

## **Municipal Comprehensive Land Use Plan Annual Report**

**Name of Municipality:** Town of Smyrna

**Date of Plan Certification:** February 4, 2013 **Date of Report:** June 2, 2017

In accordance with 22 Del. C. §702 (g) Municipalities shall provide to the Office of State Planning Coordination a report describing implementation of their comprehensive plan and identifying development issues, trends\* or conditions since the plan was last adopted or amended. The report shall be due annually no later than July 1.

\*Please note that the development trends data is provided twice to further supplement this requirement. Please contact the Office of State Planning Coordination with questions regarding development trends or this annual report.

1. Please review the recommendations, goals and implementation items within your comprehensive plan and Please indicate which items are complete, underway, or not yet started. Also please include any other comments you may wish to add.

The 2012 Comprehensive Plan details five “Issues and Goals” in the introduction to Chapter 3, THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

The first issue cited is a lack of new employment opportunities and the need to promote Smyrna to prospective new employers. Implementation of programs that address this issue is underway.

In August of 2016, the Town of Smyrna was designated as a Downtown Development District. The town doubled the size of its district in May 2017. This designation has incentivized the re-development or expansion of no less than four commercial buildings and one residential building.

Contracted marketing and business recruitment services have been continued through the 2016-17 reporting year. The 2014-15 branding initiative provided a launching point for place-making and wayfinding programs in the current fiscal year. Vacant commercial properties have been enhanced through the use of window “clings” with the Smyrna logo and messages such as “imagine your business *here*”. Wayfinding signage designs have been approved and funding is being sought.

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This multi-faceted marketing program is designed to make the Town of Smyrna a destination for dining, entertainment and shopping. It is complimented by the Smyrna at Night events. This widely advertised event drew more than 4,000 visitors in June 2016. More are expected in June 2017. And the “buzz” is kept alive by way of semi-annual town sponsored business development events at the Smyrna Opera House.

The second issue cited was the need for the preservation of historic buildings. Implementation of programs that support this goal is also currently under way.

The establishment of a Historic Overlay District, by way of ordinance, requires that exterior improvements to properties in this district be approved by the Historic District Review Board (HDRB). During period January 2016 through May 2017 (inclusive), forty-six Building Permit applications were reviewed and approved by this group. The preservation of historic standards of construction (materials of construction, color, ornamental elements, design of windows and/or shutters) was often a condition of approval.

The Historic District Review Board has also drafted informational material that may be used as a pro-active measure to ensure applicants consider historic standards before an application is submitted.

A significant historic structure on a “gateway” entrance to the town was saved from demolition by neglect in the last year. It was purchased at Sheriff’s Sale in 2015 by the Slum Clearance and Redevelopment Authority (RDA). Ownership was subsequently conveyed by way of a conditional sale in June 2016. The conditions included a significant investment in historically accurate renovations. The renovations were approved by the HDRB in August 2016. More than 50% of the exterior renovations were completed by April 2017 and the buyer was given a clear title to the property. It is expected that the building will be an operating business and social reception facility by the Fall of 2017.

The RDA’s accomplishments cited in the Comprehensive Plan report of July 2017 included ten façade improvement grants and the financing of improvements to three additional historic downtown properties.

The façade grant program continues to match private investment in exterior renovations. It is being expanded to be more pro-active, in a targeted area. Re-payment to the RDA for financed improvements continues on schedule. This authority has expanded its scope to include the financing of a small business loan that will re-launch a business in one of these properties. The establishment of this loan program required the creation of forms and a review process. The first loan was approved in May 2017.

The third issue cited is the need for annexation – so that development on the town’s periphery may be better controlled and so that economic opportunities in town may be maximized. Since the last certification, there have been sixteen annexations.

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During the 2016-17 reporting year, the Department of Transportation traveler Rest Stop was annexed into the Town of Smyrna. This allowed for the extension of critical infrastructure. Several properties along the east side of DuPont Boulevard, north of Duck Creek, may now be served.

The business park in this area, cited in the last report, has not yet been developed. The prospect of development has been greatly enhanced by this extension of critical services, though.

The fourth issue cited is that of the need for the Town of Smyrna to be an active and informed participant in the planning activities of surrounding jurisdictions. The achievement of this goal requires on-going effort to be engaged with “partners” as the planning landscape changes.

The Planning and Zoning Manager has been engaged with the Dover Kent MPO in the capacity of a representative to the Technical Advisory Committee and the Regional Bike Plan Committee. The Dover Kent MPO Bike Project Ratings were shared with the Planning & Zoning Commission in February 2017. The MPO Executive Director was a guest speaker at the May 2017 Planning & Zoning Commission meeting.

Similarly, proposed changes to DART bus routes were shared and representatives spoke at the February 2017 Planning and Zoning Commission meeting.

Developing an understanding of shared community and watershed interests has been at the heart of recent efforts to partner with the neighboring Town of Clayton. Publication of the Notice of Intent for the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control to issue a General Permit regulating discharges into surface waters is imminent. This precedes the need for compliance with the EPA Phase II NPDES program relating to Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4's). The mapping of each respective system is currently underway. The end result, however, will be a better understanding of connections and the impact that development in one jurisdiction will have upon the other.

Kent County is currently engaged in its 2018 Comprehensive Plan update. Members of our planning team are aware of the process and some have participated in the on-line surveys promoted by the County Planning Department.

The fifth issue cited is the need for the strategic extension of critical infrastructure. This activity is currently underway.

As detailed above, utilities on the east side of Dupont Boulevard are extended through the Del DOT Rest Stop. Utilities have been extended to the trailer park that is north of Duck Creek and west of DuPont Boulevard. Services on the west side of DuPont Boulevard, along Joe Goldsborough Road and north to the Route 1 interchange will be developer-driven.

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The establishment of a Traffic Improvement District (TID) in this particular area has been explored. Because the entire area is within the corporate limits of the Town of Smyrna, this approach will not be limited to the options on Brenford Road (half in-town, half in-county) on the south side of town. The Site Plans for this northerly area (Duck Creek Road, Joe Goldsborough Road) have expired, though. Implementation of a TID may be included in a Comprehensive Plan update. There is no known date for the revision of expired Site Plans.

Finally, there is consideration of an exploratory drinking water well to meet demand in the southern part of Smyrna's corporate limits. Certain subdivisions in this area are currently serviced by Tidewater Utilities, through an agreement in 2004.

2. Please highlight any significant accomplishments development issues, trends or conditions since the plan was last adopted or amended that may either have enhanced or hindered the implementation of your plan. These accomplishments may be used in the annual report to the Governor.

The designation of Smyrna as a Downtown Development District municipality in August 2016 and approval of the boundary change request in May 2017 is a significant accomplishment with respect to the economic development needs cited as the top Issue in the 2012 Comprehensive Plan Update. These acts add momentum to the movement that resulted from the implementation of several local incentive (tax abatements and fee reductions) programs.

It is anticipated that the vacant industrial property at the intersection of Glenwood Avenue and Smyrna Clayton Boulevard (formerly Harris Manufacturing and Metal Masters) will petition for annexation in the next year. The proposed use of this facility would be consistent with the Future Land Use Plan – an Employment Center. The area would also be contiguous to and eligible for inclusion in the Downtown Development District.

Another accomplishment was the adoption, by ordinance, of physical and aesthetic standards in the area closest to DuPont Boulevard. These areas are known as the North and South Corridor Zones. The intent to re-zoning, from Highway Commercial to the new zones, will be reflected in a future Comprehensive Plan Update.

3. Are there any planning issues that the municipality is currently facing Do you anticipate any comprehensive plan changes for which the Office of State Planning Coordination may be able to offer technical assistance? If yes, please describe below.

The Growth and Annexation Plan section within the 2012 Update to Smyrna's Comprehensive Plan (page 36) refers to the annexation of nine parcels within the unincorporated enclave of Spruance City. The failure of septic systems within this community continues to drive interest, by individual owners, to annex into the Town of Smyrna. Not all parcels are contiguous to the town, though.

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In addition to this, the need to design both water and waste water systems that ensure reliability and quality (looped drinking water systems) and geophysical conditions (gravity, rather than force main waste water systems) is an intrinsic aspect of planning. Engineering design for a community that does not present an opportunity for cost recovery is not acceptable financial planning, though.

The USDA and DNREC have been presented with similar scenarios in unincorporated communities in Sussex County. Morningside Village, near Bridgeville, is an example. The Department of Justice Community Ombudsman has advocated for relief, on behalf of low income home owners.

A planning grant for the design of infrastructure that would serve Spruance City would be welcome assistance. It will enable the town to be proactive with respect to annexation of parcels. It will also serve the needs of citizens of modest means.

The 2012 Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map shows limits of annexation that exclude Spruance City. State funded assistance for engineering design may prompt the re-consideration of these limits – by the Planning & Zoning Commission and the Town Council.

4. Please help update our mailing list by supplying the following information:

Mayor: John L. Embert III e-mail address: Jembert@smyrna.delaware.gov

City/Town Manager: Gary F. Stulir e-mail address: Gstulir@smyrna.delaware.gov

Planning Director: Wilmer Abbott e-mail address: Wabbott@smyrna.delaware.gov

Town/City Clerk: Valerie Heritage e-mail address: Vheritage@smyrna.delaware.gov

Council/Commission Members:

Peter M. Retzlaff, Vice Mayor; Robert C. Johnson, Council Secretary; Alvin C. Pope; Valerie M. White, William D. Pressley, Sr.; Anthony H. DeFeo

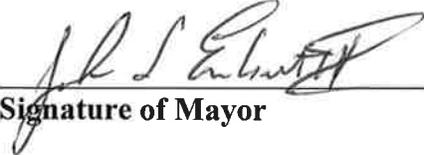
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Planning Commission Members:

Robert P. Newnam, Chairman; James Wolfe; Michael McGrath; Michael Reed, Sharon Wright

*Town of Smyrna 2017 Annual Report, cont'd*

On behalf of the Town of Smyrna, I respectfully submit this comprehensive plan annual report to the Office of State Planning Coordination. The information contained in the report is correct and complete.

  
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Signature of Mayor

  
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Date

John L. Embert III  
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Printed Name of Mayor