



PREFACE

WHY WE PLAN

*“Who would invest in a corporation if it didn’t have a business plan?
...The same is true for a community if it doesn’t have a plan. Every successful
institution, whether a corporation or a community, needs a plan.”*

Ed McMahon

Charles E. Fraser Chair on Sustainable Development at the Urban Land Institute (1)

At Newark Day, June 2, 2012, the City of Newark held its kickoff for public outreach on the fourth update to the City’s *Comprehensive Development Plan*, a document adopted by the City that puts forward in words, maps, illustrations, and tables the City’s goals, aspirations, policies, and guidelines intended to direct the City’s future land use, as well as its physical, environmental, social and economic development. The *Plan* is a blueprint for the City to achieve a vision, address short- and long-range planning concerns, and provide a rational basis for local land use decisions.

Why are comprehensive plans important? Why do local governments need to plan?

The City of Newark adopted its first formal *Comprehensive Development Plan* in 1969. Since 2001, the State of Delaware also requires municipalities to adopt a comprehensive plan (Title 22, Section 702). We plan first and foremost to create a foundation for decision making, but there are a variety of other reasons:

We plan to establish a shared vision for the future. A comprehensive plan looks at the “big picture” and how it relates to regional trends as well as to the community’s “sense of place.” Planning is an opportunity to take a broad look at issues including housing, economic development, transportation, public infrastructure, and environmental quality.

We plan to think regionally and coordinate local decision making. By adopting a series of goals and strategies that guide the City in its daily decisions, the comprehensive plan provides a basis for coordinating the actions of our City government with other local government agencies. Our city is small; City residents routinely use the services and amenities of surrounding

communities. We also rely on regional cooperation for the protection of the environment and for economic development.

We plan to give guidance to landowners and developers. The *Comprehensive Development Plan* is a statement of how the City intends to use public investment and land development controls. Therefore, the private sector can use the *Plan* to get a sense of where the community’s priorities are and the direction that it is headed in terms of the physical, social, economic, and transportation future.

We plan to establish a sound basis in fact for decisions. The *Comprehensive Development Plan* provides information and analysis that gives policy makers a factual basis for land-use decisions. As a result, the *Comprehensive Development Plan* supports consistency of government action and limits potential for arbitrariness. (2)

We plan to involve a broad array of interests in a discussion about the future and vision for our City. Citizen participation in planning is an essential part of a democratic system of government. The planning process involves outreach and active participation by a variety of stakeholders, including elected and appointed officials, city staff, business and civic leaders, and residents from all areas of the community to engage in a discussion about the community’s major physical, environmental, social, and economic development priorities. The *Plan* seeks to bring these varied interests together in a shared vision for the community they are trying to create. (3)

We plan to build an informed constituency. Planning workshops, meetings, surveys, and public hearings create a two-way dialogue between citizens and city officials regarding a vision of the community and how that vision is to be achieved, establishing a basis for collaborative implementation. By anticipating change and development, the community is in a better position to shape its future and address concerns to preserve its core values. (2)

Having defined what a comprehensive plan is, and why it is important, it is also useful to clarify *what a comprehensive plan is not*. (4)

A Comprehensive Plan is not designed to prevent change. Instead, a comprehensive plan serves as a means to control and direct a community’s continuing evolution. Within the guidelines established by the Comprehensive Plan, elected and appointed officials will have to make decisions for the specific circumstances that will arise. As the needs and wants of the community evolve, the Comprehensive Plan itself and its land use prescriptions may have to be updated. Such changes, however, shall not be taken lightly since the *Plan* reflects the consensus derived from a lengthy process.

A Comprehensive Plan is not a detailed prescription of future development. A good plan is a guide, giving shape and direction to a city’s anticipated future needs, particularly its physical

development. But what, where, and how to build within these guidelines is ultimately a decision of private businesses, individual landlords and investors, and the public through City government.

A Comprehensive Plan is not zoning. Zoning is one of many administrative tools that communities use to implement and refine a long-range plan. A zoning map must, under state law, be consistent with the general land uses indicated in the Comprehensive Plan. However, a Comprehensive Plan encompasses much more: It establishes the community’s vision and goals that define appropriate land uses within the framework of Newark’s physical, social, and economic environment.

This *Comprehensive Development Plan* is an officially adopted, legally required, and legally binding public document designed to establish strategies and guidelines for our community’s growth over the next five to ten years. The *Plan* incorporates, expands, and updates previous planning efforts. It includes a detailed examination of the physical, environmental, demographic, and economic conditions that provide the parameters within which future growth will occur.

Under State of Delaware Law, the *Plan* is the legal planning document upon which our zoning code and zoning map are based. Specifically, *Delaware Code Title 22, §702*, stipulates that, “The comprehensive plan shall be the basis for the development of zoning regulations (...) [and] shall have the force of law and no development shall be permitted except as consistent with the plan.”

“If we understand the Plan as a tool for building and rebuilding our changing city that assists all of us — City officials, residents, land owners and developers — in making good and equitable decisions on Newark’s growth, then the Plan will be a working document rather than a dust collector.”(4)

Roy H. Lopata
 City of Newark Planning & Development Director, 1975–2012
Comprehensive Development Plan IV

Sources:

1. Wayne Senville, “What’s the Market Telling Us?”; PlannersWeb; 2012
2. John Wiley & Sons, *Planning and Urban Design Standards*; American Planning Association, 2004
3. Grabow, Killiker, Morkal; *Comprehensive Planning & Citizen Participation*; University of Wisconsin-Extension; Community, Natural Resource and Economic Development Programs; 2006
4. *Comprehensive Development Plan IV*, 2008

