

The City of Newark
Conservation Advisory Commission
Annual Report for 2019

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CAC Accomplishments in 2019

This report summarizes the activities of the City of Newark's Conservation Advisory Commission in calendar year 2019. The CAC achieved almost all of its goals for 2019, which is an accomplishment worth noting given that the CAC is comprised of citizen volunteers. It is a testament to the merits of citizen participation in local government.

The CAC addressed six environmental and conservation policy issues in 2019, which include:

1. **Raising citizen awareness** about the importance of conservation in the City by partnering with the Newark Post to write a Conservation Corner article once a month in the Post and by hosting a CAC table at the annual Newark Community Day to poll residents about their conservation concerns and share information about CAC and City conservation activities;
2. **Planting native trees** and shrubs in partnership with other volunteers via the annual Newark Reforestation Day held each November;
3. **Reducing the use of plastic straws and bags** in the city by partnering with high school students from the Newark Charter School to craft recommendations to City Council;
4. **Promoting green energy** production by the City by recommending the installation of rooftop solar arrays on City buildings and expansion of the McKees Solar Park, based on a feasibility study by UD researchers; and by revising of the City's Green Energy Fund's provisions to make the funding more accessible to all city residents;
5. **Promoting clean transportation** in the City by recommending that the City procure electric vehicles and install type 2 electric chargers at City Hall by leveraging DNREC grant funding, as well as by recommending against replacing existing bike lanes with on-street parking along Delaware Avenue; and
6. **Contributing to the writing of the City's first ever Sustainability Plan** thanks to two CAC members volunteering to serve on the sustainability plan steering committee. The CAC also provided input to the Planning Commission's efforts to make the city's building code more sustainable.

Additional details about each of these accomplishments are below. More information can be found in the CAC meeting minutes that are available on the City's website and from the City Secretary's office. The minutes contain detailed descriptions of the presentations to the CAC and of the CAC's discussions.

1. **Raising Citizens' Awareness of Conservation Issues:**
 - (a) At the invitation of the editor of the Newark Post, the CAC started to provide short articles to the Newark Post each month since December 2019 about conservation issues facing the city. The articles are called "Conservation Corner" in the Post. This allows for greater public awareness of conservation policy and the work of the CAC. The topics are selected by the CAC based in part on public input at the annual Newark Community Day.
 - (b) As in previous years, the CAC hosted a booth at the Newark Community Day to highlight its activities, provide information on conservation issues, and collect input from the public. In 2019, the CAC distributed conservation-themed re-usable straws and shopping bags. CAC members also promoted energy efficiency to citizens in a fun and engaging way, and, in turn, heard about citizens' conservation and environmental policy concerns and questions.
2. **Planting Native Trees in Newark:** The second annual Newark Reforestation Day was held in November 2019. This is the result of a CAC recommendation passed by City Council in March

2018. Over 50 volunteers from the city, Newark High School, the University of Delaware, and local organizations, among others, planted native trees and shrubs in the park adjacent to the Newark reservoir. In addition, the volunteers tended to and culled trees (due to deer or weather damage) that were planted in the same location during the first Newark Reforestation Day in 2018.

3. **Reducing the Use of Plastic Straws and Bags in Newark:** In December 2018, the CAC invited the Newark Charter School's marine science club to present their research into proven public policies designed to decrease the use of single-use plastic straws. In early 2019, the CAC recommended that City Council consider one of three policy options: 1) ban the distribution of single-use disposable plastic straws at restaurants and other food service establishments; 2) adopt a city-wide policy whereby restaurants and food establishments only provide straws on request; 3) phase in the ban over a 2 year period while starting with the request-only option. In 2019, City Council chose option 2 and has requested CAC assistance in drafting a resolution to encourage restaurants and other food service establishments to only provide straws by request.
4. **Promoting Green Energy in Newark:** In January 2018 and April 2018, the CAC hosted researchers from the University of Delaware (Dr. John Byrne and Dr. Michael Chajes and their graduate students) to discuss the merits of installing solar energy production capacity on City buildings. Based in part of these presentations and its own policy analysis, the CAC recommended that City Council install solar arrays on select city buildings either via a power purchase agreement with a private investor – solar operator combination or via self-financing. As a result of CAC's recommendation, City Council instructed city staff to look into installing solar on city buildings in partnership with DEMEC, expanding the McKees Solar Park and purchasing an appropriate amount of Renewal Energy Credits to reduce its carbon footprint.
5. **Promoting Green Transportation in Newark:**
 - (a) The CAC recommended to City Council that it procure electric vehicles (EVs) and install EV charging stations at City Hall. Council accepted the CAC recommendation, and the City is in the process of purchasing two EVs and will replace aging gas-powered vehicles with EVs as they are up for renewal whenever practicable. This places Newark among the early adopters among cities that use EVs in their vehicle fleets. The City has applied for the DNREC rebate program which partially funds public EV charging stations.
 - (b) The CAC also urged City Council not to replace the heavily used bike lane along Delaware Avenue with on-street parking. This proposal was under consideration to enhance downtown parking options during the Main St. construction project, but was turned down by City Council, following the CAC's recommendation.
6. **Sustainability Plan and Building Code for the City:**
 - (a) The CAC helped write the new sustainability plan for the city. Sheila Smith had been appointed to the Sustainability Planning Steering Committee in 2017 as the official CAC representative. After she joined the CAC in March 2019, Helga Huntley, who had served on the Steering Committee as a resident, became a de facto second CAC representative on the committee. The Steering Committee provided extensive input and feedback to the consultants from AECOM, who were charged with drafting the Sustainability Plan. Comments from the full CAC on the penultimate draft were also incorporated. The final version was approved by City Council in November 2019. However, the CAC's efforts to improve sustainability in Newark are

only just beginning: The Sustainability Plan intends for the CAC to monitor progress toward the stated goals.

(b) Throughout 2019, the CAC provided input to the Planning Commission’s efforts to reform the City’s Building Code to encourage greater use of LEED building practices. The new code will be sent to City Council by the Planning Commission in early 2020.

CAC Ordinance

Ordinance 77-56 created the CAC in November 1977,

“to advise in the development, management, and protection of its natural resources with appropriate consideration of Newark’s human and economic resources. The Commission shall concern itself with conservation in its broadest sense and may, among its activities: (a) Recommend to City Council a program for ecologically suitable utilization of all wet lands, valley streams, and flood plains and other land areas, the condition and use of which will affect the environmental quality of life in the City of Newark; (b) Shall file an annual report; (c) Maintain informal liaison with the Planning Commission, the Parks and Recreation Department, the City Manager, and the City Council, and cooperate with other public and private bodies organized for similar purposes: (d) In addition to the foregoing, carry out any other duties, tasks, or responsibilities, consistent with the objectives of this Commission assigned to it by resolution of City Council.”

Ordinance 77-56 gave examples of programs that may be considered by the Commission, such as street tree replacement; improved recycling; beautification plans for volunteer groups; guidelines for multiple use of open space and public areas; community gardens; energy conservation; and review of Zoning Code amendments to encourage conservation, and also stated that “the above list shall not, however, limit the program which the Commission may undertake or be requested to undertake.”

CAC Membership

The CAC has 9 members when all positions are filled, serving staggered 3-year terms. The volunteers serving on the CAC as of January 2020 are listed below. George Irvine served as chair throughout 2019. Ajay Prasad served as co-chair through the end of his term on the CAC in March 2019. He was replaced in June 2019 by Bob McDowell. Both Mr. Irvine and Mr. McDowell were re-elected to their respective positions at the January 2020 CAC leadership election. Their terms are for one year per CAC bylaws.

Appointment Type	CAC Member	Term Expiration Date
Mayor’s Appointment	Kismet Hazelwood	3/15/20
Mayor’s Appointment	Beth Chajes	3/15/21
Mayor’s Appointment	Robyn O’Halloran	3/15/22
District 1	Helga Huntley	3/15/22
District 2	John Wessells	3/15/20
District 3	Bob McDowell	3/15/21
District 4	Sheila Smith	3/15/20
District 5	George Irvine (Chair as of May 2015)	3/15/21
District 6	Mary Clare Matsumoto	3/15/22

An updated CAC roster is maintained on the City's web site at www.cityofnewarkde.us/DocumentCenter/Home/View/620 (pdf format). Secretarial services are provided to the CAC by a member of the City Secretary's office; this role was filled by various individuals in 2019, most recently by Nichol Scheld.

CAC Goals for 2020

Throughout the year, the CAC continuously evaluates new environmental conservation ideas. These ideas form the basis for discussions to formulate CAC recommendations to City Council. For 2020, the CAC is planning to:

- Use the City's Sustainability Plan as a guide for CAC activities. In particular, the CAC will recommend that City Council form the Newark Energy Transition (NET) Commission before the summer of 2020, as foreseen in Action A under Goal 1.3 of the Sustainability Plan, so that the City can start working on the energy goals. The CAC would have representation on the Newark Energy Transition Commission to facilitate interaction and coordination between the two advisory bodies.
- Help the city write a resolution to reduce the use of both plastic straws at restaurants and single-use plastic bags by businesses;
- Incentivize the use of electric cars by the City of Newark and by residents to reduce carbon emissions and increase revenue for the City via increased electricity sales;
- Continue to increase the CAC's Outreach & Education efforts via continued presence at Newark's Community Day, monthly articles in the Newark Post, and improved coordination with the City's communications office to launch social media outreach;
- Promote the Better Newark Award, as part of the CAC's outreach efforts, so there is greater citizen interest in conservation behavior.
- Reach out to the Newark Police Department to determine the best way to enforce the City's Anti-Idling ordinance. Idling continues to be a problem in the City.
- Continue to train more of its members on FOIA by coordinating with the City Secretary's Office, following the recommendation of the 2016 Boards and Commissions Review.
- Provide guidance to City Council about how to reform the Green Energy Fund to make the funding more available to all citizens regardless of income level.
- Continue to grow the Newark Reforestation Day for the Fall 2020 by getting more tree donations and involvement of volunteers from corporations and organizations.
- Help the City Parks and Recreation Department re-write the Tree and Shrub ordinance (hold over goal from 2019).
- Educate the public about the importance of riparian buffer zones. (hold over goal from 2019).
- Promote open space in Newark (hold over goal from 2019).