex	928	468	-50%
Total	4,511	11,691	159%

In 2025, Delaware experienced a statewide increase in permitted square footage, driven by increases in all three counties. New Castle County experienced a nearly 40% increase from 2024 to 2025, while Kent County saw the largest year-over-year increase at 158%. Sussex County also experienced a significant increase of 50% (**Table 4**).

Table 4: Annual Change in Square Footage

Non-Residential Building Permits (ft² in thousands)

County	2024	2025	Change (%)
New Castle	2,002	2,798	+40%
Kent	739	1,908	+158%
Sussex	1,077	1,619	+50%
Total	3,819	6,325	+66%

Figure 6: Total Permitted Square Footage Over 5 Years

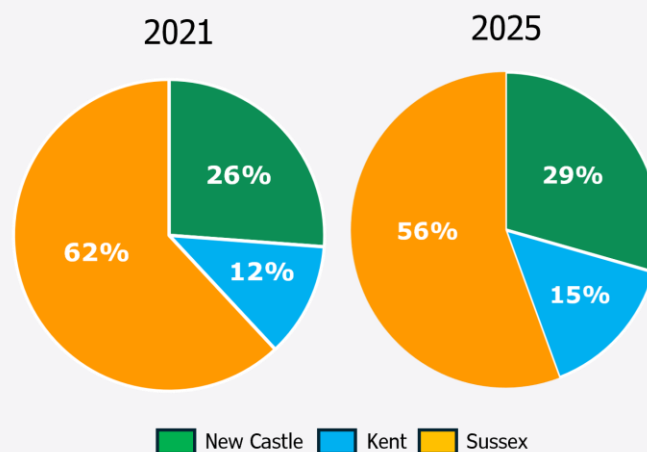
Key Findings

The preceding data represents high-level changes observed over time. The next step is to interpret the data to determine the contributing factors and forecast the societal impacts. The following findings are trends that have persisted in recent years, which all have long-term impacts to local communities and the state's infrastructure spending. For more detailed data, see the online Development Trends Dashboard (link on page 6).

I. Sussex Development is Moderating, but Still High

Despite annual fluctuations, the overall trend of residential construction in eastern Sussex County continues. In 2025, development applications in Sussex increased 21% from 2024, but remained well below the peak seen in 2022 (**Figure 1**). New Castle County continued its increase in residential

applications with a 78% increase over 2024. This is the fourth straight year New Castle County has seen an increase in development applications. As in prior years, Sussex accounted for a vast majority of residential development at 56% in 2025 (**Figure 7**).

Figure 7: Residential Development Activity by County

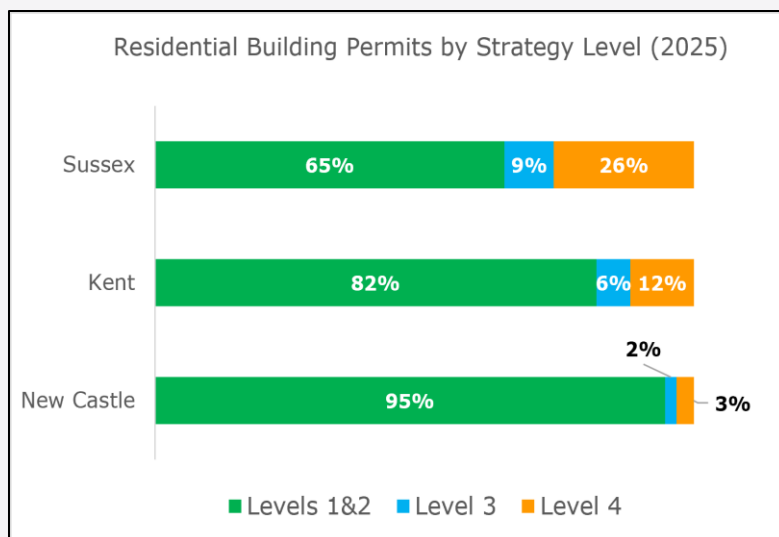
II. Level 4 Development is Unsustainable

Residential development activity in Level 4 areas as designated by State Strategies continues to be a concerning trend in Sussex County. **Figure 8** shows the proportions of building permits per county by Strategy Level in 2025. Twenty-six percent (26%) of Sussex County's activity was in Level 4. Level 4 development in Sussex is over twice that seen in Kent County and over 8 times that seen in New Castle County. This 26% consists of 1,093 units from building permits in Sussex compared to 133 units in Kent and 72 units in New Castle.

This pattern continues because most of the county's rural land is zoned Agricultural Residential (AR-1), which allows two dwelling units per acre (commonly referred to as by-right development). Two units per acre is a density that should not be considered "rural" and is contributing to the urbanization of eastern Sussex.

Constructing infrastructure and providing public services is the State's responsibility; therefore, there is a long-term cost burden for developing in Level 4. Also, the loss of natural land is counterproductive to the state's quality-of-life and environmental protection goals. The cost to serve 1,093 new units in Level 4 is much larger than the cost to serve the same number of units in Levels 1–3. It is crucial that the State and local governments work together to reduce the portion of development in Level 4.

Figure 8: County Residential Activity by Strategy Level



III. More Housing Options are Needed

As presented in last year's annual report, Delaware is facing housing affordability challenges. In 2025, there were 7,557 building permits issued statewide. This demonstrates that Delaware continues to build a substantial amount of houses each year, but the majority are single-family homes. The continued predominance of single-family homes has resulted in a scarcity of homes at lower price points. Often, other housing types require rezonings or special approvals and typically involve public hearings.

Furthermore, Delaware has solidified its status as a retirement destination and building homes to meet this demand does little to address the state's housing challenges. Data continues to show that a greater variety of housing types is needed in the state's housing supply. Refer to the 2023 [Housing Needs Assessment](#) for information. **Figure 9** is a sample table from the Needs Assessment that shows the potential number of units needed to meet future demand.



Sunnyside Elementary School on Rabbit Chase Lane, Smyrna

Figure 9: Sample Table from Needs Assessment**Projected Units Needed by Occupancy Type, by County, 2030**

		Occupancy Type	
		Resident Units	Seasonal Units
Total			
Units Needed by 2025:			
Delaware	16,269	13,428	2,841
New Castle	3,000	2,993	7
Sussex	9,320	6,525	2,795
Kent	3,949	3,910	39
Units Needed by 2030:			
Delaware	30,231	24,349	5,882
New Castle	4,030	4,016	14
Sussex	19,180	13,392	5,788
Kent	7,021	6,941	80

Source: Delaware Population Consortium and Root Policy Research.

IV. Warehousing and Logistics Growth Continues

Statewide non-residential development increased over 65% between 2024 and 2025 with an increase seen in all three counties (**Table 4**). Non-residential applications increased 159% from 2024 to 2025; however, much of that was driven by a proposed e-commerce fulfillment center in Middletown. Most of this growth continues to be large warehousing, distribution, and logistic projects. New Castle County had the largest of these projects in 2025, with a warehousing project totaling 1,128,400 square feet along Churchmans Road. Kent and Sussex Counties also have warehousing development projects, albeit at smaller scales. These projects are crucial for economic development as they will create new jobs. However, it is important to forecast the long-term costs associated with this growth. For example, what will it cost the Department of Transportation (**DelDOT**) to accommodate more truck traffic? And, as warehouses become more automated, will the smaller number of jobs justify the significant infrastructure costs?

These questions illustrate the importance of continued freight planning with our local government partners ([see Recommendation 2b](#)) and the need for better methods of forecasting costs and impacts ([see Recommendation 3a](#)).

*C&D Canal West of Reedy Point, Delaware City*

Figure 10: By the Numbers

State Funding for Services and Infrastructure

Explore the Financial
Investments Dashboard
[Here](#)

Delaware's State government funds many services and infrastructure needs...

Transportation



\$653,705,106

Federal and
state capital
transportation
funding for FY26

85%

Of Delaware Roads
Maintained by the State

State Police



\$199,855,400

State police
personnel and
budget for
FY26

1,088

Employees

Paramedics



\$18,275,620

State paramedic
program funding
for FY26

30%

State Funded

Including a variety of support for environment, education, and land preservation...

Water Quality



\$64,400,000

Water Quality
Improvements funding
for FY26

8

Water Quality
Projects Completed

School Construction



\$171,927,777

Education capital
funding for FY26

140,830

Students Enrolled in
Public School

Agriculture



\$14,901,979

Ag Land Preservation
funding for FY26

2,883

Acres of Land
Preserved

Agency Accomplishments

State agencies and their partners work diligently every day to implement the State Strategies for Policies and Spending. This section celebrates recent accomplishments from 2026.

2026 and Beyond

Over the past year, the Office of State Planning and Coordination (OSPC) and our state agency partners have been busy completing the five-year State Strategies update and working on additional initiatives outlined in Executive Order 16. Some of the key initiatives include Smart Growth Visioning, US Route 9 corridor planning, capital budget mapping, and addressing climate change within municipal comprehensive plans. Our agency leaders and staff contribute to State Strategies implementation in many ways, so the following selection of accomplishments is only a sample of the work that is most applicable. Information was provided by agency staff and compiled by OSPC.

Planning at the State Level

State Strategies implementation begins with our agencies' plans and programs that impact development activity and conservation efforts statewide. Agency staff and partners

work together on efforts to encourage growth and infrastructure spending in Levels 1–2, Level 3 where appropriate, and to encourage spending on agricultural preservation and natural resources in Level 4 areas, where conservation and preservation are critical.

Housing

Housing issues have been featured prominently in this annual report in recent years, and this year is no different, particularly with the approval of **Senate Bill 23** and **House Bill 450**. Together these bills address affordable housing, residential density, multi-modal development patterns and transportation permitting and funding. See the more detailed discussion in the Policy section later in the report.

The Delaware State Housing Authority (**DSHA**) continued to coordinate with OSPC on multiple housing and redevelopment initiatives. DSHA implemented several changes to strengthen the effectiveness of the **Downtown Development Districts (DDD)** program and better position it to respond to continued demand. The program received an increase in funding, providing an opportunity to take a more strategic and forward-looking approach to resource allocation. In response to strong and growing demand, the allocation for the Small Project Set-Aside was increased; the set-aside has fully exhausted its available funding in each of

the past two years. DSHA also revised the Large Project Set-Aside application process to better manage demand in an increasingly oversubscribed program and prepare for the forthcoming expansion of designated Downtown Development Districts. Together, these changes are intended to ensure the program remains responsive to current demand while positioning it to support continued growth and investment in downtowns throughout Delaware.

DSHA also continued to refine its **Community Growth Strategy** to more directly target housing and economic development investments in and around DDDs and other priority growth areas. The strategy focuses on supporting mixed-use and mixed-income development, including affordable and workforce rental housing for households earning up to 100 percent of Area Median Income (AMI), as well as for-sale housing opportunities for households earning up to 120 percent of AMI. DSHA is also pursuing a **Small Business Lending Program** to complement these housing investments and support local businesses, neighborhood amenities, and broader economic activity. Collectively, these efforts are intended to better align housing and economic development resources, leverage existing infrastructure, and encourage sustained investment in areas where targeted growth can have the greatest impact.

In addition, DSHA received **\$1.5 million** for the **Delaware Workforce Housing Program**, which is in its second year of funding. DSHA is currently developing program guidance and implementation strategies for the program.

DSHA's housing initiatives support State Strategies by helping ensure that future housing investments are directed toward areas most prepared to accommodate growth and that communities have access to a greater diversity of housing options. For example, the **Balanced Housing Opportunity Map** provides a tool for identifying areas where resources can be targeted to expand housing choice. These efforts further the CCSPI's progress on **Recommendations 3b–3d**.

Health and Social Services

Delaware's aging population is struggling with housing affordability and the availability of care. In 2026, Delaware had the fifth highest percentage of population over 65. Given the increase in older Delawareans, and the impact that has on the infrastructure of the state, the Department of Health and Social Services (**DHSS**) plans to seek funding to develop a comprehensive aging report for the State of Delaware. The increased aging population, combined with resources that are stretched and rising costs has resulted in DHSS providing services to sustain capacity and allow individuals to remain in their community through accessible medical, home, safety, and personal care services.

To improve their efficiency, DHSS is currently conducting a needs assessment and developing a Strategic Plan to move the agency forward in a meaningful way over the next three to five years. Completion of the plan is anticipated in late 2026.

DHSS is also serving the state through its **Reimagining Service Delivery Project**, which will standardize and

improve the quality of services at DHSS facilities. Related to this effort is the modernization of the DHSS website, which will improve the public's experience when seeking DHSS services.

Safety and Homeland Security

As a state agency that provides essential public services, the Department of Safety and Homeland Security (**DSHS**) is continually adapting to Delaware's changing landscape. As the state's counties experience population growth and demographic shifts, DSHS relies increasingly on demographic projections to anticipate service needs, effectively allocate resources, and ensure that underserved communities and populations have appropriate access to services.

Across its divisions, DSHS continues to identify opportunities to reduce response times and improve service delivery. Population growth may require the development or reallocation of emergency medical, fire, and law-enforcement resources to adequately respond to increased calls for service, including consideration of additional facilities where warranted.

In response to these growth-related challenges, DSHS has undertaken a strategic planning initiative focused on **people, programs, and policy**. The initiative emphasizes deploying resources in a cost-effective and efficient manner while ensuring that services remain responsive to changing population needs. This approach also underscores the importance of coordinating service and infrastructure investments with statewide planning objectives and

minimizing development in Level 4 areas consistent with the Strategies for State Policies and Spending (State Strategies).

Reliable and timely demographic projections will remain critical to DSHS's ability to anticipate future demand, guide resource allocation, and support informed decisions regarding public safety and homeland security infrastructure, as discussed in **Recommendation 1a**.

Education

Annually, the Department of Education (**DOE**) collaborates with school districts on calculating annual school enrollment and anticipated enrollment for the following year, helping inform future facility and infrastructure needs. Continued residential growth is increasing pressure on school infrastructure, with many schools operating at or above design capacity. The need to construct additional schools also reduces the funding available for improvements and upgrades to existing facilities. Currently, funding for new schools and major renovations is determined by Delaware's School Construction Formula. The formula calculates allowable square footage and how much of the building costs the state will fund based on grade levels and the number of students the facility is intended to serve.

Explore school enrollment figures:
education.delaware.gov/community/data/reports/unitcount

House Bill 500 passed during the 2026 legislative session established a committee to review the School Construction Formula and determine the future rate for new school construction.

An additional working group is also reviewing the Certificate of Need process, which approves major school construction projects and authorizes school districts to hold a public referendum.

Continued coordination with OSPC and school districts is essential to strategically locating new schools, addressing capacity issues, and ensuring that school construction keeps pace with Delaware’s growth.

Transportation

The Delaware Department of Transportation (**DelDOT**) developed the **FY2027 – FY2032 Capital Transportation Program (CTP)** in 2025 and 2026. The CTP outlines the schedules and funding for transportation projects. The final step in adopting the six-year plan is obtaining approval from the Federal Highway Administration, which is anticipated in early 2027.

DelDOT finalized the 2026-2030 Strategic Highway Safety Plan in late 2025, outlining priorities and strategies to eliminate fatalities and injuries on the transportation system. DelDOT continued to make progress on an update to the Delaware State Freight Plan, the Delaware State Rail Plan, and the Delaware State Aviation System Plan, with all plans expected to be finalized in 2027. DelDOT is also advancing a C&D Canal Rail Bridge Economic Impact Study to quantify

the value of the bridge to the state’s economy. Additionally, the Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization (D/K MPO), in coordination with DelDOT, finalized a rail corridor land use study. These plans outline recommended policies, projects, studies, and strategies to enhance intermodal transportation connectivity throughout the state.

Throughout 2025, the **Transportation Infrastructure Investment Fund (TIIF)** continued to support economic development across Delaware by providing financial assistance for transportation infrastructure improvements that facilitate business growth and expansion. During the year, the TIIF Council reviewed 12 new grant applications, recommended 10 grant awards, and approved one grant term extension request (**Table 5**).

Table 5: TIIF Funding and Jobs

TIIF Round	Number of Grants Awarded	Amount Awarded	Jobs Created or Maintained
11	1	\$544,462	44
12	0	\$0	0
13	7	\$9,337,257	766
14	1	\$1,848,036	24
15	1	\$2,939,865	62
Total 11-15	10	\$14,669,620	896

Lastly, DelDOT is advancing an initiative to develop a Master Transportation Plan, to outline a future vision for all transportation infrastructure in the state. The project will continue into 2027.

Environment

The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (**DNREC**) Division of Climate, Coastal and Energy developed the **2025 Delaware Climate Action Plan** in collaboration with technical experts, stakeholders, and residents. The Plan establishes a framework for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening community resilience, and preparing Delaware for a changing climate. Implementation is a shared responsibility among state agencies, local governments, community organizations, businesses, and residents. Near-term actions focus on achievable initiatives over the next five years, while the Plan's broader strategies and goals provide a long-term vision for climate action through 2050.



Volunteers plant trees with protective tree tubes in the Red Clay Creek floodplain at Ashland Nature Center.

In FY26, Delaware enacted Senate Bill 9, establishing state-level protections for freshwater wetlands after a three-year legislative effort led by Senator Stephanie Hansen. The legislation was supported by technical experts from DNREC's Divisions of Water, Fish and Wildlife, and Watershed Stewardship, as well as DNREC legal counsel. The passage of Senate Bill 9 marked Delaware's seventh attempt to establish freshwater wetland protections and represented a historic achievement. The legislation establishes a policy framework to achieve, through permitting, mitigation, and other strategies, a statewide goal of no net overall loss of wetland acreage and function resulting from human activities, while striving for a net gain in wetland resources over current conditions.

In addition to protecting wetlands, DNREC's **Open Space Program**, in partnership with the Delaware Department of Agriculture (**DDA**), protected 660 acres in FY25 and 245 acres in FY26, for a combined total of 905 acres. This included 597 acres of Level 4 lands in Sussex County, 161 acres in New Castle County, and 145 acres in Kent County.

Agriculture

DDA also acquired 48 acres to expand Redden State Forest and 18 acres to expand Taber State Forest. In addition, 30 acres of forested land within the City of Lewes were protected through a conservation easement.

Through the **Agricultural Land Preservation Program**, DDA enrolled 36 additional properties totaling 2,883 acres

during Round 29 of the program, representing an investment of \$14.9 million in agricultural land preservation.

The Department of Agriculture has contracted with American Farmland Trust to update their 2006 study of the impact of population growth and development on land use and state spending. Key findings from the 2006 study were that though the population and housing have grown every decade, recent land use and spending have increased at rates 2-3 times higher than accounted for by populations growth. This increased our land use and lost of farmland without a proportional increase in housing. The current study is expected to be completed in the Spring 2028.

DNREC and DDA continue to partner on the **Tree for Every Delawarean Initiative (TEDI)**. Since 2020, the TEDI tracker shows that more than **532,215 trees** have been planted. Over **175,000** of those plantings used TEDI funding.

Historical and Cultural Resources

As our state grows, it is important to preserve our historical and cultural resources. The State Historic Preservation Tax Credit (HPTC) Program continues to encourage investment and redevelopment through adaptive reuse, and improvements to livability in existing communities, supporting **CCSPI Goals 1 and 6**. In November 2025, the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs (**DHCA**) amended the HPTC regulations to reflect legislative changes and program updates. A new online application system, launched in July 2025, transitioned the program to a fully digital process, allowing applicants and consultants to submit applications, request assistance, track review status, pay

fees, and submit tax forms to claim or transfer awarded credits securely online, supporting greater efficiency and advancing **CCSPI Goal 5**.

Planning at the Community Level

The next level of State Strategies implementation happens with our agencies' plans and programs that are more focused at the local community level. State agencies partner with local governments to develop more detailed plans that ensure that state investments are made in the most efficient ways and provide benefits to communities.

Transportation

In Sussex County, DelDOT updated the **Sussex County Transportation Operations Management Plan (TOMP)** in 2025, which identifies major congestion issues in Sussex County and recommends improvements to address those needs. In addition, DelDOT and OSPC have partnered with Sussex County to evaluate three potential development scenarios and model their future traffic impacts on the US Route 9 corridor. Results of the study are anticipated in late 2026.

DelDOT continues to monitor and implement the recommendations from the Five Points Transportation Study, with working group meetings concluding in late 2025, but with ongoing traffic analysis and data collection. DelDOT also continues to monitor and implement the recommendations from the Coastal Corridors Study, by

conducting a land use and transportation scenario analysis in late 2025. As part of this study, DelDOT led and recently completed the SR 16 Corridor Study and the Milton Active Transportation Plan, which recommends multimodal improvements to SR 16 and within Milton. DelDOT also started two community transportation plans in Millville and Frankford in 2026.

DelDOT investments also support communities by improving traffic conditions near **Delaware State Police (DSP)** troop locations. Recent improvements by DelDOT to roadway infrastructure in Sussex County will positively impact the Division of State Police response times to calls for service; specifically, the location of the new Troop 4 (Georgetown) in relation to the new bypass around Millsboro. The responses to Long Neck and the resort towns South of the Inlet were challenging with only two highways (SR1 or US113) and high-volume traffic. This new troop location and the roadway infrastructure will enable enhanced response times to stakeholders.

In Kent County, the Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization (Dover/Kent MPO), in partnership with DelDOT, completed several studies, including the Little Creek Sidewalk and Crosswalk Improvements Study, the Camden Sidewalk Network Gap Study, the Wheatley's Pond/Underwood's Corner Intersection Safety Study near Clayton, and the Airport Road Corridor Study in Milford. These studies represent significant progress in improving safety, supporting economic development, and expanding multimodal access on the Kent County transportation system. Project partners are currently advancing studies along

South State Street in Dover, SR 300 near Clayton, and in western Kent County's Amish community.

In New Castle County, the Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO), in partnership with DelDOT, completed the Southbridge Truck Bypass Study in Wilmington and a regional Sidewalk Gap Analysis for all of New Castle County. Progress continues to be made in updating the Land Use and Transportation Plan for the Southern New Castle County Growth Area, and a Safety Action Plan for Wilmington. A multimodal improvements study in the vicinity of Augustine Cutoff in Wilmington was completed in late 2025, as well as a feasibility study for the implementation of an underpass of US 202 concurrent with Rocky Run. WILMAPCO continues to monitor and support the implementation of recommendations from various regional plans. Lastly, WILMAPCO is currently in the process of updating their Regional Transportation Plan for all of New Castle County. These plans will continue to improve safety, enhance multimodal access, and reduce congestion.

In late 2025, DelDOT adopted an updated **Corridor Capacity Preservation Program (CCPP)** plan for SR 1. The CCPP has helped guide appropriate use of certain corridors in the state (SR 1, US 13, US 113, and SR 48) and improve their access management. In 2027, DelDOT will be advancing updates to the CCPP plans for US 13. DelDOT and the Dover/Kent MPO are additionally working on a needs assessment for a portion of US 113 near Milford.

Lastly, DelDOT uses **Transportation Improvement Districts (TIDs)** as a regional planning tool to ensure

infrastructure investments are coordinated with development. These districts are formalized by agreements with local governments and provide districtwide capital programs and developer fees to implement the planned improvements. Successful implementation of TIDs depends on predictable land-use policies of the local governments. Significant development outside TID boundaries may contribute to transportation impacts within the districts without contributing TID funding toward the capital improvements needed to address those impacts. Status updates for TIDs are found in **Table 6**.

Table 6: TID Status Updates

TIDs In Operation	County
Newark	New Castle
Hyetts Corner	New Castle
Southern New Castle County	New Castle
Eastown	New Castle
Westown	New Castle
Little Heaven	Kent
South Frederica	Kent
Milford	Sussex
Henlopen	Sussex

TIDs In Development

County

These 3 TIDs are currently in development with substantial progress on the technical analyses complete.

Churchman's Crossing

New Castle

Magnolia

Kent

Milton

Sussex

Housing

DSHA continues to work closely with the Office of State Planning Coordination to jointly administer the Downtown Development Districts program, supporting revitalization efforts in designated districts across the state. This year, DSHA partnered with OSPC to review applications that will expand the program from 12 to 15 Downtown Districts, increasing opportunities for strategic redevelopment and investment.

In addition, DSHA also continued implementation of the **SJR 8 Local Land Use and Zoning Reform Pilot Program**, providing technical assistance to nine municipalities as they evaluate zoning and land use reforms intended to expand housing supply, affordability, and housing choice while preserving local decision-making authority.

Explore the new TID Dashboard!

tid.deldot.gov

Agriculture

The Department of Agriculture continued promoting local food systems through comprehensive plan reviews and land use recommendations that encourage opportunities for farm markets, local food distribution, and agribusiness uses within existing communities. These efforts support agricultural viability while improving consumer access to locally produced food **Recommendation 6a**

Health and Social Services

The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) continued making progress on the planned expansion of health facilities at the **Delaware Hospital for the Chronically Ill (DHCI)** campus. The new 120-bed and roughly 120,000 square foot building has an \$88 million budget mostly funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The project broke ground in August 2025 and is expected to open in early 2028, greatly improving the quality of healthcare in the Smyrna area.

Historical and Cultural Resources

The Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs (DHCA) is advancing several projects to preserve and enhance Delaware's historic resources and visitor experiences. The new Visitors Center at **John Dickinson Plantation**, featuring exhibition, education, and meeting space, is nearing completion and is anticipated to open in fall 2026. Improvements at the **Johnson Victrola Museum** are underway to enhance visitor access and align with best practices for exhibited objects, while planning continues for

rehabilitation and construction at the **Cooch's Bridge Historic Site**. In 2025, DHCA transferred ownership of **The Lindens** to the Town of Smyrna, with a preservation easement established to protect its historic values. With assistance from the Open Space Program, DHCA also acquired the 1858 **Fenwick Island lightkeeper's house**, expanding its collection of structures associated with this historic maritime property.



John Dickinson Plantation Visitor Center, Kent County

Environment

The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control's **Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Trails (ORPT)** Program provided over \$2 million in matching grant funds to several local governments throughout Delaware to improve existing public parks and enable the development of new outdoor recreation facilities.

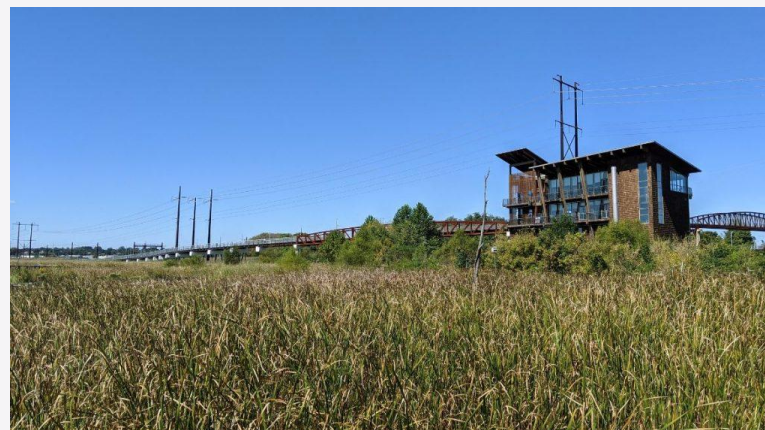
The DNREC Division of Waste and Hazardous Substances manages the **Christina/Brandywine Remediation, Restoration and Resilience (CBR4)** project. The effort addresses legacy toxic contamination, restores native ecology, and strengthens the resilience of the lower Christina River and tidal Brandywine Creek to climate change and other threats to river health. The project encompasses the Christina River from Interstate 95 east of Newport to its mouth at the Delaware River and the Brandywine Creek from the Amtrak Northeast Corridor to its confluence with the Christina River. Its long-term goal is to achieve fishable, swimmable, and potable waters throughout the project area.



Future housing at Windward Ridge, Dover

In FY26, the CBR4 project team secured a contractor and initiated design work for three ecological restoration projects identified in **A Plan for Restoring Wilmington's**

Rivers: Peterson Wildlife Refuge, Banning Park, and the former Dravo Shipyard shoreline along the Christina River.



The DuPont Environmental Education Center located at the Russell W. Peterson Urban Wildlife Refuge, a former industrial site along the Christina River in Wilmington.

Delaware's Resilience and Sustainable Communities League (RASCL) is a collaborative network of state, non-profit, and academic partners working to create a more resilient and sustainable Delaware. RASCL partners work together to accelerate the capacity of local governments to take steps to become more sustainable and resilient. The RASCL Community Planning Assistance Committee is developing a guidance document to provide Delaware towns and cities with best practices and examples for forest preservation ordinances **Recommendation 7a**. In FY26, DNREC's Clean Transportation Program provided rebates to local governments for battery electric and plug-in

hybrid vehicles and Level 2 charging stations. The program awarded \$10,000 to the City of Milford Police Department to install four EV charging stations for its fleet.

Additionally, In FY26, DNREC and DelDOT provided EV readiness training to local governments through the University of Delaware Institute for Public Administration's 2025 Delaware Municipal Clerks Institute. The training addressed EV infrastructure planning, zoning, permitting and inspections, fleet electrification, idle reduction, best practices, and available resources. Participants also received an EV Readiness Guide to support municipalities in planning and implementing EV initiatives. **Recommendation 7b.**

In FY26, DNREC's Division of Waste and Hazardous Substances approved 20 applications for brownfields certification, demonstrating the State's continued commitment to revitalizing and repurposing contaminated sites. The certified projects include a diverse range of redevelopment efforts, from mixed-use residential and commercial developments to the transformation of previously contaminated properties into community facilities. These projects support economic growth and job creation while advancing environmental sustainability and improving community well-being.

One project certified in FY26 is located at **20769 DuPont Boulevard in Georgetown**. Formerly occupied by building materials supplier Builders FirstSource, the site is being redeveloped as a micro hospital that will provide needed medical services to the surrounding community. The project demonstrates how brownfields redevelopment can

transform previously underutilized properties into productive community assets while supporting local economic development and expanding access to essential services. **Recommendation 4b.**

DelDOT uses **Transportation Improvement Districts (TIDs)** to ensure infrastructure investments are coordinated with development. These districts are formalized by agreements with local governments and provide districtwide capital programs and developer fees to implement the planned improvements. Successful implementation of TIDs depends on predictable land-use policies of the local governments. If intense development occurs outside of TID boundaries, there will be insufficient resources to fund capital projects within the districts. Status updates for TIDs are found in **Table 6**.

To provide frequent TID updates, DelDOT launched the **TID Dashboard** earlier this year. The interactive map displays summary data and details about each district. One prominent figure on the site is the total cost of planned capital improvements at **\$1.09** billion over the 12 TID's.

Policy Updates

The implementation of State Strategies is affected by occasional policy changes, whether legislative, regulatory, or internal policymaking. It is important to regularly evaluate these changes to determine how they impact State Strategies implementation long term.

Policy on Housing and Transportation

Two significant legislative changes enacted during the 2026 Legislative Session—SS 2 for **Senate Bill 23** (SB 23) and HS 1 for **House Bill 450** (HB 450), the Reforming Opportunities and Accelerated Development for Delaware Act advances Delaware’s goals related to economic development, redevelopment, sustainability, and resiliency. Together, the legislation promotes more sustainable patterns of housing and transportation development by supporting housing affordability, encouraging residential growth in areas with existing infrastructure, and improving connectivity. These policies also support the preservation of agricultural lands and open space by directing growth toward appropriate development areas and reducing pressure from continued sprawl.

Senate Bill 23 requires counties and municipalities with populations of 2,000 or more to develop affordable housing plans. Among the strategies required under the legislation is the promotion of transit-oriented development, which can help expand housing opportunities while encouraging development in areas served by existing transportation infrastructure.

House Bill 450 will impact the development coordination process used by the Delaware Department of Transportation. The new legislation increases the thresholds required for a traffic impact study. Under the new requirements, DelDOT can only require comprehensive traffic impact studies for large projects projected to generate at least 500 peak-hour trips. Traffic impact studies often guide transportation

network improvements necessary, to be paid for at least in part by responsible developers, to handle increased traffic from new developments. DelDOT will now establish statewide developer-funded impact fee program by January 1, 2027, to finance local infrastructure upgrades.

Policy on Economic Development and Environmental Protection

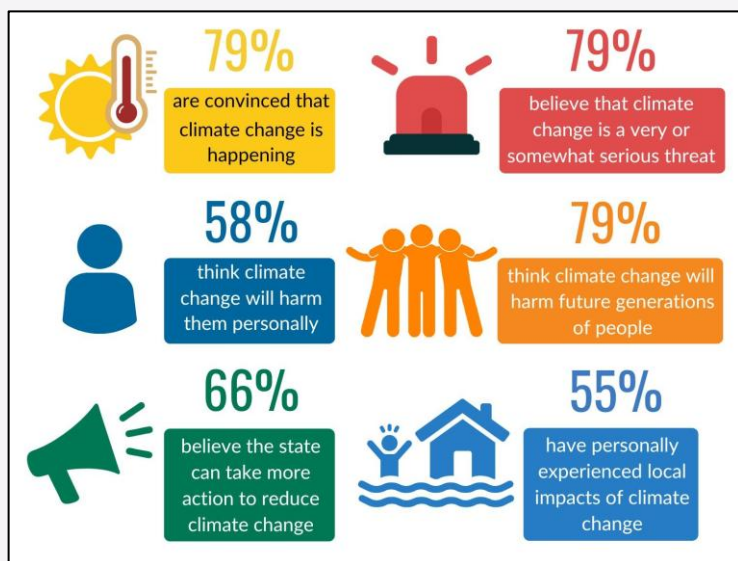
Although HB 450 primarily affects DelDOT, the legislation also establishes funding mechanisms that support broader State Strategies objectives. A surcharge on transportation impact fees for new development will provide funding for DNREC’s Waste and Hazardous Substances Brownfields Program. Additional funds will support the Delaware Department of Agriculture’s Farmland Preservation Fund, DNREC’s Open Space Program and coastal resilience programs, and DelDOT programs for sidewalks and bicycle pathways. These provisions help link transportation and development activity with investments in environmental protection, land preservation, and multimodal infrastructure.

In FY26, Delaware passed state legislation to protect and regulate freshwater wetlands, following a three-year effort. The legislation, **Senate Bill 9** includes a directive to attain, through a combination of permitting, mitigation and other strategies, a statewide goal of no net overall loss in wetland acreage and function from human-driven activity, and to strive for a net resource gain in wetlands over present conditions. The bill also incorporated recent permitting improvements within the DNREC Division of Water, that will

enhance implementation and minimize wait times for permit requests.

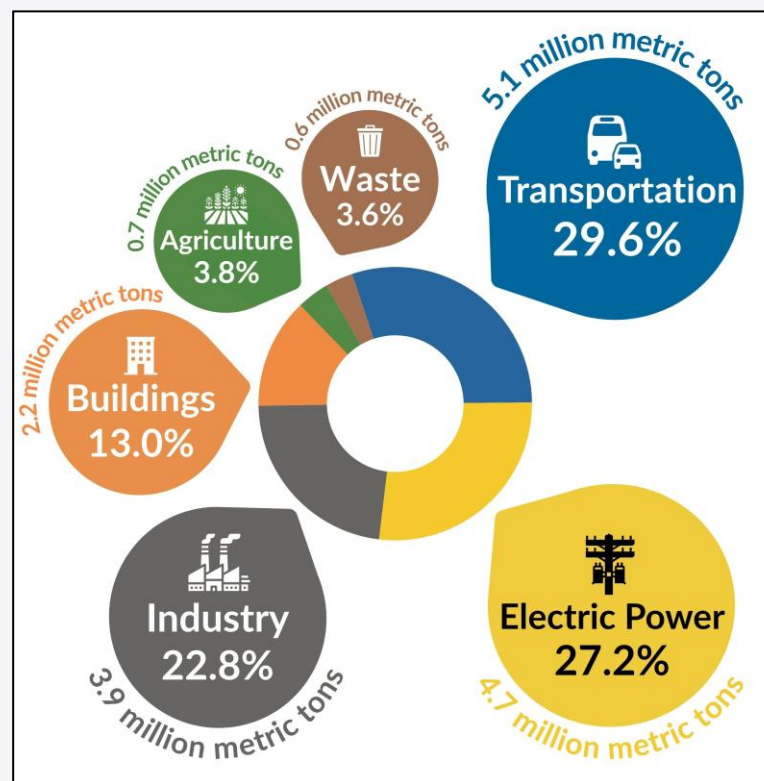
Policy on Climate Change and Resilience

After November 15, 2026, county and municipal comprehensive plans will be required to incorporate climate change and resiliency topics, pursuant to the recent passage of **Senate Bill 237**. Plans must consider the implementation of the **Climate Action Plan** when adopting strategies to reduce vulnerability of property, agriculture, infrastructure, and cultural and natural resources. To assist counties and municipalities in achieving this goal, the **Delaware Climate**



Summary of statewide Climate Change Perceptions Survey results, 2025 Delaware Climate Action Plan

Change and Community Resiliency Planning Toolkit was developed by OSPC in coordination with DNREC's Division of Climate, Coastal and Energy along with support from DSHA, DEMA, DelDOT, and DDA.



Gross greenhouse gas emissions by sector in Delaware (2021), 2025 Delaware Climate Action Plan.

Policy on School Safety

Delaware **Senate Bill 328** updates DOE's school building safety and maintenance codes by requiring facility assessment tools to be set via Department of Education regulations and explicitly classify lead under the hazardous materials category.

Summary

State agencies should keep State Strategies implementation in mind when policy changes affect business practices, to ensure that future decisions are consistent with the principles set forth in State Strategies.



State Route 1 over State Route 16 in Sussex County

The Cabinet Committee in Action

The Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues (CCSPI) acts in an advisory role to the Governor. The following is a summary of actions taken over the past year and a preview of the year ahead.

Meetings

The **CCSPI** meets the second Monday of each month, when necessary to review and/or take action on planning issues related to comprehensive planning, Downtown Development Districts, Strategies for State Policies and Spending, and this Annual Report to the Governor. Between August 2025 and August 2026, the Cabinet Committee met ten times.

August 2025

October 2025

January 2026

March 2026

June 2026

September 2025

November 2025

February 2026

May 2026

August 2026

Actions

The Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues (CCSPI) had a very busy year with the following action items on their agendas:

- Recommended the 2025 Strategies for State Policies and Spending for approval by the Governor
- Approved Annual Report to the Governor outlining State Planning Issues and local Development Trends
- Comprehensive Plan amendments – The CCSPI reviewed 2 comprehensive plan amendments. One was approved and the other is pending additional information from the local jurisdiction
- Downtown Development Districts – The CCSPI approved a boundary expansion for 1 district and renewed 5 Districts (Georgetown, Harrington, Laurel, Milford, and Smyrna) for an additional five years. In addition, the Governor called for the Downtown Development Districts program to allow applications to be submitted to fill the 3 remaining districts. Once designated, this action will bring the total number of districts to the allowable 15. At their

meeting on September 15, the CCSPI recommended Claymont, Newport and Millsboro for designation as Downtown Development Districts. The designations are awaiting the Governor's action.

In January 2026, Governor Meyer signed Executive Order 16 which enacted the 2025 Strategies for State Policies and Spending. In addition, the Executive Order called for the Office of State Planning and the Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues to launch the 2026 State Smart Growth Visioning process. The process is meant to bring State agency together with key, non-state partners and stakeholders to develop the comprehensive future-visioning of smart growth including land use patterns, investment plans, infrastructure, and population trends ([see Smart Growth Visioning chapter of this report for more details](#)). Additionally, Executive Order 16 called for OSPC to compile an inventory and assess the efficacy of existing state investments to drive growth or preservation. To address this, an initiative was started to map capital budget appropriations throughout the state ([see Capital Budget Mapping Section](#)).

State Strategies Update

The purpose of the Strategies for State Policies and Spending is to coordinate land-use decision-making with the provision of infrastructure and services. In 2025, the Office of State Planning Coordination ([OSPC](#)) completed the five-year update. In January 2026, Governor Meyer signed Executive Order 16 certifying the latest update and new investment level maps (Figure 11).

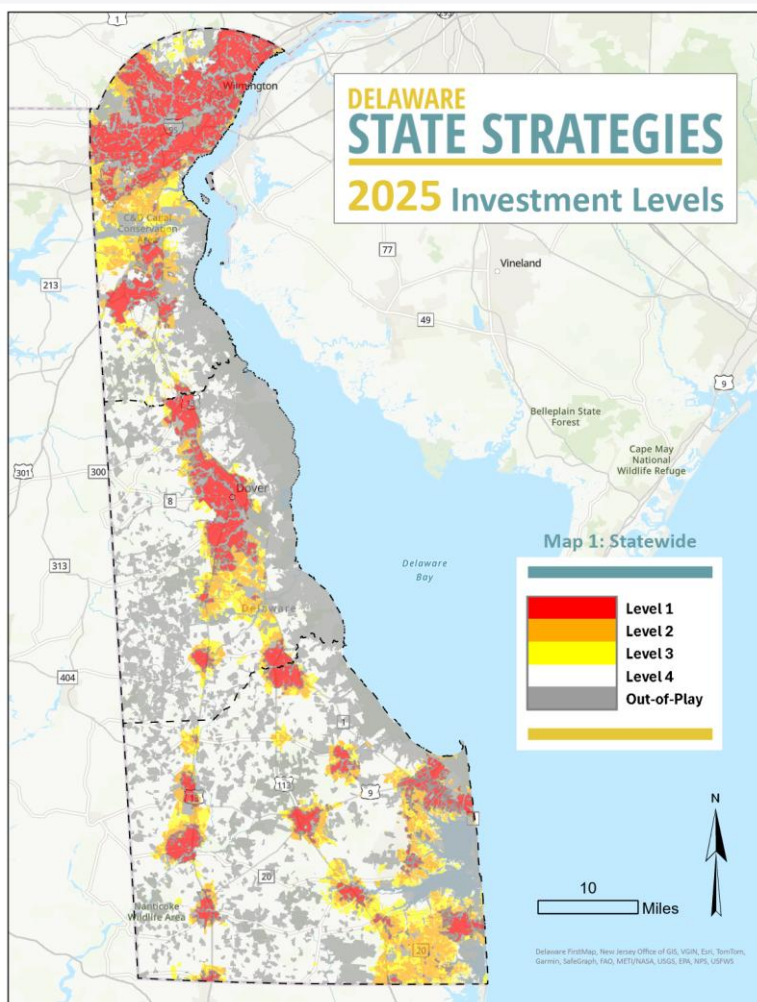
State Strategies guide the Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues (CCSPI) in making state investment decisions that promote efficient development patterns, protect agriculture and open space, discourage sprawl, and support coordination with local governments on land-use matters. They also establish priorities for state investments in regulatory programs, land protection, state lands, and public facilities.

The State Strategies update was informed by a GIS-based analysis that considered state, county, and local policies related to residential growth, economic development, and land preservation. OSPC compiled more than 35 GIS data layers from state agencies and local governments, with each layer representing a policy or program that influences an area's potential for growth or preservation. The data were categorized as **Promoting Growth**, **Promoting Preservation**, or **Out-of-Play**. The resulting map provides a comprehensive picture of areas where government investment in infrastructure and services is intended to support growth, as well as areas targeted for preservation and agricultural uses.

Investment Levels range from 1 to 4 going from dense downtown areas to rural areas.

**Learn more about the
State Strategies:**

stateplanning.delaware.gov/ccspi

Figure 11: Approved 2025 State Strategies Map

Level 1: Municipalities, downtowns and suburban clusters in unincorporated areas. These are higher density development areas with mixed-uses with a variety of housing and transportation options.

Level 2: Suburban areas in or near municipalities. These are rapidly growing areas surrounding urban centers characterized by mid-to-low density development, access to utilities, public water and wastewater. Level 2 is more automobile oriented.

Level 3: Certified growth areas in county and municipal comprehensive plans. These are disconnected areas with significant development pressure. They are often urban to rural transition areas. Often level 3 lands are environmentally sensitive and/or agricultural lands with limited access to infrastructure.

Level 4: Mostly unincorporated rural areas and open space with small settlements and disconnected homes. They are predominantly natural and agricultural lands with limited access to infrastructure and utilities. Development was mostly single-family homes with reliance on automobiles.

Out of Play: Lands not available for private development. These are legally protected lands for conservation, public parks, wildlife refuges, state forests and protected farmland and forests. It also includes tidal wetlands and 100-year floodplains (New Castle and Kent Counties only)

Capital Budget Mapping

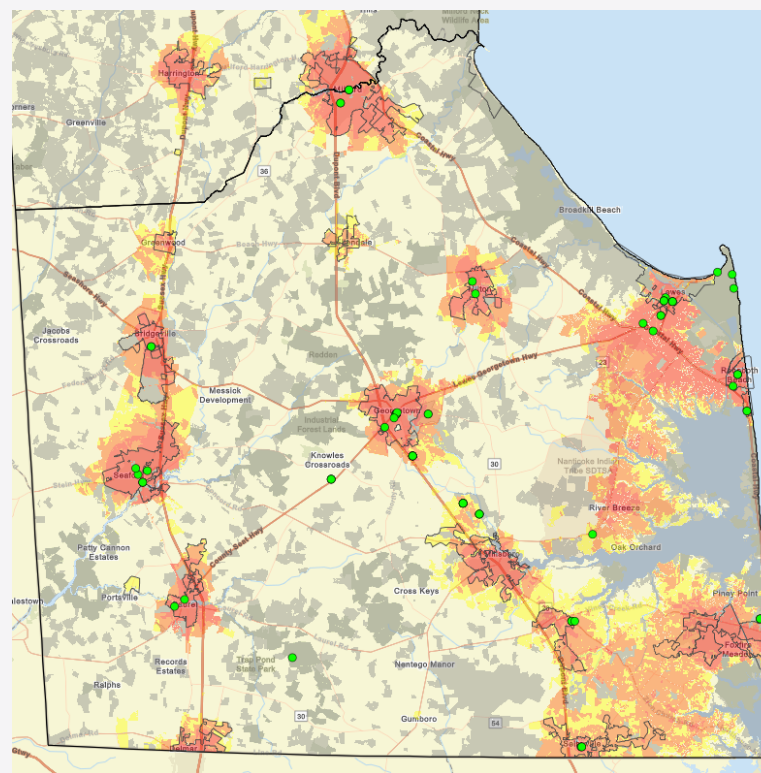
In response to Executive Order No. 16, the Office of State Planning Coordination (**OSPC**), in collaboration with staff from the Office of Management and Budget (**OMB**), began mapping state budget appropriations from Fiscal Year 2021 through Fiscal Year 2026. This effort will help visualize the geographic distribution of state investments and support analysis of how state funding aligns with planning priorities and the State Strategies.

To map state capital budget appropriations, each line item was linked to the tax parcel associated with the project location. Each project was assigned to one of twelve budget categories including, economic development, education, equipment, housing, infrastructure development, infrastructure maintenance, infrastructure purchase, infrastructure renovation, public safety, quality of life, technology, and transportation. The mapped locations were incorporated into an online dashboard, allowing the data to be visually analyzed by county, municipality, legislative district, and State Strategies area (Figure 12). The Capital Budget Dashboard is available to view on our [website Office of State Planning Coordination](#).

Transportation appropriations are presented separately within the online dashboard. In the state capital budget, DelDOT transportation projects are generally grouped into larger funding categories rather than identified as individual projects. Specific transportation projects are identified through DelDOT's Capital Transportation Program (CTP). The Office of State Planning Coordination, in collaboration

with DelDOT staff, identified many of the larger CTP projects funded between 2021 and 2024 and incorporated them into the dashboard. It is important to note that state funding for transportation projects is often used as a match for various federal funding sources.

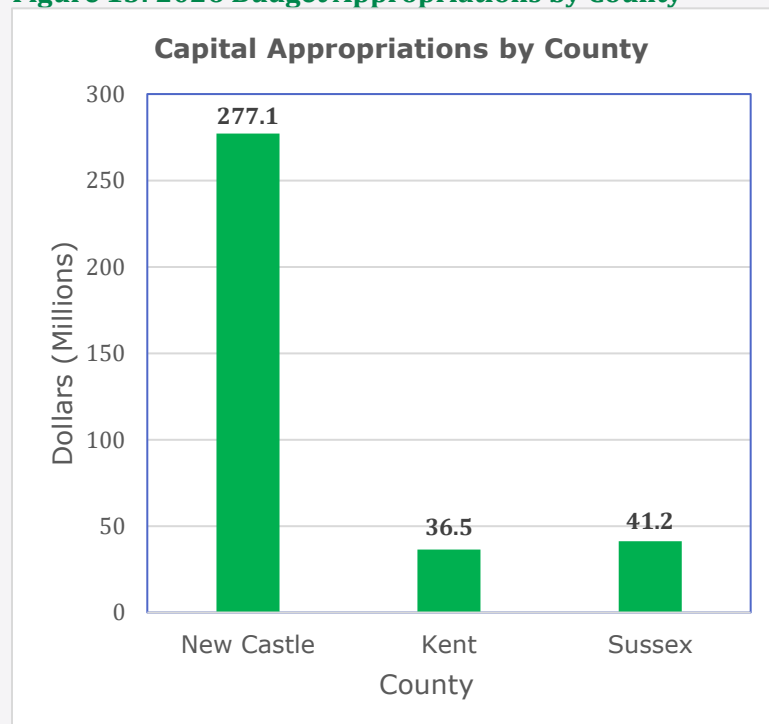
Figure 12: Map from the Capital Budget Dashboard showing projects in Sussex County by state strategy area for fiscal years 2021 to 2026.



Not all capital budget appropriations could be linked to a specific tax parcel. In some cases, appropriations were directed to funds or programs that allow resources to be

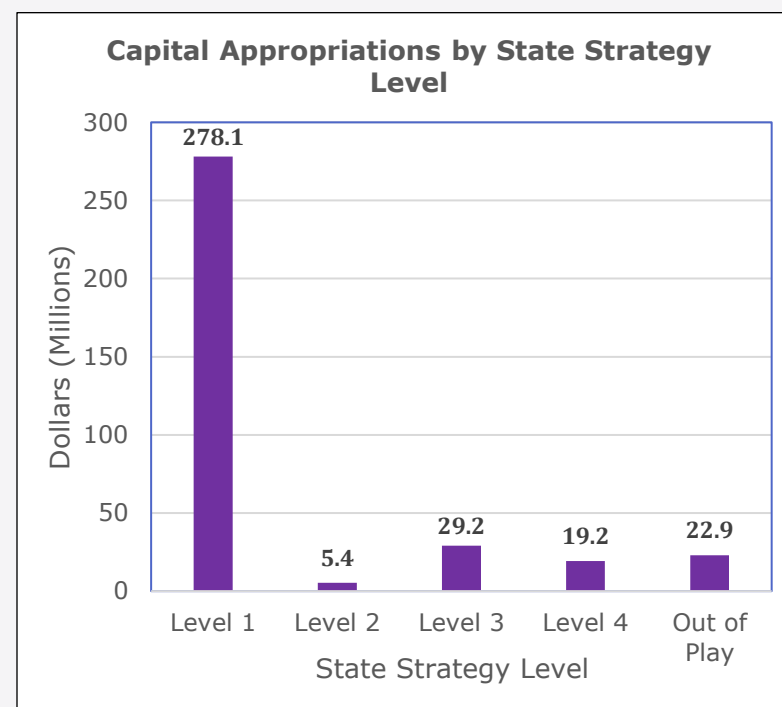
allocated statewide based on need. For example, in Fiscal Year 2026, the Department of Education received \$30 million for infrastructure maintenance at schools statewide. Appropriations that could not be assigned to a specific geographic location were included in the online dashboard by project type. However, because the specific locations of these expenditures cannot be determined, they cannot be analyzed by county, municipality, legislative district, or State Strategies area.

Figure 13: 2026 Budget Appropriations by County



In 2026, 78% of appropriated capital budget funds were allocated to New Castle County, while Kent County received 10% and Sussex County received 12% (Figure 13). These figures do not include transportation appropriations received by DelDOT, as project-level transportation data was not available for 2026.

Figure 14: 2026 Budget Appropriations by State Strategies Level

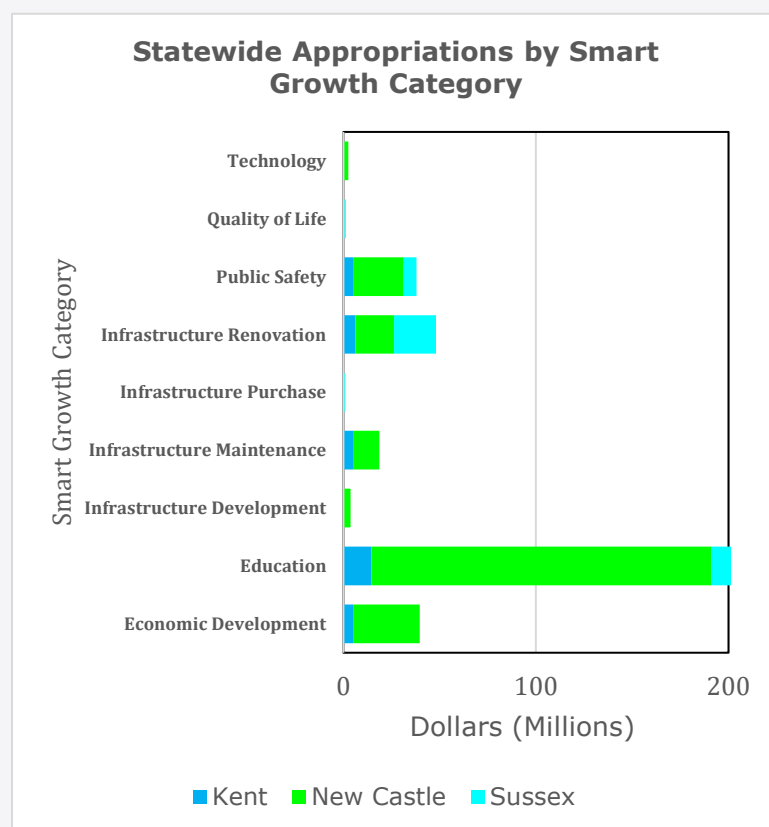


During the same period, 80% of appropriations were directed to State Strategies Levels 1 and 2, while 5% were allocated to Level 4 and 6% to Out of Play areas (Figure 14). Most of the funding within Level 4 was allocated to the new

Sussex Technical High School, with the remaining funds supporting maintenance and repairs to existing facilities.

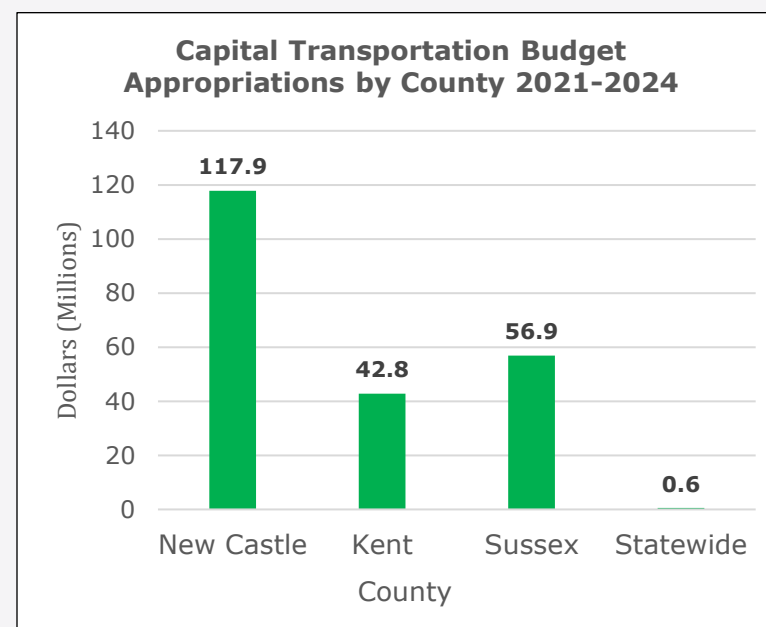
Allocations within out of play areas were primarily directed toward the expansion of the Baylor Women's Correctional Institution and renovation of the former Family Court House in Dover.

Figure 15: 2026 Budget Appropriations by County and Smart Growth Category



Over the past four years, the State has allocated more than \$218 million in transportation funding to projects that could be linked to a specific project location. This represents only the State funding associated with these transportation projects. The total amount of transportation funding is considerably higher due to the use of Federal funds for many projects. Only State funding associated with projects that could be mapped to a specific location is included in this analysis.

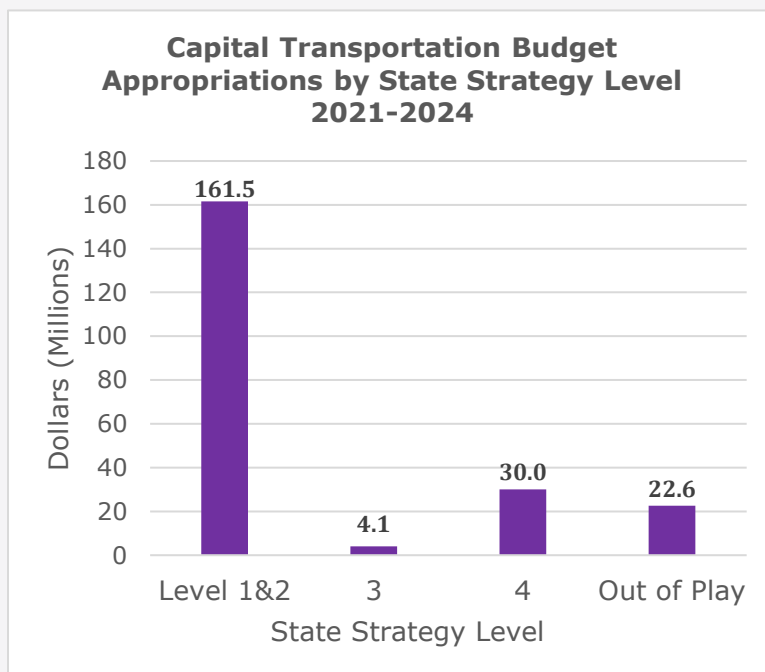
Figure 16: 2021-2024 DelDOT Appropriations by County



Of the mapped transportation funding, 54% was allocated to New Castle County, while 26% was allocated to Sussex County and 20% to Kent County (Figure 16).

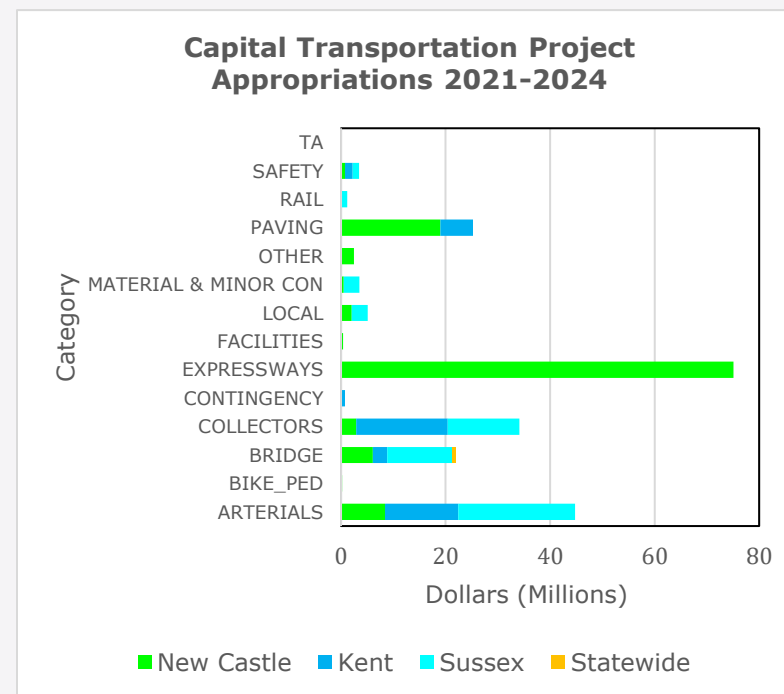
Approximately 76% of the funding was allocated to State Strategies Levels 1, 2, and 3, while 14% was allocated to Level 4 and 10% to Out-of-Play areas (Figure 17). Most of the funding was allocated to large highway projects (Figure 18).

Figure 17: 2021-2024 DelDOT Appropriations by State Strategy Level



The budget mapping dashboard will help the State evaluate whether investments supporting health, safety, and welfare in rural Level 4 areas are consistent with the State Strategies, as outlined in **Recommendation 5a**.

Figure 18: 2026 Budget Appropriations by County and Transportation Category



The Office of State Planning Coordination plans to continue working with staff from the Office of Management and Budget and DelDOT to identify and map additional projects. The dashboard will be updated as future state budgets are approved, providing an ongoing tool to monitor the geographic distribution of state investments and their alignment with the State Strategies.

Smart Growth Visioning

Findings and Recommendations

City of Seaford, looking west on High St

Smart Growth Visioning

For the State Strategies to effectively coordinate land-use and state investments, they must evolve. This section lays out a plan for this evolution.

Gathering Feedback

Governor Meyer adopted the 2025 State Strategies through [Executive Order 16](#), which also tasked the Office of State Planning Coordination (OSPC) and the Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues (CCSPI) with completing a “2026 State Smart Growth Visioning process.” The goal was to identify enhancements to the State Strategies over the next few years.

Gathering stakeholder feedback was an essential part of the visioning process. With assistance from the University of Delaware’s Institute for Public Administration (IPA), three workshops were conducted in the summer of 2026, one in each county.

August 11, 2026 - Kent County

August 12, 2026 - Sussex County

August 13, 2026 - New Castle County



Figure 19: Smart Growth Visioning Process Timeline

Findings

The IPA and OSPC collected stakeholder feedback and public comments and compiled the following findings in four general categories.

Vision and Goals

- The Strategies need a more clearly defined vision.
- The goals need to be streamlined and potentially the number reduced.
- The goals need corresponding metrics and measurable outcomes.
- Two new goals were suggested to address climate resiliency and public health.

Maps

- The term “investment” is unclear to many.
- Using numbers is unclear to some. Level 3 is often misunderstood and the relationship between Levels 2 and 3 is unclear.
- Some participants suggested five categories were too many and need to be simplified. Others suggested more detail is needed and five may not be enough.
- State investment decisions should be more tied to current infrastructure availability and planned growth and capacity, but there are gaps in available data.
- Many commented about weighting the data inputs, but there was no consensus on how to accomplish this – due to conflicting priorities.

Comprehensive Plans

- The ten-year update timeline is somewhat arbitrary and could benefit from updates based on planning conditions or triggering events. Many smaller jurisdictions don’t change substantially in ten years.
- Many local governments share similar issues and would benefit from regional planning to share resources and align timelines.
- The burden of proof could be placed on local governments to justify the extent of their growth areas through capacity analysis.
- Plans should be more actionable, fiscally constrained, and tied to available resources.

- The state needs “more teeth” for stronger enforcement and reporting on local government implementation progress.

Note: The Housing for Every Delawarean Act (Senate Bill 23) solidified the state’s comprehensive plan enforcement role by prohibiting a local government from adopting a plan that is not certified by the Governor.

Program Administration

- Five years is too long to wait for a full Strategies update when planning conditions change more frequently.

Recommendations

The following are high-level recommendations based on the preceding findings.

Vision and Goals

- Adopt a new vision for State Strategies.
- Revise the goals to provide more clarity.

Maps

- Change the term “investment” to a more land-use focused term and change the numerical levels to text categories.
- Evaluate methods to simplify the investment levels while also evaluating more granular overlay data to add value.

- Develop methods to better differentiate between state investments for maintenance and safety and investments for development and growth.
- Develop methods to map state infrastructure capacity.
- Use local government infrastructure data to analyze the “readiness” of areas and use to develop state priority areas for investments and incentives.

Comprehensive Plans

- Before comprehensive plan certification, evaluate local government growth areas based on current and future infrastructure capacity.

Program Administration

- Develop a plan to implement programmatic improvements leading to the 2030 mandated update of State Strategies ([see Figure 20](#)).
- Process annual amendments to the State Strategies maps to capture changing conditions from updated comprehensive and/or master plans.

Path Forward

After reviewing the findings and recommendations from the Smart Growth Visioning process, it was clear that implementing enhancements to State Strategies requires a multi-year approach that is well-coordinated with comprehensive plans and requires access to new data. OSPC developed the following 2027-2030 State Strategies Enhancement Plan to ensure successful implementation.

City of Seaford, along High St.



Explore the 2025 State Strategies

stateplanning.delaware.gov/strategies

Figure 20

2027-2030 State Strategies Enhancement Plan

Implementation Timeline*

2027

- Develop a vision and revised goals for CCSPI adoption
- Reframe the “Investment Levels” and change numerical levels to text categories
- Implement a process for annual map amendments
- Formally request infrastructure data from public and private providers to fill gaps

2029

- Complete annual map amendments
- Develop and test state infrastructure capacity analysis and mapping methods
- Use newly acquired data and new analysis methods to pilot a “readiness” map(s), based on favorable zoning and infrastructure availability

- Complete annual map amendments
- Develop and test new visualization methods to simplify the current investment levels, and
- Test new data as map overlays to enhance the current investment levels and aid decision-making
- Implement new processes for tracking comprehensive plan updates, amendments, and compliance

2028

- Develop a new comprehensive analysis methodology based on all enhancements to date, then
- Complete a full update of State Strategies with new methodology and visualization

2030

Implementation Challenges

1. The next evolution of State Strategies will depend on new methods to assess current and future infrastructure capacity at the state and local levels. This will require access to additional data layers and will require local governments to use these data to justify growth areas in their comprehensive plans.
2. Local government compliance with the “Housing for Every Delawarean Act” (Senate Bill 23) and the “ROAD-DE Act” (House Bill 450) is ongoing and will be achieved through comprehensive plan amendments/updates and ordinance adoption over the next few years. Due to the coordinated nature of comprehensive plans and State Strategies, specific actions on this plan may need to be adjusted accordingly.

*Subject to change

OSPC Support Activities



Mural on Pearl St, Seaford

Data & Demographics

Delaware's population continues to age, net migration continues to rise, and housing costs continue to outpace household incomes. Read on to learn more.

Census State Data Center

The Office of State Planning Coordination (OSPC) is the Governor's liaison to the U.S. Census Bureau and disseminates Census communications to the State Data Center network, supports Census workshops for the Affiliates Network, and responds to public inquiries. Due to funding cuts at the federal level, the State Data Center has asked members of the Affiliates Network to present to the group how they are using Census data. This year started with a presentation by the Department of Labor on their labor forecasting followed by a presentation by Department of Education and how they use population projections to determine staffing needs. Later this year, more information will be shared with the Network in preparation for the 2030 Census. Also, OSPC staff were fortunate to attend the State Data Center Annual Training Conference again, which was held virtually over three days in July.

Population Consortium

The Delaware Population Consortium (DPC) is the state authority for demographic and population projections. These projections are vital to effective land use planning, economic development, education planning, and other state functions. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the projections were not updated last year. This year we are working with the Center for Applied Demography & Survey Research (CADSR) and The Biden School at the University of Delaware to create a new transparent methodology and set of projections which will be ready in early 2027. The 2024 DPC projections show the population increasing to over 1.17 million persons by 2050, though the rate of growth is slowing. The number of deaths will continue to outpace the number of births at a higher rate, and the only population growth will be from migration.

Delaware Census State Data Center:

<https://stateplanning.delaware.gov/state-data-center/index.shtml>

GIS Initiatives

The availability of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data is a key element to successful long-range planning. OSPC has worked to administer the first acquisition of its multi-year aerial imagery (6-inch leaf-off), and land-use land-cover (LULC) data, in support of **Recommendation 8c**. In support of this effort OSPC continues to work with agencies, county

representatives and local governments for review leading to better quality data.

Additionally, OSPC has acquired Oblique imagery during leaf off season for a subset of urban NCC and is working to finalize this data. This data opens the door for more strategic planning and collaboration among agencies and county partners.



Port of Wilmington

Land-Use Coordination

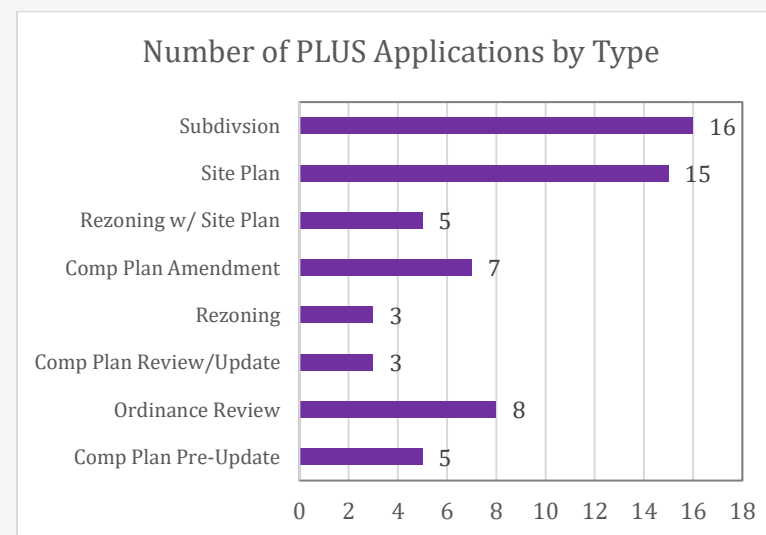
The following is a summary of land-use planning activities, annexations, and Downtown Development District investments this past year.

Preliminary Land-Use Service (PLUS)

The Preliminary Land Use Service (**PLUS**) process offers developers an opportunity to engage with key State agencies and receive early feedback on their plans. This review helps identify potential issues before a project proceeds to local jurisdiction review and approval, which can help avoid delays later in the process. PLUS also provides an opportunity for comprehensive plan updates and amendments to receive State agency review.

Between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026, the State reviewed 62 PLUS applications, including comprehensive plan reviews, updates and amendments, rezonings, site plans, and subdivision plans. See **Figure 21** for the numbers of applications by type.

Figure 21: Number of 2026 PLUS Applications by Type

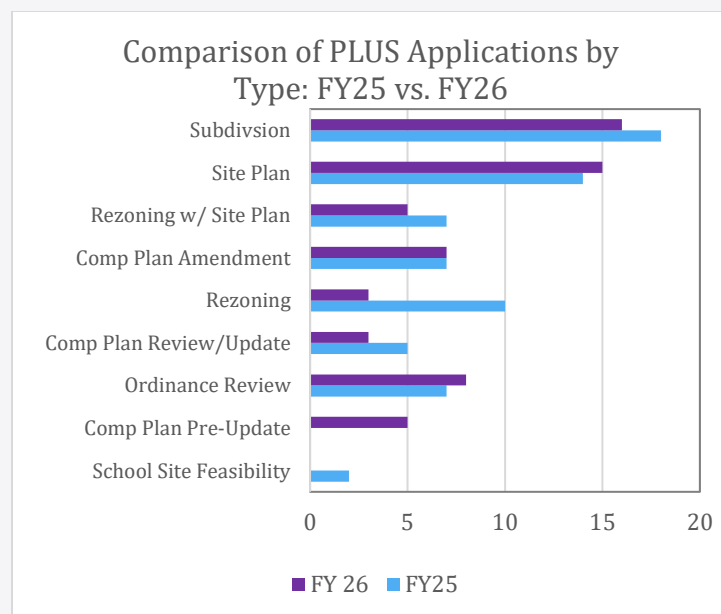


A comparison of PLUS applications by type between FY25 (blue) and FY26 (purple) shows several notable differences (**Figure 22**). FY26 included five Comprehensive Plan Pre-Update Reviews, compared with none in FY25. These reviews allow local jurisdictions to engage with State agencies before beginning a formal plan update, providing an opportunity to discuss new requirements, planning best practices, and other considerations early in the process. This

is particularly valuable as jurisdictions prepare to address new comprehensive planning requirements such as Senate Bill 237, which now requires climate change and resiliency to be woven into different aspects of a jurisdiction's comprehensive plan. Comprehensive plan updates can be a significant undertaking, and the Pre-Update Review provides an opportunity for jurisdictions to get guidance and better understand expectations before beginning the work.

FY25 also saw a higher number of Rezoning applications, with 10 applications compared to just 3 in FY26. This represents the largest year-to-year change among the PLUS application types and is a notable shift in the types of projects coming through the PLUS process.

Figure 22: Number of PLUS Applications by Type



The enhanced PLUS process implemented in summer 2025 also continued throughout FY26 and has operated smoothly, with no significant concerns raised by applicants or reviewing agencies. OSPC also began connecting the PLUS process with Gov. Matt Meyer's JobsFirst Permitting Accelerator program, which is intended to streamline complex permitting reviews while maintaining Delaware's environmental, public safety, and regulatory standards. The two programs will work together to support smart development in Delaware and improve coordination through the state.

Municipal Annexations

Per Delaware Code (22 Del. C.§101), all annexations must be consistent with the most recently adopted comprehensive plan, be depicted as future annexation areas within that plan, and must be rezoned by ordinance to classifications consistent with the comprehensive plan or development strategy. Annexation plans help municipalities examine the impact of development in annexation areas.

Cities and towns are also required to prepare a Municipal Annexation Plan of Services for all annexations. The plan demonstrates how services are to be provided and the operating and financial capabilities necessary to support them. The Plan of Services collects property and land-use data and information about needed utility and public safety services. Between July 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026, OSPC processed 23 annexation Plan of Services applications totaling 360.03 acres of land proposed for annexation. Of those, 17 applications, equaling 115.33 acres have been

formally annexed. The remaining applications are still in process.

Local Government Comprehensive Plans

Throughout the past year, Governor Meyer has certified 4 comprehensive plans. These include Clayton, Harrington, Henlopen Acres, and Newport. Per Delaware Code (22 Del. C. §702 and 9 Del. C. c. 26, c. 49, c. 69), all local jurisdictions are required to review their comprehensive plans every 5 years and complete a full update and recertification every 10 years.

Looking ahead, OSPC is currently working with 10 municipalities who are updating their comprehensive plan and 12 municipalities in the 5-year review process to determine if their current plans are still applicable or if changes are needed before the next 10-year update.

Local governments are also required to monitor their implementation progress and document that in an annual report to OSPC.

To date, 40 municipalities and all 3 counties have submitted comprehensive plan annual reports. Of those jurisdictions, 5 have noted that plan amendments may be needed at this time, 14 are working on or have recently updated their ordinances or zoning code, 16 municipalities are considering bike and/or pedestrian walkway plans or trails or are actively working on parkland or playgrounds within their town. Twelve municipalities have designated Downtown

Development Districts (**DDD**) and several are working with the Department of Transportation (**DeIDOT**) on Transportation Improvement Districts (**TIDs**).

In addition, 25 local jurisdictions have identified issues that could benefit from technical assistance from OSPC. Many of the requests were related to help with the comprehensive plan and guidance with new legislative requirements.

Highlights from this year's reports:

Bridgeville – The town is currently working with a consultant and DSHA on SJR8 updates to their zoning ordinances. In addition, the town has received a federal grant for the renovation of a historic structure in the town.

Delaware City – The city continues to make progress on the Fort Delaware Redevelopment. The town has restructured its Main Street organization to increase its focus on business recruitment and downtown revitalization.

Frederica – The town created a new park including a gazebo, walking path, and area for a farmers market. In addition, the town constructed a 1-mile multi-use path from the Firehouse and new restaurant to the senior center and park.

Leipsic – Over the past year, several properties have been remodeled, and 2 vacant lots were purchased and developed. The town continues to work with DNREC on the Whedbee property.

Magnolia - The solar credits program with Solar on Earth took effect and the initial savings appeared on the town invoices. It will save the town 10-15% on their electric bill.

Middletown - Development activity continues throughout Middletown. Appoquinimink School District is planning an additional elementary school and early childhood center. Amazon has begun the permitting process for another distribution facility and STA Pharma is nearing completion of Phase I of its project, which includes an administration building, laboratory, and drug product manufacturing facility.

Millville - The Town of Millville launched Discover Millville, an interactive mobile application designed to enhance community engagement and provide information about local amenities and resources. The Town also acquired the Dukes Property and is advancing plans for a future public works facility.

Newark - The City of Newark completed a Rental Housing Needs Study and adopted the Newark Sustainability Plan. In addition, Newark achieved Silver Bicycle Friendly Community designation, recognizing its continued efforts to promote bicycling and improve bicycle infrastructure.

Sussex County - The county completed work on the Land Use Reform Working Group. From the recommendations of that group, the county adopted new ordinance with changes to the Sussex County Rental Program and changes to Chapter 9909c to clarify the criteria to be considered in subdivision applications. In addition, the County is working with the State on the US Route 9 Master plan.

Downtown Development Districts

Since 2014, the Downtown Development District (DDD) program has revitalized downtowns by providing incentives for a variety of projects (see Table 7). OSPC works closely with DSHA to implement the program, which spurs private capital investments, stimulates job growth, increases housing opportunities, and improves the vitality of neighborhoods.

The primary incentive is the state’s DDD Rebate Program, which is administered by DSHA and provides up to 20% of eligible construction or redevelopment costs (**Figure 23**). In addition, our local government partners have provided investors with a variety of local incentives, such as tax abatements, permit fee waivers, impact fee waivers or reductions, business license fee waivers, and other financial incentives. They have also provided expedited processing and direct assistance that have value difficult to calculate in monetary terms.

Table 7: Designated Downtown Development Districts

There are **12 DDDs**, listed by their year of designation:

2015	2016	2019
Wilmington	Smyrna	New Castle
Dover	Harrington	Delaware City
Seaford	Milford	Middletown
	Georgetown	Clayton
	Laurel	

Since 2015, Delaware's investment in the DDD program has facilitated downtown revitalization with the completion of

572 projects (483 small and 89 large) that together used \$55 million in state funds to leverage \$799 million in private

investment. In addition, there are 28 large projects that are still under construction.



Cape Henlopen Lighthouse

Photo courtesy of Tom Miller

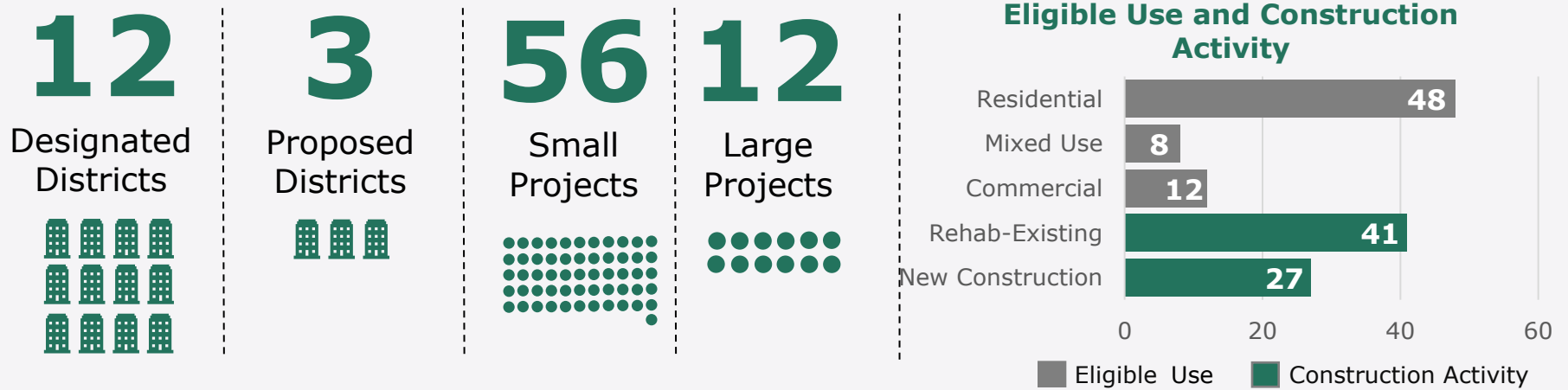
Visit the DDD Story Map:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/4fae700bc97e42ac8795534e218c056e>

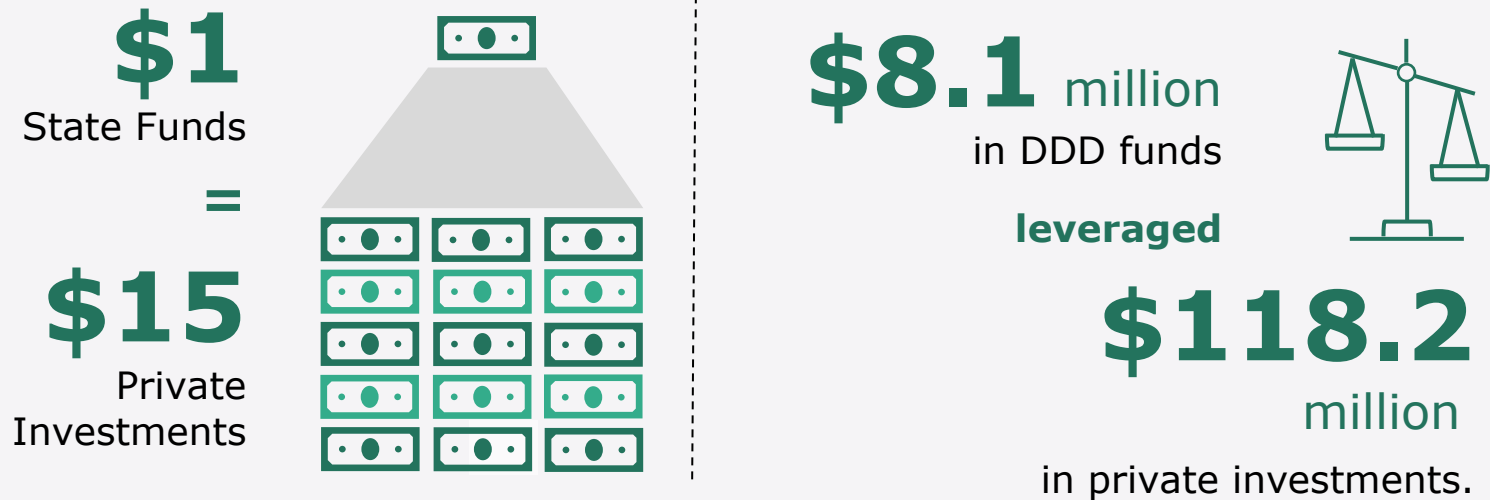
Figure 23: By the Numbers

Downtown Development Districts

In FY25, the Downtown Development Districts (DDD) program sponsored...



In FY25, the DDD program leveraged state funds for private investments...



Recommendations



Seaford River Walk looking east

Recommendations

Based on the preceding input from our state agencies, this section summarizes the key challenges we face and presents recommendations to guide the work of the CCSPI, agency staff, and their partners in meeting these challenges.

Recommendations for Consideration

To help Delaware meet its state planning challenges and continue the implementation of State Strategies, agency staff and Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues (CCSPI) members developed the following set of recommendations. The intent is not to implement all of them over the next 12 months, but rather to maintain an ongoing set of recommendations that can be monitored and adjusted each year. The CCSPI can work with the Strategies Implementation Team (SIT) to prioritize these recommendations and integrate them into the work programs of the individual agencies.

Challenges and Recommendations

1. Demographic Projections



Demographic data forecasts from the Delaware Population Consortium (DPC) are required for planning and policy purposes (29 Del. C. §9152). DPC requires consulting services to prepare the annual figures. The current arrangement with the University of Delaware is informal and funding is unpredictable. Ancillary products are also important, such as school enrollment projections needed to satisfy the requirements of 9 Del. C. §2656, §4956, and §6956.

1a. Continuity of Demographic Data

Work with the Delaware Population Consortium (DPC) members to develop a sustainable plan for funding and contractual services to produce the annual data. In addition, develop a reliable and consistent process for obtaining and interpreting school enrollment projections for use in the education element of county comprehensive plans, per 9 Del. C. §2656, §4956, and §6956. *Sources: DOE, OSPC, DelDOT*
Update: DPC is working with new team at UD CASDSR to revise methodology for population projects, with new projections on track to be delivered in early 2027.

Sustainable funding remains an unresolved issue. OSPC has engaged UD CADSR to update school district enrollment projections.

2. Emerging Land Use Compatibility



Emerging technological and societal trends can create land-use conflicts between existing and new uses. For example, the demand for renewable energy, such as solar and wind, will increase as the Climate Action Plan is implemented and sometimes projects are met with opposition from agricultural landowners. Also, freight truck traffic is often undesirable in local communities even though the warehousing and distribution building trend will likely continue, like the New Castle County trend presented earlier.

2a. Renewable Energy and Agriculture

Develop policy guidance and provide planning assistance to local governments for the siting of renewable energy facilities, such as solar and wind, to ensure compatibility with agricultural land uses. *Source: DDA*

2b. Freight as a Good Neighbor

Consider providing planning assistance for local governments to integrate elements of the Delaware State Freight Plan into their comprehensive plans to prepare for and attract freight activity on appropriate routes. *Source: DelDOT*

3. Housing Development Practices



Local land-use practices and real estate market forces are continuing the boom in single-family housing development, which frequently occurs in Level 4 areas where conservation should be encouraged. These practices make it difficult to meet conservation and climate goals, strain the state's infrastructure budgets, and are often incompatible with fair housing goals, which limits the availability of diverse housing options at lower price points. Contributing factors include, but are not limited to:

- Affordable housing developments often face strong community opposition.
- The predominant residential zoning is single-family homes, which limits housing options and creates barriers for some.
- Housing at lower price points is often not located near opportunities, such as jobs and high-performing schools.

3a. The Cost of Development Decisions

Develop new methods for calculating the long-term costs of providing state services for land-use actions that are inconsistent with State Strategies. Evaluate the quality-of-life and climate change impacts of disconnected Level 4 land uses. These figures would help agency leaders make policy decisions. *Sources: DelDOT, DNREC* **Update: as per EO#16, the OSPC has mapped the Capital Budget allowing for more detailed analysis of State infrastructure spending. See the section earlier in this report. In addition, DDA**

has engaged with the American Farmland Trust to study the value of the agricultural economy and the cost of farmland conversion in Delaware, including metrics about Capital Budget growth.

3b. Governance of Housing Supply

Review Delaware State laws and regulations that affect the local governance of housing supply in comparison to similar states that have addressed housing challenges and consider potential policy changes to help meet Delaware's fair housing goals. *Source: DSHA Update: The General Assembly passed Senate Bill 23 (SB 23), which requires local governments to develop detailed affordable housing plans and implement ordinances as part of their comprehensive plans. See the Policy section for more details.*

3c. Local Reform of Housing Policies

Throughout the development and implementation of local comprehensive plans, consider additional technical and financial support for communities to implement zoning changes that lead to more diverse housing options and monitor the implementation of these plans to track the percentage of affordable housing over time. *Source: DSHA Update: SB23 obligates DSHA to provide technical assistance to local governments as they prepare their required housing plans. The bill also requires DSHA and OSPC to work together on more detailed tracking and reporting for affordable housing production.*

3d. Incentives for Favorable Development

Consider the creation of additional incentives from Cabinet agencies for any residential development project that is consistent with State Strategies and increases the diversity of housing supply. *Source: DSHA*

4. Economic Opportunities and Barriers



There are multiple State programs and incentives encouraging economic development; there are also infrastructure needs and criteria that most new businesses rely upon. In addition, there are sometimes barriers for small businesses to redevelop or reuse brownfield or grayfield sites in developed areas where infrastructure already exists. These sites are consistent with State Strategies and prepared for growth.

Tools for combining this information are needed to reduce barriers and highlight opportunities for sites that are ready for growth.

4a. Ready in Delaware

Develop a consolidated map of site characteristics and available incentives for a one-stop shop approach. In addition, consider new financial incentives for development that is consistent with State Strategies investment levels, such as higher incentives in Levels 1 and 2. *Sources: DSB, OSPC, DNREC Update: This concept has been integrated into the mapping recommendations resulting from the*

Smart Growth Visioning Process, see recommendations below.

4b. Reuse of Brownfields and Grayfields

Consider new methods to identify and promote the redevelopment and/or reuse of underutilized or abandoned lands in developed areas, such as brownfields or grayfields.

Source: DSB Update: In FY26, DNREC's Division of Waste and Hazardous Substances approved 20 applications for brownfields certification, demonstrating the State's continued commitment to revitalizing and repurposing contaminated sites.

4c. Utilization of Rail Infrastructure

Consider potential incentives for local governments to rezone properties adjacent to rail lines to industrial and/or commercial zones, based on the recommendations of the Dover Kent MPO Rail Land-Use Study. *Source: OSPC*

5. Infrastructure for Health, Safety, and Welfare in Rural Areas



State infrastructure investments for health, safety, and welfare in rural Level 4 areas could inadvertently spur development interest in surrounding lands. This infrastructure is usually not designed for additional growth and would require significant capital investments for upgrades if development does occur.

5a. Manage Investment Impacts

Consider potential actions to ensure that State infrastructure investments for health, safety, and welfare in rural Level 4 areas are consistent with State Strategies and do not accommodate more intense development of the surrounding land uses. *Source: OSPC*

5b. Preserving Vital Transportation Corridors

Consider coordination of multiple agency funding sources to successfully manage access along State Route 1 (SR 1) per DelDOT's updated Corridor Capacity Preservation Program transportation plan for SR 1 to prevent more intense development of the surrounding properties. *Source: DelDOT, OSPC*

6. Healthy Community Resources



Many Delawareans do not have access to community resources that contribute to improved health, such as locally grown food, natural areas with adequate tree cover, and safe bike and pedestrian facilities.

6a. Local Food Programs

Develop policy guidance and provide planning assistance for local jurisdictions to create local food systems. Programs could encourage in-fill development, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse in Level 1 and 2 areas. *Source: DDA*

6b. Urban Forestry Programs

Develop policy guidance and provide planning assistance for local jurisdictions to create urban forestry programs. They

could encourage in-fill development, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse in Level 1 and 2 areas. *Source: DDA*

6c. Walkable and Bikeable Communities

Consider improvements to the coordination of policymaking and infrastructure investments in safe bike and pedestrian facilities that provide active transportation in developed areas. *Source: DNREC*

7. Clean Energy Transition Assistance



The Climate Action Plan outlines strategies for Delaware to meet its climate change challenges. Local governments have a large role to play in implementing the plan and must be prepared for emerging trends in transportation and energy.

7a. Local Resiliency Planning

Support local government efforts to plan for the impacts of climate change, such as planning assistance for resiliency plans, sustainability plans, and providing guidance to ensure comprehensive plans address climate change. *Source: DNREC*

Update: To support the implementation of SB237, the OSPC worked with DNREC and other agency partners to develop a checklist and Toolkit to assist local governments as they add climate change and resiliency to their comprehensive plans.

7b. Reducing Emissions from Transportation

Develop policy guidance and provide planning assistance for local governments to transition to electric vehicle fleets and provide public and residential vehicle charging. Provide education and best practices for the implementation of 22 Del. C. §119, which requires municipalities with more than 30,000 persons to develop a permitting process for residential curbside charging. *Source: DNREC, DelDOT*

7c. Energy Building Codes

Develop best practices and educational resources for local governments to implement updated energy building codes. *Source: DNREC*

8. Meeting all Challenges



These recommendations could help Delaware meet all the challenges presented in this report.

8a. Enhancements to CCSPI

The Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues (CCSPI) is comprised of Cabinet agency leaders, but not all agencies are official members. Evaluate the responsibilities and membership of the CCSPI to determine if changes would be beneficial. *Source: OSPC*

8b. Comprehensive Plan Amendment Process

Review the comprehensive plan amendment process and consider improvements to clarify the actions of the CCSPI, reduce potential conflicts with local jurisdictions, and make the process more transparent and efficient. *Source: OSPC*

Update: The OSPC and CCSPI have implemented a new procedure to review comprehensive plan amendments. Any amendment that proposes expanding an annexation area or growth area into Investment Level 4 is reviewed through the CCSPI following detailed analysis by OSPC and agency planning staff.

9. Smart Growth Visioning

The following recommendations are a result of stakeholder feedback from the 2026 State Smart Growth Visioning process as set forth in [Executive Order 16](#). For more information, see the “Smart Growth Visioning: Findings and Recommendations” chapter in this report.



9a. Vision and Goals

1. Adopt a new vision for State Strategies.
2. Revise the goals to provide more clarity.

9b. Maps

1. Change the term “investment” to a more land-use focused term and change the numerical levels to text categories.
2. Evaluate methods to simplify the investment levels while also evaluating more granular overlay data to add value.
3. Develop methods to better differentiate between state investments for maintenance and safety and investments for development and growth.

4. Develop methods to map state infrastructure capacity.
5. Use local government infrastructure data to analyze the “readiness” of areas and use to develop state priority areas for investments and incentives.

9c. Comprehensive Plans

1. Before comprehensive plan certification, evaluate local government growth areas based on current and future infrastructure capacity.

9d. Program Administration

1. Develop a plan to implement programmatic improvements leading to the 2030 mandated update of State Strategies.
2. Process annual amendments to the State Strategies maps to capture changing conditions from updated comprehensive and/or master plans



Lighthouse at Cape Henlopen



Slaughter Beach, Sussex County

Photo by: Krystine Sipple