

# 2021 Comprehensive Plan

## TOWN OF ELSMERE

*New Castle County, Delaware*



**Adopted by the Mayor and Council on XXXX XX, 2021; Ordinance XXX-XX-XX**

**Certified by the Governor on XXXX XX, 2021**

***Prepared by***

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# Town, County, and State Officials

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## Town of Elsmere

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# Institute for Public Administration

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The *Town of Elsmere 2021 Comprehensive Plan* was prepared by the Town of Elsmere Planning Commission with assistance from the Institute for Public Administration (IPA), a unit within the University of Delaware's Joseph R. Biden, Jr. School of Public Policy & Administration. IPA links the research and resources of the University of Delaware with the management and information needs of local, state, and regional governments in the Delaware Valley. IPA assists agencies and local governments through direct staff assistance and research projects as well as training programs and policy forums.

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# Background and Overview

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## Overview

The Town of Elsmere has a long and rich history dating back to the late 1800s, and at just one square mile is one of the most densely populated areas in the state. However, despite maintaining a very healthy local economy, the town has experienced little growth over the past 20 years. Since the 2000 Census, the town has grown from 5,800 residents to approximately 6,100 (a growth rate of approximately 0.25% per year), making it the ninth largest of Delaware's 57 municipalities. Elsmere is almost completely built-out, with very little open space or available land for new development. Despite these constraints, Elsmere is interested in growing in the near future. Many of the goals from the town's 2010 Comprehensive Plan have been addressed, such as reviewing its zoning code, expanding its network of trails, and addressing flooding issues in trouble spots throughout town. However, more remains to be done. The 2021 Comprehensive Plan incorporates information and actions from the previous comprehensive plan while providing an updated vision for the town over the coming decades.

As a community with a strong local employment base, good local commercial destinations, and a premier location within the Wilmington area and near the I-95 corridor, Elsmere is well positioned for future economic and population growth. In addition to addressing the goals of its prior comprehensive plan, the Town of Elsmere has implemented new policies and guidelines that must be considered in this comprehensive plan update along with those of New Castle County and the City of Wilmington. This includes an additional focus and interest on improving the Kirkwood Highway corridor running through the middle of town. Planning for an appropriate amount of new development that can be accommodated by the town while simultaneously protecting existing neighborhoods and the town's community character will be a challenge and a focus for the town moving forward.

The purpose of the 2021 Comprehensive Plan is to guide future decisions by delineating the policies on which these future decisions will be based. These policies are developed through the comprehensive planning process and informed by factors affecting the community. These factors include land uses, the transportation system, natural resources, economic development, historic resources, and both utilities and community facilities. An assessment of existing conditions and the creation of a guiding vision and goals have informed the development of recommendations for the town to consider after the adoption of this plan.

## Vision for the Town's Future

"The Town of Elsmere will work to maintain its small-town atmosphere while adapting to changes in the surrounding region. Elsmere plans to do this by maintaining a connection to its roots as a close-knit community of just one square mile, while continuing to make changes that will be beneficial to the town's character and economic strength in the future."

## Goals of the Plan

The following five goals represent the primary objectives of the plan, with elements of each impacting various chapters throughout the plan:

1. Strive to become a destination for New Castle County residents seeking a safe, affordable, and walkable community.
2. Maintain the character of the town's built environment while allowing for expansion, growth, and change in clearly identified appropriate locations.
3. Improve the safety, aesthetics, and character of Kirkwood Highway and recognize its connection to the local community as Elsmere's "Main Street," with the long-term goal of being part of the "Delaware On Main" program.
4. Maintain and enhance the town's neighborhoods and small businesses by focusing on their unique characteristics.
5. Preserve areas with historic, cultural, scenic, environmental, and recreational value as important resources for a small, densely populated municipality.

## Planning Process

The comprehensive planning process involves establishing goals for the future of a municipal government, analyzing current and projected conditions, and laying out steps that can be taken to help a municipality reach its goals. Important town information and data have been updated to summarize the existing and projected conditions for Elsmere in the areas of demographics, infrastructure, environmental, economic, transportation, and land use.

## Public Participation

IPA staff began meeting with Town of Elsmere staff in August of 2019. At subsequent meetings, various plan components were discussed.

### Open House

IPA and town staff held an open house at Elsmere's Town Hall to invite input and recommendations for the new comprehensive plan on November 5, 2019, from 5:00 to 6:15 p.m., which was prior to the town's regular planning commission meeting. The open house was advertised by the town over a month in advance of the event, including at the town's fall festival held on October 12, 2019, and on the town's website.

### Website Invitation to Comment

Shortly after the open house event on November 5, 2019, the following message and a link to the questionnaire were posted on the town website:

*“Elsmere is currently in the process of updating our comprehensive plan. A comprehensive plan is a town’s guiding policy document that is required to be updated at least once every ten years. Some of the key elements of a comprehensive plan include:*

- *Outlining real estate development and transportation goals and objectives;*
- *Mapping the desired locations for homes, shops, offices, and other land uses in town in town;*
- *Identifying areas that Elsmere may want to annex into the town over the next ten years; and*
- *Serving as the basis for future zoning and subdivision laws through a series of maps and recommendations.*

*Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts about the Town of Elsmere.*

*You may bring them directly to the Town Hall, fax them to (302) 998-9920, mail them to 11 Poplar Avenue, Elsmere, DE 19805, or e-mail them to [diana.reed@townofelsmere.com](mailto:diana.reed@townofelsmere.com).”*

### **Public Feedback Summary**

Despite the town’s best efforts to garner input from the public, there were no responses to the message on the town’s website. Unfortunately, additional planned efforts for outreach during the spring of 2020 were stifled by the COVID-19 pandemic, which delayed the completion of the plan during 2020.

Attendees at the open house on November 5, 2019 shared a variety of thoughts that were focused primarily around maintaining safe neighborhoods and quality town services, improvements along Kirkwood Highway, and concern for new development at the former GM plant on Boxwood Road.





## Community Profile

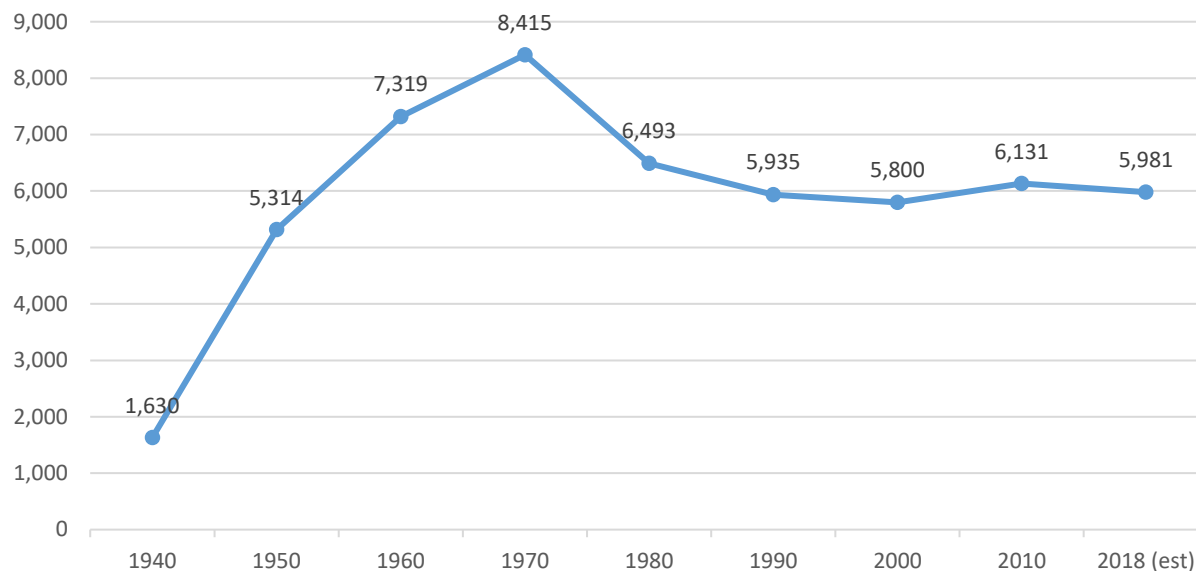
Elsmere's population has rebounded over the past 20 years after a steady decline from 1970 to 2000, surpassing previous population projections. The population of Elsmere dropped over 30 percent during the period of 1970–2000, but rebounded over the last 20 years growing almost 6 percent from 2000 to 2010 alone. While the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) estimate is slightly lower than the town's 2010 Census population figure, the ACS has a much higher margin of error particularly for smaller municipalities like Elsmere, and the town's 2020 decennial Census population figure is likely to be much closer to the 2010 figure. Figure 1 displays these trends graphically. While recent growth trends for Elsmere may continue, the town has very little ability to grow significantly in the near future without rezoning land for increased density or annexation. On the other hand, New Castle County and the state have seen continued steady growth over the past 80 years. Growth rates in New Castle County have slowed somewhat since their peak from 1980 to 2000, but still increased nearly 8 percent from 2000 to 2010.

**Table 1. Population 1940 to 2018**

	Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware
<b>1940</b>	1,630	179,562	266,505
<b>1950</b>	5,314	218,879	318,085
<b>1960</b>	7,319	307,446	446,292
<b>1970</b>	8,415	385,856	548,104
<b>1980</b>	6,493	398,115	594,338
<b>1990</b>	5,935	441,946	666,168
<b>2000</b>	5,800	500,265	783,600
<b>2010</b>	6,131	538,479	897,934
<b>2018 (est)</b>	5,981	559,335	967,171

Source: U.S. Census, 1940–2018.

**Figure 1. Elsmere Population Trend 1940–2018**



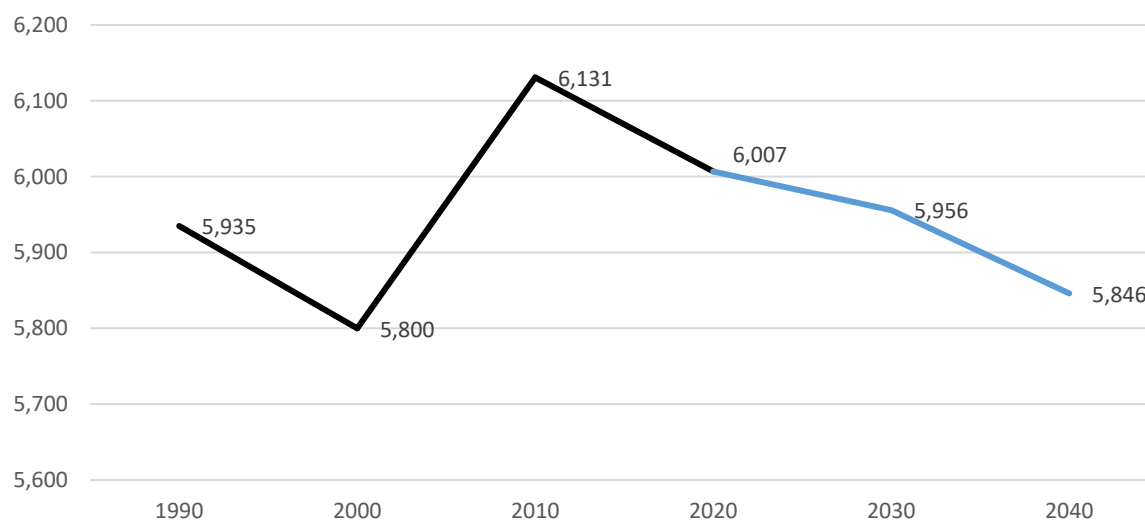
Source: U.S. Census, 1940–2018.

Table 2 summarizes the town's population between 1990 and 2010 as well as the projected negative growth in Elsmere's population from 2020 to 2040 and Figure 2 portrays this data graphically. These projections are based on methodology formulated by the Delaware Population Consortium (DPC). After having grown rapidly from 1940 to 1970, Elsmere's population declined between 1970 and 2000 before leveling out since then to a population around 6,000. The U.S. Census recorded 8,415 residents in 1970, 5,800 in 2000, and over 6,000 in 2010. It is worth noting that the DPC population projection for Elsmere in 2010 was approximately 8 percent lower than the actual population of the town from the 2010 Census.

**Table 2. Population Trend 1990–2010, Projection to 2040**

	Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware
<b>1990</b>	5,935	441,946	666,168
<b>2000</b>	5,800	500,265	783,600
<b>2010</b>	6,131	538,479	897,934
<b>2020</b>	6,007	572,820	977,780
<b>2030</b>	5,956	595,664	1,021,023
<b>2040</b>	5,846	603,677	1,044,441

Sources: Actual population data, 1990–2010, were obtained from the U.S. Census. Projections 2020–2040 were obtained from the Delaware Population Consortium.

**Figure 2. Elsmere Population Trend 1990–2010, Projection to 2040**

Sources: Actual population data, 1990–2010, were obtained from the U.S. Census. Projections 2020–2040 were obtained from the Delaware Population Consortium.

Population projections are very difficult to make with a significant degree of accuracy, particularly for areas with relatively small populations like Elsmere. As stated above, projections made by the DPC prior to the completion of the last plan for Elsmere were significantly inaccurate (8% lower than the actual 2010 Census population). With that said, currently approved and anticipated residential developments are likely to continue the recent pattern of growth in and around Elsmere into the future. In addition, the declining population forecasted in the charts above do not appear to factor in the potential for significant rezoning or redevelopment in the Wilmington area, but instead are reliant on historic development patterns and data. It is also worth noting that these projections can have the unintended

effect of pushing new growth and development toward the areas where it projects growth rather than where it is most appropriate from an effective land-use planning perspective.

Development in the greater Wilmington area, including areas adjacent to Elsmere, is likely to model the pattern of growth seen over recent decades. For example, while most of the surrounding area is relatively built-out in a fashion similar to Elsmere, there are pockets where significant new developments have occurred (such as the Wilmington Riverfront) and is likely to occur in the near future. The redevelopment of the Boxwood Road industrial facility will provide another large job center for the area and likely bring thousands of new jobs to the area immediately adjacent to Elsmere. In addition, large redevelopment projects in the nearby areas of the Riverfront in Wilmington, initial planning for major new developments in nearby Newport, and the redevelopment of the former Astra Zeneca site at the intersection of Routes 202 and 141 are likely to have a major impact on the local and regional economy. The redevelopment of Barley Mill Plaza and Incyte's expansion along the Augustine Cut-Off promise to bring new employment opportunities to the area from both retail and office uses as well as increased traffic that is likely to impact Elsmere. The potential redevelopment of DuPont's Chestnut Run Plaza also presents the possibility of new jobs and economic growth for the area as well as increased traffic. These new developments as well as the redevelopment of additional infill sites in and around Elsmere are likely to ensure that the town and its surrounding area continue to grow at a moderate pace.

### Position on Population Growth

Contrary to the recent projections made by the Delaware Population Consortium, the Town of Elsmere believes that its population will continue to grow modestly over the next two decades through planned and recorded new developments, infill development, redevelopment of existing properties, potential annexations, and up-zoning some properties in appropriate locations.

### Demographic Characteristics

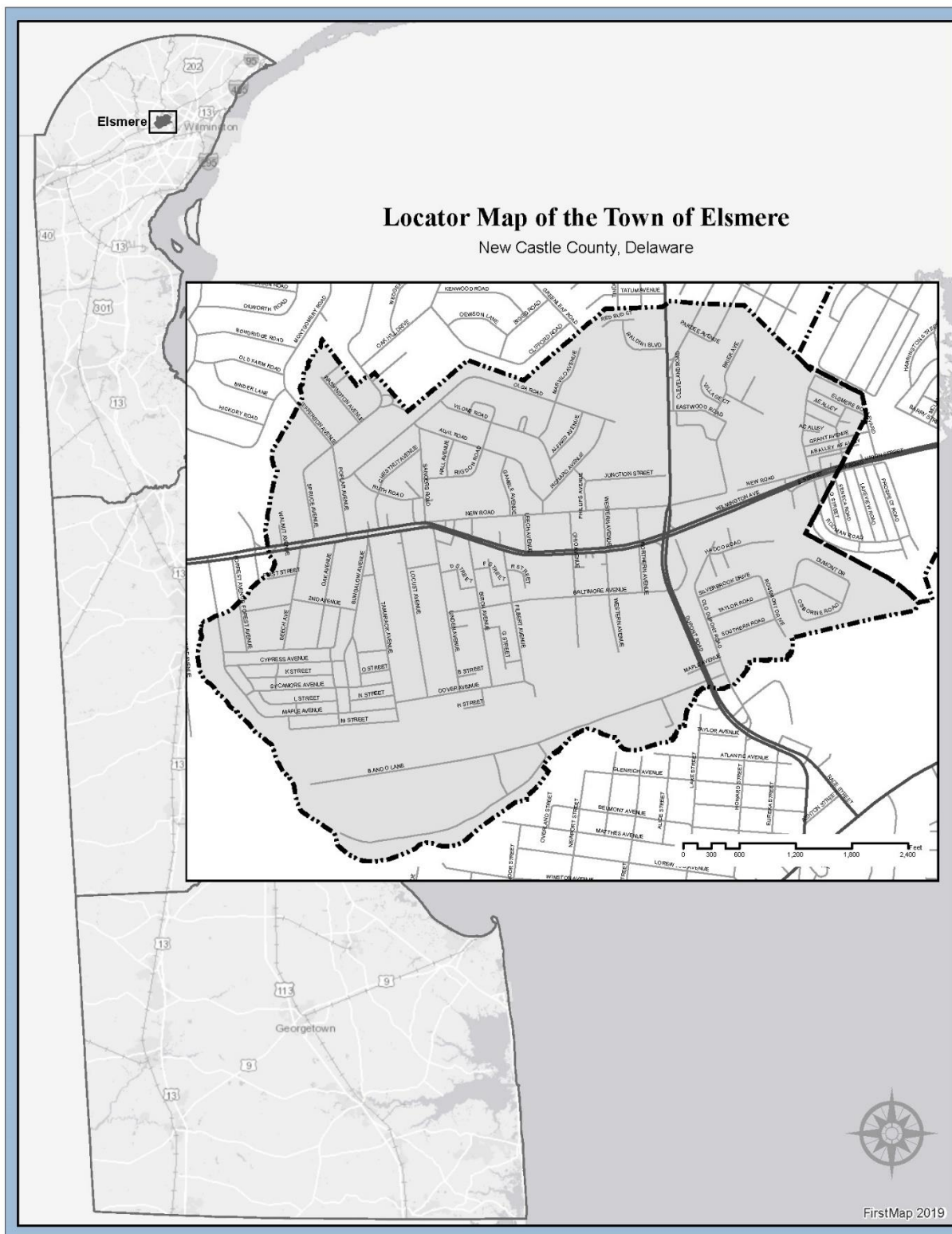
According to data from the U.S. Census 2010 and estimates from the American Community Survey 2014–2018, Elsmere's population became significantly more diverse between 1990 and 2018, going from a town with a white population making up over 90 percent in 1990 to just 58 percent in 2018. Elsmere has grown a significant Hispanic and Latino population as well over this time, with almost 27 percent of its current residents identifying as Hispanic or Latino. Elsmere is also younger than the rest of New Castle County and Delaware, with a younger median age and a smaller percentage of its population over the age of 60. Elsmere has a very similar number of residents under the age of 19 compared to New Castle County and the state, but the town's residents are less educated on average. When compared to the rest of New Castle County or the state, fewer Elsmere residents have a bachelor's degree or higher and almost twice as many have not graduated with a high school degree. Elsmere residents also have a lower median income than the rest of New Castle County or the state.

A detailed description and analysis of the town's demographics can be found in Appendix A, and more detailed economic information can be found in the Economic Development chapter.

## Community Character

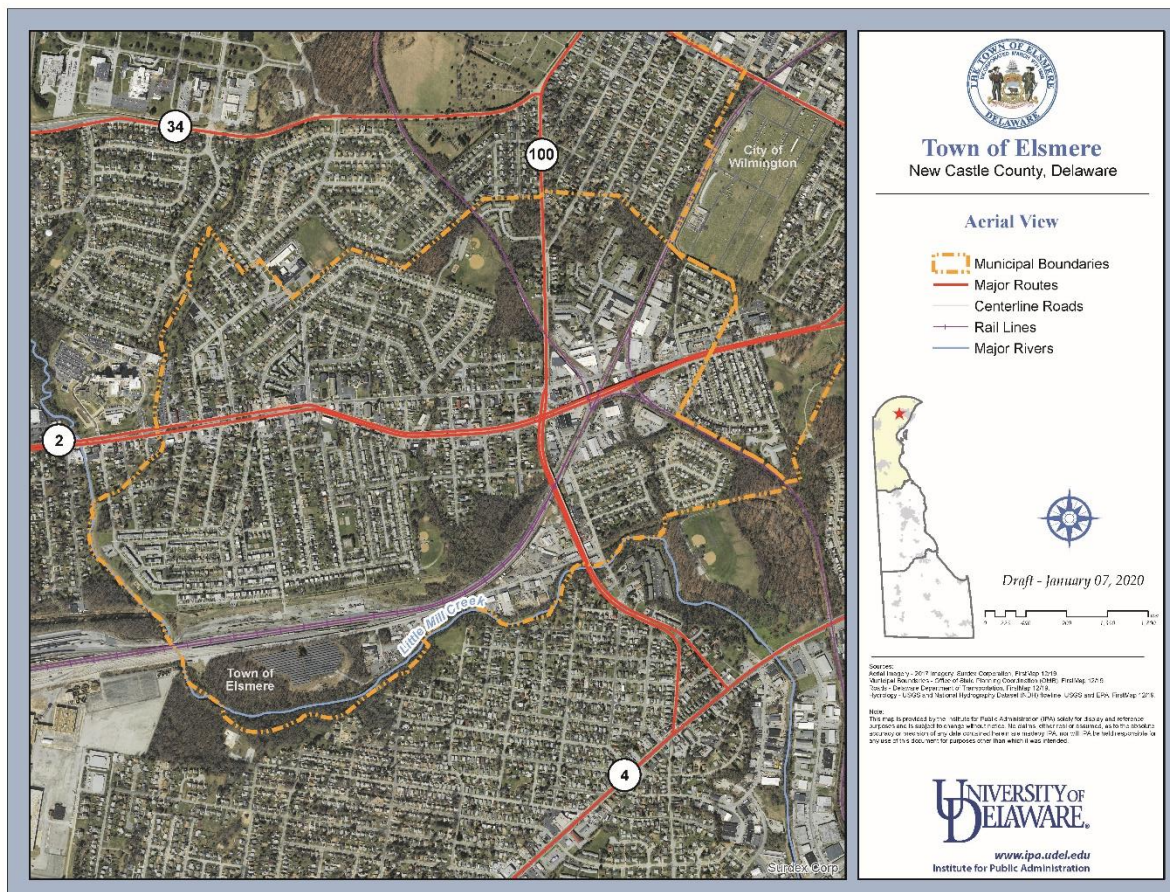
Map 1 depicts Elsmere's regional location. The town shares a border with Delaware's largest municipality, the City of Wilmington, to its east and is located in northern New Castle County just to the north of I-95. It is roughly 30 miles south of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and 65 miles north of Baltimore, Maryland, along the I-95 corridor. An aerial view of the town is provided by Map 2, which shows an area that is almost entirely built out, consisting of mostly post–World War II residential neighborhoods. The aerial map also shows the town's close proximity to the City of Wilmington to the east, the significant railroad corridor extending through the eastern and southern portions of town, and the Route 2 corridor, which is one of the primary commercial corridors in the region and cuts directly through the middle of town from east to west.

## Map 1. Elsmere Regional Location





## Map 2. Elsmere Vicinity Aerial View



### Town History

Prior to the late 1800s, the Elsmere area existed as a small rural community in northern New Castle County, consisting of largely open farmland with some scattered residential dwellings. The major road through the area during much of the nineteenth century was Dupont Road, used by the DuPont company to transport black powder to the Christina River for shipment. In the years after 1881, two rail lines and a road that intersected the area were added. The “New Road” (still known by this name) runs east to west from Wilmington to Greenbank. The Delaware and Western Railroad and the Wilmington and Northern Railroad made connections from the north into lines that passed through Wilmington.

Between 1881 and 1893, significant land divisions occurred. The transformation from a rural farm district characterized by large estates to a suburb of Wilmington evolved in part through the efforts of a real estate promoter, Joshua T. Herald. The close proximity of the railway lines offered cheap transportation to city workers.

In 1909, with the agreement of the approximately 70 families residing in the area at the time, four men incorporated the Town of Elsmere. They were Joseph A. Ranck, Thomas Kane, Penrose S. Foreman, and Albert Wild. The population increased between 1910 and 1920 from 374 to 620 residents. After 1920, Elsmere began to draw population away from the city.

During the late teens, the Delaware State Fair Association purchased land and built a new fairgrounds within Elsmere's town limits. The Delaware State Fair would remain in Elsmere from 1917 until its eventual move to Harrington in 1928.

The outlying areas of the town were built up by developers beginning at the end of World War II and continuing into the early 1960s. The town's population peaked in 1970 at 8,415 residents before declining over the next 30 years to 5,800 in the year 2000.

Today, Elsmere is a thriving community with very little undeveloped land within its one square mile land area.

See the Historic and Cultural Resources chapter for a more detailed narrative of Elsmere's history.

### Community Design Overview

Elsmere's design is largely influenced by the adjacent railroad lines and Kirkwood Highway, both of which run through the town. Kirkwood Highway is the primary commercial area in town and functions as Elsmere's "Main Street." Adjacent to the intersection of the two railroad lines in the eastern portion of town is a very healthy industrial area with some thriving businesses that serve as a good source of employment for the area. To the north and the south of the Kirkwood Highway commercial corridor are primarily residential neighborhoods of varying styles and character that reflect the town's 110-year history.

As with most towns, Elsmere experienced distinct periods of growth. The first homes in Elsmere were built near the intersection of railway lines, offering close proximity to the new railway yards and factories for work and just a small fare to downtown Wilmington. This industrial area continues to thrive today, with many successful businesses operating near the overpasses of Route 100 and Kirkwood Highway. These origins were in the late 1800s prior to when the town was incorporated in 1909. The town essentially grew up around the railroads, the rail yards, and factories, and most of the town today is characterized by attached homes or small-lot single-family homes characteristic of a historic working-class community.

Most of the Town of Elsmere is residential and has many well-designed and attractive residential neighborhoods. The town also has very little open space, being only approximately one square mile in size and almost entirely built-out. However, one of the more unique features of the town is the vast amount of parkland it offers to residents and visitors, including Fairgrounds Park, Vilone Park, and the new Elsmere Dog Park. On the eastern edge of town one will find neighborhoods of attached housing adjacent to the City of Wilmington. Manchester Arms Apartments and Greenbrier Village are just north of this area, and on the southeast side of town one can find single-family detached homes adjacent to



an office and industrial area off Old Dupont Road. To the west of Route 100, the town is defined by Kirkwood Highway running through the middle of the town, bisecting it between north and south. One can find a mix of residential neighborhoods both to the north and south of Kirkwood Highway, with Elsmere's library, Town Hall, and police station located to the north between Poplar and Spruce Avenues. Austin D. Baltz Elementary School borders the town's northern boundary, the Wilmington VA Medical Center borders the town's western boundary, and the Boxwood Road former industrial site is located just outside of the town's southern boundary.

Elsmere offers a diverse housing stock when compared to most other areas in Delaware. Slightly over one-third of the housing options are detached single-family homes located on small lots with front and backyard space. Almost all of these are one- or two-storied homes. Elsmere is also somewhat unique among Delaware municipalities in that approximately 29 percent of homes are single-family attached structures. This is likely due to the fact that many of the housing structures in town were constructed prior to 1960, when large-lot single-family homes were less common than they are today. Approximately two-thirds of homes in Elsmere are homeowner-occupied, and approximately 81 percent of homes were built prior to 1970, according to the 2018 Census ACS 5-year Estimates. Homes in Elsmere are still relatively affordable, partially as a result of this healthy mix of housing types. There has been very little new development in town in recent years as very little vacant land is available for new construction.

## Design Strategies

The following resources are important tools that can guide Elsmere to develop in a sustainable manner.

1. Complete Communities Toolbox
2. Better Models for Development in Delaware
3. DelDOT's Complete Streets Policy

### Complete Communities Toolbox

The *Complete Communities Toolbox* is a product of the Institute for Public Administration (IPA) at the University of Delaware with support from the Delaware Department of Transportation. The purpose of the toolbox is to help communities develop planning approaches, community design tools, and public engagement strategies. The five elements of a complete community are complete streets, efficient land use, encouragement and design for healthy and livable communities, inclusive and active communities, and sustainable and resilient communities. Subsequent to its last comprehensive plan, the Town of Elsmere worked with IPA to help develop the initial model for complete communities throughout Delaware. However, many of these tools can be useful to the town and its planning commission in the future. Additional information can be accessed at <https://www.completecommunitiesde.org/>.

### Better Models for Development in Delaware

The *Better Models for Development in Delaware* handbook was jointly produced by the Conservation Fund and the Office of State Planning Coordination (OSPC). It proposes that the following six principles are necessary to achieve better development in a community:

1. Conserve farmland, open space, and scenic resources.
2. Maintain a clear edge between town and countryside.
3. Build livable communities.
4. Preserve historic resources.
5. Respect local character in new construction.
6. Reduce the impact of the car.

Additional information can be accessed at <https://stateplanning.delaware.gov/better-models/index.shtml>.

This resource provides examples of good development models to serve as a reference for Elsmere development and design in the future. It encourages towns to focus on the concepts of infill, redevelopment, design, and the fostering of a flexible regulatory environment that encourages mixed-use, compact development in the downtown.

Elsmere's history and design, particularly in its neighborhoods, maintains many of the key elements that have made and continue to make it a vibrant, walkable community. One of the goals of the 2021 Comprehensive Plan is to increase the viability of Elsmere's main commercial corridor, Kirkwood Highway, by designing the area to increase walking and bicycling. Mobility should be increased by continuing to encourage multimodal paths throughout town that connect neighborhoods to commercial areas and other neighborhoods.

## Complete Streets

The purpose of the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) Complete Streets policy is to integrate multiple modes of transportation such as walking and bicycling into one interconnected transportation network. Motorized transportation modes should complement walking, bicycling, and other non-motorized modes to provide citizens with optimal transportation system performance. The Elsmere transportation network should allow for maximum vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle interconnections both within new developments and among existing developments.



*Examples of complete streets*

Source: University of Delaware Institute for Public Administration Complete Communities Toolbox

## Position on Community Character

Elsmere will continue to value and protect its unique history and character while also identifying opportunities to grow and improve properties where they are deemed appropriate.

## Community Character and Design Recommendations

1. Encourage the redevelopment of underutilized locations for their highest and best use for the community.
2. Ensure that new developments are designed to complement the surrounding neighborhoods, commercial areas, and the environment.
3. Continue to make investments in the construction of bicycle and pedestrian pathways and improve bicycle and pedestrian connectivity throughout the town.
4. Encourage “complete street” policies for Kirkwood Highway, with a focus on improving the safety of the corridor for walking, bicycling, shopping, and dining.
5. Pursue the expansion and improvement of the greenway trail to ensure that Elsmere has a focus on remaining a healthy, active, and livable community.

## Planning Environment

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Elsmere's planning environment consists of more than its own plans and policies. It encompasses the plans and policies of the state, New Castle County, and the City of Wilmington. Together with the town's planning issues, plans developed by the state, county, and other entities, form the backdrop for the development of Elsmere's future land use and its growth and annexation strategy.

### Strategies for State Policies and Spending

In 1999 the Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues adopted the Strategies for State Policies and Spending, outlining needs and concerns for future state planning and growth and identifying geographic areas where the state was most prepared for growth. This document was updated in 2004, 2010, and 2015, and 2020.

The State Strategies are important because municipal and county comprehensive plans must consider them in the development of future land use within their boundaries and, for municipalities, the identification of potential annexation areas. The Strategies document classifies the entire state into four investment levels based on the predominant type of development. Shown on Map 3, these levels form the basis for identifying locations where state-supported growth should occur and establish guidelines for state investment in those areas. The state is most prepared for growth to occur in Level 1 and accepts growth in level 2. The state is prepared to channel investments such as new schools, roads, state service centers, and public safety facilities in these areas. In Level 3 areas, development—and therefore state investment—is not encouraged in the immediate future. These areas are adjacent to, and sometimes within, more densely developed areas in Levels 1 or 2. In Level 4 areas, state investment will be made only when necessary to preserve the rural or natural character of these lands.

Out of play areas are not available for development or redevelopment. In these areas, the state intends to expend funds primarily on land preservation and management, environmental protection, and mitigation with some development of public facilities that further health, safety, and welfare goals. Out of play areas in and near Elsmere primarily consist of creeks, streams, and parkland.

Elsmere's town limits are almost entirely within Investment Level 1. Areas within Elsmere's town limits that are not within Investment Level 1 are parkland or other "out of play" areas. The only areas near Elsmere that are not within Investment Level 1 are Silverbook Memorial Cemetery and areas northwest of the intersection of Route 141 and Faulkland Road, which are primarily located within Investment Level 2.

### New Castle County

New Castle County's plans and policies are important for Elsmere's planning efforts. New Castle County's land-use actions have underscored a commitment to growth management, protecting environmental resources, and historic preservation. Responding to community concerns about growth and sprawl taking place in the county throughout the 1980s and 1990s, New Castle County adopted the

Unified Development Code in 1997 with the purpose of better regulating land use. According to New Castle County's website, the UDC regulates and controls the creation and administration of zoning districts; general development of real estate in the unincorporated areas of New Castle County; planning and subdivision of lands; and use, bulk, design and location of land and buildings. The UDC has been revised multiple times since 1997, but this ordinance continues as the foundation of New Castle County's growth strategy by heavily regulating all new development that takes place throughout the county. New Castle County is currently in the process of updating its comprehensive plan and hopes to have a new plan adopted in 2021 or early 2022.

Regarding unincorporated areas surrounding towns like Elsmere, the 2012 New Castle County Comprehensive Plan proposed the following two strategies:

Chapter 11, Objective 1, Strategy 4 "Develop closer working relationships with appropriate State and municipal agencies regarding coordination of respective capital improvement programs as well as annexation policies."

Chapter 11, Objective 1, Strategy 5 "Develop a system to provide copies of proposed plans located in municipal Areas of Concern to each municipality for their information and feedback."

The County's 2012 Comprehensive Plan also proposes the following regarding growth in municipalities:

Chapter 3, Objective 3 "Continue to support new residential development strategies of the incorporated areas and municipalities to help guide new growth to cities and towns."

## City of Wilmington

The City of Wilmington's plans and policies are important because it shares a border with Elsmere along its eastern boundary and because it is the largest city in Delaware. According to the Census ACS, Wilmington's estimated 2018 population is approximately 70,635 persons. The city is just under 17 square miles in total area.

Wilmington updated its comprehensive plan in 2019, and it was adopted by Wilmington City Council in 2020. The planning process for the most recent update included a steering committee, a public survey, focus groups on ten topic areas, and six separate public forums for feedback, including a final forum at the Delaware Children's Museum where goals and themes for the new plan were rolled out to the public. The plan included a citywide framework map that identifies four major areas for change and six economic opportunity areas. None of these areas directly border the Town of Elsmere, although one of the areas of focus for major change is the city's Riverfront area, which is located less than two miles from Elsmere's southeast border near Route 4.

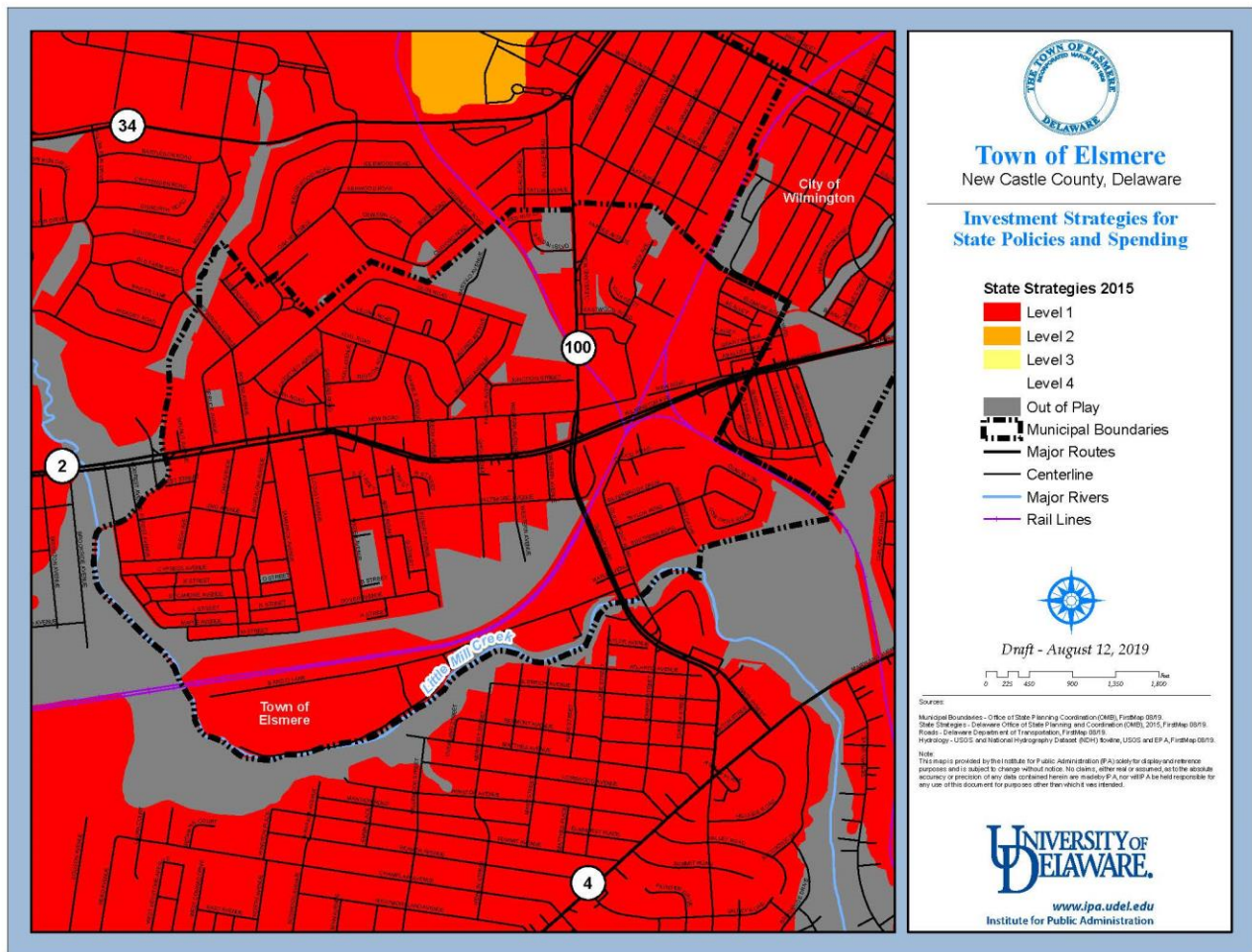
In addition to the areas of change and economic opportunity identified in Wilmington's recently adopted, there were five major goal areas identified including:

- Strong and Safe Neighborhoods
- Healthy and Thriving Communities
- Robust Local Economy
- Connected City and Region
- Sustainable and Resilient City

Of these five goal areas, Goal Area 4 "Connected City and Region" is likely to impact Elsmere most directly. Many of the ideas and goals referenced in this portion of the plan could have an impact on Kirkwood Highway near its gateway into the City of Wilmington on Elsmere's eastern boundary. This presents a good opportunity for the Town of Elsmere to partner with the City of Wilmington, DelDOT, and the Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) to create an extended regionally connected corridor in this area.



### Map 3. State Investment Strategies



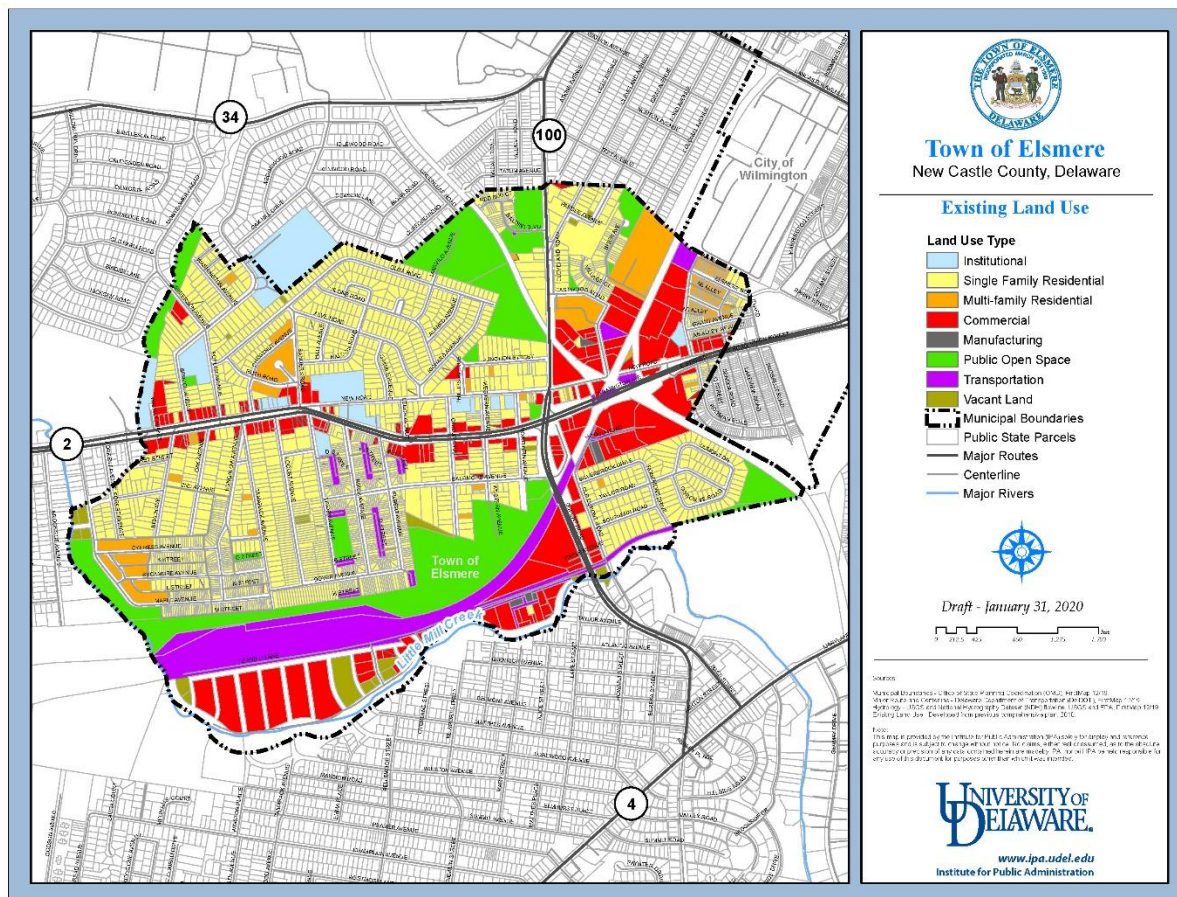


# Land Use and Annexation

## Existing Land Use

Existing land use is a snapshot of a jurisdiction's existing development pattern. In this section, Elsmere's current land-use classifications are described. The distribution of these land uses is shown in Table 3. Map 4 depicts Elsmere's current land uses.

### Map 4. Existing Land Use



**Table 3. Land-Use Distribution, 2020**

Land Use	Number of Properties	Percent of Total Properties	Acreage	Percent of Total Acreage
<b>Single Family Residential</b>	1,983	85.3%	234.4	46.7%
<b>Commercial</b>	177	7.6%	83.8	16.7%
<b>Parks, Recreation &amp; Open Space</b>	19	0.8%	76.1	15.2%
<b>Transportation</b>	19	0.8%	45.4	9.1%
<b>Multifamily Residential</b>	84	3.6%	27.0	5.4%
<b>Institutional</b>	14	0.6%	25.2	5.0%
<b>Vacant Land</b>	26	1.1%	8.3	1.6%
<b>Manufacturing</b>	4	0.2%	1.3	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	2,326		501.4	

### Single Family Residential

Land improved with a single dwelling unit on a single lot is classified as Single Family Residential. This can include either attached or detached single-family dwellings on separate lots. Single Family Residential properties represent the majority of land in Elsmere and can be found throughout the town. Seeing as how the town is mostly built-out and there is very little undeveloped land within town or nearby areas within New Castle County and the City of Wilmington, there is likely to be very little new single-family development in the future. Single-family dwellings can either be attached or detached, and Elsmere has a considerable number of attached dwellings. These dwellings are not considered multifamily because they are on separate lots. According to the 2018 Census ACS, approximately 10.8 percent of the residential structures in Elsmere are duplexes, or two-unit attached dwellings divided into two separate lots. An additional 14.2 percent of the residential structures in Elsmere are between three to nine units, which would primarily be townhouses and other attached homes that are individually owned.

### Multifamily Residential

Land improved with multiple dwellings on a single property such as apartment buildings are classified as Multifamily Residential properties. Multifamily Residential properties in Elsmere include Maple Walk Apartments in the southwestern portion of town, Parklynn Apartments in the center of town just north of Kirkwood Highway, and both Manchester Arms Apartments and Greenbrier Village Apartments in the northeast portion of town near Route 100. It is possible that Elsmere could see additional multifamily development in the future through the redevelopment of properties particularly along Kirkwood Highway, however some of this potential redevelopment may be of a mixed-use variety with commercial uses included as part of the new development.

## Commercial

Land improved with retail, wholesale, sales and service establishments, offices, and restaurants and land improved with establishments where items are made, assembled, processed, stored, or handled are classified Commercial. Most of Elsmere's commercial areas are located along or near the two railroad lines that intersect under the Kirkwood Highway bridge on the eastern side of town. These uses are primarily industrial warehouses or commercial offices for businesses located in these areas. Another concentration of commercial uses is along Kirkwood Highway in the center of town. These businesses primarily consist of retail, convenience stores, and small business offices. There is still a good deal of potential for new commercial development and redevelopment in commercial and potential mixed-use areas of town in the future. Particularly along Kirkwood Highway and Old Dupont Road.

## Parks, Recreation & Open Space

Parks, Recreation & Open Space areas are those used for public recreation, such as Fairgrounds Park; open space and recreation areas recorded in New Castle County land records; and stormwater management facilities in residential areas. The majority of the parkland in Elsmere is intended for active uses rather than passive uses. This land-use category may require extensive review from the town moving forward as there is a concern that the town has an excess of parkland, much of which is intended for active use but is not frequently utilized. There are many nearby parks outside of the town that are within close proximity and are also frequently utilized by the town's residents. The Town of Elsmere would like to study and review all of its current parkland following the plan update to evaluate whether it is the highest and best use for the town and its residents moving forward.

## Institutional

Institutional properties are located on land used for social, cultural, or educational purposes including nonprofit, social, religious, and public uses such as governmental and public safety facilities, healthcare facilities, libraries, senior centers, places of worship, and schools. These properties are often non-taxable, although if redeveloped for a different use they may be taxable in the future. Institutional properties in the Town of Elsmere include the Town Hall, the library, churches, and Austin D. Baltz Elementary School on the northern side of town. At this time, there are no institutional properties within town that are expected to change to another use in the near future.

## Vacant

Vacant areas are those that have no land-use activity, including undeveloped or unimproved lots. There are very few vacant properties in Elsmere. These areas include the portion of property adjacent to the former Boxwood Road GM assembly plant on the southern portion of town that is not currently being used for an active purpose. It also includes small vacant lots in the wooded area along Maple Avenue to the north of Maple Avenue Park. There is very little vacant or unused land within the town, and additional infill development is likely in the future.

## Transportation/Utilities

Streets, railroads, and properties utilized for utility purposes are classified as Transportation/Utilities. In Elsmere most of this area is represented by the two railroad lines and their rights-of-way. Land currently utilized for transportation and utilities is unlikely to change in the near future.

## New Development and Development Applications

Based on Elsmere's annual reports to OSPC since 2010, there have been at least XX commercial developments completed, including XX. As far as residential development is concerned, there has been little to no activity since 2010. Between 2015 and 2019, only seven building permits were issued for new development and subdivisions in town. Of these new developments, five were new townhomes built from subdivisions on Locust Avenue and Elsmere Boulevard, one was a new commercial building on Kirkwood Highway with a Season's Pizza and two additional stores attached, and the final was a residential subdivision on Spruce Avenue from one lot to three lots.

In terms of future development in town, there are very few undeveloped properties. Elsmere will have to redevelop existing properties, such as those along Kirkwood Highway, or will most likely need to annex nearby properties to expand.

## Future Land Use

Map 5 depicts Elsmere's desired development pattern within the town boundary. Table 4 describes how the land uses depicted on the map were developed.

**Table 4. Elsmere Future Land-Use Descriptions**

<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Residential</b>	Areas intended for development with dwellings or similar uses.
<b>Mixed Use</b>	Areas suitable for mixed-use developments; intended that this designation will enable the adoption of land-use regulations that encourage the development of areas that mix residential and commercial uses.
<b>Commercial</b>	Areas intended for commercial development such as retail, office, service, or similar uses.
<b>Industrial</b>	Areas intended for the development of light industrial uses such as warehouses and light manufacturing.
<b>Institutional</b>	Areas suitable for, or depicting current locations of, institutional uses such as town offices, the library, or churches.
<b>Parks, Recreation &amp; Open Space</b>	Areas intended for parks, recreation, or public open space.

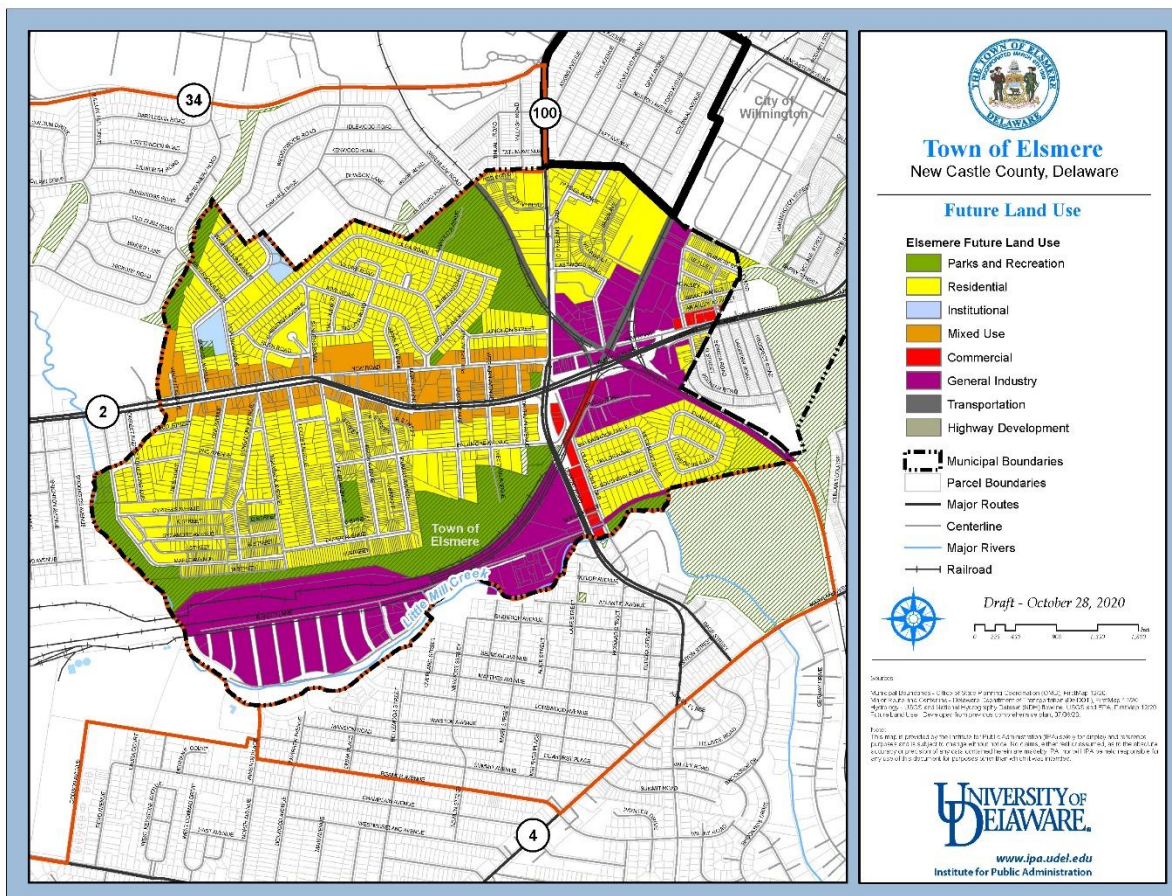
Residential communities are recommended for most of the areas already developed as residential, including multifamily developments. Mixed Use areas are recommended for much of the Kirkwood Highway corridor, with the intention of modifying the zoning in this area. Commercial areas are recommended along the portion of Kirkwood Highway to the east of Route 100. Industrial uses are recommended in the area surrounding the intersection of the two railroad lines as well as property along the railroad line to the south of the town's boundary. Parks, Recreation and Open Space and Institutional uses are recommended in areas that are already used for those purposes.

### Position on Redevelopment

Elsmere will seek opportunities to maximize the use of existing developed properties by allowing for redevelopment of those properties, particularly along Kirkwood Highway, with the understanding that this will likely require allowances for greater density and more flexibility in zoning and land uses at those locations.



## Map 5. Future Land Use



## Land Use and Zoning

Zoning is an important aspect of implementing the comprehensive plan. The zoning map is a critical part of the zoning update to follow the comprehensive plan and delineates districts or zones into which the municipality is divided to regulate the use of land. A zoning ordinance specifies the types of activities (uses) that can occur in each district either as a matter of right (in all circumstances) or under certain conditions (conditional uses). It also regulates building height, lot sizes, setbacks, yards and green space, the number and sizes of signs, and space for off-street parking.

Zoning is complemented by subdivision regulations. Subdivision refers to the process of splitting up or assembling land for development. The regulations governing this process designate utility locations, street rights-of-way, open space, and common areas. They also outline the services, such as water, sewer, gas, and electricity, and amenities that a developer must supply prior to sale of subdivided (or assembled) land.

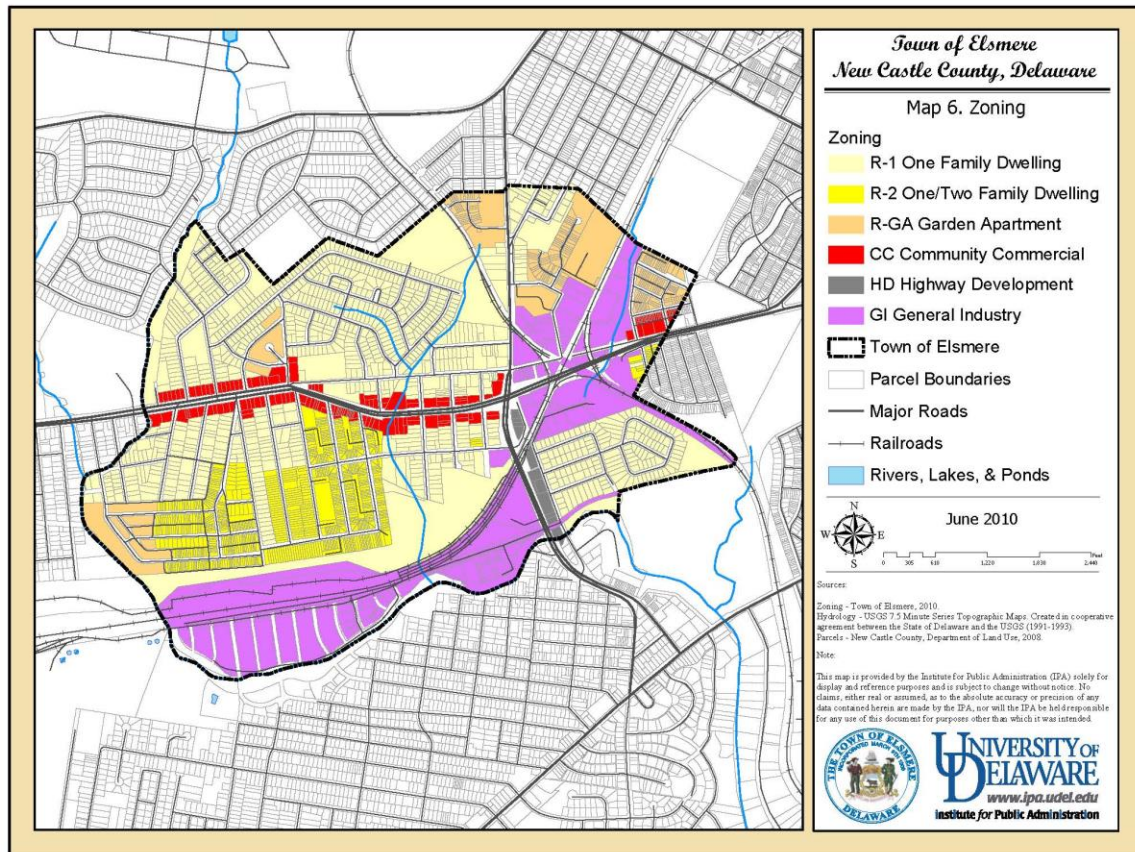
Some municipalities incorporate environmental protection or design standards in zoning ordinances and/or subdivision regulations, while others have stand-alone ordinances with cross-references to zoning, subdivision, and other applicable ordinances. Elsmere has adopted the following stand-alone ordinances that are related to zoning:

- Chapter 76 – Building Construction
- Chapter 93 – Excavating and Grading
- Chapter 102 – Floodplain Management
- Chapter 190 – Stormwater Management
- Chapter 196 – Subdivision and Land Development
- Chapter 225 – Zoning

## Zoning Districts

Map 6 depicts Elsmere's current zoning. Table 5 summarizes the uses allowed in each zoning district.

### Map 6. Existing Zoning, 2020





**Table 5. Zoning Districts, 2014**

<b>Zoning District</b>	<b>Permitted Use Summary</b>
<b>R-1 One-Family Dwelling</b>	Single-family dwellings and two-family dwellings if such a structure existed prior to the adoption of the new zoning code.
<b>R-2 One-/Two-Family Dwelling</b>	Any two-family semidetached dwellings and all uses allowed in the R-1 zone.
<b>R-GA Garden Apartment</b>	Garden apartments, townhouse developments at a density less than 21 units per acre, two-family and one-family dwellings as per the lot and yard regulations allowed in the R-2 zone.
<b>CC Community Commercial</b>	Retail, service, and office uses, indoor facility for amusement or assembly, and all residential uses permitted in the R-1 zone as well as two-family dwellings.
<b>HD Highway Development</b>	Retail, service, and office uses, indoor facility for amusement or assembly, a club or lodge, bus station.
<b>GI General Industry</b>	Light industrial and manufacturing uses.

### Relationship Between Land Use and Zoning

The link between land use and zoning is important because Title 22, Section 702(c) of the Delaware Code requires that all municipalities must:

*...within 18 months of the adoption of a comprehensive development plan or revision thereof, amend its official zoning map to rezone all lands within the municipality in accordance with the uses of land provided for in the comprehensive development plan.*

Table 6 shows the relationship between the future land-use designations depicted on the future land-use map and zoning districts. This table describes how Elsmere's zoning districts might match up with the land uses recommended on the future land-use map. This table is intended as a guide for the Town of Elsmere Planning Commission and Town Council to consider during the rezoning process. They are not intended to preclude the development of new zoning districts or revisions to the zoning ordinance, the subdivision ordinance, or any other land-use regulations.

**Table 6. Land Use and Zoning Link**

<b>Land-Use Designation</b>	<b>Corresponding Zoning District(s)</b>
<b>Residential</b>	R-1, R-2, R-GA
<b>Commercial</b>	CC
<b>Industrial</b>	GI
<b>Mixed Use</b>	Any combination of R-1, R-2, R-GA, or CC that creates a mix of dwelling types and/or mix of dwelling types and commercial uses
<b>Infrastructure/Institutional</b>	All Zoning Districts

## Annexation Areas

The circumstances regarding Elsmere’s areas of concern and annexations have changed from the plan that was adopted in 2010. While annexation of adjacent lands is not an immediate concern of the town at this time, it may become more desirable as circumstances change and opportunities arise. Currently, the town is built-out, with limited opportunities for infill or redevelopment. Furthermore, the majority of adjacent lands in both unincorporated New Castle County and the City of Wilmington are zoned and developed as residential uses that are unlikely to provide new development opportunities in the near future. With any potential future annexations, all of the Office of State Planning Coordination’s policies and procedures would be followed.

An important factor to consider when identifying properties for annexation is the economic feasibility of providing public services. Elsmere should give high priority to areas where town services can be extended easily and economically. When considering the annexation of a developed area, Elsmere also must evaluate the condition of the area’s existing infrastructure. In some cases, the costs of bringing roads, street lighting, and stormwater management facilities into compliance with Elsmere’s standards may exceed the revenues and other benefits of annexation. Other factors include the plans and policies of other governmental entities. Close coordination and cooperation with New Castle County or the City of Wilmington would be critical to any future annexation proposal.

Elsmere is relatively unique in Delaware in that it is small in size at just one square mile, but also almost entirely built-out with very little room to expand. Even redevelopment opportunities are limited due to the density of existing uses and the ability to provide parking and transportation access on relatively small lots. Considering its position as a small built-out community along with the factors mentioned above, Elsmere has identified new potential annexations areas to include in this plan update. These areas are primarily residential, but also include commercial properties along Kirkwood Highway to the west of the current town boundary, the Boxwood Road former industrial property to the south, and commercial properties along the north side of Route 4 to the southeast of the town boundary. The Town

of Elsmere feels that extending the town’s boundaries to Route 34 in the north, to South Clifton Avenue to the west, and to Boxwood Road and Route 4 in the south represent a healthy and natural growth boundary for the town over the next 10–20 years. There is no intent at the time of this plan update to change the land uses if any of these identified areas decided to annex into the town.

One of these proposed annexation areas that holds great significance to the Town of Elsmere and its history is the former General Motors plant that is located off of Boxwood Road directly adjacent to the town’s southern boundary. For over 60 years, from 1947 to 2009, the GM Boxwood Road automobile factory was a major source of employment and economic activity for the region, but this was especially true for the Town of Elsmere as it is located immediately adjacent to the town. The Town of Elsmere grew alongside of the GM plant and, even though the plant was not actually located within the town, for many locals the two were synonymous with each other. Subsequent to the closing of the plant in 2009 and the town’s 2010 comprehensive plan, the Boxwood Road site—after sitting dormant for close to a decade—was purchased by local real estate developer Harvey, Hanna & Associates, Inc. (HHA). New plans for the site proposed by HHA in 2019 include the demolition of existing buildings and the re-use of the site as a distribution warehouse facility. HHA agreed to sell the site to Dermody Properties in late 2019. Dermody Properties is a national logistics and industrial real estate investment company that specializes in the development, acquisition, and management of such facilities. The potential development of this site as a major distribution hub for the region promises to bring some of the employment and economic activity back to the area in the void of the old GM plant. Given the high degree of developed land both within the town and in the adjacent areas, Elsmere has significant concerns with regard to the current and future land-use pattern in this nearby area. The town’s quality of life and its environment (e.g., storm drainage, air quality, noise, traffic, combined sewer overflows, etc.) is greatly affected by the adjacent uses.

For these reasons and for its potential economic benefit to the town’s employment and tax base, which is needed for the town to continue to thrive in the future, Elsmere has chosen to include this area in its potential annexation area. Elsmere has placed other adjacent areas to the northeast of town that are of great interest within an “Area of Concern.” The Town of Elsmere, however, is not interested in annexing those areas at the current time.

Elsmere supports new development within the town as well as in areas outside of the town that are near its boundary, as long as they are in accordance with the goals and policies of this comprehensive plan.

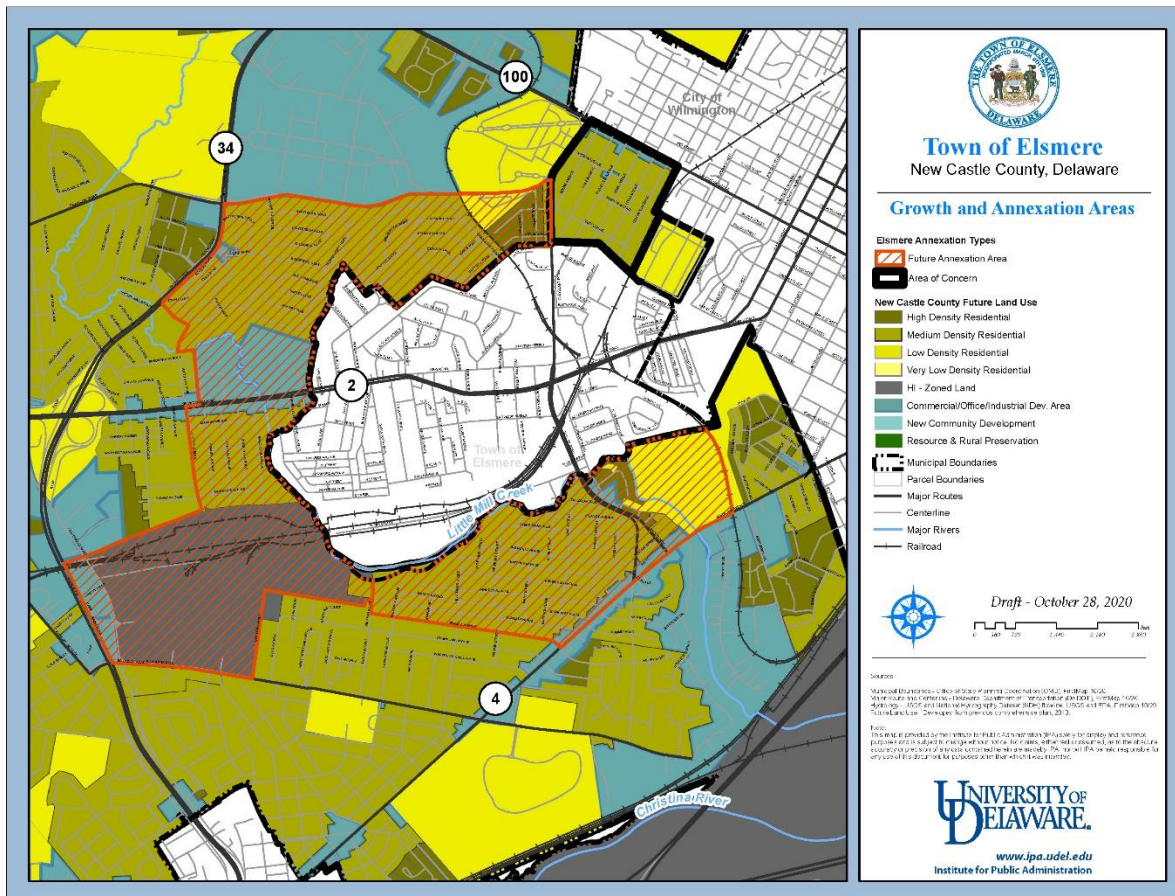
### Position on Expansion of Boundaries

Elsmere has identified new areas that it is interested in annexing to its north, northwest, west, south, and southeast. The town has also identified an “Area of Concern” to its northeast.

## Annexation Plan

Map 7 identifies properties to be considered for annexation in the 2021 Comprehensive Plan and their land-use designations. As the map shows, the proposed land use for each property is compatible with existing development on adjacent properties.

### Map 7. Annexation Area, 2019



## Recommendations

1. Review zoning code and subdivision code in order to direct development so that it is consistent with the town's vision and goals.
2. Consider removing or replacing the Highway Development Zone.
3. Promote mixed-use zoning and development along the Kirkwood Highway corridor and other select areas of town.
4. Initiate an annexation strategy that includes consideration for areas identified in the Annexation Area Map.
5. Develop a corridor study along Kirkwood Highway in cooperation with WILMAPCO and DelDOT to identify opportunities to both improve pedestrian safety and encourage a more walkable and attractive environment.
6. Ensure that pedestrian safety is a priority throughout town when making land-use decisions, especially on Kirkwood Highway and Route 100 and for children walking to and from schools.
7. Review the town's park space to evaluate each park for its current usage and design prior to considering the replacement of some park space with infill residential development in locations deemed to be suitable.
8. Investigate improvements to the town's signage and wayfinding system to better direct visitors to key destinations in town.
9. Investigate appropriate code amendments to address aged housing stock that cannot meet current regulations, including flag lots.
10. Continue coordinating with the Land Bank to address potential tear-downs and blighted properties.
11. Consider state and county resources for the redevelopment of outdated buildings.
12. Continue to pursue Main Street recognition through Delaware's Main Street affiliate program "Delaware on Main" now managed by the Division of Small Business.

## Transportation

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This chapter provides an inventory of the town's transportation system, identifies perceived issues within the town's transportation system in need of being addressed, notes planned improvements to the transportation network, and recommends actions to improve the transportation system within the Elsmere area.

### Transportation Trends

Since Elsmere's most recent plan update in 2010, Delaware has shifted some of the goals of its statewide transportation agenda. While motor-vehicle-related projects do, and will continue to, receive the overwhelming majority of investment, there has been an increasing focus on non-motorized modes such as biking and walking.

In 2009 Governor Jack Markell signed Executive Order Number Six—Creating a Complete Streets Policy. This order compels DelDOT to ensure that the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians are considered whenever the state builds or does significant maintenance work to existing state-maintained roadways. Effectively, the order strengthens the standard concerning the presence of bike and pedestrian amenities to the level where their exclusion must be demonstrated to be wholly infeasible or impractical.

Similarly, in 2011 the 146th General Assembly passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 13. The Bond Bill Committee voted to fund the measure with \$7.5 million. This measure requests that DelDOT explore and plan how "to create contiguous systems or networks of walkways and bikeways within and between cities and towns in Delaware in order to provide travelers with the opportunity for safe, convenient, cost-effective and healthy transportation via walking and bicycling."

In October 2011, an MOU was initiated between the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) and DelDOT to implement the resolution and, among other things, "link Delaware communities internally to support more sustainable local economies and externally expand the linkages between the state's neighborhoods, towns, and cities."

As of February 2020, DelDOT's goals statewide as shown on their website are the following:

- Minimize the number of fatalities and injuries on our system.
- Build and maintain a nationally recognized system benefiting travelers and commerce.
- Provide every traveler with access and choices to our transportation system.
- Provide every customer with the best service possible.
- Minimize the environmental impact of the state's transportation system.
- Achieve financial sustainability through accuracy, transparency and accountability.
- Develop and maintain a place where talented and motivated employees love to work and can be national leaders in transportation.



## Roads and Traffic

The transportation system in the Town of Elsmere consists of roadways, sidewalks, and public transit through DART First State buses. Map 8 depicts roads, routes, and a railroad in the Elsmere vicinity. On average, the traffic in Elsmere has remained relatively consistent over recent years with little change. This reflects the lack of new development that has occurred in town and within its immediate surrounding area in recent years. The primary point of congestion is located at the Kirkwood Highway and Route 100 interchange. The highest traffic volumes of any road segment in town as of 2018 happens to be on the far eastern side of Kirkwood Highway heading into the City of Wilmington with approximately 32,000 vehicle trips per day. The segment of Kirkwood Highway to the west of town between Route 141 and the Franbert Shopping Center is far higher than any road segment in town, experiencing over 80,000 trips per day. This shopping center includes a large BJ's wholesale store along with a new Walgreens near the entrance, and these destinations likely contribute to the higher traffic volumes traveling there from Route 141 and other points to the west of town.

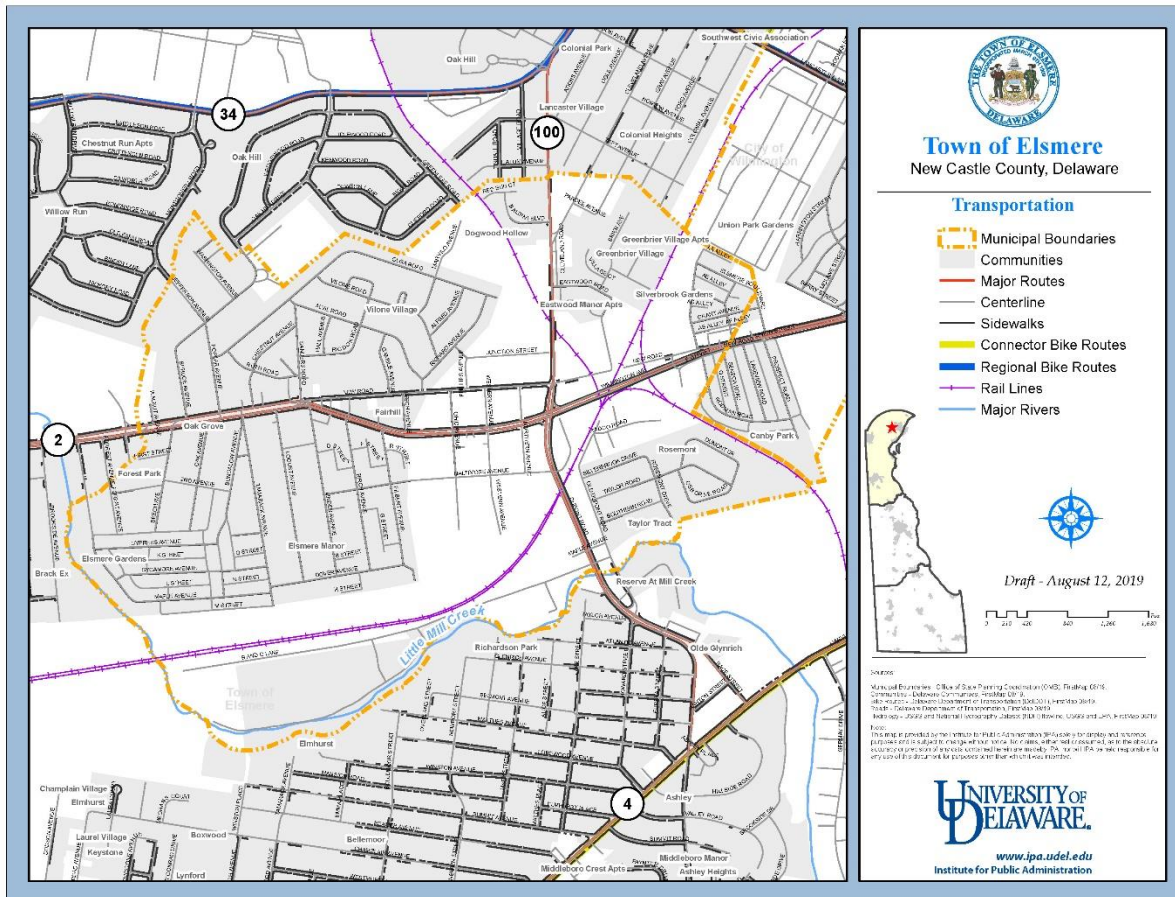
The growth in areas near Elsmere along with some road projects in the region has created the perception among some residents of increased traffic congestion. However, the data does not show that traffic has increased significantly in Elsmere since the last comprehensive plan update in 2009. The most significant issues facing Elsmere in terms of vehicular traffic appear to be the high speeds that vehicles travel along Kirkwood Highway through the town's limits, particularly in the center of town immediately to the west of Route 100, and the perceived lack of safety at the intersection of Kirkwood Highway and Route 100. Elsmere would very much like to work with WILMAPCO, DelDOT, and other parties to evaluate the entire Kirkwood Highway corridor after completing this plan to ensure it is designed as safely as it can be in the near future.

The only significant roadway project that recently occurred within town was the Route 100 bridge renovation that travels over the East Penn Railroad line to the north of the intersection with Kirkwood Highway. This project was completed in 2020 and was described by DelDOT as a "bridge rehabilitation including deck and barrier replacement, cleaning of the bearings, painting of the steel members and minor spall repairs." The Town of Elsmere had communicated its desire to see more pedestrian and bicycle improvements along the bridge incorporated into this project, but that did not occur. This was a point of frustration and a missed opportunity to significantly improve bicycle and pedestrian safety in this area of town.

A major concern for the town related to its roads and traffic are the condition and frequent erosion of many of its local roads extending south from Kirkwood Highway toward the railroad. These local roads include Linden Avenue, Locust Avenue, Tamarack Avenue, and others. These roads were originally built and designed in the first half of the twentieth century. They were not constructed to the current DelDOT standards and do not include storm drains. This has had the effect of eroding these roads more frequently than they should be and costs the town a significant amount of money to repair on an annual basis. The funding for this repair is only partially recovered on an annual basis through the municipal street aid it receives from the state most years. Given the increasing number of heavy rain storms and

intense weather our region has been experiencing in recent years, likely due to climate change, this is an increasing concern for the town and a strain on its budget. Elsmere would like to pursue potential remedies to this problem as well as additional funding to help support the costly maintenance associated with these roads.

## Map 8. Roads, Routes, and Railroad



## Non-Automotive Travel

### Pedestrian Mobility

There are many pedestrians in Elsmere, including children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities. Although the town has a good system of pedestrian walkways and sidewalks with many parks and greenspaces, some of the more heavily travelled roads in town, such as Kirkwood Highway, are often perceived as dangerous to navigate by pedestrians. Sidewalks are present and continuous throughout most of the town, including interconnections to major destinations such as schools, Town Hall and library building, and parks. Major destinations drawing pedestrians include retail and shopping locations



along Kirkwood Highway as well as schools, parks, and playgrounds. Although there is a good system of sidewalks, some are in poor condition. Several notable locations lack sidewalks, including the previously mentioned Route 100 bridge over the East Penn Railroad to Boulevard Road and other neighborhoods to the north, the eastern portion of Baltimore Avenue, Ohio Avenue, and Western Avenue. Sidewalk maintenance is the responsibility of the property owner on whose property the sidewalk exists.

Moving forward, the Town of Elsmere should focus on improvements to pedestrian safety by better connecting its neighborhoods and commercial areas alike through safer roadway design and pedestrian crossings, particularly along Kirkwood Highway. As stated previously, sidewalks run throughout Elsmere including along the Kirkwood Highway corridor and within most neighborhoods. However, there is concern within the town that the existing pedestrian crossings and roadway designs are not conducive to the type of pedestrian-friendly environment that Elsmere would like to promote. To improve pedestrian mobility and access, the Town of Elsmere would like to not only fill “holes” in the sidewalk network, but also look at the overall safety of the pedestrian network at key points in a more comprehensive manner. In some cases, this may require traffic calming or additional crosswalk infrastructure. This is particularly true for students who walk to Baltz Elementary School, especially those who cross Kirkwood Highway every day. Elsmere has expressed some interest in pursuing a pedestrian safety and improvement study of the Kirkwood Highway corridor subsequent to the adoption of this plan to identify and plan to fund improvements that could be made to the pedestrian network.

Additionally, the Town of Elsmere paid for a Concept Design Report completed by Whitman, Requardt and Associates, LLP in 2011 that focused on pedestrian and bicycle improvements that could be made within town. Since the completion of this report, which identified and outlined key improvements to be made along the Route 100 corridor as well as other areas within town, none of the improvements identified in the plan have been made despite the town’s efforts.

## Bicycle Traffic

In response to the need and desire for improved bicycling ability throughout the state, DelDOT formed the Delaware Bike Council. DelDOT has created a map of bicycle suitability for all major roads in the state. DelDOT suggests utilizing its framework, which is called the “Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress,” for understanding the ability of residents to safely bike from place to place. The Bike Council is appointed by the Governor and meets every other month in Dover. They are tasked with continuing to improve areas throughout Delaware to make them more bicycle friendly. The Bike Delaware Council has a webpage on DelDOT’s website that includes a great deal of information including bicycle route maps, bicycle safety information, the Council’s meeting agendas and meeting minutes, and additional information and resources about bicycling.

In October 2017, Governor Carney signed the Bicycle Friendly Delaware Act, which reforms the Rules of the Road regarding interactions between motorists and bicyclists. Delaware’s new rules require motorists to change lanes when passing bicyclists (when lanes are too narrow for side-by-side sharing), forbid motorists from maliciously honking at bicyclists, permit bicyclists to safely yield at stop signs and

to ride two abreast, and eliminate the requirement for bicyclists to always ride far to the right as well as other safety improvements.

Currently, there are no specific bicycle facilities in Elsmere. While bicyclists can ride safely on most municipal streets, Kirkwood Highway and Route 100 would be considered hazardous places to navigate on a bicycle. On New Castle County's bicycle map, which can be found on the Delaware Bike Council's webpage, both Kirkwood Highway and Route 100 are listed as "high traffic roadways" that would be "hazardous for cyclists." The Town of Elsmere would like to improve cycling conditions throughout town as much as possible in the future, particularly along Kirkwood Highway.

## Railroads

Passenger rail is available approximately two miles east of Elsmere at the Wilmington Train Station off of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, with services from SEPTA and Amtrak. Parking lots are available near the train station from third-party management companies for pay.

Two freight railroad lines pass through Elsmere. CSX Transportation (CSX) owns and operates a main East Coast line through northern Delaware, which roughly parallels the Amtrak line to the south. This track has no at-grade crossings in Elsmere. CSX also has a major switching and maintenance yard—the Wilsmere yard on the south end of Elsmere adjacent to the Boxwood Road former industrial site. CSX's Market Street Industrial Branch line extends south from the Wilsmere yard toward Wilmington and is used to interchange railcars with Norfolk Southern. The Wilmington and Northern line is operated by the East Penn Railroad and part of a larger conglomerate. There is one at-grade railroad crossing in Elsmere for this line, located on the easternmost end of New Road.

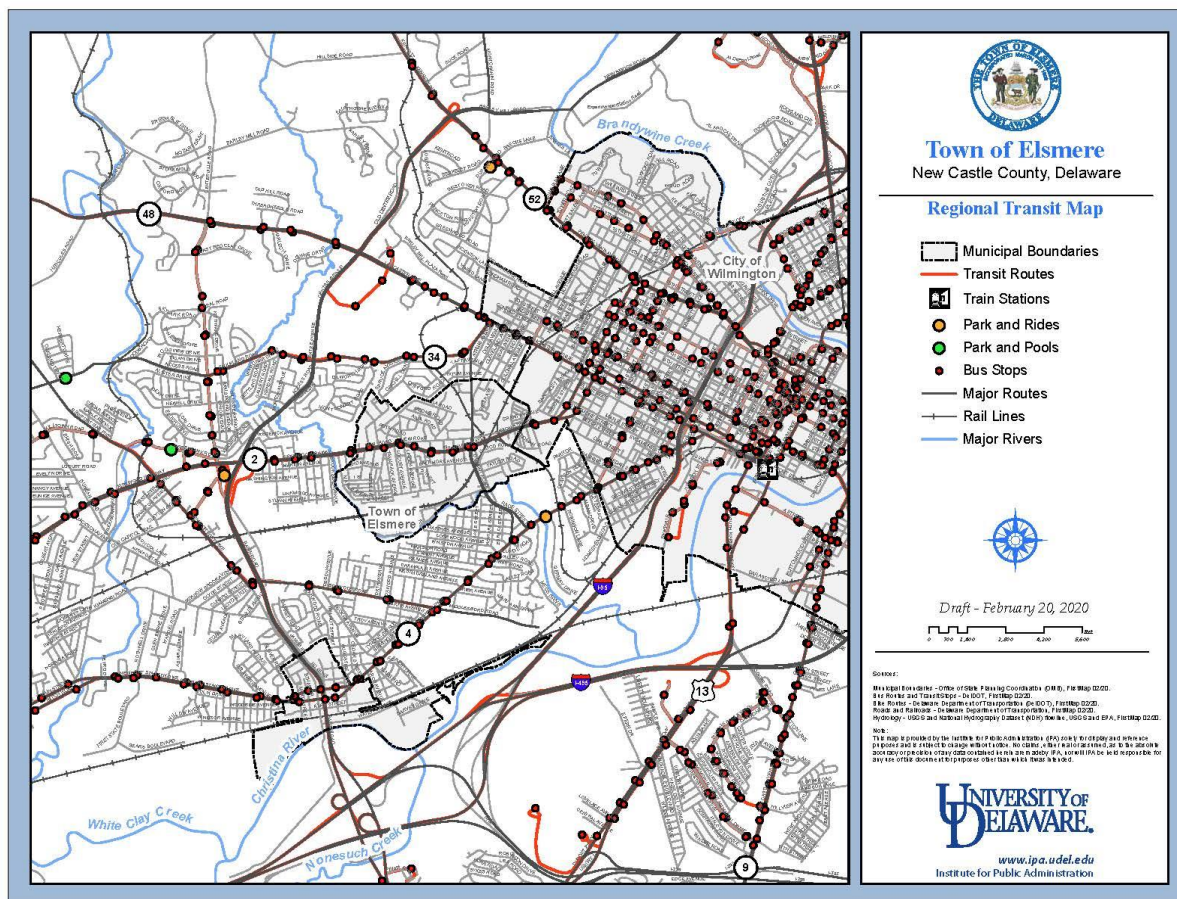
## Public Transportation

The public transportation provided to Elsmere is operated by DART First State. DART First State operates fixed-route service in New Castle County. As a town bisected by a main thoroughfare, there are 11 bus stops available within the town limits, all located along Kirkwood Highway. None of the bus stops except for one stop (1112) have shelters. Six of the stops have benches (1110, 1112, 1114, 1241, 1245, 1247), and the remaining 4 stops do not have benches. DART Paratransit service provides door-to-door transportation service for elderly and disabled riders, and there are also accessible bus schedules available online. Paratransit rides need to be arranged at least one day in advance. The Senior Citizens Affordable Taxi (SCAT) service, which provides elderly or disabled persons with a 50 percent discount on taxi fares from participating companies, is also available. Both Route 6 and Route 18 run directly through Elsmere, connecting the Prices Corner Shopping Center with the City of Wilmington. Route 6 extends directly to the City of Newark along Kirkwood Highway while Route 18 travels along Faulkland Road to the north of Elsmere from Wilmington out to the Pike Creek area before looping back to Wilmington. The Route 6 line runs seven days a week. It runs Monday through Friday from approximately 4:30 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. and Saturday through Sunday from approximately 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Elsmere residents utilizing the Route 6 line have access to services and employment along the Kirkwood Highway corridor that includes retail, grocery, pharmacy, banking, and the Wilmington VA Medical Center among other employers. This route also includes access to shopping and other resources on Centerville Road,

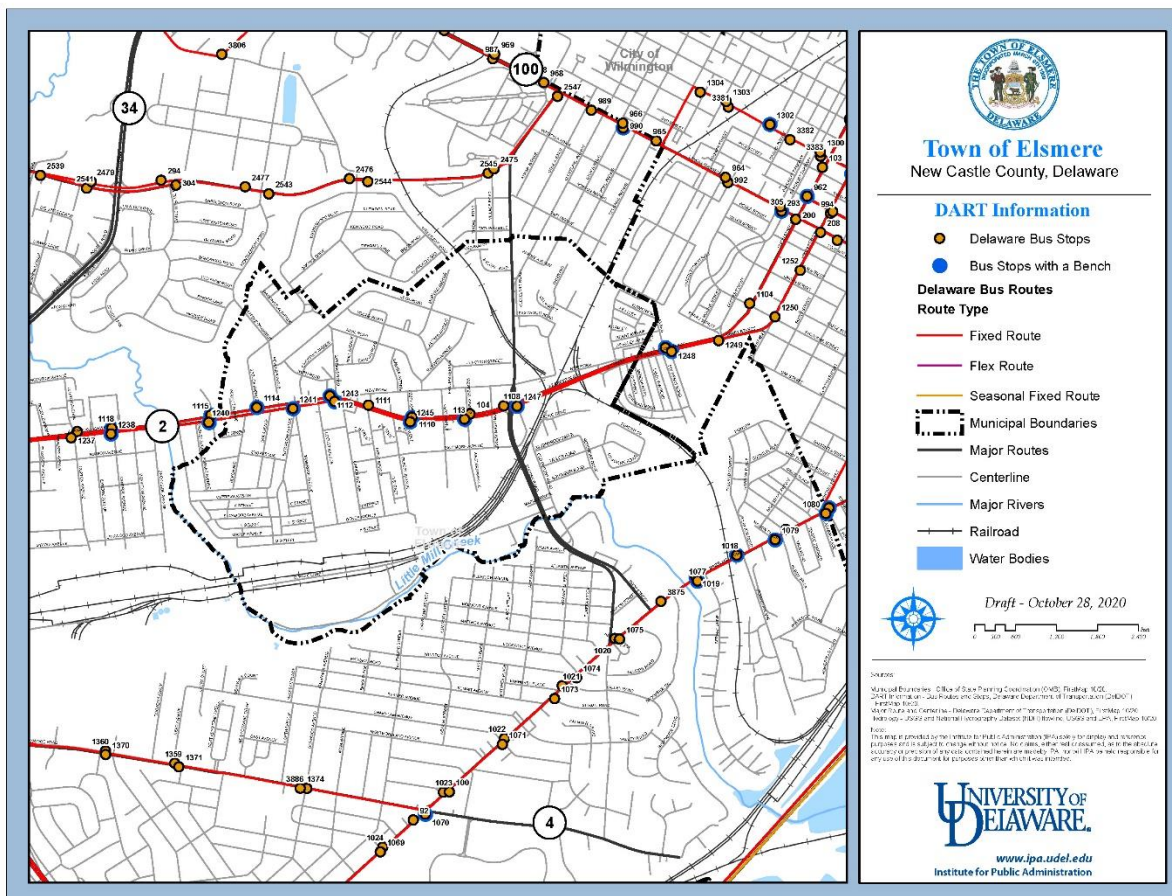
including the Acme grocery store and the Walmart adjacent to the Prices Corner Shopping Center. The Route 18 bus line runs on weekdays to the north of Elsmere along Faulkland Road from approximately 5:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and provides access from the Polly Drummond Shopping Center in Pike Creek to Naamans Road near the northern border of the state via Foulk Road. The Route 18 line also passes through downtown Wilmington and the Prices Corner Shopping Center areas and provides access to a large number of employers and shopping destinations. There are currently no park and rides in Elsmere. The park and ride lots closest to Elsmere are located at the Prices Corner Shopping Center and at 402 North Maryland Avenue just south of town.

There is concern within Elsmere that some of the bus stops along Kirkwood Highway may not be safe or suitable for the amount of ridership that they attract. This issue aligns with the other pedestrian safety and road design concerns that Elsmere has expressed throughout the comprehensive plan update process. The Town of Elsmere would like for the alignment, placement, and facilities provided for each of the town's bus stops to be evaluated sometime in the near future.

## Map 9. Transit Map



## Map 10. Local Bus Route Map



### Commuting Patterns

The three tables below describe commuting patterns in Elsmere, New Castle County, and Wilmington. Commuting patterns in Elsmere vary slightly when compared to New Castle County. More residents of Elsmere carpool and fewer work from home or walk to work than in the rest of New Castle County or Wilmington. The vast majority of Elsmere residents commute to locations within New Castle County, which is not surprising given its central location and proximity to Wilmington, the largest and most populous city in Delaware. Almost 16 percent of Elsmere workers commute to Chester County, Delaware County, and the City of Philadelphia in Pennsylvania. Commuters who work in Elsmere are largely from New Castle County. Most of the commuters from other areas come from Chester County or Delaware County in Pennsylvania or Cecil County in Maryland.



**Table 7. Means of Travel to Work, by Percent of Workers, 2018**

	<b>Drove Alone</b>	<b>Carpooled</b>	<b>Public Transit</b>	<b>Walked</b>	<b>Other Means</b>	<b>Worked at Home</b>
<b>Elsmere</b>	77.5%	15.1%	2.8%	1.5%	1.5%	2.5%
<b>New Castle County</b>	79.9%	8.1%	3.9%	2.5%	0.8%	4.5%
<b>Wilmington</b>	66.2%	9.1%	11.6%	7.2%	1.6%	4.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Commuting Characteristics, Table S0801.

**Table 8. Place of Employment for Elsmere Residents, 2017**

	<b>Percent of Elsmere Residents</b>
<b>New Castle County, DE</b>	73.8%
<b>Chester County, PA</b>	6.2%
<b>Delaware County, PA</b>	5.9%
<b>Philadelphia, PA</b>	3.5%
<b>Other Counties</b>	10.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *On the Map* 2013–2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

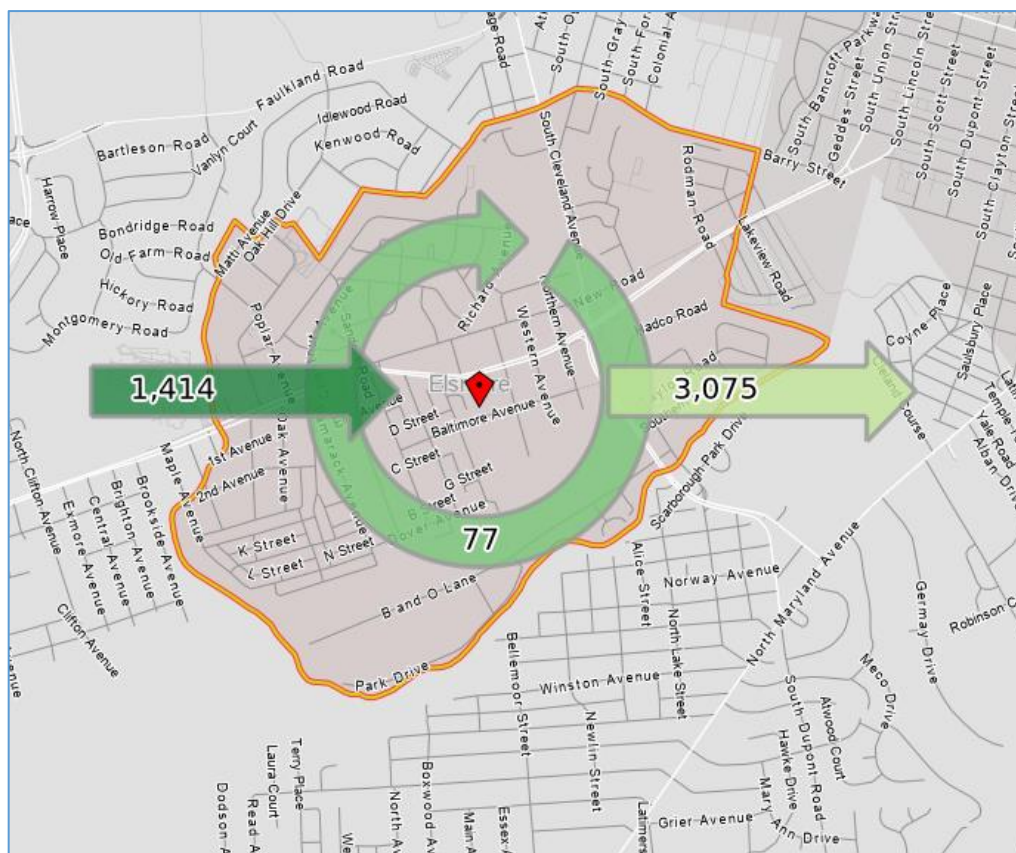
**Table 9. Place of Residence for Elsmere Workers, 2017**

	<b>Percent of Elsmere Workers</b>
<b>New Castle County, DE</b>	68.9%
<b>Chester County, PA</b>	5.2%
<b>Cecil County, MD</b>	4.9%
<b>Delaware County, PA</b>	4.1%
<b>Other Counties</b>	16.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *On the Map* 2013–2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

The figure below shows the employment pattern of people either commuting into Elsmere or from Elsmere to another location. About half as many commuters come to Elsmere to work every day (1,414) compared to the number of Elsmere residents who leave to commute elsewhere for work (3,075). Given the fact that the town is overwhelmingly residential, this is not especially surprising. However, it is somewhat surprising that only 77 residents both live and work in town. It is also somewhat surprising that only 6.8 percent of Elsmere workers live in Wilmington, and only 12.5 percent of all Elsmere commuters work in Wilmington.

**Figure 3. Employment Patterns for Elsmere Residents and Commuters**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *On the Map* 2013–2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

## Transportation Improvements

The Town of Elsmere has drawn up plans to extend its greenway trail that runs along the southern border of the town out to the new dog park on the eastern side of Baltimore Avenue. This trail has allowed for more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly activity in town, and many residents would like to see those improvements continue. Elsmere has also drawn up plans to implement crosswalks and bike lanes along Route 100 and Kirkwood Highway. These planned projects, however, have not been funded since they were studied and designed in 2011, and new plans are likely necessary at this point.

Another planned improvement in the near future that are likely to impact Elsmere residents is the rehabilitation of the Route 141 overpass bridge that goes over Kirkwood Highway to the west of town near the Prices Corner Shopping Center. This project is described as a “bridge rehabilitation including replacing joints, concrete deck overlay, concrete patching of substructure, painting steel beams in sections, and other incidental repairs to the substructure and superstructure.” Construction on this project was expected to begin in the spring of 2020 with completion in the winter of 2020/2021, but the project has been delayed and the new scheduled date for this project is still yet to be determined. Another major roadway project that will impact Elsmere residents as well as the entire region is the

rehabilitation of I-95 from I-495 to north of the Brandywine River Bridge. This project is slated to begin in spring of 2021 and be completed by the summer of 2023.

### Route 100

As mentioned previously in this chapter, there was a recent project on the portion of Route 100 that extends north from Kirkwood Highway. This bridge renovation project travels over the East Penn Railroad line to the north of the intersection with Kirkwood Highway. The project is described by DelDOT as a “bridge rehabilitation including deck and barrier replacement, cleaning of the bearings, painting of the steel members, and minor spall repairs.” Elsmere had communicated its desire to see more pedestrian and bicycle improvements along the bridge incorporated into this project, but that did not take place and the bridge update has now been completed. Elsmere would still like to pursue options for adding bicycle lanes, sidewalks, and improved pedestrian crossings along Route 100 in the future.

### Kirkwood Highway

Traffic along Kirkwood Highway is a significant concern for residents. Actual average annual daily traffic counts in Elsmere for 2018 range from just over 22,000 in the least-busy section of Kirkwood Highway in the center of town to over 85,000 in the busiest section to the west of town near Route 141. The last actual traffic counts for the section from the western limits of Elsmere to Linden Avenue and the section from Dupont Road to the eastern limits of Elsmere were conducted in 2018. Sections of Kirkwood Highway in the Elsmere area that had traffic counts conducted include Route 141 to Elsmere’s western town limits, Elsmere’s western town limits to Linden Avenue, from Linden Avenue to Dupont Road, and from Dupont Road to the City of Wilmington. Ideally, Elsmere would like to see vehicular speed along Kirkwood Highway reduced to 25 miles per hour to improve the safety of the road through town as well as improving the pedestrian environment and encourage a “main street” atmosphere. While the current speed of traffic along Kirkwood Highway seems to be much higher than 25 miles per hour, Elsmere would like to evaluate and consider roadway design and pedestrian improvements to help ensure that the average speed is reduced through town. At the very least, the design speed for Kirkwood Highway should be no higher than the current speed limit of 35 miles per hour, and the feeling within the town is that it currently is not the case. This creates an unsafe and unfriendly atmosphere for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists within town. To that end, The Town of Elsmere is interested in exploring the full array of physical, psychological, and regulatory tools available to achieve its objectives.

### Public Health Considerations

In conjunction with the state’s new policies focused on non-automotive transportation, many policymakers and advocates in Delaware and nationwide are promoting the link between bicycling and pedestrian mobility and public health goals. Promoting bicycle and pedestrian improvements and connectivity not only provide an alternative to driving and additional recreation opportunities, they also help to promote healthy communities in Delaware. Given the obesity crisis facing the country as well as the state, it is important for all local governments to promote policies that help to make our population healthier and more mobile.

One effort to help improve public health in the development of comprehensive plans is the Delaware Plan4Health Initiative. The Delaware Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA) and the Delaware Academy of Medicine/Delaware Public Health Association received a \$135,000 grant from APA through its Plan4Health program to combat two determinants of chronic disease—lack of physical activity and lack of access to nutritious foods. The funding for this national program has been implemented in partnership between APA and the American Public Health Association (APHA). This represents a major new collaboration between planners and public health professionals that Delaware hopes to build on in future comprehensive plans. Funding for Plan4Health was provided through an award from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This 2021 Comprehensive Plan has sought to incorporate some of the key principles of Delaware’s Plan4Health, where feasible. These principles include:

1. Health Equity – Let health equity guide the planning process.
2. Transportation – Promote all transportation modes and prioritize mobility.
3. Parks and Recreation – Let community health needs guide parks and recreation planning.
4. Community Facilities – Provide facilities that help keep people healthy.
5. Food Systems – Promote a vibrant agricultural industry that focuses on rural and urban agriculture.
6. Economic Development – Emphasize strategies to alleviate poverty and improve employment opportunities while expanding healthy food retail.
7. Land Use – Create compact, walkable, mixed-use, vibrant communities.

## Recommendations

1. Continue to work with DeIDOT and other government agencies to identify additional funding to repair roads throughout the town, especially those on roads running north to south between Kirkwood Highway and the railroad tracks where improvements are badly needed due to a lack of stormwater infrastructure.
2. Consider developing a strategic plan to address the ongoing maintenance issues and concerns for streets throughout town, especially roads that experience a high volume of truck traffic.
3. Continue to work with DeIDOT to control traffic speeds along Kirkwood Highway through traffic-calming measures and to ensure that road design does not encourage excessive speeds.
4. Develop a corridor study along Kirkwood Highway in cooperation with WILMAPCO and DeIDOT to identify opportunities to improve pedestrian safety and encourage a more walkable and attractive environment.
5. Plan to update all town sidewalks to ADA standards as funding becomes available and continue to support the town’s sidewalk inspection program.



6. Build enhanced working relations with WILMAPCO and become part of its Transportation Improvement Program.
7. Work with DART First State to maintain and upgrade the bus stops and shelters along Kirkwood Highway and ensure that riders who frequent those bus stops can safely gather at those locations.
8. Encourage forms of transportation other than single-user automobiles such as bicycling, walking, carpooling, and taking the bus to help take more cars off the roads.
9. Join the “Vision Zero” network or create a town vision for “Vision Zero in Elsmere” to place more emphasis and focus on pedestrian and bicycle safety in the area. (Vision Zero is a multi-national road traffic safety project that aims to achieve a roadway system with no fatalities or serious injuries involving road traffic.)
10. Pursue opportunities to expand the greenway trail that currently extends from Maple Avenue Park to Fairgrounds Park to the Bark Park through a boardwalk-style walking and bicycling path.
11. Continue to monitor activities of CSX and the site of the former Boxwood Road GM plant.
12. Ensure that town residents and businesses are given the utmost consideration when it comes to advance notice of transportation improvement efforts.

# Natural Resources and Environment

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## Physical Characteristics

### Geology and Soils

The earth north of Kirkwood Highway is composed of amphibolites. Amphibolites are the typical rocks of the metamorphic group containing calcium, magnesium, iron, aluminum, and sodium combined with silica. This rock was originally sedimentary in nature but has been deformed by the application of heat and pressure. The age of these rocks is difficult to determine, as fossils were destroyed during the metamorphic process. The area south of Kirkwood Highway is made up of the Potomac Formation, which consists of variegated white, yellow, and red silts and clays. It also contains quartz, sand, and gravel. This formation is about 16,000 feet thick. This sedimentary unit forms a wedge-shaped mass, which has its thin edge along the fall line. Primary soils in the Elsmere area include (1) Elsinboro-Delanco-Urban land complex, (2) Neshaminy-Urban land complex, and (3) Urban land. Combined, these three soil types make up about two-thirds of the soils in the Elsmere area.

### Topography

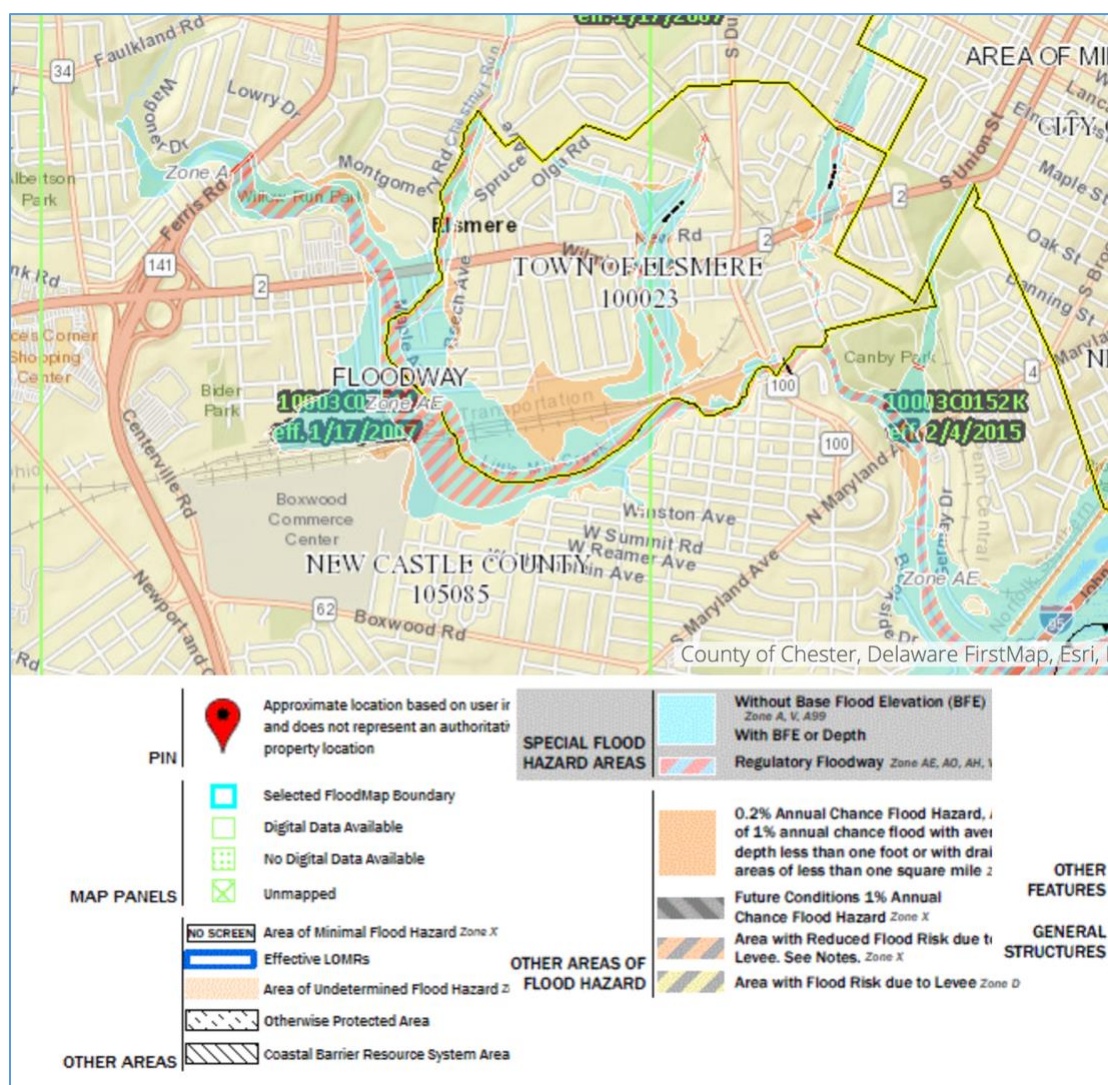
Kirkwood Highway, the main road running through the middle of Elsmere, divides the landform to its south and north by the fall line. The fall line is a narrow band that roughly follows Kirkwood Highway across the state between the cities of Newark and Wilmington and represents the transition from an upland area of diversified relief to relatively level lowland. The area to the north of Kirkwood Highway is part of the physiographic region known as the Piedmont Province of northern New Castle County. The Piedmont is defined as foothills and consists of gently rolling uplands ranging between 50 and 150 feet above sea level. Narrow valleys and shallow ridges that descend to the lowlands and major stream valleys, including Little Mill Creek, run to the south or southeast. The area south of the highway is located within the Coastal Plain Province. This province can be divided into coastal lowlands and interior lowlands. Elsmere is located on interior lowland. Broad streambeds such as the one on the southern border of Elsmere characterize this area. This area is between 50 and 100 feet above sea level. Elsmere lies entirely in an area of nearly level land (up to 3% slope).

### Floodplains and Flood-Hazard Areas

Protecting flood-prone areas is important, not only as an integral component of a comprehensive environmental protection program, but also for continued participation in the National Flood Insurance Program. On August 8, 2013, the Town of Elsmere amended the Town of Elsmere Mitigation Actions to include Elsmere Mitigation Action 9, which provides flood-proofing funding to repetitive loss locations in town. Since the town's 2010 Comprehensive Plan, Little Mill Creek has been widened to help relieve some of the regional flooding issues associated with the creek flooding. The Little Mill Creek Flood Risk Management project was completed in September 2015 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. These improvements have relieved the flooding hazards associated in the Sycamore Avenue area in the past.

Flooding problems in Elsmere can be separated into two major groups—widespread regional flooding incidents due to flow in Little Mill Creek and its tributaries and more localized flooding due to lack of or inadequate stormwater-management facilities. The map below shows the areas of flood concerns, highlighted by FEMA Flood Map Service Center, which are also shown in Map 13 at the end of the Chapter. (<https://msc.fema.gov/portal/search>)

**Map 11. FEMA Flood Map**



## Wetlands

Wetlands are important because they naturally filter pollutants from water, mitigate flooding, and provide habitats for wildlife and many plant species. Wetlands also offer a wide range of recreational opportunities, including canoeing, fishing, and birdwatching. Through proper water management, careful site selection for development projects, and the identification of sites for restoration, wetlands can be protected and preserved.

The Town of Elsmere has one non-tidal wetland location within its limits. Regulatory protections provided for non-tidal wetlands are less stringent than tidal wetlands and only covers non-tidal wetlands over 400 acres in size. There are no regulations by the state or the Town of Elsmere to protect the non-tidal wetland.

## Water Resources

### Surface Water

Surface water includes streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds. Elsmere is located in the Christina River drainage basin, which flows east to the Delaware River.

### Drinking Water

The Town of Elsmere does not own or operate its own public water system. The town is located in an area where water supply is provided by both the Artesian Water Company and the City of Wilmington. The Wilmington service area is concentrated in the easternmost part of the town in Silverbrook Gardens, which is adjacent to the southern boundary of Wilmington. The vast majority of the town is serviced by Artesian Water Company. Artesian has no public wells located within the municipal boundaries, and treated drinking water is distributed to all homes and businesses throughout the town by Artesian.

## Protecting Water Resources

### Brownfields

Brownfields and other remediation projects have been identified within the town. The DNREC Remediation Section (formerly Site Investigation and Restoration Section) lists the following sites:

- DE-1736 Del Campo Bakery
- DE-1535 217 New Road
- DE-1661 504 Kirkwood
- DE-1186 Former DP&L Elsmere Substation
- DE-1497 Former James Julian Construction

All of the sites listed above have either been remediated or are currently in the Brownfield program. Chestnut Run PCE (DE-1531), which is just outside of the town, is currently being redeveloped and remediated.

### Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)

A total maximum daily load (TMDL) is the greatest amount of a pollutant that a water body can absorb each day without violating water-quality standards—in other words, a pollution limit.

Examples of pollutants, which can harm surface-water bodies, include nitrogen and phosphorus, bacteria, sediments, and heat. There are two sources of these pollutants: “point” sources, such as

sewage treatment plants and “nonpoint” sources, such as runoff from farms, parking lots, and golf courses.

Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) requires states to develop a list of water bodies for which current pollution-control activities are not sufficient to attain applicable water-quality standards and establish TMDLs for pollutants of concern. The first step in combating water pollution from point and nonpoint sources is to determine acceptable pollution levels—the TMDLs. On December 1, 2006, DNREC adopted regulations establishing the TMDL for the pollutants in the Christina River watershed that are outlined in the table below.

The second step is to develop a pollution-control strategy. DNREC’s Watershed Assessment staff works with Tributary Action Teams—comprising residents of each watershed, the public, and other stakeholders—to develop this strategy. Typical strategies considered by these teams include the following:

- Eliminating point-source discharges.
- Managing fertilizer and manure applications.
- Replacing failing septic systems with environmentally safer sewage-disposal systems.
- Employing protective agricultural practices such as planting vegetative buffer strips between cropland and waterways.
- Treating residential stormwater runoff at higher levels.

**Table 10. Christina River Watershed Subbasin C05 TMDLs**

Pollutant	Waste Load Allocation for Point Sources	Waste Load Allocation for Nonpoint Sources	TMDL
<b>Total Nitrogen (pounds per day)</b>	2.606	12.006	12.624
<b>Total Phosphorus (pounds per day)</b>	0.441	0.826	0.930

Sources: TMDL and Reduction from Baseline Data from *Delaware Administrative Code*, Title 7, Section 7425, adopted December 1, 2006. Point and Nonpoint data from *DNREC, Christina River Watershed TMDLs*, Page ix, September 2006 at [http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/swc/wa/Documents/Xia/Christina\\_High-Flow\\_NutrientsTMDL\\_TechReport\\_2006.pdf](http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/swc/wa/Documents/Xia/Christina_High-Flow_NutrientsTMDL_TechReport_2006.pdf).

## Air, Noise, and Climate

### Air Quality

Air quality in Delaware is similar to other areas in the region such as Harford County (Maryland), Cumberland County (New Jersey), and Philadelphia. To determine the ambient levels of pollutants for which national standards have been established, the state of Delaware created the Delaware Air Monitoring Network. The nearest air monitoring station to Elsmere is at the corner of Martin Luther King

Jr. Blvd. and Justison Street in Wilmington. Fine particulate matter are generally emitted from combustion activities and penetrate deeper into the lungs than do coarse particles and are more likely to cause health problems than larger particles. The Wilmington monitoring site has detected particulate matter over the national recommended standards, and the Wilmington area has the highest concentrations of particulate matter in Delaware.

## Noise Pollution

Unwelcome noises have at times become a nuisance to the citizens of Elsmere. Although noise pollution can be subjective, it is an important area to examine because of the possible negative impact it can have on the health and well-being of the citizenry by contributing to sleeplessness and elevated stress levels. The CSX Railroad and traffic on Kirkwood Highway are significant sources of noise within the town, and Elsmere would like to ensure that the noise created by the CSX Railroad is closely monitored by Delaware's regulatory authorities.

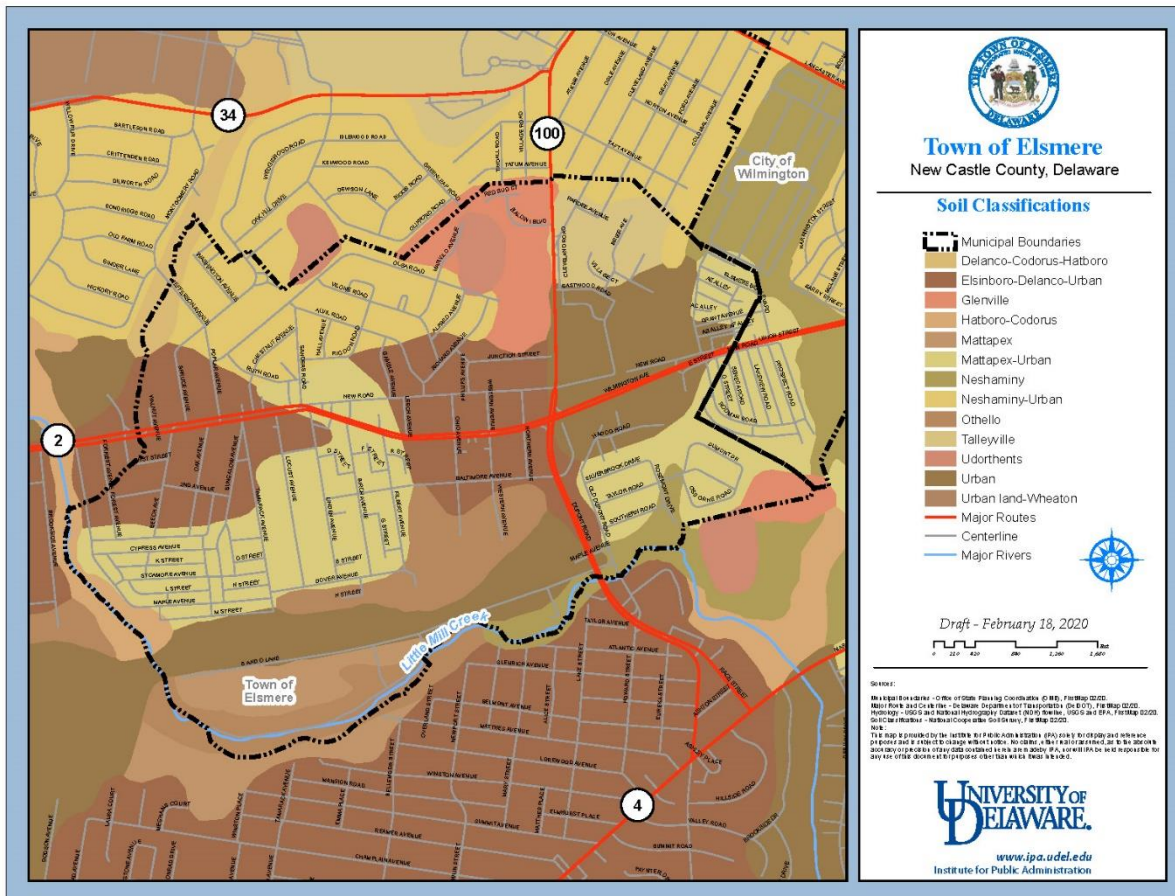
## Climate Change

Climate change is already impacting Delaware in troubling ways. Over the coming years, we can anticipate negative effects on Delaware's communities as a result of climate change such as more days of dangerously high heat, more frequent heavy precipitation events, and sea-level rise that leads to significant flooding. While Elsmere is not particularly vulnerable to coastal flooding, increasing temperatures and increased flooding in nearby areas are likely to have an impact on Elsmere in the future. The increasing frequency of heavy rain events is also likely to cause more localized flooding in the town in the near future.

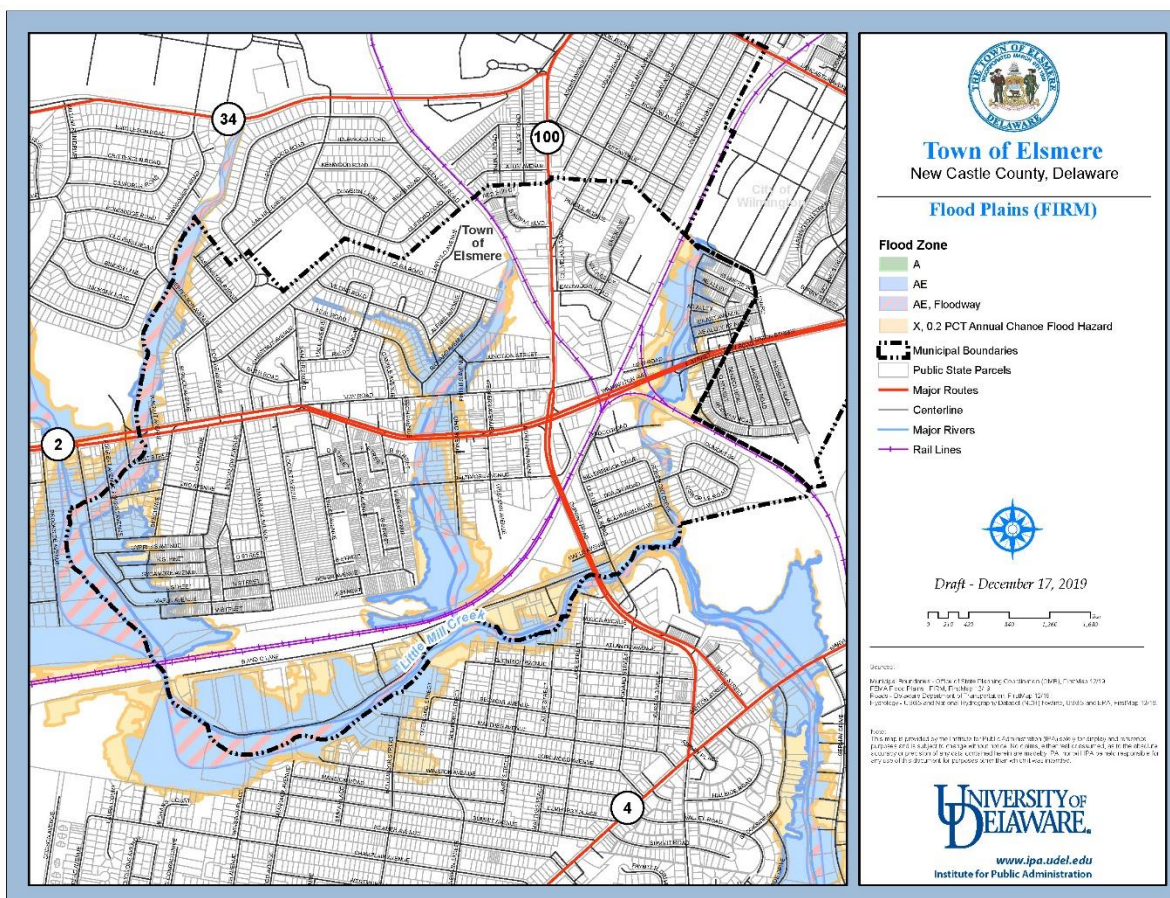
Energy efficiency is another area where the town can promote alternatives such as solar panels that can both reduce the impacts of climate change and potentially save residents money in the long term. Elsmere is committed to developing strategies to reduce vehicle emissions through a variety of efforts including improving multi-modal infrastructure, incorporating electric vehicles/infrastructure, and promoting renewable energy sources in addition to solar such as wind or geothermal. The Town of Elsmere will also consider energy efficiency upgrades such as LED lighting in its municipal facilities. Overall, climate change will be something that Elsmere considers when planning for the future and in its day-to-day operations. DNREC has noted that the Division of Climate, Coastal, and Energy offer grant opportunities relating to sustainability and energy efficiency that Elsmere may want to apply for in the future. In March 2018 the Town of Elsmere passed Resolution 18-01, "A Resolution Committing the Town of Elsmere to Increase the Urban Tree Canopy." This resolution is intended to display the town's support for both maintaining and expanding its tree canopy in recognition of the important role it plays in the town's natural environment. A healthy tree canopy can also help to mitigate some of the negative effects of climate change, especially those related to excessive heat and increased intense rain events.



## Map 12. Soil Classifications



## Map 13. Water Resources



## Recommendations

1. Seek assistance in addressing the issues related to the lack of storm drains along many streets south of Kirkwood Highway, which leads to excessive runoff and flooding on a more frequent basis than in the past.
2. Continue working with the City of Wilmington to resolve flooding issues and raw sewage overflows relating to the CSO 27 project.
3. Assist residents who ask to be taken off the FEMA floodplain map.
4. Utilize FEMA and DEMA assistance for infrastructure improvements.
5. Work to obtain compliance with state-mandated levels of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs).
6. Collect parcel data to track flooding from storm events throughout town, and consider implementing green infrastructure and other best management practices in locations that can help alleviate these localized flooding events.



7. Consider developing strategies to reduce vehicle emissions through improving multi-modal infrastructure, incorporating electric vehicles/ infrastructure, and promoting renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, or geothermal.
8. Promote Elsmere as a Tree Friendly Community with a focus on protecting and increasing the town's tree canopy and continue to pursue programs and opportunities to maintain and support the town's tree canopy.
9. Elsmere should work with DelDOT and DNREC to continue monitoring noise and air pollution along the CSX Railroad area, Kirkwood Highway, Dupont Road, and other areas of town, especially as rail traffic increases near the former Boxwood Road industrial area.
10. Keep the emergency response plan current.



## Economic Development

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Economic development includes policies and practices that enhance the tax base, create and retain employment opportunities, and promote commercial activity and economic growth. Many new employment opportunities in the New Castle County area will likely be healthcare- and service-related, but finance, the tech sector, education, legal services, and construction jobs are also a vital part of the local economy.

### Countywide Trends

In a recent County report, *NCC @ 2050*, the New Castle County Department of Land Use identifies trends in county growth and development that are likely to impact Elsmere. They raise questions of planned growth, resource allocation, and revitalization methods and provide some recommendations. The population growth of the county is expected to slow down and stabilize as 2050 nears, with an increase of both ethnically diverse and elderly populations. Populations may have different needs, especially the elderly population, which could be taken into account while identifying future areas of targeted growth and economic development.

One question from the county report, “Are we supporting communities that need reinvestment and revitalization?,” is relevant to the standing of the town. As a community that has lost employment opportunities and residents over the past 40 years, working to identify and create revitalization plans for the town’s assets could be beneficial for its continued prosperity. Elsmere’s unemployment rate is almost double that of the county, state, and national rates, highlighting the need for jobs in the area.

New Castle County will most likely set forth new policies and plans dealing with economic development in its updated comprehensive plan, which is expected to be finalized in 2022. Strategies put forward by the 2012 New Castle County Comprehensive Plan to be potentially adopted by Elsmere include:

1. Promote infill and redevelopment to optimize existing infrastructure, creating transit corridors with a mix of housing and relieve the pressure of greenfield development.
2. Encourage collaboration with public- and private-sector partners to advance strategies for job retention and creation.
3. Seek assistance in the form of grants, loans, tax incentives, or other subsidies provided at the state or federal level that support business retention and attraction.
4. Develop a marketing strategy to reach the small business community and provide information about the land development process and the ways in which the town can provide information and assistance as it starts new enterprises or seeks to expand.

## Statewide Trends

### The Delaware Prosperity Partnership

On his first day in office in January 2017, Governor Carney signed Executive Order Number One of his administration that set forth a plan to dissolve the Delaware Economic Development Office (DEDO) and create a public-private partnership to lead Delaware's economic development efforts. This public-private partnership was formed in September 2017 as the Delaware Prosperity Partnership (DPP) and was tasked with a new focus on economic development in the state by promoting innovation, supporting Delaware's entrepreneurs, and leveraging private-sector resources to create jobs and grow Delaware's economy. DPP is headed by a 19-member board of directors on which the Governor serves as a co-chair. The DPP also hired its first CEO, Kurt Foreman, in the spring of 2018 and, as of winter 2020, has a staff of 15. DPP is officially the nonprofit state economic development agency that leads Delaware's economic development efforts to attract, grow, and retain businesses; build a stronger entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem; and support private employers in identifying, recruiting, and developing talent in Delaware. DPP's services include working with prospects to review potential sites, cost-of-living details, and funding opportunities, including available tax credits and incentives. The four key elements of economic development on which DPP focuses include:

- Attraction – Focusing on bringing new companies to Delaware.
- Expansion – Engaging and supporting existing employers.
- Innovation – Convening and supporting new, emerging sectors.
- Talent – Enhancing the state's talent pool and supporting employers in their workforce needs.

### The Division of Small Business

In addition to forming DPP, the State of Delaware also created the Division of Small Business to take the place of the other functions that DEDO previously covered. The Division of Small Business is located within the state's Office of Budget and Management and focuses on assisting Delaware businesses in the following areas:

- Navigating the government process
- Connecting with resource organizations
- Accessing capital

The Division of Small Business administer programs including various state incentive programs and tax credits, EDGE Grants, the Delaware on Main program (which replaced the Delaware Main Street program), and Opportunity Zones. The Division also coordinates the Delaware Economic Development Authority (DEDA). DEDA was created by the Delaware General Assembly to promote economic activity in the state of Delaware. The director of the Delaware Division of Small Business chairs DEDA and may designate officers or employees of the Division of Small Business to lawfully act on his behalf. Under Delaware Code, DEDA is authorized to issue bonds to finance the cost of any project, or part of any project, or provide other financing support to projects with approval by the Council on Development Finance (CDF). CDF is responsible for conducting a public hearing following reasonable public notice,

prior to the issuance by DEDA of any bond or the provision by DEDA of any other form of financing support. DEDA staff is tasked with reviewing prospective projects to determine whether the goals and outcomes of the projects align with the purposes set forth in Delaware law, including whether they contribute to the prosperity, health, or general welfare of the citizens of Delaware. Upon successful approval of a prospective project, DEDA will adopt a resolution and execute the necessary legal agreements.

## Economic Characteristics

Tables 11 and 12 summarize 2018 income and poverty data for Elsmere, New Castle County, the State of Delaware, and the United States. Elsmere has significantly lower median household incomes and higher rates of poverty than those of New Castle County and Delaware overall.

**Table 11. Household Annual Income, 2018**

	Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware	United States
<b>Median Income</b>	\$49,020	\$70,996	\$65,627	\$60,293

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP03.

**Table 12. Selected 2018 Income Distribution and Poverty Data**

	Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware	United States
<b>Households with Annual Income under \$25,000</b>	22.0%	16.4%	17.0%	20.2%
<b>Households with Annual Income of \$100,000 or More</b>	18.9%	33.3%	29.6%	27.9%
<b>Individuals below Poverty Line</b>	14.3%	11.4%	11.9%	14.1%
<b>Individuals 65 Years and Over below Poverty Level</b>	8.2%	6.8%	6.6%	9.3%

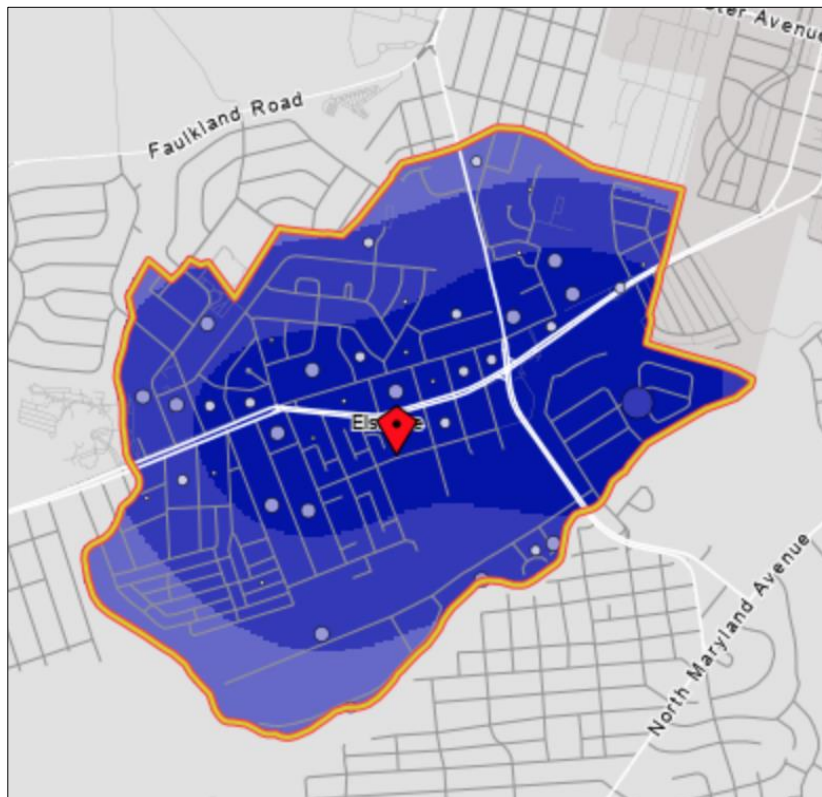
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

## Area Employers

Figure 4 shows the concentration of employers in Elsmere. The figure shows that jobs in Elsmere are largely concentrated around Kirkwood Highway, which bisects the town. Most of the employment along Kirkwood Highway is retail- or small office-oriented. The lack of parking along Kirkwood Highway is a concern for the growth of these businesses as they rely heavily on convenient and accessible parking. Industrial zoned areas located near and surrounding the intersection of the town’s two railroads and the intersection of Route 100 and Kirkwood Highway are also a major employment hub. The former General Motors plant along Boxwood Road was a major employer for the area before its closure and could become a strength again if recent plans for it to reopen as a logistics and distribution facility continue to

move forward. The City of Wilmington also offers a great variety of employment opportunities for the area. The primary employment areas for Wilmington are just three miles from Elsmere.

**Figure 4. Employer Concentration, 2017**



Source: Census *On the Map* website Elsmere Town Employers, American Community Survey 2013-2017.

### Employment and Unemployment

Table 13 presents the employment status for persons in the labor force for Elsmere, New Castle County, Delaware, and the United States. Elsmere residents are unemployed at a higher rate than those of New Castle County, Delaware, and the United States. However, the unemployment gap is not as significant as the income gap between Elsmere, New Castle County, and the rest of Delaware. Employment levels in Delaware, along with New Castle County, have remained comparable to the United States as a whole over the past decade.

**Table 13. Employment Status, 2018**

Employment Status	Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware	United States
<b>Employed</b>	64.5%	61.1%	58.6%	59.3%
<b>Unemployed</b>	5.0%	4.1%	3.7%	3.7%

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2014–2018.

## Occupations

Table 14 shows the employment of Elsmere’s residents by occupational category in both 2010 and 2018. While these occupational categories are relatively consistent between New Castle County and the rest of the state, Elsmere has a significantly different employment base. Elsmere is more heavily dependent on Service jobs and in the past was more dependent on Natural Resource, Construction and Maintenance jobs as well as Production, Transportation and Material Moving jobs. Since 2010, Elsmere has become less reliant on some of those workforce areas while gaining more employment in the Management, Business, Science & Arts and Sales & Office occupational sectors. There was significant growth in the Management, Business, Science, and Arts sectors and Sales and Office occupations. In 2018, 82.8 percent of employment in Elsmere was in the Management, Business, Science & Arts, Service, or Sales & Office employment areas compared to just 71.4 percent in 2010. While the growth in Management, Business, Science & Arts jobs in Elsmere was significant between 2010 and 2018, the town still lags well behind both New Castle County and the rest of the state in that category.

**Table 14. Occupational Breakdown, 2010 and 2018**

Occupational Category	Elsmere		New Castle County		Delaware	
	2010	2018	2010	2018	2010	2018
<b>Management, Business, Science &amp; Arts</b>	26.1%	32.1%	40.8%	44.0%	36.8%	39.9%
<b>Service</b>	19.4%	22.5%	15.9%	16.5%	17.0%	17.7%
<b>Sales &amp; Office</b>	26.0%	28.2%	26.0%	22.0%	26.0%	22.1%
<b>Natural Resource, Construction &amp; Maintenance</b>	14.2%	8.5%	7.9%	7.3%	9.6%	8.6%
<b>Production, Transportation &amp; Material Moving</b>	14.4%	8.7%	9.5%	10.1%	10.6%	11.7%

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey, S2405, 2006–2010 and 2014–2018.

## Recommendations

1. Develop a business district plan for the town that centers along Kirkwood Highway and industrial zoned areas surrounding the intersection of Route 100 and Kirkwood Highway.



2. Address the design of Kirkwood Highway to make the commercial corridor more inviting to pedestrians and more attractive to businesses and potential customers.
3. Put together a market area study to identify potential opportunities for business expansion, new developments, and new business opportunities for the town.
4. Review the town's sign regulations to improve the aesthetics of town business storefronts, particularly along Kirkwood Highway.
5. Continue to support the industrial areas of Elsmere by seeking their input and valuing their importance as a critical employment base for the community.
6. Make better use of the town's open space and parks with the goal of providing for current residents, attracting new residents, and supporting local businesses.

## Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities

Town parks and recreation make an essential contribution to a healthier population and a greener town. They are integral to the quality of life, provide beauty, respite, and opportunity for structured and informal play, and are an important part of the town's living experience. Community facilities also play a vital role in Elsmere, particularly the town's police department and the library.

### Local and Regional Facilities

Much of the open space in Elsmere is set aside for parks designed to suit the needs of the town's residents. Many of these parks contain playground areas and amenities for baseball and basketball. They also offer picnic tables, concession stands, benches, iron lampposts, and trash receptacles. These facilities and services affect the attractiveness of the town as a place to live and do business and provide the foundation for new development opportunities. A full listing of these local and regional facilities is provided in Table 15.

**Table 15. Elsmere Park and Recreation Facilities**

Facility	Features
<b>Junction St. &amp; Casapulla Ave.</b>	Playground, basketball courts, picnic tables, and benches
<b>Fairgrounds Park – Dover Ave. &amp; Filbert Ave.</b>	Playground, ball fields, picnic tables, and concession stand
<b>Joseph R. Walling Park – Linden Ave.</b>	Playground, basketball courts, picnic tables, and Pavilion
<b>Maple Ave Park – Maple Ave. &amp; Sycamore Ave.</b>	Playground, handicapped table, and benches
<b>Brian Martin Park – Tamarack Ave.</b>	Playground
<b>Vilone Park – Olga Rd. &amp; Marvilo Ave.</b>	Playground, ball fields, picnic tables, benches, and concession stands
<b>Veterans Park – 11 Poplar Ave.</b>	Playground, picnic tables, and benches
<b>Elsmere Bark Park – 400 Baltimore Ave.</b>	Benches and dog recreational equipment

Source: Town of Elsmere.

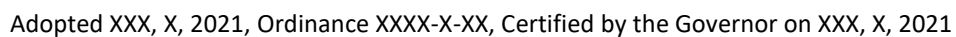
## County and State Recreational Facilities and Parks

Elsmere residents also have access to New Castle County and state parks that offer a wide variety of amenities, including playgrounds, sports fields, hiking, picnicking areas, tennis courts, historical attractions, basketball courts, and even a zoo. Table 16 provides a list of nearby parks with amenities. All parks listed in the table are within four miles of the town with the exception of Brandywine Creek State Park, which is a very large 933-acre regional park that is now part of the First State National Park along with 1,100 acres donated by The Conservation Fund. Brandywine Creek State Park is Delaware's first and only national park.

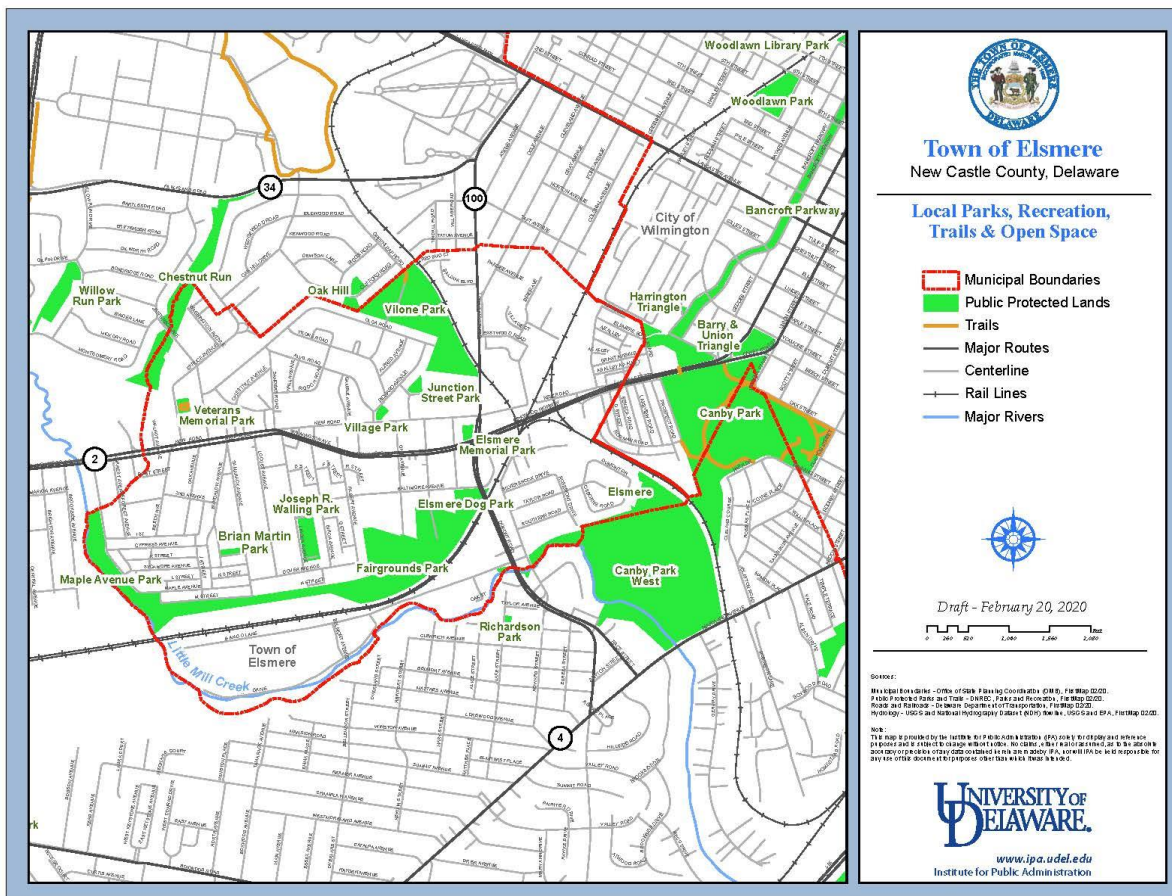
**Table 16. New Castle County and State Park and Recreation Facilities**

Facility	Location	Features
<b>Willow Run Park</b>	Montgomery Rd. and Willow Run Rd. (1.5 miles from Elsmere)	Basketball court
<b>Banning Park</b>	Rt. 4 and Middleboro Rd. (2.0 miles from Elsmere)	Playground, multipurpose field, ball fields, soccer fields, basketball and tennis courts, and picnic pavilion
<b>Canby Park</b>	Union Street and Lincoln Street (2.2 miles from Elsmere)	Playground, multipurpose field, ball fields, tennis courts, tot lot, and picnic pavilion
<b>Greenbank Park</b>	Greenbank Rd. (2.6 miles from Elsmere)	Historical park with museum and steam-driven trains
<b>Woodland Park</b>	Faulkland Rd. at the Little Mill Creek Crossing (2.7 miles from Elsmere)	Playground, basketball and volleyball court, and ball field
<b>Albertson Park</b>	Elder Dr. between Rt. 34 and Rt. 2 (2.7 miles from Elsmere)	Ball field, basketball court, two tennis courts, and playground
<b>Faulkland Heights</b>	Newall Dr. and Inman Dr. (3.0 miles from Elsmere)	Playground, ball fields, and tot lot
<b>Rockford State Park</b>	19th Street and Red Oak Rd. (3.4 miles from Elsmere)	Fields for baseball and softball, tennis and basketball courts, hiking trails, and picnic area with grills
<b>Biden Park</b>	Woodland Ave. and Rt. 2 (3.4 miles from Elsmere)	Playground, basketball courts, and ball field
<b>Dunlinden Acres</b>	St. John Dr. (3.6 miles from Elsmere)	Playground, basketball court, ball field, and tot lot
<b>H. Fletcher Brown State Park</b>	South park Dr. and Marcus St. (3.7 miles from Elsmere)	Bricked walkway and landscaped park
<b>Brandywine Springs Park</b>	Rt. 34 and Rt. 41 (3.7 miles from Elsmere)	Playground, ball fields, basketball courts, tot lot, and picnic pavilion
<b>Brandywine Creek State Park</b>	North Park and South Park Dr. (6.7 miles from Elsmere)	Baseball, softball, football, and soccer fields, tennis and basketball courts, zoo, stadium, biking and hiking trails, and picnic tables and pavilion

Source: New Castle County and DNREC.



## Map 15. Local Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Spaces



## Community Facilities

Community Facilities and Services constitute a network of interrelated public and semi-public institutions and activities that give a jurisdiction its identity. These facilities and services not only affect the attractiveness of a community as a place to live, work, and do business, but also influence its growth pattern. Like most Delaware municipalities, service provision is a shared responsibility. The Town of Elsmere is responsible for street and sidewalk maintenance, local policing, code enforcement, building permitting and inspection, and planning and zoning. Water and sewer service are provided by Artesian Water Company, Inc., the City of Wilmington, and New Castle County. Electric service and related maintenance are provided by Delmarva Power. Trash, yard waste, and recycling collection recently changed and is now contracted out to Republic Services, Inc. Other services are provided by the state, county, semi-public agencies, or private establishments. Map 15 at the end of this chapter depicts the location of Elsmere's community facilities.



## Town Government

Elsmere's Town Charter, adopted at the time of incorporation in 1909, provides the legal foundation for the town's governmental structure. Elsmere's government includes an elected Town Council, an appointed Planning Commission, and an appointed Board of Adjustment. The Elsmere Town Council constitutes its legislative body and consists of a mayor and six council members who represent the six districts of Elsmere. All council members are elected and serve two-year terms. The Elsmere Town Council meets on the second Thursday of every month in the Town Hall.

The Planning Commission consists of seven members who are appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the Town Council and serve staggered three-year terms. The Elsmere Planning Commission is responsible for preparing the town's comprehensive plan and recommending public improvements based on the adopted plan.

The Board of Adjustment consists of five members who are appointed by the mayor, confirmed by majority vote of the Elsmere Town Council, and serve three-year terms or until a successor is appointed by the mayor. Members must be residents of Elsmere and may not be candidates, hold an elected office, or be employees of the town. According to the town code, "appeals to the Board of Adjustment may be taken by any person aggrieved or by an officer, department, board or bureau of the municipality affected by any decision of the Building Official and Building Committee."

## Town Facilities and Services

Elsmere's Town Hall is located at 11 Poplar Avenue. The town's administrative, finance, and code enforcement staff as well as its police department operate out of this building. The Public Works Department is located on New Road. Public Works is responsible for removing snow, repairing street signs, and maintaining the parks and public buildings. Elsmere asks residents to clear their own sidewalks and areas adjacent to their properties within eight daylight hours after snowfall.

## Public Safety

### Police Protection

The Elsmere Police Department is responsible for protecting its residents, enforcing state and local laws, conducting crime-prevention activities, performing criminal investigations, promoting traffic safety, and other obligations. They are in operation 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The department operates out of its headquarters located adjacent to Town Hall, but officers are dispatched through the New Castle County Emergency Service Center (911). The police department consists of a chief of police, 11 uniformed patrol officers, and an administrative assistant assigned to the chief of police. The department is divided into two patrols, with each patrol commanded by a sergeant.

### Fire Protection

Fire protection is provided by the Elsmere Fire Company No. 1, a volunteer fire company founded on March 21, 1921. The company's headquarters is located at 1107 Kirkwood Highway. Its history reflects a



unique volunteer fire company that embodies the four words of its emblem: tradition, pride, dedication, and service. The Elsmere Fire Company currently has 125 active firefighters and 68 social members. The entire unit is fully qualified and trained in fire, medical, and emergency-management services. Today, Elsmere Fire Company provides fire-protection and ambulance service to a first-alarm district, which is approximately 15 square miles. This area encompasses the Town of Elsmere and developments north to the Brandywine River and west to Route 141. This area has a population of approximately 20,000 people living in single-family and multifamily residences and includes commercial, industrial, and municipal buildings.

Elsmere Fire Company occupies a fire station that was officially dedicated on September 12, 1993. It was designed by Anderson Brown Higley Associates, which received the 1995 American Institute of Architects (AIA) Delaware Design Award in recognition of its outstanding architectural design. The fire station has a sizeable, well-lit, and maintenance-free engine room that has enhanced the efficiency of emergency operations. This modern building also includes a basement that serves as a civil-defense area, a state-of-the-art communications-control room at the anterior, a hazmat-operators room, spacious offices, a training room, a physical-fitness room with both male and female locker rooms and showers, a membership room, a lunch and recreation room, and a television room. The Training Room was set up and designed to be a command post for the town and fire department during an emergency.

Elsmere Fire Company is part of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Working Group administered by the Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA). This ongoing partnership utilizes the building as a host fire station for the training of technical reserve teams to coordinate effective responses to the use of weapons of mass destruction and hazardous materials. Hazmat 16, Decon 1, and the Hazmat Operators room are part of the state-standardized field equipment used in emergency management of disasters involving weapons of mass destruction and hazardous materials.

The company's fire suppression and rescue apparatus include two engines (including one rescue), two tower ladders, two emergency service vehicles, and one utility and command unit.

### Emergency Medical Service

The Elsmere Fire Company presently has two ambulances that are dispatched for emergency medical services. Paramedic services are provided by New Castle County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) section of the New Castle County Police Department.

## Educational Facilities

### Red Clay Consolidated School District

The Town of Elsmere is located within the Red Clay Consolidated School District. The district was formed in 1981 and is now the second largest district in the state. There are currently about 16,000 students attending the schools in the district, which comprise 15 elementary schools, 6 middle schools, and 5 high schools. In addition, there are two special education schools. The district is governed by a seven-

member school board with each member elected to a five-year term, and the board employs a superintendent to administer the policies and regulations of the district.

**Table 17. Red Clay Consolidated School District Schools Serving Elsmere Students**

School	Location	Grades Served	Fall Enrollment 2019
<b>Austin D. Baltz Elementary</b>	1500 Spruce Ave., Wilmington	Grades K through 5	515
<b>Richardson Park Elementary</b>	16 Idella Ave., Wilmington,	Grades K through 5	615
<b>A.I. du Pont Middle</b>	3130 Kennett Pike, Wilmington	Grades 6 through 8	908
<b>Stanton Middle</b>	1800 Limestone Rd., Wilmington	Grades 6 through 8	730
<b>McKean High</b>	301 McKenna Church Rd., Wilmington	Grades 9 through 12	1,893

Source: Delaware Department of Education, <https://reportcard.doe.k12.de.us/index.html>, accessed 11/20/2019.

## Charter Schools and Private Schools

Authorized by Title 14, Chapter 5 of the Delaware Code in 1995, charter schools aim to “improve student learning; encourage the use of different and innovative or proven school environments and teaching and learning methods; provide parents and students with improved measures of school performance and greater opportunities in choosing public schools within and outside their school districts; and to provide for a well-educated community” ([www.doe.state.de.us/programs/charterschools](http://www.doe.state.de.us/programs/charterschools)).

There are two charter schools located just outside of Elsmere’s limit. The first is the Charter School of Wilmington, which is located northeast of the town at 100 North Dupont Road and has an enrollment of approximately 970 students. Southeast of the limits is the second school, Delaware Military Academy, located at 112 Middleboro Road with an enrollment of approximately 580 students. Both charter schools serve grades 9 through 12. Elsmere students are eligible to apply to all of the charter schools throughout the state in addition to the standard option of attending public schools in the Red Clay Consolidated School District. Cab Calloway School of the Arts and Odyssey Charter School are also near the town, and St. Elizabeth School, a Catholic school serving grades Pre-K 3 through 12, is not far outside of the town’s limits in the City of Wilmington.

For many years, the Elsmere community had been home of the All Saints Catholic School, a private Catholic school based on the Franciscan tradition and founded in 1952. All Saints announced in the spring of 2020 that it would be closing after the end of the school year. All Saints provided for grades K–8, and at the time of its closing was serving the residents of the Corpus Christi Parish in Elsmere and the

adjoining St. Mary of the Assumption Parish and had about 340 students. The school was staffed by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia as well as other lay educators. The future of the school property located at 907 New Road is yet to be determined as of the completion of this 2021 Comprehensive Plan.

## Civic and Social Services

### Postal Service

There are no U.S. Postal Service offices located within Elsmere, but there are two locations within a few miles. One is located to the east at 1500 Lancaster Avenue in Wilmington and another is located to the west at 3434 Old Capitol Trail in Marshallton.

### Library Services

The New Castle County Public Library at Elsmere was founded in 1995. It is a modern facility, built as an extension of the Elsmere Town Hall that is owned by the town and leased to New Castle County. Although the town has no administrative control over the operation of the library, its programs primarily serve the residents of Elsmere. The library offers an extensive collection of volumes, periodicals, audiotapes, DVDs, and eAudiobooks. Presently, the library offers an extensive list of programs including story times for children, senior coffee hours, library technology classes, workshops in business and health, guest performances in music and theater, and book clubs.

Within the last several years, two online services have become available. The first is the Delaware Library Catalog, which provides access to information through a single online library database for all public libraries and a number of academic and school libraries. The second program is Ask-a-Librarian Delaware, a free, 24/7 online information service where users can connect with a real-time librarian for assistance (<https://nccde.org/327/Elsmere-Library>).

### Senior Services

Elsmere's focus on the well-being of its senior citizens has been embodied in the nonprofit organization, Oak Grove Senior Center, Inc. located in the Elsmere Town Hall. However, the senior center announced in spring of 2020 that it would not be renewing its lease in the summer of 2020. The space is owned by the Town of Elsmere and has been leased to the center for a number of years to organize events for seniors, ages 55 and older, to promote their social, mental, and physical well-being. Elsmere hopes to continue to provide services and opportunities for its seniors in the future.

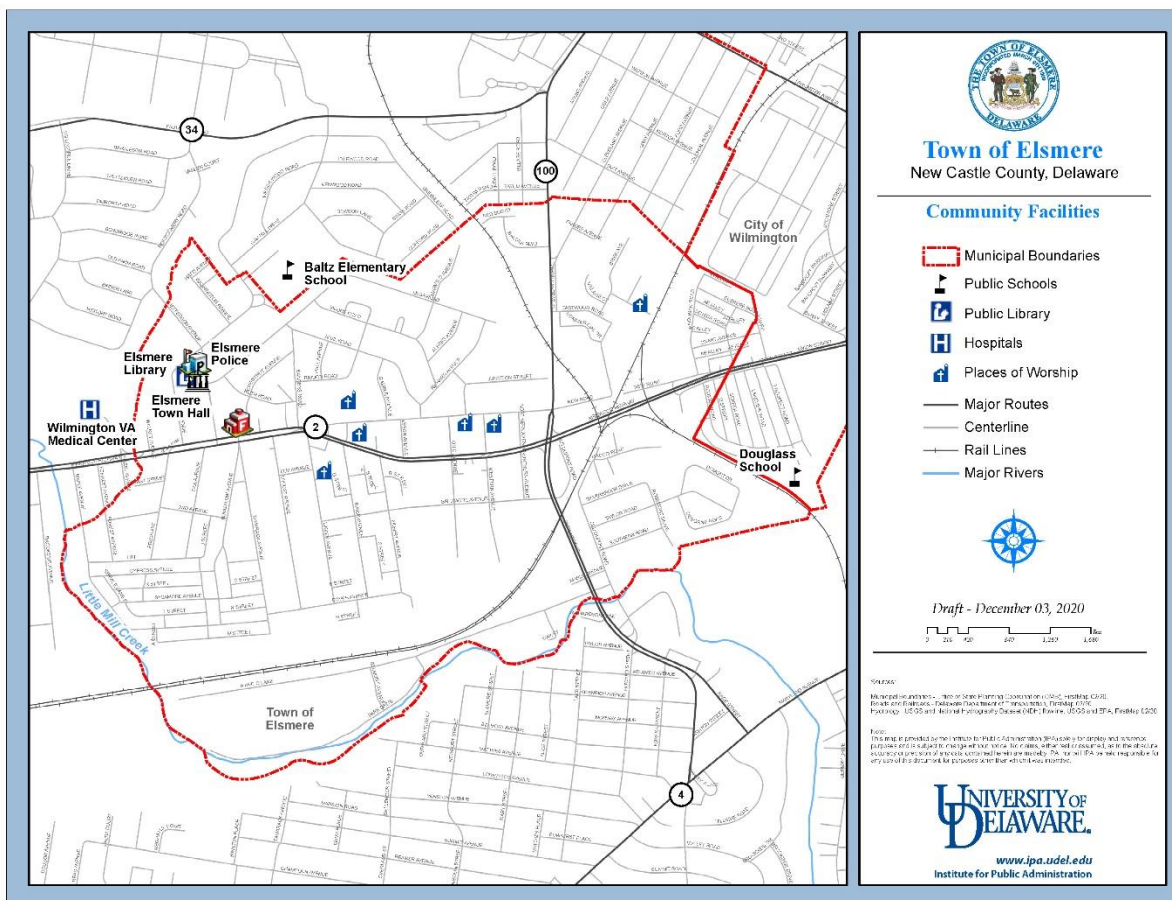
**Table 18. Elsmere Community Facilities**

Facility	Features
Elsmere Public Library	Story times, technology classes, workshops, book clubs, and guest performances in music and theater

## State Service Center

The DSS/Canby Park Office is located nearby to the southeast of town at 1920 Maryland Avenue. The center offers a wide variety of public services to help people with their health and social services needs. The center can assist the public obtain services provided through the Delaware Health and Social Services (DHSS), the state Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families, and the Delaware Department of State, as well as many nonprofit community services groups.

## Map 16. Community Facilities



## Recommendations

1. Review the town's park space to evaluate each park for its current usage and design prior to considering the replacement of some park space with infill residential development in locations deemed to be suitable.
2. Consider hiring a consultant to evaluate the current usage and design of each park in town and within the region to determine how effectively the park system is meeting the recreational needs and priorities of the town's residents.

3. Promote Elsmere's access to local and regional trail systems and identify new opportunities to expand and enhance the town's trail system, such as a new trail connection between Fairgrounds Park and the Bark Park and improving the lighting on trails.
4. Look for opportunities to increase the effectiveness of the town's park system by expanding the town's "pocket parks" throughout town.
5. Consider hosting an annual "Library Day" event to increase the use of the New Castle County Public Library at Elsmere and promote it as a valuable resource for town residents.
6. Consider evaluating local events and activities organized by the town to ensure they are directed toward the town's residents and meeting their needs and desires.

## Housing

The housing stock in the Town of Elsmere has not undergone any major changes in recent years. A slight, continual increase in housing was the trend until the mid-2010s, whereas in the most recent years no new housing units have been built. The Town of Elsmere's housing structures are relatively older than those in the county or state. There is little room for any major development of housing units, unless areas are redeveloped.

### Housing Profile

Table 19 summarizes the distribution of housing unit types in Elsmere and comparison areas as of the 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Elsmere's housing stock has less detached single-family housing when compared to the county and state housing stocks. Elsmere makes up for this difference with its higher percentage of single-family attached housing, which is over double that of the state. There has been an increase in the presence of mobile homes, from none to around 35. Elsmere also has a large percentage of two or more unit housing compared to both New Castle County and the state, which demonstrates the relatively large number of multifamily and rental units in the town. This number unsurprisingly correlates closely overall to the percentage of renter-occupied units in Table 20.

**Table 19. Elsmere Housing Stock Composition, 2018**

	Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware
<b>1-Unit Detached</b>	38.2%	53.5%	58.8%
<b>1-Unit Attached</b>	29.3%	21.2%	15.3%
<b>2 or More Units</b>	31.8%	23.2%	17.5%
<b>Mobile Home and Other</b>	0.7%	2.1%	8.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Selected Housing Characteristics, Table DP04.

Table 20 shows the occupancy status for Elsmere, New Castle County, and Delaware. Elsmere has a slightly lower owner-occupied rate compared to the rest of the state, but is similar to the rate for the rest of New Castle County. The renter occupancy rate is comparable to the county and is slightly higher than the state's overall renter occupancy rate. The vacancy rate in the town is almost double that of the county but is very similar to the state's overall vacancy rate. Housing units that are rented as opposed to owned by the potential occupant are almost five times more likely to be vacant in Elsmere.



**Table 20. Elsmere Housing Occupancy, 2018**

	Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware
<b>Overall Occupancy</b>	83.5%	91.8%	83.7%
<b>Owner-Occupied</b>	66.9%	68.0%	71.1%
<b>Renter-Occupied</b>	33.1%	32.0%	28.9%
<b>Overall Vacancy</b>	15.6%	8.3%	16.8%
<b>Homeowner Vacancy</b>	3.3%	1.5%	1.9%
<b>Rental Vacancy</b>	14.7%	8.1%	7.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Selected Housing Characteristics, Table DP04.

The majority of homes in Elsmere are more than 40 years old. Most of the houses were built before 1959, accounting for about 82 percent of the housing stock; this is in contrast to that of New Castle County and Delaware, which are more heavily composed of newer housing stock. As Elsmere is largely built-out, there is little chance for any major increases in housing units. Table 21 displays the 2017 data of the age of Elsmere’s housing stock compared to that of New Castle County and the state.

**Table 21. Elsmere Age of Occupied Housing Units, 2018**

Year Built	Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware
2010 or later	1.2%	3.7%	6.3%
2000 to 2009	7.2%	10.6%	18.9%
1990 to 1999	3.4%	14.0%	16.0%
1980 to 1989	2.1%	12.7%	13.7%
1970 to 1979	4.6%	12.7%	11.9%
1960 to 1969	14.5%	14.3%	10.3%
1950 to 1959	29.7%	14.4%	10.0%
1940 to 1949	20.5%	6.7%	4.6%
1939 or earlier	16.7%	10.9%	8.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Selected Housing Characteristics, Table DP04.

Table 22 compares the median value of owner-occupied housing units in Elsmere with median values in New Castle County and Delaware. The median value of owner-occupied units in Elsmere was \$168,400 in 2017. This value is significantly lower than the values for New Castle County and Delaware. The median housing value in the state is approximately \$70,000 greater than that in Elsmere and an \$80,000 difference from the county.

**Table 22. Median Housing Value, Owner-Occupied Housing, 2018**

Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware
\$173,000	\$254,500	\$244,700

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Selected Housing Characteristics, Table DP04.

Table 23 compares the median gross rents in Elsmere with rent payments in New Castle County and Delaware. The median gross rent in Elsmere in 2017 was approximately \$1,009 per month. This is slightly lower than state and county rents, which could be due to a difference in demand. Elsmere has higher rental vacancy rates, leading to a larger, less competitive rental market.

**Table 23. Median Gross Rent, 2018**

Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware
\$1,001	\$1,141	\$1,110

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Selected Housing Characteristics, Table DP04.

## Housing Needs

Elsmere is more affordable than most places in the state and the region. The Town of Elsmere has a lower median home value than both the county and the state, making it more affordable for prospective residents. Elsmere’s gross rents are also slightly less than New Castle County and Delaware. Elsmere also has a higher percentage of renters than the county and the state overall and has a much higher vacancy rate than the county. Elsmere also has an older stock of housing than both the county and the state, with over 70 percent of its homes being built prior to 1960.

Given the age of the town’s housing stock, Elsmere should pursue opportunities for new market rate housing when they become available. Elsmere is situated in a relatively attractive market for both multifamily and single-family housing, and it would be beneficial for the town to pursue opportunities for both types. Given the fact that the town is relatively built-out with little open space for new development, new opportunities are likely to be through either redeveloping properties or renovating older homes. In some cases, it may be feasible for older homes to be renovated into multi-unit dwellings if the town pursues those options.

The current mix of housing types in Elsmere weighs more toward rental housing than homeowner-occupied housing, but at the current time this mix is still healthy. Having said that, the town has expressed a concern about too much of its housing stock becoming renter-occupied and would like to maintain its history and character as a primarily homeowner-occupied community. With this in mind, the town should monitor the housing-type mix within town to ensure that not too much of the housing stock becomes renter-occupied in comparison to the county.

Given the fact that Elsmere is already more affordable than the county and the state overall in terms of cost of housing, it should not pursue additional opportunities for affordable or workforce housing at the current time. While the town is located in a prime area for market rate housing, it simply does not allow for many opportunities for infill development at the current time given the zoning standards and the lack of new open space for development. To create more opportunities for redevelopment, Elsmere may want to consider significant changes to its zoning code to amend parking standards and increase density in select areas of town, providing incentives to redevelop those properties. Elsmere has expressed its desire to pursue opportunities to redevelop underutilized land throughout town, including current parkland, thereby providing new opportunities to build additional housing.

## Affordable Housing and Housing Rehabilitation

Two out of three households in Elsmere pay more than 30 percent of their annual incomes on housing costs, which is the amount considered to be “affordable.” The 2014–2018 American Community Survey provides estimates for the percentage of a renter’s income that goes toward their housing costs. The estimates for renters indicate that gross rents exceeded 30 percent of annual household income for a much higher proportion (65.3%) of Elsmere’s renters, compared to that of New Castle County (40.2%), Delaware (49.5%), or the United States (51.1%). Interestingly, the median monthly gross rents in Elsmere are lower than the others. Median monthly gross rent is \$1,009 in the town, compared to \$1,104 in New Castle County and \$1,076 statewide. This is likely due to the income of Elsmere renters being lower than the renters elsewhere in the county and state as well as higher levels of poverty and unemployment than surrounding areas and the rest of the state.

**Table 24. Median Gross Rent as Percent of Household Income, 2018**

	Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware
<b>15% or Less</b>	6.1%	13.7%	13.3%
<b>15–19.9%</b>	16.3%	14.5%	14.0%
<b>20–24.9%</b>	8.8%	12.2%	11.9%
<b>25–29.9%</b>	4.8%	11.8%	11.5%
<b>30–34.9%</b>	11.4%	8.6%	9.4%
<b>35% or More</b>	52.6%	39.3%	40.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Selected Housing Characteristics, Table DP04.

As shown in Table 24, Elsmere’s median housing value is much lower than that of the county and state. Elsmere’s housing stock is more affordable than the county and the state, and less of its housing stock is made of detached one unit homes while it has more 1 & 2-unit attached housing units.

In today’s housing environment, the quality of affordable housing is always a concern. In 2012 the Elsmere adopted the International Building Code standards to ensure that quality housing construction

is required in town. It is desirable to have houses with a variety of ages, sizes, and characteristics from an affordable housing perspective. It is equally necessary that the housing stock be in adequate and safe condition.

## Position on Housing Growth

Elsmere supports developing new market rate housing, including multifamily and mixed-use housing, and redeveloping existing properties in appropriate locations while working to maintain the current homeownership rate through a variety of means.

## Recommendations

1. Continue to allow for a diverse housing stock in town, recognizing the importance of maintaining a healthy mix of homeownership and rental properties.
2. Review town ordinances, and update as needed, to provide for additional infill development and opportunities to redevelop existing properties to provide market rate housing opportunities.
3. Perform a study of parkland throughout town to identify potentially underutilized town property that may present opportunities to provide new market rate housing.
4. Consider revising the zoning code to allow for increased renovation activity among older homes, potentially adding new housing units to the town in the process, and address aged housing stock that cannot meet current regulations.
5. Continue to grant “reasonable accommodations,” that may include Zoning Ordinance variances and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance waivers, to permit development or redevelopment of housing situations for individuals with disabilities.
6. Support programs offered through community agencies that provide supportive services to senior citizens desiring to “age-in-place” by continuing to reside in their own homes.
7. Continue coordination with the Land Bank to address potential tear-downs and blighted properties.
8. Consider state and county resources for the redevelopment of outdated buildings.

# Historic and Cultural Resources

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## Town History

Delaware has a long history of early colonial exploration along its coastline. The first attempt at permanent colonization occurred when a Swedish expedition to Delaware landed in 1638 and built Fort Christina, which later became a center for fur trading with the Native Americans. A small town, which became Wilmington, gradually developed near the fort. The mills along the Brandywine River and the major port along the Christina River gradually established Wilmington as the dominant city in New Castle County. From 1832 to the Civil War, a steadily increasing number of commercial and industrial undertakings supplemented the manufacturing and shipping that solidified Wilmington's economic importance. Following the nationwide financial panic that occurred at the end of the Civil War, money was subscribed for a succession of railroads and transportation companies. During the latter half of the 1880s, the Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad extended its lines from Philadelphia to an area known as Elsmere Junction.

Prior to the late 1800s, the Elsmere area was a small, rural community largely made up of farmlands and scattered residences. An 1868 map shows several homes as well as a grist mill, sawmill, and schoolhouse. The major road through the area was Dupont Road, used by the Dupont Company to transport black powder to the Christina River for shipment. By 1881 two rail lines and a road that intersected the area were added. The "New Road" (still known by this name) ran east to west from Wilmington to the Greenbank Mill on the Red Clay Creek. The Western Railroad and the Wilmington and Northern Railroad made connections from the north into lines that passed through Wilmington.

Between 1881 and 1893, Elsmere evolved from a rural farm district into a suburb of Wilmington. Significant land development occurred in part through the efforts of real estate promoter Joshua T. Heald, who saw an opportunity to transform this rural farm district close to Elsmere Junction into a Wilmington suburb. Heald promoted cleaner and cheaper living outside of the City of Wilmington with newspaper advertisements enticing buyers with promises of escape from the city, cheaper living, and exemption from city taxes. Heald hoped to attract working-class people to the small building lots that he sold for about \$200 each. Buyers were allowed to choose whether to erect their own homes or employ a contractor. Initially, 15 homes were built, establishing a development that that would be identified as Elsmere. This new suburb was within walking distance of the new railway yards and factories and was only a five-cent fare away from downtown Wilmington.

The close proximity of the railway lines provided inexpensive transportation to city workers and access to supplies and served as a shipping point for new businesses in Elsmere, namely a brickyard and the Wilmington Wheel Company. The introduction of trolley car service furthered Elsmere's development. In 1897 an agreement was reached between the local line and the Wilmington line, which allowed uninterrupted service to run from downtown Wilmington out to what is now Brandywine Springs Park, west of Elsmere. Not only did the trolley line provide transportation to the amusement park for urban dwellers, but also made commuting to downtown jobs feasible for suburban dwellers.

In 1909 the approximately 70 families residing in Elsmere gave their consent to Joseph A. Ranck, Thomas Kane, Penrose S. Foreman, and Albert Wild to incorporate the area into the Town of Elsmere. Between 1910 and 1920, the population doubled from 374 to 620 residents, and Elsmere continued to draw residents from the city. The main portion of this growth comprised white-collar clerks, small retailers, and skilled artisans. In the 1920s, the Delaware State Fair Association bought land and built a new fairgrounds within Elsmere. The grounds, including a racecourse for horses, cars, and motorcycles, were located south of New Road and Wilmington Avenue and west of the previously established streets. This land became the site of the Delaware State Fair from 1917 to 1928 and provided a modern facility with a large parking area and ready access from the nearby trolley line. Agricultural exhibits provided the backbone of the fair, but, in addition to the races, the summer attraction also included horse and dog shows, vaudeville acts, music, and fireworks. After 1928, the State Fair moved to Harrington, but the grandstand and the races remained until 1943 when the property was converted to land for residential housing.

During the next decade, streets were laid to the north and west of the fairgrounds. Most of the new development occurred close to Wilmington Avenue, New Road, and its western extension (now known as Kirkwood Highway). The outlying areas of the town were built by developers from the 1940s through the 1960s. Commercial development continued to expand westward along Kirkwood Highway, and by the 1950s the majority of Elsmere was developed. Subsequently, Elsmere emerged as a traditional town connected to an urban center. The town became a working-class suburb of the city with relatively small residential lots, with the majority of the modest homes having been built between 1940 and 1960.

About half of Elsmere's homes are small cottage- and ranch-style, single-family detached dwellings, mostly clad with brick or siding. The southern side of town also has a large number of brick row-homes and some apartments. Elsmere Manor was built by Daniels, Inc., in 1943 on the former site of the state fairgrounds. From 1946 to 1950, Alfred Vilone built the village bearing his name. In addition to those homes, Mr. Vilone also built the first apartment complex in Elsmere—Parklynn Apartments. Development continued as the Tigani brothers built Elsmere Park in 1950. Rosemont and Elsmere Gardens followed in the 1960s, built by Bordman, Smith, Pullela and Baldini.

Thus, the farms of the Brown, Derrickson, Forman, Hollingsworth, Richardson, Stidham, and Walters families became the Elsmere of today.

## Historic and Cultural Resources Summary

Elsmere is a traditional community that reflects its values and services through unique historical and cultural resources that define the character of the town. Prior to the construction of Kirkwood Highway, the B&O Railroad tracks paved the way for Elsmere to develop its commercial and residential areas. The railroad running through Elsmere initiated the suburban development of the town. Developers promoted the area as one offering inexpensive living and an escape from the expanding urban lifestyle in Wilmington.



Elsmere's historic link to the railroad has been preserved by the Wilmington & Western Railroad attraction in Greenbank Park, one mile west of the town. The park operates as a holiday and weekend excursion adventure, offering trips through the Red Clay Valley on its steam-driven trains. The park also houses Greenbank Mill, a historic museum that showcases a restored commercial gristmill that is symbolic of the water-powered technology that was instrumental in Elsmere's development.

The Fair Grounds was one of the first cultural landmarks in Elsmere and hosted the Delaware State Fair from 1917 to 1928. The main events of the Delaware State Fair included agricultural exhibits, races, horse and dog shows, vaudeville acts, music, and fireworks. Although the State Fair was relocated to Harrington in 1928, the Fair Grounds in Elsmere remained operational until 1943.

Elsmere Town Hall, originally built in 1917 as the Elsmere School, also enhances the town's historic links. By 1930, this building was expanded into a three-story structure, of which two floors were used as classrooms. In addition, the Elsmere School was renamed the Oak Grove Elementary School. By 1954, further expansions of the building created an additional six classrooms. In 1970 this building ceased to house the Oak Grove Elementary School and was recognized as the Elsmere Town Hall. The Elsmere Police Department moved into Town Hall in 1990.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs further strengthened Elsmere's historic image with the opening of a large hospital in 1950, just west of the town. The hospital's primary function is an outpatient treatment facility, with a regional benefits office located on the site. According to the Wilmington VA Medical Center's website, more than 22,000 veterans are treated at this center with over 150,000 outpatient visits.

While Elsmere has a rich and long history, there currently are no national register properties listed within the town. Elsmere supports future efforts to identify and preserve historic properties and will consider pursuing a historic survey of the town with the goal of being nominated as a historic district to the National Register of Historic Places.

## Recommendations

1. Provide an awareness of town history.
2. Provide information on and help to obtain resources about Elsmere's heritage.
3. Work to identify buildings and areas within town that are eligible for historic designations.
4. Consider completing a survey of historic properties and the nomination of a historic district to the National Register of Historic Places.

## Utilities

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This section provides information about the utilities that serve Elsmere residents, including water, wastewater, electricity, natural gas, telecommunications, solid waste management, and stormwater management. These services are essential to town residents and businesses, and their locations are depicted on Map 16.

### Water System

Elsmere is located in an area where water supply is provided by both the Artesian Water Company, Inc. and the City of Wilmington. The Wilmington service area is concentrated in the easternmost part of the town in Silverbrook Gardens, which is adjacent to the southern boundary of Wilmington. As part of Wilmington's water system, this section of Elsmere uses water withdrawn from the Brandywine Creek, which flows via a 4,800-foot-long raceway to the Brandywine Pumping Station. From there, the flow is divided between the Brandywine Filtration Plant and the Porter Filtration Plant, where the water is chemically treated.

The Artesian Water Company, Inc. (AWC) is the largest investor-owned, regulated public water utility in Delaware. AWC provides water to most of the town, excluding the abovementioned section served by the City of Wilmington. Elsmere is part of AWC's regional water system in northern New Castle County, which supplies water through an interconnected system. Elsmere's water source comes from groundwater that flows from well fields located near the areas of New Castle and Hockessin. The treated drinking water is transmitted from the wells to Elsmere through a series of transmission mains ranging from 6 to 16 inches in diameter. The major transmission lines entering Elsmere from AWC's system are located along Kirkwood Highway and Dupont Road (Route 100). AWC's water supply to Elsmere also can be supplemented through a system interconnection with United Water Delaware located at Cleveland and Taft, and between AWC and the City of Wilmington located on Maryland Avenue.

Since there is little vacant land in town, only incremental commercial and residential growth is expected in Elsmere. And with modern plumbing codes requiring conservation fixtures in new construction and redevelopment, little or no increase in water demand is likely during the projected time period that ends in 2020. Therefore, the water systems operating in Elsmere have sufficient capacity to meet current and future demands.

### Supply—Source Water

Most of Elsmere's drinking water is supplied by the Artesian Water Company, Inc. public water system. According to the Artesian Water Company Water Quality Report for 2019, AWC's public water system is supplied with water from 54 wells located throughout northern New Castle County. These wells are in the Columbia, Potomac, Cockeysville Marble, and Mount Laurel formations. The groundwater wells use the natural filtering capability of the aquifer to remove harmful bacteria and other substances from the water. These wells are located in confined aquifers that provide additional protection from surface-borne contaminants. AWC's treatment stations provide water that meets or exceeds all Environmental

Protection Agency (EPA) and state Division of Public Health water-quality parameters. Regular testing also helps to ensure high quality.

#### Wellhead Protection Areas

There are no wellhead protection areas in Elsmere. The closest wellhead protection area is between Wilmington Manor and the City of New Castle.

#### Excellent Groundwater Recharge Potential Areas

There are no excellent groundwater recharge potential areas in Elsmere. The closest is to the north of Newport.

#### Protecting Source Water

The federal Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996 mandated that all states develop a Source Water Assessment Program (SWAP) to protect public drinking water sources. The basic components of the program include:

- Delineation of the boundaries of land areas most important to public water sources.
- Identification of the potential sources of contamination within those boundaries.
- Assessment of the susceptibility of the public water source to these contaminants.

Delaware's SWAP standards are in Title 7, Chapter 60, Subtitle VI, Section 6082 of the Delaware Code. The program is coordinated by DNREC and the Delaware Division of Public Health. Artesian Water Company, Inc. has completed many recent assessments but none in the immediate area near Elsmere; the reports can be found at <http://delawaresourcewater.org/assessments/>.

Elsmere has not adopted a source water protection ordinance due to the fact that the town has no excellent groundwater recharge potential areas and no wellhead protection areas near its borders.

### Water-Quality Assessment and Water Storage

The Town of Elsmere does not own or operate its own public water system. The town is primarily served by the Artesian Water Company, Inc. with a small portion being serviced by the City of Wilmington. AWC has no public wells located within the municipal boundaries of the town.

Water quality is monitored constantly. The AWC's 2019 Water Quality Report (available at <http://www.artesianwater.com/WQR/AWC2019.pdf>) indicates that Elsmere's drinking water is of good quality. This report (for the period January to December 2018) found that the company's drinking water "...meets or exceeds all Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and State Division of Public Health water quality parameters." Artesian has no public wells and no water storage facilities located within the town boundaries.

## Wastewater System

New Castle County currently provides sanitary sewer service for all customers in Elsmere. At this time, there is no inter-municipal sewer agreement between New Castle County and Elsmere; consequently, no set sewer capacity is reserved for the town. The residents of Elsmere pay an additional property tax to New Castle County in addition to what they pay to the Town of Elsmere. The charges for sewer service are paid by each property owner to New Castle County. The sanitary sewer capacity presently available is largely due to New Castle County Improvement Project 9201 – Little Mill Creek Interceptor Relief, for which funding was originally provided in 1992. New Castle County recently completed a pipe re-lining project on the north side of the town, but no other recent improvements have occurred and none are planned for the near future. As with water supply, wastewater flows are not expected to significantly increase within the next ten years.

## Stormwater Management Under MS4

Stormwater runoff is the rain and snow that do not soak into the soil and “runs” over paved streets, parking lots, and rooftops. The runoff gathers trash, chemicals, oils, and dirt that pollute rivers, lakes, bays, and oceans. If left untreated, polluted stormwater can make its way into Delaware’s waterways.

A Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) is a publicly owned conveyance or system of conveyances (i.e., ditches, curbs, catch basins, underground pipes, etc.) designed to collect and convey stormwater that discharges to surface waters such as rivers. In Elsmere, the stormwater system is separate from the sewage collection system. Most of the town’s stormwater runoff is collected by a combination of street gutters, culverts, storm sewers, and catch basins. Runoff is conveyed through pipes (the MS4) to the Christina River, flowing into the Delaware Bay.

The nationwide MS4 program is overseen by the EPA and regulated under the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System. This program was first introduced in 1990, addressing stormwater runoff with Phase I permits in cities and municipalities of highly urbanized areas. Phase II permits were introduced in 1999, addressing smaller communities in Census-designated Urbanized Areas and some non-governmental stormwater systems. DNREC is the permitting agency for the MS4 program in Delaware.

Elsmere is a co-permittee on a Phase I individual permit with New Castle County and DelDOT. Other co-permittees on the Phase I permit include Bellefonte, Newport, Delaware City, New Castle, and Wilmington. For towns, counties, and agencies such as Elsmere holding an MS4 permit, the management of stormwater under an MS4 permit includes various strategies, such as:

- Development and implementation of programs to control stormwater runoff.
- Implementation and maintenance of best management practices (BMPs).
- Creation of a Pollution Minimization Plan.
- Permittees satisfying the six Minimum Control Measures.

As part of the MS4 permit agreement, DelDOT owns, maintains, and operates best management practices (BMPs) within the MS4 jurisdiction, while New Castle County oversees maintenance of the BMPs within the unincorporated boundaries of New Castle County. Incorporated towns, such as Elsmere, maintain the MS4 and oversee maintenance of BMPs within their respective jurisdictions.

As part of the planning for future infrastructure upgrades, Elsmere should consider projects that map stormwater infrastructure and/or conduct preliminary designs for improving the inadequate stormwater facilities highlighted in this document. Grants are available from DNREC that can assist the town to address the stormwater concerns. Please visit the following website:  
<https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/environmental-finance/surface-water-planning-grants/>

## Electricity and Natural Gas

Electricity and natural gas service in Elsmere is provided by Delmarva Power. Elsmere is not involved in the billing or the servicing of customers.

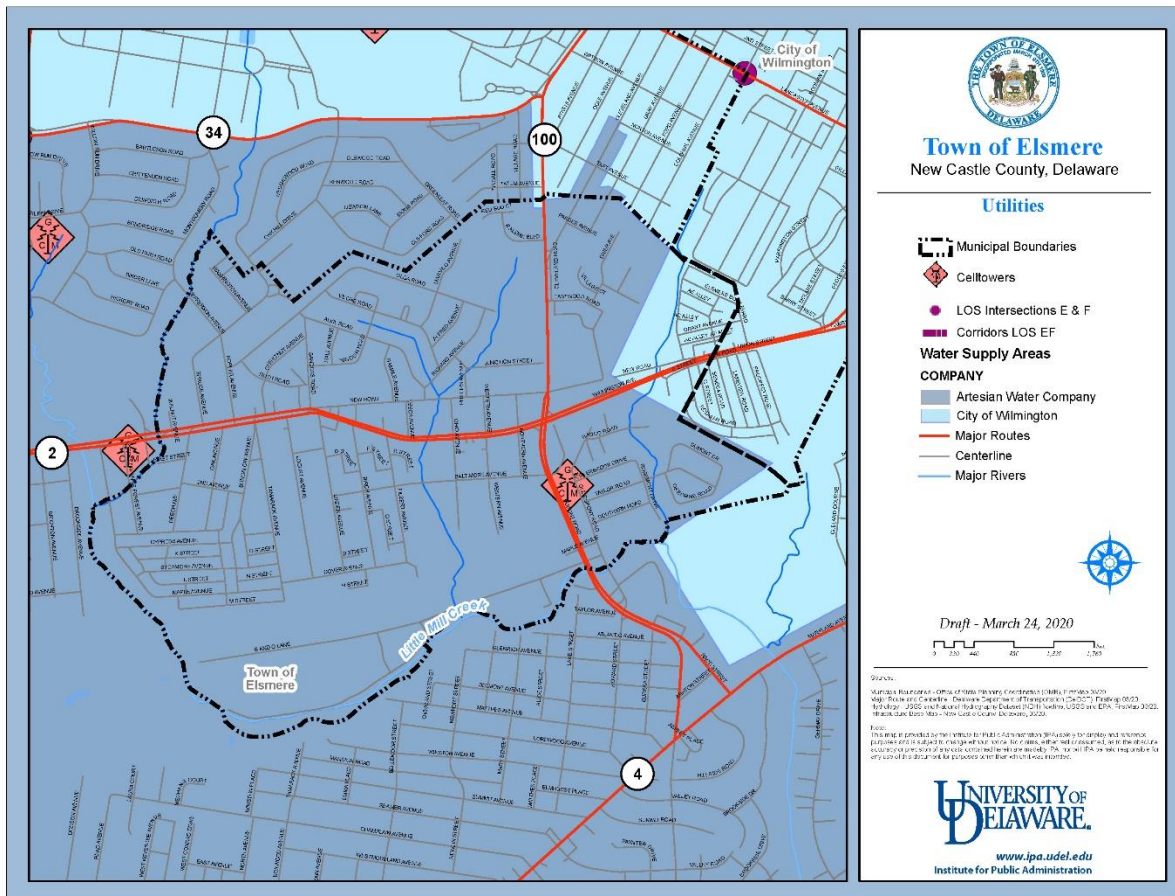
## Telecommunications

Elsmere has signed franchise agreements with Comcast Cable and Verizon for cable television service for Elsmere residents and businesses. The town's franchise was renewed with Comcast in 2010 and was signed with Verizon for the first time in April 2009. Verizon has installed fiber-optic lines within the town. Elsmere does not require internet providers or cell service providers to have a franchise agreement, and several other providers offer telephone and internet services.

## Solid Waste Management

Elsmere recently contracted with a new private company, Republic Services, Inc., for weekly residential collection services for trash, yard waste, and recycling. Prior to hiring Republic Services, the town had contracted with Waste Management, Inc. for many years. For heavy trash pick-up, removal can be arranged for a fee through Republic Services. Republic Services provides containers for trash and yard waste. The Town of Elsmere provides containers for curbside single-stream recycling.

## Map 17. Utilities



## Recommendations

1. Ensure a high-quality level of municipal services.
2. Maintain a supply of safe, reliable drinking water for all town residents.
3. Manage all stormwater with consideration of both public and environmental safety.
4. Regularly monitor the level of service provided by private utility companies and vendors.
5. Collaborate with other levels of government to enhance services provided to town residents.



# Implementation and Intergovernmental Coordination

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## Post-Plan Requirements

This section summarizes the provisions of the Delaware Code that must be complied with following adoption of this 2021 Comprehensive Plan.

- Section 702(c) – Adopt comprehensive rezoning within 18 months after adopting this plan.
- Section 702(e) – Within five years following adoption, review this plan to determine if its provisions are still relevant.
- Section 702(f) – Submit annual reports to OSPC each July 1.

## Vision for the Town’s Future

“The Town of Elsmere will work to maintain its small town atmosphere while adapting to changes in the surrounding region. Elsmere plans to do this by maintaining a connection to its roots as a close-knit community of just one square mile, while continuing to make changes that will be beneficial to the town’s character and economic strength in the future.”

## Goals of the Plan

1. Strive to become a destination for New Castle County residents seeking a safe, affordable, and walkable community.
2. Maintain the character of the town’s built environment while allowing for expansion, growth, and change in clearly identified appropriate locations.
3. Improve the safety, aesthetics, and character of Kirkwood Highway and recognize its connection to the local community as Elsmere’s “Main Street,” with the long-term goal of being part of the “Delaware On Main” program.
4. Maintain and enhance the town’s neighborhoods and small businesses by focusing on their unique characteristics.
5. Preserve areas with historic, cultural, scenic, environmental, and recreational value as important resources for a small, densely populated municipality.

## Recommendations

This section summarizes the recommended actions that Elsmere should consider to achieve the goals or solve the problems identified in this 2021 Comprehensive Plan. Some of these can be accomplished entirely by the Town of Elsmere, while others involve working with, seeking assistance from, or relying on neighboring jurisdictions, the county, or state.

## Community Character and Design Recommendations

1. Encourage the redevelopment of underutilized locations for their highest and best use for the community.
2. Ensure that new developments are designed to complement the surrounding neighborhoods, commercial areas, and the environment.
3. Continue to make investments in the construction of bicycle and pedestrian pathways and improve bicycle and pedestrian connectivity throughout the town.
4. Encourage “complete street” policies for Kirkwood Highway, with a focus on improving the safety of the corridor for walking, bicycling, shopping, and dining.
5. Pursue the expansion and improvement of the greenway trail to ensure that Elsmere has a focus on remaining a healthy, active, and livable community..

## Land-Use and Annexation Recommendations

1. Review zoning code and subdivision code in order to direct development so that it is consistent with the town’s vision and goals.
2. Consider removing or replacing the Highway Development Zone.
3. Promote mixed-use zoning and development along the Kirkwood Highway corridor and other select areas of town.
4. Initiate an annexation strategy that includes consideration for areas identified in the Annexation Area Map.
5. Develop a corridor study along Kirkwood Highway in cooperation with WILMAPCO and DeIDOT to identify opportunities to both improve pedestrian safety and encourage a more walkable and attractive environment.
6. Ensure that pedestrian safety is a priority throughout town when making land-use decisions, especially on Kirkwood Highway and Route 100 and for children walking to and from schools.
7. Review the town’s park space to evaluate each park for its current usage and design prior to considering the replacement of some park space with infill residential development in locations deemed to be suitable.
8. Investigate improvements to the town’s signage and wayfinding system to better direct visitors to key destinations in town.
9. Investigate appropriate code amendments to address aged housing stock that cannot meet current regulations, including flag lots.

10. Continue coordinating with the Land Bank to address potential tear-downs and blighted properties.
11. Consider state and county resources for the redevelopment of outdated buildings.
12. Continue to pursue Main Street recognition through Delaware's Main Street affiliate program "Delaware on Main" now managed by the Division of Small Business.

### Transportation Recommendations

1. Continue to work with DelDOT and other government agencies to identify additional funding to repair roads throughout the town, especially those on roads running north to south between Kirkwood Highway and the railroad tracks where improvements are badly needed due to a lack of stormwater infrastructure.
2. Consider developing a strategic plan to address the ongoing maintenance issues and concerns for streets throughout town, especially roads that experience a high volume of truck traffic.
3. Continue to work with DelDOT to control traffic speeds along Kirkwood Highway through traffic-calming measures and to ensure that road design does not encourage excessive speeds.
4. Develop a corridor study along Kirkwood Highway in cooperation with WILMAPCO and DelDOT to identify opportunities to improve pedestrian safety and encourage a more walkable and attractive environment.
5. Plan to update all town sidewalks to ADA standards as funding becomes available and continue to support the town's sidewalk inspection program.
6. Build enhanced working relations with WILMAPCO and become part of its Transportation Improvement Program.
7. Work with DART First State to maintain and upgrade the bus stops and shelters along Kirkwood Highway and ensure that riders who frequent those bus stops can safely gather at those locations.
8. Encourage forms of transportation other than single-user automobiles such as bicycling, walking, carpooling, and taking the bus to help take more cars off the roads.
9. Join the "Vision Zero" network or create a town vision for "Vision Zero in Elsmere" to place more emphasis and focus on pedestrian and bicycle safety in the area. (Vision Zero is a multi-national road traffic safety project that aims to achieve a roadway system with no fatalities or serious injuries involving road traffic.)
10. Pursue opportunities to expand the greenway trail that currently extends from Maple Avenue Park to Fairgrounds Park to the Bark Park through a boardwalk-style walking and bicycling path.
11. Continue to monitor activities of CSX and the site of the former Boxwood Road GM plant.

12. Ensure that town residents and businesses are given the utmost consideration when it comes to advance notice of transportation improvement efforts.

## Natural Resources and Environment Recommendations

1. Seek assistance in addressing the issues related to the lack of storm drains along many streets south of Kirkwood Highway, which leads to excessive runoff and flooding on a more frequent basis than in the past.
2. Continue working with the City of Wilmington to resolve flooding issues and raw sewage overflows relating to the CSO 27 project.
3. Assist residents who ask to be taken off the FEMA floodplain map.
4. Utilize FEMA and DEMA assistance for infrastructure improvements.
5. Work to obtain compliance with state-mandated levels of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs).
6. Collect parcel data to track flooding from storm events throughout town, and consider implementing green infrastructure and other best management practices in locations that can help alleviate these localized flooding events.
7. Consider developing strategies to reduce vehicle emissions through improving multi-modal infrastructure, incorporating electric vehicles/ infrastructure, and promoting renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, or geothermal.
8. Promote Elsmere as a Tree Friendly Community with a focus on protecting and increasing the town's tree canopy and continue to pursue programs and opportunities to maintain and support the town's tree canopy.
9. Elsmere should work with DelDOT and DNREC to continue monitoring noise and air pollution along the CSX Railroad area, Kirkwood Highway, Dupont Road, and other areas of town, especially as rail traffic increases near the former Boxwood Road industrial area.
10. Keep the emergency response plan current.

## Economic Development Recommendations

1. Develop a business district plan for the town that centers along Kirkwood Highway and industrial zoned areas surrounding the intersection of Route 100 and Kirkwood Highway.
2. Address the design of Kirkwood Highway to make the commercial corridor more inviting to pedestrians and more attractive to businesses and potential customers.
3. Put together a market area study to identify potential opportunities for business expansion, new developments, and new business opportunities for the town.

4. Review the town's sign regulations to improve the aesthetics of town business storefronts, particularly along Kirkwood Highway.
5. Continue to support the industrial areas of Elsmere by seeking their input and valuing their importance as a critical employment base for the community.
6. Make better use of the town's open space and parks with the goal of providing for current residents, attracting new residents, and supporting local businesses.

### Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities Recommendations

1. Review the town's park space to evaluate each park for its current usage and design prior to considering the replacement of some park space with infill residential development in locations deemed to be suitable.
2. Consider hiring a consultant to evaluate the current usage and design of each park in town and within the region to determine how effectively the park system is meeting the recreational needs and priorities of the town's residents.
3. Promote Elsmere's access to local and regional trail systems and identify new opportunities to expand and enhance the town's trail system, such as a new trail connection between Fairgrounds Park and the Bark Park and improving the lighting on trails.
4. Look for opportunities to increase the effectiveness of the town's park system by expanding the town's "pocket parks" throughout town.
5. Consider hosting an annual "Library Day" event to increase the use of the New Castle County Public Library at Elsmere and promote it as a valuable resource for town residents.
6. Consider evaluating local events and activities organized by the town to ensure they are directed toward the town's residents and meeting their needs and desires.

### Housing Recommendations

1. Continue to allow for a diverse housing stock in town, recognizing the importance of maintaining a healthy mix of homeownership and rental properties.
2. Review town ordinances, and update as needed, to provide for additional infill development and opportunities to redevelop existing properties to provide market rate housing opportunities.
3. Perform a study of parkland throughout town to identify potentially underutilized town property that may present opportunities to provide new market rate housing.
4. Consider revising the zoning code to allow for increased renovation activity among older homes, potentially adding new housing units to the town in the process, and address aged housing stock that cannot meet current regulations.

5. Continue to grant “reasonable accommodations,” that may include Zoning Ordinance variances and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance waivers, to permit development or redevelopment of housing situations for individuals with disabilities.
6. Support programs offered through community agencies that provide supportive services to senior citizens desiring to “age-in-place” by continuing to reside in their own homes.
7. Continue coordination with the Land Bank to address potential tear-downs and blighted properties.
8. Consider state and county resources for the redevelopment of outdated buildings.

### Historic and Cultural Resources Recommendations

1. Provide an awareness of town history.
2. Provide information on and help to obtain resources about Elsmere’s heritage.
3. Work to identify buildings and areas within town that are eligible for historic designations.
4. Consider completing a survey of historic properties and the nomination of a historic district to the National Register of Historic Places.

### Utilities Recommendations

1. Ensure a high-quality level of municipal services.
2. Maintain a supply of safe, reliable drinking water for all town residents.
3. Manage all stormwater with consideration of both public and environmental safety.
4. Regularly monitor the level of service provided by private utility companies and vendors.
5. Collaborate with other levels of government to enhance services provided to town residents.

### Continuing Intergovernmental Coordination

An important aspect of continuing intergovernmental coordination is maintaining awareness of, and respecting, the plans and policies of other jurisdictions. This 2021 Comprehensive Plan recommends that the plans and policies of the state, county, and the other jurisdictions in the surrounding area be factored into land-use decisions.

Intergovernmental coordination also means working with other governmental departments and agencies, and there are a number of ways to maintain ongoing communications. This 2021 Comprehensive Plan recommends that Elsmere consider the following.

1. Notify affected jurisdictions and agencies of proposed development-related actions in Elsmere.
2. Request information on, and opportunities to provide input into, proposed actions of governments and quasi-governments that affect Elsmere.



3. Keep the town website updated with Town Council and Planning Commission agendas for others to access.
4. Request comment from affected jurisdictions and agencies on proposed development-related actions in Elsmere that are of interest to them.
5. Attend meetings of other agencies and jurisdictions when necessary.
6. Ask other agencies and jurisdictions to send agendas and request the opportunity to review and comment on proposed actions in and nearby Elsmere.

## Appendix A. Demographic Profile

### Demographic Characteristics

According to data from the U.S. Census 2010 and estimates from the American Community Survey 2012–2016, Elsmere’s population became more diverse between 1990 and 2010, going from a town with a white population of 92.1 percent in 1990 to almost 70 percent in 2010. Elsmere also increased its Hispanic community from 3.5 percent in 1990 to almost 24 percent in 2010. Elsmere has more high school graduates compared to New Castle County and the state, though it has slightly fewer college graduates than New Castle County and Delaware, respectively.

### Households

Table 25 summarizes household characteristics for Elsmere, New Castle County, and Delaware. A household is any occupied housing unit comprising all of those people living in the unit. Elsmere has a slightly lower household size to the county and state.

**Table 25. Household and Family Characteristics, 2018**

	Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware
<b>Total Population</b>	6,049	555,133	949,495
<b>Total Households</b>	2,280	203,855	337,765
<b>Average Household Size</b>	2.58	2.64	2.65

Source: U.S. Census 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1101.

### Racial Composition, Hispanic or Latino Origin

Tables 26 and 27 compare Elsmere’s 2010 racial characteristics to those of the state and county and summarize Elsmere’s racial composition from 1990 to 2010. Between 1990 and 2010, demographic changes in Elsmere resulted in a higher percentage of African Americans and other races. Table 28 indicates that Elsmere’s Hispanic or Latino population is increasing generously.

**Table 26. Racial Composition of Elsmere, New Castle County, and State, 2018**

	Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware
<b>White (reporting only one race)</b>	58.4%	58.1%	62.7%
<b>Black or African American (one race)</b>	13.0%	24.3%	21.6%
<b>Other (reporting two or more races)</b>	28.6%	17.6%	15.7%
<b>Totals</b>	6,049	555,133	949,495

Source: U.S. Census 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05.

**Table 27. Elsmere's Racial Composition, 1990–2010**

	1990	2000	2010
<b>White (reporting one race)</b>	92.1%	82.4%	69.6%
<b>Black or African American (reporting one race)</b>	5.5%	9.4%	13.1%
<b>Other (reporting two or more races)</b>	2.4%	8.1%	17.3%
<b>Totals</b>	5,935	5,800	6,131

Source: U.S. Census 1990, 2000, 2010 Summary File 1.

**Table 28. Elsmere Population Reporting Hispanic or Latino Origin, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2018**

	1990	2000	2010	2018
<b>Hispanic or Latino (of any race)</b>	3.5%	12.1%	23.8%	26.6%
<b>Not Hispanic or Latino</b>	96.5%	87.9%	76.2%	73.4%
<b>Total Population</b>	5,935	5,800	6,131	6,049

Source: U.S. Census 1990, 2000, and 2010 Summary File 1, U.S. Census 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05.

### Age Distribution

As Table 29 indicates, Elsmere's population is similar compared to New Castle County and Delaware. Elsmere has a slightly larger population of residents under the age of 5 compared to the New Castle County and the state of Delaware.

**Table 29. Age Distribution, 2018**

	Elsmere		New Castle County		Delaware	
<b>Under 5 Years</b>	221	3.7%	32,547	5.9%	54,854	5.8%
<b>5 to 19 Years</b>	1,245	20.7%	104,538	18.8%	173,640	18.3%
<b>20 to 59 Years</b>	3,437	56.8%	302,519	54.5%	492,246	51.8%
<b>60 Years &amp; Over</b>	1,146	18.9%	115,169	20.8%	228,755	24.1%
<b>Totals</b>	6,049		555,133		949,495	
<b>Median Age</b>	34.7		38.1		40.2	

Source: U.S. Census 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05.

Tables 30 and Figure 10 show that age distribution in Elsmere changed slightly from 2010 to 2018, with a larger population of the town that is 60 years and over. The percentage of children under the age of five decreased the most, while the percentage of children between the ages of 5–19 increased slightly, and the population 20 to 29 years stayed consistent.

**Table 30. Elsmere Age Distribution Change, 2010 to 2018**

	2010		2018		Change	
<b>Under 5 Years</b>	465	7.6%	221	3.7%	-244	-3.9%
<b>5 to 19 Years</b>	1,196	19.5%	1,245	20.7%	+49	+1.2%
<b>20 to 59 Years</b>	3,493	56.9%	3,437	56.8%	-56	-0.1%
<b>60 Years and Over</b>	977	16%	1,146	18.9%	+169	+2.9%
<b>Totals</b>	6,131		6,049		-82	

Source: U.S. Census 2010, Summary File 1, U.S. Census 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05.

## Education

Table 31 compares Elsmere’s educational attainment for the population aged 25 years or over with that of the county and state. As the table shows, Elsmere has a higher percentage of high school graduates than both New Castle County and Delaware. Elsmere has a slightly lower rate of college graduates with an associate’s degree or bachelor’s degree than New Castle County and the state.

**Table 31. Educational Attainment for Population Over 25, 2018**

	Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware
<b>Not High School (HS) Graduates</b>	19.3%	8.6%	10.3%
<b>Graduated HS, No Degree</b>	52.6%	48.6%	50.6%
<b>Associate's Degree</b>	7.8%	7.0%	7.8%
<b>Bachelor's Degree or Greater</b>	20.3%	35.9%	31.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

## Appendix B. Preliminary Land Use Service (PLUS) Comments and Intergovernmental Responses

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*PDF copies of these letters to be added*