

**2010 Update** to the 2004  
*Town of*  
**Elsmere**  
**Comprehensive Plan**

adopted and certified  
**August 2010**

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## Town, County, and State Officials

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John Acton  
Charles Lindell  
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Mark Sheldon  
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Town Staff

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Edward McNally, Town Solicitor  
Tina Law, Administrative Assistant

### New Castle County

County Executive

Chris Coons

County Council

Paul Clark, President  
Joseph Reda, 1<sup>st</sup> District

### State of Delaware

Governor

Jack A. Markell

Senate

Patricia Blevins, Majority Leader, 7<sup>th</sup> District

House of Representatives

John Mitchell, 13<sup>th</sup> District

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## **Institute for Public Administration**

This plan was prepared by the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration (IPA). IPA links the resources of the University of Delaware with the management and information needs of local, state, and regional governments in the Delaware Valley. IPA provides assistance to agencies and local governments through direct staff assistance and research projects as well as training programs and policy forums.

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Plans developed by IPA are a total team effort, utilizing the individual skills of many of the staff and students working with the IPA Planning Services group. Special thanks go to Herb Inden, the Office of State Planning Coordination Circuit-Rider Planner for New Castle County, for his guidance in developing the Town of Elsmere Comprehensive Plan.

# Chapter 1. Introduction

The *2010 Update to the 2004 Town of Elsmere Comprehensive Plan* provides information on population, housing, employment, the environment, public services, and land use. Most importantly, the 2010 Update provides the Town of Elsmere’s vision for its future land use and is, therefore, the town’s guide for making decisions on development proposals and capital improvements.

## 1-1. Planning Authority

Title 22 of the Delaware Code, Chapter 7, Section 702 (a) requires municipalities to develop strategies for “the most appropriate uses of the physical and fiscal resources of the municipality and the coordination of municipal growth, development, and infrastructure investment actions with those of other municipalities, counties, and the State through a process of municipal comprehensive planning.”

Chapter 7 also states that “the plan is a legal document serving as a foundation for guiding decisions on land use proposals and annexation policy. The comprehensive plan shall be the basis for the development of zoning regulations ... and, within 18 months of the adoption of a comprehensive development plan or revision thereof, (*the town must*) 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. After a comprehensive plan or portion thereof has been adopted by the municipality in accordance to this chapter, the comprehensive plan shall have the force of law and no development shall be permitted except as consistent with the plan.” This plan was written to comply with the requirements of a municipal development strategy as described in the Delaware Code for towns with a population of 2,000 or greater.

In Delaware, a comprehensive plan is “a document in text and maps, containing a description of the physical, demographic and economic conditions of the jurisdiction; as well as policies, statements, goals and planning components for public and private uses of land, transportation, economic development, affordable housing, community facilities, open spaces and recreation, protection of sensitive areas, community design, adequate water and wastewater systems, protection of historic and cultural resources, annexation.”

The Delaware Code also requires that “at least every 5 years a municipality shall review its adopted comprehensive plan to determine if its provisions are still relevant given changing conditions in the municipality or in the surrounding areas. The adopted comprehensive plan shall be revised, updated and amended as necessary, and re-adopted at least every 10 years.”

The town’s comprehensive-planning process must demonstrate coordination with other municipalities, the county, and the state during plan preparation. This document significantly updates information provided in Elsmere’s 2004 comprehensive plan and is intended to serve as Elsmere’s ten-year update. This 2010 update will be reviewed in five years.

## **1-2. Plan Development Process**

The Institute for Public Administration (IPA) worked with the Town of Elsmere to complete its comprehensive plan. This plan-development process encouraged public involvement and input through town meetings and a survey of elected officials. The following provides a brief analysis and description of the discussions that occurred at each meeting and the information that was gathered through those discussions.

### **1-2a. Town Meetings**

#### ***October 14, 2008***

The purpose of this Planning Commission meeting was to begin the five-year update to the comprehensive plan. IPA introduced the team that would work with Elsmere and discussed the plan-update process and the background of comprehensive planning. This was followed with a facilitated discussion regarding Elsmere's 15-year Town Vision and the goals and recommendations in each category of the plan. Changes were incorporated, and the planning commissioners were given additional time to look over the plan's goals and recommendations to provide more detailed feedback. The town also discussed the Delaware State Housing Authority's offer to work with Elsmere to evaluate its housing stock and affordable-housing program and agreed to accept their offer of assistance.

#### ***November 5, 2008***

Members from the Delaware State Housing Authority, along with IPA team members and the Town of Elsmere's Town Manager and Administrative Assistant, conducted a windshield survey of Elsmere to assess its current housing stock.

#### ***March 3, 2009***

This Planning Commission meeting was scheduled to report on the progress of the plan update. Valerie Miller of the Delaware State Housing Authority updated the town about relevant housing elements. Discussions included the proposed annexation and growth plan, updated maps, walkability studies, citizen input, and the scheduling of a public meeting in April.

#### ***April 29, 2009***

It was decided to schedule two public workshops to optimize the opportunities for the public to attend—one in the afternoon in hopes of drawing the business community to attend and one in the evening that was focused on attracting the general public. Both meetings were held in the community room of the Elsmere firehouse to provide plenty of space for public participation. Staff from IPA worked with the town to present a summary of information developed in the 2004 plan and for this update. A number of poster-size maps and narratives were also placed around the meeting space, and staff was available to answer questions and collect comments from the public. As expected, the afternoon meeting was moderately attended and participants were mainly from the business community. It was thought that the evening meeting would draw a larger audience from the general public; however, very few people attended this session. At both meetings discussions included the plan for growth, updated land use and environmental features maps, walkability studies, a proposed redevelopment area, improving connectivity, current zoning, and road signage.

***November 3, 2009***

This Planning Commission meeting was held to review a almost-complete draft of the town plan and receive comments from the commissioners, the town staff, and the public. Nearly all of the attendees provided comments on the draft plan, and the commissioners ended the meeting by deciding to extend the comment period for a couple of weeks. The town manager would then forward all additional comments to IPA to incorporate into a complete draft plan. The complete draft would be reviewed at an early 2010 Planning Commission meeting, with the goal that the commissioners would approve the draft and forward it to Town Council for its approval and subsequently to the state for review.

***February 2, 2010***

The Planning Commission met to provide final comments on the draft plan. Several final comments were provided, the most significant being a recommendation to have the town solicitor provide specific language on a recommendation concerning “flag lots” in town. All of the commissioners in attendance supported the revised draft and voted to forward it to the council for its consideration, with the hope that council would approve forwarding the draft plan to the state for its review process.

***March 11, 2010***

The Town Council discussed the draft plan and the proposed language from the town’s solicitor concerning flag lots. The Council approved, by resolution, the addition of the solicitor’s language to the draft plan. The Council then approved the forwarding of the draft plan to the state to be considered at its Preliminary Land Use Service (PLUS) meeting in April 2010.

**1-2b. Intergovernmental Review**

***County and Municipal Review***

Following the Town Council’s March 11, 2010, vote to forward the draft plan to the state for PLUS review, IPA emailed a notice on April 14, 2010 to the planning units at the city of Wilmington and New Castle County informing them that the town plan would be reviewed at the state PLUS meeting scheduled for April 28, 2010. The email advised the jurisdictions that comments on the Elsmere draft plan should be provided through the PLUS process.

***State Review***

The Elsmere draft plan was reviewed at the April 28, 2010 PLUS meeting held in Dover. The reviewing agencies provided written comments in a letter from OSPC dated May 26, 2010. The letter stated that there were no certification issues with the draft plan, but offered suggestions for improving it. IPA drafted the town’s response to the letter and made revisions to the draft.

**1-3. Town Goals and Vision**

In 1972 the Town of Elsmere developed a list of goals to provide broad guidelines for the town as it changed from being known as a “suburb” of Wilmington into being its own unique place for people to live and businesses to prosper. Almost 40 years later, the town believes those goals are still relevant.

- To create a desirable and healthful environment in which to live and work.

- To provide a coordinated pattern of land use that prevents the indiscriminate mixture of land uses and provides for a concentration and clustering of uses to achieve harmony, order, and efficiency.
- To take measures to preserve the present quality of housing in Elsmere and to prevent the emergence of blighted areas in the future.
- To take measures to encourage the growth of Elsmere's economic base in order to provide for more job opportunities and a higher level of goods and services to the town's residents.
- To provide a sound basis for local government operations and revenues and a viable opportunity for annexation.

At the October 2008 meeting referenced in Section 1-2a, the Town also reviewed vision statements from the 2004 plan and produced the following statements:

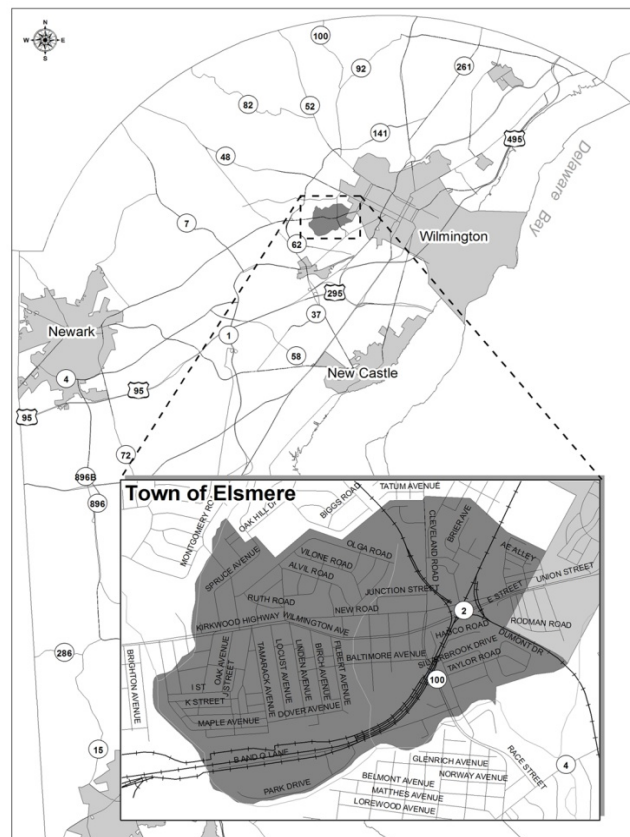
- Be a good place to live—people will want to live in Elsmere.
- Be viewed as “small-town Delaware with small-town values.”
- Maximize participation and use of the library.
- Change “Kirkwood Highway” to “Main Street” and enter into a “Main Street Affiliate” program.
- Acquire an Elsmere postal address.
- Continue to build upon “re-greening” efforts.
- Market a positive image of the town.
- Maintain strong neighborhood relations.
- Increase ratio of home-ownership to rental units.
- Be known as a walkable town, including walking trails and the shopping district.
- Create connectivity between parks and open space.
- Be able to annex adjacent areas of land if desired.
- Improve intergovernmental cooperation on transportation issues.
- Enhance relations and partnerships with business community.

## Chapter 2. Background

### 2-1. Location

The location of the Town of Elsmere is shown in Figure 1 below, and an aerial map of the town is provided in the Appendix. The town is located in northern Delaware adjacent to the western boundary of the City of Wilmington. The remainder of the town shares its boundaries with land governed by New Castle County. Elsmere is bisected by one of the busiest commuter roads in Delaware—Kirkwood Highway—and also has a major rail line crossing the eastern side of the town. The center of Elsmere is located at 39 degrees, 44 minutes 21 seconds north of the equator and 75 degrees, 35 minutes, and 53 seconds west of the Prime Meridian.

**Figure 1: Location Map of Elsmere**



### 2-2. History and Cultural Resources

#### 2.2a. History

The state of 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, a sawmill, and a schoolhouse. The major road through the area was DuPont Road, used by the DuPont Company to transport black powder to the Christiana 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 suburb of Wilmington. 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 fairground 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, 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.

## **2.2b. Cultural Resources**

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 Baltimore & Ohio 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 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 veteran-benefits office located on the site. According to the Wilmington Veterans Affairs Medical Center website, more than 22,000 veterans are treated at this center with over 150,000 outpatient visits.

## **2-3. Physical Conditions and Natural Features**

### ***Land Forms and Elevation***

Kirkwood Highway, the main road running through 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 three-percent slope). This makes it ideal for all forms of urban development, providing that soil conditions are satisfactory.

### ***Geology***

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.

***Sub-Watershed***

The Little Mill Creek sub-watershed area is located within the Christina River watershed in New Castle County and totals 5,907 acres. This area includes land within and to the north of Elsmere and the southwest section of Wilmington. The total length of the creek is approximately 8.5 miles. Many tributaries drain into the Little Mill Creek. The main branches include Canby Run, Silverbrook Run, Derrickson Run, Chestnut Run, and Little Falls Creek. The land within this sub-watershed area is under the jurisdiction of New Castle County, the City of Wilmington, the Town of Elsmere, and the state of Delaware.

## Chapter 3. Community Profile

This chapter provides a demographic summary of the residents of Elsmere, based mainly on the 2000 U.S. Census. Where appropriate, comparisons are made among Elsmere, New Castle County, and the state of Delaware. Unfortunately, the 2000 Census information is somewhat dated. Other sources of information are also used where available.

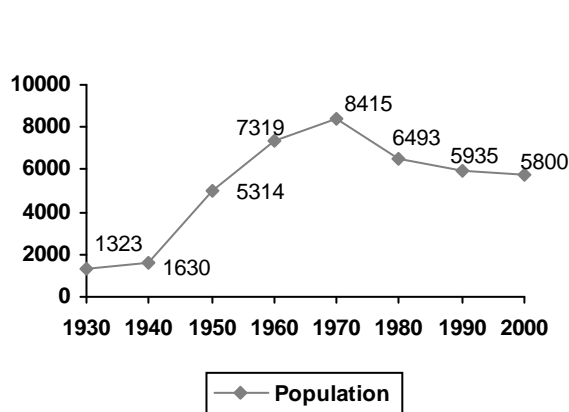
### 3-1. Population

The U.S. Census Bureau indicates that for a 70-year period, between 1930 and 2000, the population of Delaware and New Castle Country steadily increased. However, in Elsmere the population shows two distinct trends. First, from 1930 to 1970, the population displayed a steady increase, peaking at 8,415. Second, from 1970 to 2000, the town showed a population decrease, leveling out at around 5,800 in 2000. Although the next census information will not be available for a couple of years, the most recent estimates show the decreasing population trend continuing, estimating there were 5,688 people in Elsmere in July 2008.

Much of the following information was reported in the town’s 2004 Update and summarized in Figures 2a and 2b. It is necessary to report the same information in this Update since the next Census results will not be available until 2011. In 1990 there were 5,935 residents living in Elsmere, 441,946 people living in New Castle County, and 666,168 people living in Delaware. The population in Elsmere decreased 9 percent from 1980 to 1990, while the populations in New Castle County and the state increased 20 percent and 12 percent, respectively.

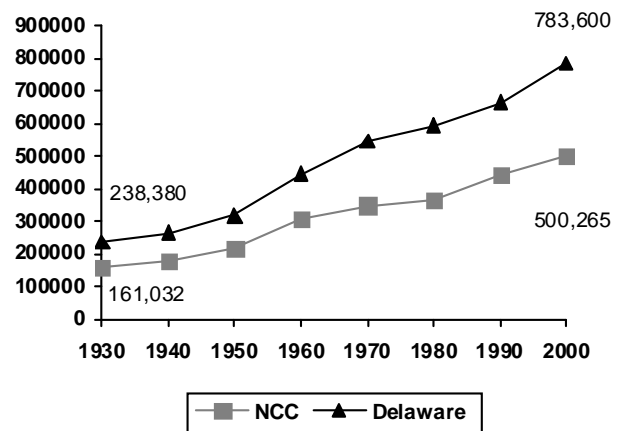
These state, county, and town trends continued through 2000. As shown in Charts 2a and 2b, Elsmere’s population decreased by 2 percent, while New Castle County and Delaware continued experiencing growth of 13 percent and 17 percent, respectively, in the 1990s.

**Figure 2a: Elsmere Population Trends**



Source: U.S. Census SF1, 1930 to 2000.

**Figure 2b: NCC. and Delaware Population Trends**



### 3-2. Population Projections

Assuming the town does not annex significant portions of land, it is possible to estimate the future population of Elsmere. Population projections are not to be taken as absolute because of Elsmere's relatively small population. Inaccuracies in census data or grid information may interfere with the estimations for such a small area and population. There are a variety of methodologies to project future population and three alternatives for are presented for consideration.

The Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research (CADSR) at the University of Delaware has prepared population projections for the Delaware Population Consortium using a geographic approach called "modified grids." Three modified grids that correspond to the Town of Elsmere were used in the projections. These small areas do not precisely match the town's boundaries but are a very close match and the only source of population and household-growth projections at the sub-county level. CADSR's projections are shown in Table 1 below. The projections assume that the town's boundaries will change little between 2000 and 2030. Using this methodology, Elsmere's population is projected to continue to decrease through 2030.

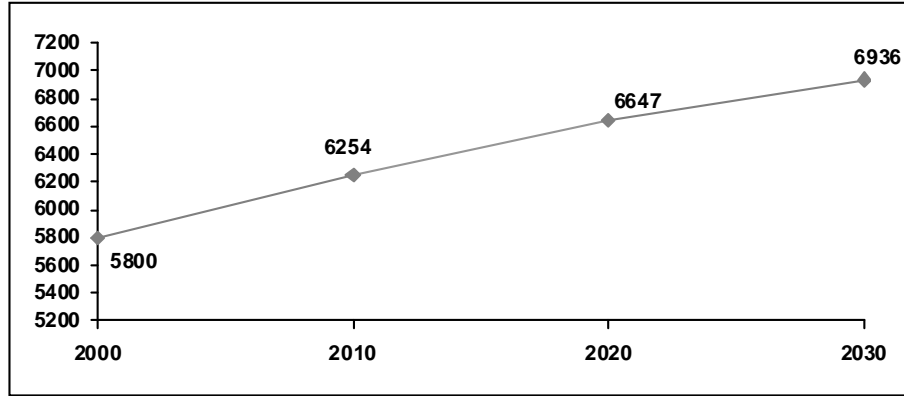
**Table 1: Population Projections, 2000 - 2030**

	2000	2010	2020	2030
<b>Elsmere</b>	5,800	5,687	5,569	5,441
<i>Projected Change</i>		-113	-118	-128
<i>Difference</i>		-1.9%	-2.0%	-2.3%
<b>New Castle County</b>	501,860	539,587	571,201	594,978
<i>Projected Change</i>		37,727	31,614	23,777
<i>Difference</i>		7.5%	5.8%	4.2%
<b>Delaware</b>	786,431	896,880	986,296	1,058,158
<i>Projected Change</i>		110,449	89,416	71,862
<i>Difference</i>		14.0%	9.9%	7.3%

*Source: Delaware Population Consortium, 2008*

Another approach to projecting population involves assuming the town will grow at the same rate as New Castle County. Figure 3 displays population projections for the years 2007 to 2030 if Elsmere grows at the same rate as New Castle County. These estimates show a possible resurgence in the population of the city from 5,800 at the last census to 6,936, an increase of 19.5 percent over that time period. These gains may be attributable to new household formation, the number of school-age children, or other demographic groups.

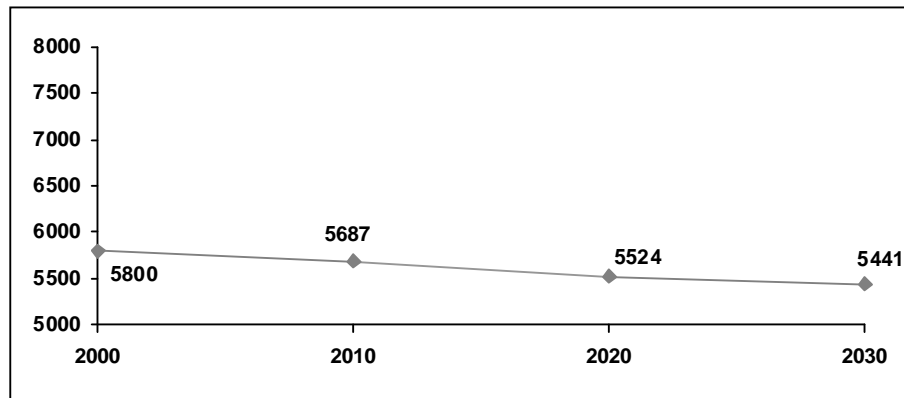
**Figure 3: Elsmere Population Projections at New Castle County Growth Rate**



Source: Delaware Population Consortium, 2008, Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research

A third way to project Elsmere’s population is to use the small area–projections method used by the state, which considers occupied-housing-unit projections and household size. Figure 4 displays estimates for the years 2000 to 2030 using the small area–projections method, and the estimates show a decrease in population. Table 2 shows that the occupied-housing rate will remain relatively unchanged.

**Figure 4: Elsmere Population Projections Using Small Area Projections**



Source: Delaware Population Consortium, 2008

**Table 2: Occupied Housing Unit Projections, 2000 - 2030**

	2000	2010	2020	2030
<b>Elsmere*</b>	2,299	2,305	2,303	2,308
<i>Projected Change</i>		6	-2	5
		.02%	-.008%	.02%
<b>New Castle County</b>	189,639	205,231	221,846	234,488
<i>Projected Change</i>		15,592	16,615	12,642
		8.2%	8.1%	5.7%
<b>Delaware</b>	299,802	347,301	387,830	419,265
<i>Projected Change</i>		47,499	40,529	31,435
		15.8%	11.7%	8.1%

Source: Delaware Population Consortium, 2008

Elsmere household projections in Table 2 are based on small-area housing-unit projections produced by the DPC. These small areas do not precisely match the town boundaries but are a close match and the only source household growth projections at the sub-county level.

Another method often used to project population in a town involves assuming the vacant land in a town is developed according to its current zoning. This build-out scenario methodology projects the total population but doesn't provide the time frame for the growth. However, there is very little vacant land in Elsmere so a "build-out" scenario is not as relevant for the town, and it is likely that if there is growth in the town it would be from redevelopment. At this time there are limited redevelopment opportunities, and it is most likely there will be little to no overall population growth in the town.

### 3-3. Demographics

#### 3.3a. Racial Composition

As shown in Table 3, the racial composition of Elsmere is significantly different than that of New Castle County and Delaware for 1990 and 2000. Although diversity increased between censuses, Elsmere still remains less diverse than New Castle County and Delaware.

**Table 3: Racial Composition as Percentage of Totals – 1990 & 2000**

	Town of Elsmere		New Castle County		State of Delaware	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
White	92.1	82.4	80.4	73.1	80.3	74.6
Black	5.5	9.4	16.5	20.2	16.9	19.2
Other	2.4	8.1	3.1	6.7	2.8	6.1

*Source: U.S. Census SFI, 1990 & 2000*

The Hispanic population more than tripled in Elsmere between 1990 and 2000, increasing from 205 (3.5%) in 1990 to 701 (12.1%) in 2000. This trend was also seen within the county and state, but not to as large an extent, as shown in Table 4. The term Hispanic refers to a person's country of origin and ethnicity, not race.

**Table 4: Hispanic Population Growth and Comparison – 1990 & 2000**

	Town of Elsmere		New Castle County		State of Delaware	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Population	205	701	11,804	26,293	15,820	37,277
Percent (of total population)	3.5%	12.1%	2.7%	5.3%	2.4%	4.8%

*Source: U.S. Census SFI, 1990 & 2000*

#### 3.3b. Age Profile

As shown in Table 5 and Figure 5, Elsmere has an age distribution comparable to those of New Castle County and the state of Delaware. In 2000 school-age (5-19 years) children comprised 20.2 percent of

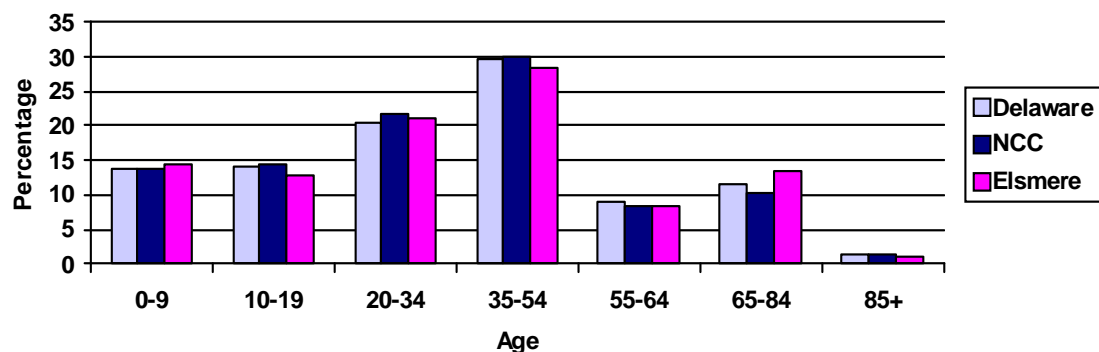
the population in Elsmere, slightly less than in New Castle County and the state of Delaware. Young working adults (20-34 years) comprised about 21.3 percent of the Elsmere population, 21.9 percent in New Castle County, and 20.5 percent in the state. About 14.6 percent of Elsmere residents are seniors (65 and older); this is higher than in New Castle County and in Delaware.

**Table 5: Age Profiles for Elsmere, New Castle County, and Delaware, 2000**

Age	Town of Elsmere		New Castle County		State of Delaware	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<5	422	7.3	33,384	6.7	51,531	6.6
5-9	425	7.3	36,150	7.2	55,813	7.1
10-14	368	6.3	34,961	7.0	55,274	7.1
15-19	384	6.6	36,309	7.3	56,632	7.1
20-24	405	7.0	35,499	7.1	51,665	6.6
25-34	823	14.2	73,869	14.8	108,840	13.9
35-44	980	16.9	83,616	16.7	127,601	16.3
45-54	663	11.4	66,882	13.4	103,999	13.3
55-59	259	4.5	23,739	4.7	39,320	5.0
60-64	218	3.8	17,953	3.6	32,199	4.1
65-74	461	7.9	30,904	6.2	56,415	7.2
75-84	326	5.6	20,556	4.1	34,762	4.4
85+	66	1.1	6,443	1.3	10,549	1.3

Source: U.S. Census SF1, 2000

**Figure 5: Age Profiles for Elsmere, New Castle County, and Delaware, 2000**



Source: U.S. Census SF1, 2000. Compiled by IPA

### 3.3c. Educational Attainment

The average educational attainment level in Elsmere is lower than that of New Castle County and the state of Delaware. As shown in Table 6, 75.1 percent of Elsmere residents have graduated from high school, and 9.4 percent have earned a bachelor's degree or higher. In comparison, 85.5 percent of New Castle County residents have graduated from high school, and 29.5 percent of those have earned a bachelor's degree or higher. Education attainment among state residents is not as high as that of New Castle County residents—82.6 percent of Delaware residents have finished high school, and 25 percent have completed at minimum of a college degree.

**Table 6: Educational Attainment, 2000**

Jurisdiction	High school graduate or higher	Bachelor’s degree or higher
Town of Elsmere	75.1%	9.4%
New Castle County	85.5%	29.5%
State of Delaware	82.6%	25.0%

Source: U.S. Census SF3, 2000

### 3-4. Economic Conditions and Major Employers

#### Income

According to the 2000 Census, Elsmere has a higher percentage of lower-income ranges for households, and a lower percentage of higher-income ranges compared with the state and New Castle County. As seen in Table 7, in 1999 Elsmere residents had a higher percentage of middle-income ranges for families than that of the state and county.

**Table 7: Income Ranges for Households (1999)**

Percentage of households within the income range of:	Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware
Less than \$10,000	8.3	6.3	7.1
\$10,000-\$14,999	5.1	4.1	5.1
\$15,000-\$24,999	16.1	9.9	11.3
\$25,000-\$34,999	15.3	10.8	12.2
\$35,000-\$49,999	16.3	15.8	16.9
\$50,000-\$74,999	21.8	21.7	21.3
\$75,000-\$99,999	9.9	13.9	12.0
\$100,000-\$149,999	6.1	11.6	9.4
\$150,000-\$199,999	1.1	3.2	2.5
More than \$200,000	-	2.6	2.1

Source: U.S. Census Table DP-1, 2000

Table 8 summarizes personal income in Elsmere, New Castle County, and the state from the 2000 Census. The median household income for Elsmere residents is lower than the median income for residents of the county and state, as are the mean earnings and the per-capita income.

**Table 8: Income**

	Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware
Median Household Income	\$39,415	\$52,419	\$47,381
Mean Earnings	\$46,946	\$65,254	\$57,407
Mean Social-Security Income	\$12,088	\$12,397	\$11,997
Mean Supplementary-Security Income	\$6,902	\$6,489	\$6,499
Mean Public-Assistance Income	\$2,268	\$2,288	\$2,516
Mean Retirement Income	\$12,191	\$18,286	\$17,872
Median Family Income	\$46,357	\$62,144	\$55,257
Per-Capita Income	\$18,643	\$25,413	\$23,305
Median Earnings for male, full-time, yearly workers	\$35,427	\$42,541	\$38,961
Median Salary for female, full-time, yearly workers	\$28,089	\$31,829	\$29,544

Source: U.S. Census Table DP-1, 2000

### **Poverty**

As compared with the state and county, Elsmere has more female-headed households that are below the poverty level. As shown in Table 9, Elsmere has a higher percentage of families and individuals 18-and-older who live below the poverty level than in the county.

**Table 9: Poverty**

<b>Percentage of ...</b>	<b>Elsmere</b>	<b>New Castle County</b>	<b>Delaware</b>
Families below the poverty level	6.7	5.6	6.5
Female-headed households below the poverty level	22.7	18.3	20.4
Individuals below the poverty level	8.9	8.4	9.2
Individuals 18 and over below the poverty level	8.0	7.7	8.3
Individuals 65 and over below the poverty level	8.6	7.4	7.9
Children ages 0-17 below the poverty level	11.8	10.2	11.9

Source: U.S. Census Table DP-1, 2000

### **Major Employers**

Historically, Elsmere has been a bedroom community of Wilmington. As a result, service-type businesses are still the major economic sources in Elsmere. Business establishments include a flower shop, a barbershop, a liquor store, a bookstore, a video store, an attorney office, a hair salon, a jewelry store, and a funeral parlor. Elsmere also offers a variety of restaurants, sandwich shops, convenience stores, and bakeries. The major employers for Elsmere residents include the Veterans Administration, located just outside the town's western border and the Elsmere town government. The municipal government employs police officers, a town manager, building inspector, and support staff.

The largest part of Elsmere's employment involves retail businesses. However, the economy is diverse without a majority of people working in any one type of industry and no primary employer. The town has a mix of restaurants, retail and other businesses, and minimal office space, although one new three-story office building is being added. It should also be noted that General Motors and DuPont have historically been major employers of the town's residents. Therefore, the recent closing of the GM plant and the reduction in workforce at DuPont has especially impacted the town's residents.

Table 10 summarizes the employers in Elsmere. The major industry in Elsmere is retail trade. In 2002 there were 18 retail trade businesses that employed a total of 211 people (up from 192 people in 1997) with an annual payroll totaling \$6,666,000. The following industries make up Elsmere's economic sector, in order from the greatest to smallest number of establishments: 18 retail trade; 15 "other services" (except public administration); nine administrative, support, waste-management, and remediation services; eight professional, scientific, and technical services; six accommodation and food services; five wholesale trade; five health care and social assistance; five real estate, rental, and leasing; and two arts, entertainment, and recreation.

**Table 10: Statistics by Economic Sector**

NAICS Industry Code	Industry Description	Number of Establishments	Number of Employees	Annual Payroll (1000s)	Shipments/Sales Receipts (1000s)
NAICS Industries					
42	Wholesale trade	5	B	D	D
44-45	Retail trade	18	211	6,666	35,376
53	Real estate, rental, and leasing	5	33	1,304	5,246
54	Professional, scientific, and technical services	8	B	D	D
56	Administrative and support, waste-management, and remediation services	9	165	5,010	14,736
62	Health care and social assistance	5	B	D	D
71	Arts, entertainment, and recreation	2	B	D	D
72	Accommodation and foodservices	6	B	D	D
81	Other services (except public administration)	15	85	2,332	6,797
Merchant Wholesalers					
423	Durable goods merchant wholesalers	4	B	D	D
424	Nondurable goods merchant wholesalers	1	A	D	D

Source: U.S. Census, 2002 Economic Census

A: 0-19 employees

B: 20-99 employees

D: Withheld to avoid disclosing information of individual companies; data are included in higher-level totals

### 3-5. Labor Market

#### Background

The 2000 Census results in Table 11 show Elsmere’s employment rate was somewhat higher (65%) than those of the state (61.7%) or New Castle County (64.1%). However, the town’s unemployment rate was also higher (3.9%) than those of the county or state. The third factor, percentage of population not in the labor force, shows that a smaller percentage of the town’s residents are not in the labor force than there are in the county and state. Those considered not in the labor force are people in the military, institutions, and unemployed but not actively seeking work. Changes have occurred since the 2000 Census, but the relative percentages are likely similar.

**Table 11: Employment**

Percentage of ...	Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware
Population in civil labor force aged 16 and older	68.8	67.6	65.7
Population in civil labor force that is employed	65.0	64.1	61.7
Unemployed	3.9	3.5	3.4
Not in labor force	31.2	32.3	34.3
Population of females that are 16 years and older in civil labor force	61.8	62.4	60.2
Population of females employed in labor force	59.8	59.5	57.0
Percentage of households with children under the age of six with both parents in the workforce	64.5	66.1	65.3

Source: U.S. Census Table DP-1, 2000

### **Types of Workers and Occupations**

As shown in Table 12, the percentage of Elsmere's workforce that is employed by privately owned businesses or by the government is comparable to that of New Castle County. In addition, Elsmere has a higher percentage of people who are self-employed compared to that of the county. Compared to that of the state, Elsmere has a higher percentage of people who are employed privately and a lower percentage of people who are employed by government.

**Table 12: Types of Workers**

Percentage of ...	Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware
Private wage/salary	83.4	84.3	81.1
Government	10.7	11.6	13.8
Self-employed	5.7	3.9	5.0
Unpaid family worker	0.2	0.1	0.2

Source: U.S. Census Table DP-1, 2000

Table 13 summarizes occupation information for Elsmere. Of particular note is that Elsmere has a higher percentage of people employed in the service and construction, extraction, and maintenance categories than do the county and state. Also, a significantly smaller percentage of Elsmere's population is involved in the management, professional, and related occupations category compared to those of the county and state.

**Table 13: Occupations**

Percentage of ...	Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware
Management, professional, and related	19.7	39.1	35.3
Service	22.8	13.4	14.6
Sales and office occupations	27.4	28.4	27.6
Farming, fishing, and forestry	1.2	0.3	0.5
Construction, extraction, and maintenance	13.6	8.1	9.5
Production, transportation, and material moving	15.3	10.7	12.5

Source: U.S. Census Table DP-1, 2000

### **By Industry**

As seen in Table 14, there are a significantly higher percentage of people in Elsmere who work in the construction industry and significantly fewer people work in manufacturing; professional, scientific, management, administration, and waste-management; and the educational, health, and social service industries in Elsmere as compared with those of the county and state.

**Table 14: Industry**

Percentage of ...	Elsmere	New Castle County	Delaware
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining	1.6	0.5	1.1
Construction	12.2	6.1	7.4
Manufacturing	9.8	13.2	13.2
Wholesale trade	3.7	2.7	2.8
Retail trade	9.9	10.3	11.8
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	6.3	4.8	4.8
Information	1.3	2.0	1.9
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental, and leasing	12.0	14.4	11.6
Professional, scientific, management, administration, and waste management	7.7	10.9	9.3
Educational, and health and social services	16.5	19.7	19.4
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services	9.9	7.3	7.7
Other	5.1	4.2	4.2
Public Administration	4.1	3.9	5.2

Source: U.S. Census Table DP-1, 2000

## Chapter 4. Housing

This section describes Elsmere's housing stock, provides a needs analysis, and recommends an affordable housing plan. According to the U.S. Census, the amount of housing in Elsmere declined from 1990 to 2000. Single-family housing units decreased by 36 units, and multi-family units diminished by 54 units. The town is not aware of any major demolitions that would account for that loss and believe this is likely a reporting error due to Census sampling methods. It is also important to mention that since the 2000 Census, two housing developments have been built and are occupied, Dog Wood Hollow, with 37 single-family units, and Greenbrier Village, which consists of 62 single-family units and 72 apartments in six buildings.

### 4-1. Housing Stock

According the Census, Elsmere had a total of 2,382 housing units in 2000. Single-family housing was the predominant housing type found in Elsmere (76.8%), comprising a higher percentage of the housing stock than in either New Castle County (73.5%) or the state of Delaware (70%). These totals include both single-family detached and attached housing units. Elsmere has a higher percentage of single-family detached than single-family attached housing. Almost 40 percent of those total units were detached single-family (931), while 37.7 percent were single-family attached (898).

Multi-family housing made up 22.9 percent of the total housing units (545). This is slightly less than that of New Castle County (24%) but significantly more than that of the state (18.7%). Tables 15 and 16 summarize the housing stock as reported by the 1990 and 2000 Census. While the 2000 Census reported eight mobile homes in Elsmere, the town does not have any record of mobile or manufactured homes within its boundaries, and this is presumed to be sampling error. Elsmere did not see a substantial increase in the housing stock from 1996-2000, with only two duplex units being built during that time period, based on construction data. Since the 2000 Census, Fenwick Park Apartments were condemned (2002), resulting in the loss of 156 multifamily housing units. However, these units have since been rehabilitated and returned to the town's active housing stock.

**Table 15: 2000 Composition of Housing Stock: Elsmere, New Castle County, and Delaware**

Housing Type	Elsmere	Percentage	NCC	Percentage	Delaware	Percentage
Single-Family, Detached	931	39.1	107,015	53.6	191,688	55.9
Single-Family, Attached	898	37.7	39,609	19.9	48,340	14.1
Multi-Family	545	22.9	47,818	24.0	64,128	18.7
Mobile Homes	8	< 1.0	5,072	2.5	38,281	11.2
Other	0	-	7	< 1.0	635	< 1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,382</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>199,521</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>343,072</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: U.S. Census SF3, 2000

**Table 16: 1990 Composition of Elsmere Housing Stock**

Housing Type	Number	Percentage
Single-Family, Detached	935	37.8
Single-Family, Attached	930	37.6
Multi-Family	599	24.3
Mobile Homes	0	0.0
Other	7	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,471</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: U.S. Census SF3, 1990

**Age of Housing Stock**

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 (34.3% before 1959) and the state (26.6% before 1959). Elsmere is largely built-out; therefore, it's unlikely that these figures have changed significantly since 2000. However, as mentioned previously, two new housing developments have been built since the 2000 Census, and these two developments (Greenbrier Village and Dog Wood Hollow) provide a total of 99 additional single-family housing units and six apartment buildings with a total of 72 apartments that are less than ten years old. Table 7 and 18 displays the 2000 Census data of the age of Elsmere's housing stock compared to that of New Castle County and the state.

**Table 17: Year Housing Built, Elsmere**

	Number	Percent
Built 1990 to March 2000	30	1.3
Built 1980 to 1989	49	2.1
Built 1970 to 1979	100	4.2
Built 1960 to 1969	239	10.0
Built 1950 to 1959	883	37.1
Built 1940 to 1949	744	31.2
Built 1939 or earlier	337	14.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,382</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: U.S. Census, 2000 SF3

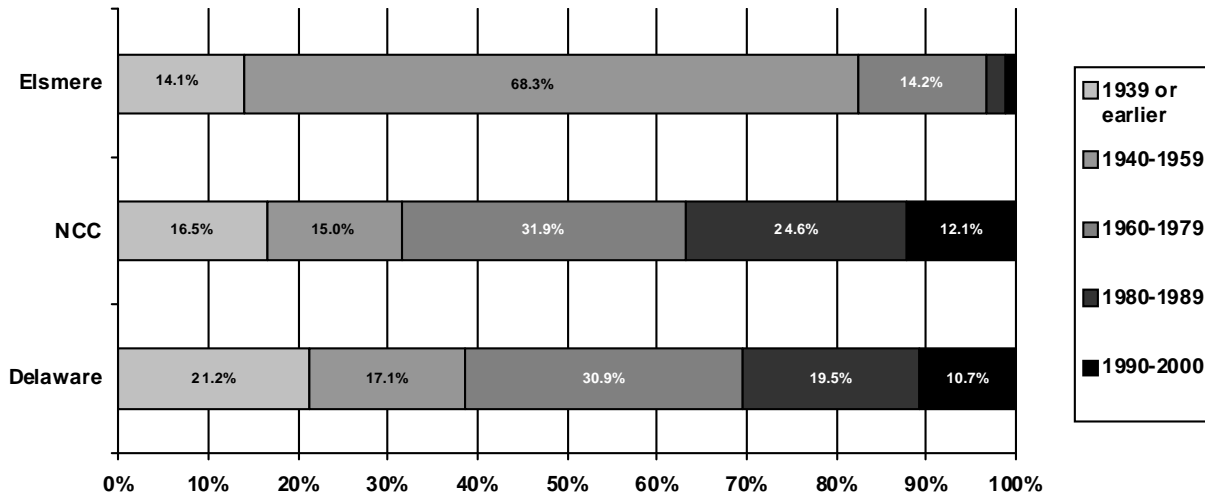
**Table 18: Year Housing Built, New Castle County and Delaware**

	New Castle County (percent)	Delaware (percent)
Built 2000 to Present	8.3	13.6
Built 1990 to 1999	14.1	16.6
Built 1980 to 1989	13.6	15.9
Built 1970 to 1979	13.0	14.3
Built 1960 to 1969	16.7	13.1
Built 1950 to 1959	15.1	11.3
Built 1940 to 1949	6.9	5.1
Built 1939 or earlier	12.3	10.2
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: U.S. Census, 2005-2007, ACS Survey Three-Year Estimates

Figure 6 displays the age of the town’s housing stock compared to that of New Castle County and the state. The majority of the housing in Elsmere is older than that of the county and state. Very little housing in town has been built since 1980.

**Figure 6: Age of Elsmere, New Castle County, and Delaware Housing Stock in 2000**



Source: U.S. Census, 2000 SF3

**Overcrowding**

Overcrowding is an important variable because it is directly related to the wear and tear on the structure, can increase strain on utilities and infrastructure, and is an overall indicator of poor living conditions. Typically, a value of more than one person per room is used as the threshold for defining living conditions as substandard. Using data from the 2000 Census, roughly 98 percent of Elsmere’s owner-occupied units fall below this threshold and 85 percent fall below it in renter-occupied units.

**Substandard Housing**

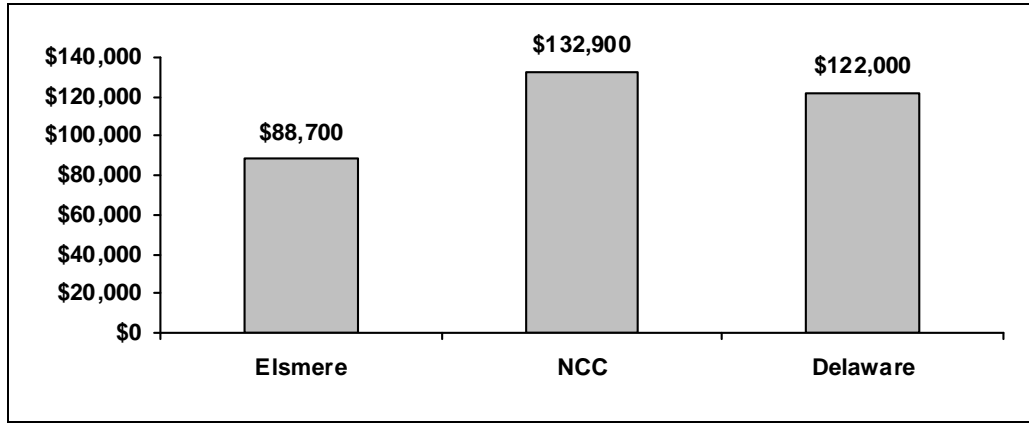
Although the vast majority of housing units in Elsmere are more than 40 years old, windshield surveys performed in November 2008 by staff from the Delaware State Housing Authority, along with IPA team members and the Town Manager and his Administrative Assistant, discovered that almost all of Elsmere’s housing stock appears to be in good or fair condition. The main single-family detached neighborhoods, Rosemont, Vilone Village, Oak Grove, Elsmere Manor, and Elsmere Gardens are all in fair condition. The only vacant property that was discovered was one duplex in the Silverbrook neighborhood that is most likely a rental property. Elsmere does not appear to have a major problem with vacant and abandoned housing, which can be a concern in communities with an older housing stock.

With regards to multi-family housing, most of Elsmere’s four properties are relatively old, but still in fair condition. Greenbrier Village, in particular, is a new community that is in excellent condition. The town should explore creating a separate building code for the rehabilitation of older homes to ensure work on older homes can be done in a manner that is cost-efficient to the homeowner.

**Housing Value**

As shown in Figure 7, the average value of an owner-occupied house in Elsmere in 2000 was 67 percent of the value of a house in the county, and 73 percent of the state’s average housing value.

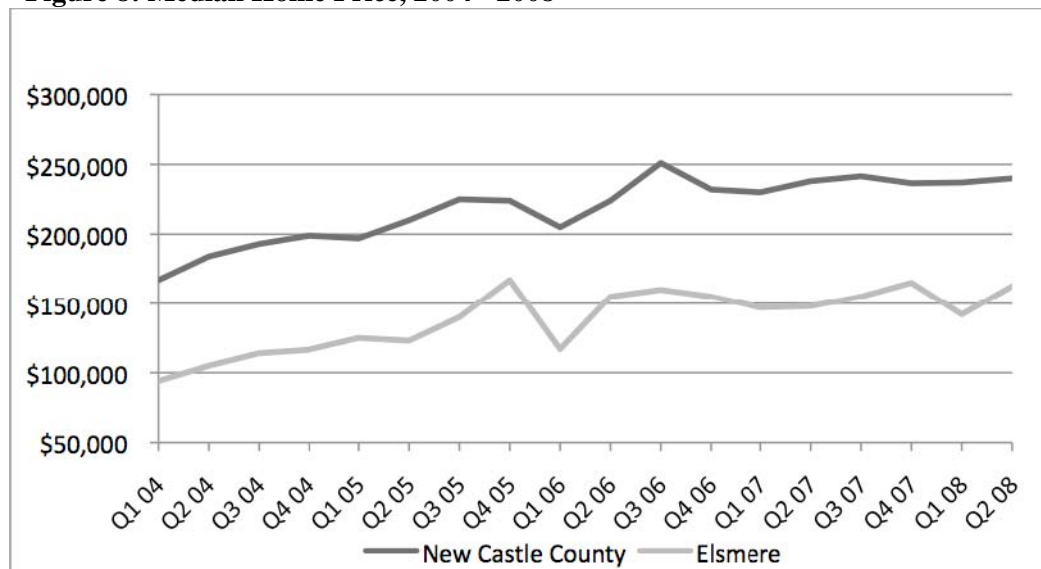
**Figure 7: Median Housing Stock in 2000**



Source: U.S. Census, 2000 SF3

As of the second quarter of 2008, the real estate information website [eneighborhoods.com](http://eneighborhoods.com) reported a median home sales price of \$162,500 in Elsmere. This is considerably lower than the median sales price for New Castle County, which is roughly \$280,000. It would appear that Elsmere is a reasonably affordable place to purchase a home compared to other areas in New Castle County. Home prices in Elsmere have risen steadily in recent years, as they have nationwide. Figure 8 shows that from the second quarter 2004 to second quarter 2008, the median home price in Elsmere increased 54.7 percent, from \$94,000 to \$162,500.

**Figure 8: Median Home Price, 2004 - 2008**

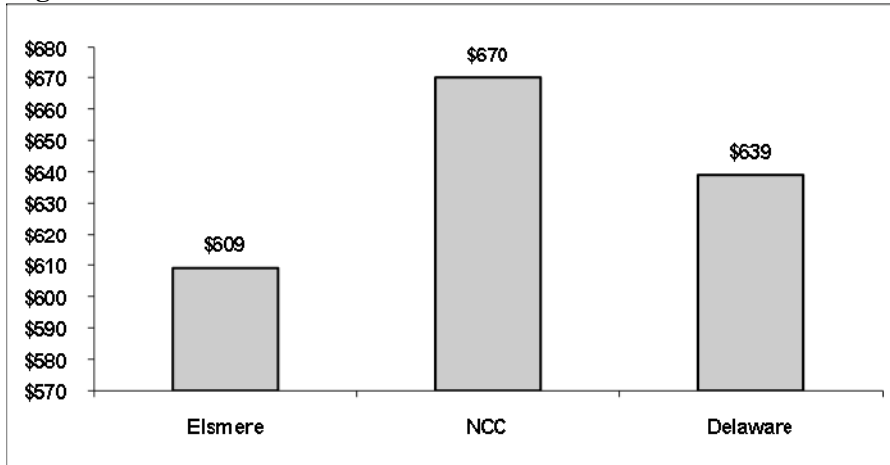


Source: [eneighborhoods.com](http://eneighborhoods.com), 2008

**Rental Prices**

Figure 9 compares the median gross rent in Elsmere, New Castle County, and Delaware. As with housing values, the cost of rental units is less in Elsmere than in the county or the state. The median rent in Elsmere in 2000 was \$609, compared to \$670 in New Castle County, and \$639 in Delaware.

**Figure 9: Median Gross Rent in 2000**



Source: U.S. Census, 2000 SF3

Table 19 provides results from the 1990 and 2000 Census, which show median rent in Elsmere is lower than in the county or state. Since the 2000 Census, rents in New Castle County and the state have increased significantly, and it is reasonable to expect that rents in Elsmere have similarly increased. As of the 2007 American Community Survey, the median gross rent in New Castle County was \$893, a 33 percent increase since 2000, and \$910 in Delaware, a 42 percent increase since 2000.

The town of Elsmere has four rental communities totaling 456 units. A brief telephone survey of multi-family rental developments in Elsmere indicates that a current average rent at these sites was approximately \$805 as of January 2009.

**Table 19: Median Gross Rent, 1990, 2000**

	1990	2000	% Change
Elsmere	\$401	\$609	34.2%
New Castle County	\$524	\$670	27.8%
Delaware	\$495	\$639	29.1%

Source: U.S. Census, 1990 SF3, 2000 SF3

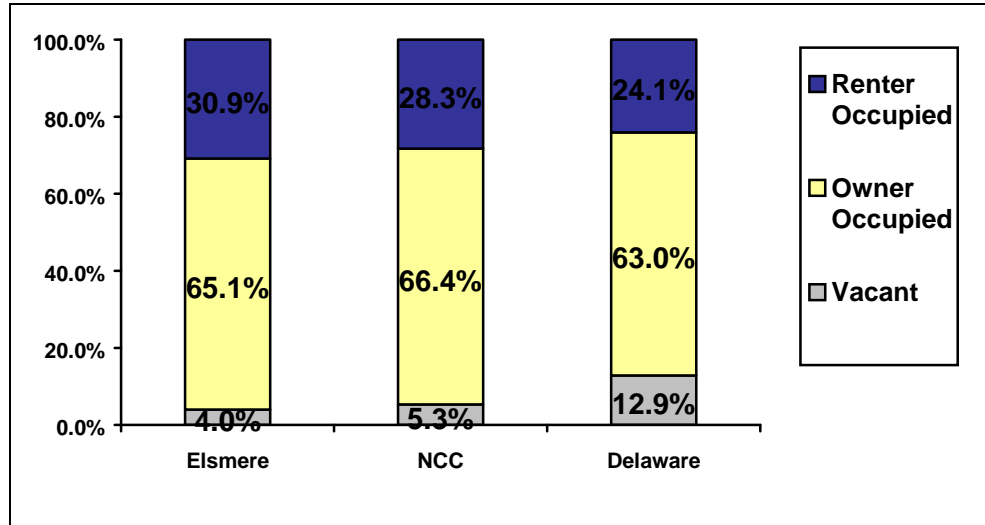
**Subsidized, Income-Restricted & Special-Needs Housing**

There are no subsidized, income-restricted and special-needs housing located in Elsmere. However, there are numerous sites located in nearby Wilmington. This could be an area of concern, or it could simply be a reflection of the overall affordability in Elsmere and the limited availability of land for new multi-family development.

**Ownership and Vacancy**

The 2000 Census reported that the vacancy rate in Elsmere is lower than the vacancy rates for the county and state. As shown in Figure 10, the state vacancy rate is 12.9 percent, which is greater than the vacancy rates in New Castle County (5.3%) and Elsmere (4%). The percentage of owner-occupied housing units is similar in all three jurisdictions.

**Figure 10: Ownership and Vacancy Rates in 2000**



Source: U.S. Census, 2000 SF1

**Tenure**

Elsmere has a significant number of renter-occupied units in the town, accounting for a third of the total housing stock (Table 20). As shown in Table 21, this is a higher rate than those of both the county (28.3%) and the state (26.4%). The town’s records indicate an increase in the number of rental units since the 2000 Census. There are now 456 units in multifamily rental properties and about 480 single-family attached or detached units being rented—a total of 936 units.

**Table 20: Housing Tenure, Elsmere, 2000**

	Number	Percent
Total	2,288	100.0
Owner-Occupied	1,523	66.5
Renter-Occupied	765	33.5

Source: U.S. Census, 2000 SF3

**Table 21: Housing Tenure, New Castle County and Delaware, 2005-2007**

	New Castle County	Percent	Delaware	Percent
Total	193,434	100.0	321,748	100.0
Owner-Occupied	138,742	71.7	236,646	73.6
Renter-Occupied	54,692	28.3	85,102	26.4

Source: U.S. Census, 2005-2007 ACS Survey Three-Year Estimates

## 4-2. Housing-Needs Analysis

The housing-needs analysis was done as part of a pilot effort of the Delaware State Housing Authority, the town of Elsmere, and IPA to conduct an analysis for a municipality as part of its comprehensive plan. The analysis provides a description of the housing needs in Elsmere with special attention given to low-income households, as outlined by the Office of State Planning Coordination.

### 4.2a. Housing-Analysis Methodology

***Determine Projected Number of Households.*** The Delaware Population Consortium (DPC) projects that Elsmere will have a population of 5,569 by 2020. The Census indicates that Elsmere has a group quarters population of only ten people. Population is divided by estimated household size, or 2.61 as indicated by the 2007 American Community Survey for New Castle County, then multiplied by the desired vacancy rate or 1.04. Graphically, this equation looks like:

$$\frac{(5569 - 10)}{2.61} \times (1.04) = \mathbf{2,215 \text{ Projected Number of Households in 2020}}$$

***Determine Projected Available Units.*** Elsmere has a total of 2,235 housing units. None were identified as beyond repair through the windshield survey. Anticipated new units are added to this total; however, the DPC forecasts that Elsmere will not gain units. Instead, it is projected to lose two units through 2020 to the number of existing units. This equation looks like:

$$\begin{array}{r} (2235 - 0) \\ + \quad (-2) \\ \hline \mathbf{2,233 \text{ Projected Available Housing Units in 2020}} \end{array}$$

***Determine the Projected Number of Housing Units Needed.*** The final step in this process is to subtract the **Projected Number of Households** from the **Total Number of Projected Units**. Results indicate that the total number of additional housing units needed to meet Elsmere's housing needs for the next ten years is met. Based on this calculation, Elsmere will have met its housing needs and will not need any additional housing units.

### 4.2b. At-Risk Households and Affordability

The 2003—2007 Delaware Statewide Housing Needs Assessment defines “at-risk” households as households with annual incomes of less than \$20,000 who spend more than 30 percent of the household income on housing costs. The combination of low-income and high housing costs puts these households in a position of financial instability. This is because low-income individuals often find it difficult to save money, making it even more challenging for this group when housing costs increase. If individuals in this low-income bracket lose their jobs, they may be unable to pay their housing costs. The generally accepted definition of affordability is for a household to pay no more than 30 percent of its annual income on housing. Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered

cost-burdened. The top three industries and the average salaries for employees working for those industries in Elsmere are listed in Table 22.

**Table 22: Elsmere Top Industries by Percentage**

	Percent	Average Salary
Education, Health, and Social Services	16.5	\$48,154
Construction	12.2	\$50,265
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, and Leasing	12.0	\$79,842
Total	40.7	

Source: U.S. Census, 2000 SF3, Delaware Office of Occupational & Labor Market Information, 2007.

The next leading industries are listed in Table 23. However, only Manufacturing makes a median income high enough to afford to buy a home in Elsmere. Therefore, only about 50 percent of the households in Elsmere can afford to purchase a home without an affordability gap. So, there are a large percentage of households that cannot afford the town’s median home price, which may help explain the high number of rental units in the town.

**Table 23: Elsmere Industries by Percentage**

	Percent	Average Salary
Retail Trade	9.9	\$26,102
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, & Food Services	9.9	\$19,372
Manufacturing	9.8	\$79,039
Total	29.6	

Source: U.S. Census, 2000 SF3, Delaware Office of Occupational & Labor Market Information, 2007.

As indicated by the affordability chart in Table 24 for Elsmere, employees in all three leading industries would qualify for a mortgage in Elsmere without an affordability gap.

**Table 24: Elsmere Income Levels and Affordability Ranges**

Second Quarter 2008: July 1 to September 30 2008				
% of Median Income	Actual Income*	Qualifying Mortgage Amount **	Median Home Price***	Affordability Gap
60%	\$24,436	\$75,341	\$162,500	(\$87,159)
80%	\$32,580	\$108,211	\$162,500	(\$54,289)
<b>100%</b>	<b>\$40,726</b>	\$141,089	<b>\$162,500</b>	<b>(\$21,411)</b>
115%	\$46,835	\$165,746	\$162,500	\$3,246

**Assumptions:**

\* Median Incomes based on HUD’s 2008 standard

\*\* Loan terms of 30 years at 5.00% with qualifying amount based on 33%/38% Debt-to Income Ratio (HUD Standard)

Estimated Tax and Insurance Costs of \$125

An estimated “other debt” of 12% was added (e.g., school loans, credit cards, etc.)

\*\*\*Source: neighborhoods.com for 2nd quarter 2008

Income growth was proportionally determined by using 2007 income data for the city of Wilmington, since only 2000 Census data were available for Elsmere. The median home price was provided by neighborhoods.com and again represents a much more accurate depiction than data from the 2000

Census. The average household would have to make a minimum of \$46,050 in order to qualify for a mortgage in town.

Elsmere has four apartment complexes within town limits. These include Manchester Arms, which start at \$660 a month for a one-bedroom unit; Fenwick, which has two-bedroom units available for \$780; Parklynn, which has one-bedroom units available for \$645 a month; and finally, Greenbrier Village, which has one-bedroom units starting at \$790. Based on these average monthly rents, only households making 60 percent or below of the median area income would be considered cost-burdened if they were to rent an apartment (Table 25).

**Table 25: Elsmere Income Levels and Rent Affordability Ranges**

<b>% of Median Income</b>	<b>Actual Income*</b>	<b>30% of Monthly Income for Housing</b>	<b>Median Rent (2 Bedroom) **</b>	<b>Affordability Gap</b>
60	\$24,436	\$610.90	\$805	(\$191.10)
80	\$32,580	\$821.50	\$805	\$16.50
100	\$40,726	\$1,018.15	\$805	\$213.15

\* Median Incomes based on HUD's 2008 standard

\*\* Median two-bedroom rents were determined by a phone survey of Elsmere Apartment Complexes

**Issue Analysis.** Based on Table 22, it is apparent that households working for Elsmere's top three leading industries can afford to buy a home in the town. However, one area of concern is that those people who are at 100 percent of the median income are still left with an affordability gap of over \$20,000 when purchasing a home. This may help explain why Elsmere has so many rental homes.

Based on this analysis, those residents working for four of the top leading industries in Elsmere can afford to purchase a home. Likewise, most households can afford to rent an apartment in town. However, roughly 30 percent of all households (or those making less than \$25,000) cannot afford to live in town without being considered cost-burdened. Some of this need may be met by Elsmere's high number of rental units (480), but exact rental prices for these units are hard to determine. Another factor to consider is the high number of owner-occupied housing units that do not have a mortgage. Roughly 34 percent of all owner-occupied housing units in Elsmere do not have a mortgage according to the 2000 Census. Based on the relative older age of Elsmere's housing stock, there may be many households who have paid off their mortgage, but based on household income would still be considered cost-burdened.

Table 26 compares the number of at-risk households in Elsmere with those in New Castle County. The rate of at-risk, owner-occupied housing in Elsmere is more than twice that of New Castle County as a whole. However, the number of at-risk renters is about the same.

**Table 26: At-Risk Households in 2000**

	<b>Total Owners</b>	<b>At-Risk Owners</b>	<b>% Total Owners</b>	<b>Total Renters</b>	<b>At-Risk Renters</b>	<b>% of Total Renters</b>
New Castle County	132,493	5,913	4.5	56,442	12,098	21.4
Elsmere	1,432	154	10.75	765	163	21.13

Source: U.S. Census 2000

## **4.2c. Housing Development Environment**

### **Land and Infrastructure**

There is minimal land available for development in Elsmere. One fairly large commercial parcel recently went on the market and could be rezoned or subdivided. The town is home to seven publicly owned parks and has been approached in the past to consider selling some of this publicly owned land, but this is not currently being considered by the town. All parcels within the town have access to public sewer and water, and there is adequate infrastructure capacity for new development.

### **Development Regulations**

Zoning, land use, and building regulations can have a great impact on the development and maintenance of affordable housing, affecting location, size, housing quality, appearance, and costs. In many towns, the impact of these regulations on new development is of greatest concern. As housing development in Elsmere largely consists of the redevelopment of existing properties and small-scale infill development, the effect of the town's development regulations are probably not as significant.

Since the town has very little vacant land available for new development, increasing height allowances is an option. The current maximum building height permitted in the town is 51 feet and permitting buildings higher than 51 feet in selected areas may provide the incentive needed to attract new development.

In general, the town's zoning code needs to be modernized. Variances are often required for things that should be routine, but the code also officially allows some things the town would like to restrict. For example, there have been many requests for small subdivisions in recent years—single-family homes on larger lots dividing off a piece to build an additional home. Most requests are successful, but the town is concerned with water runoff, driveway, and neighbor issues when a proposal places a home behind an existing home. Many in the town would like to prohibit this practice of essentially building a new home in the backyard of an existing home. The town is planning a complete review of the town zoning code by the Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment as part of its comprehensive-planning process.

## **4-3. Affordable-Housing Plan**

When considering Elsmere's housing plan, it is important to recognize that the town faces a significant fundamental obstacle if it wants to increase housing stock because Elsmere does not have many undeveloped parcels. If the town wants to expand its housing stock while preserving the remaining green space that is undeveloped, it must consider creative solutions. Another issue is the age of housing stock; the vast majority of Elsmere's housing (82%) was built before 1959. Older properties are at higher risk of being abandoned or demolished due to maintenance needs.

Currently, the town has a traditional zoning code, which separates land uses. This is mainly an issue for properties along Kirkwood Highway, because the town would like to convert the area into a traditional Main Street. The code currently does not allow for accessory dwellings as a secondary use. Accessory

dwellings can provide affordable housing and are pedestrian-friendly. In addition, the code has strict requirements for parking, which could become prohibitive in developing new projects.

It should also be noted that a lot of the existing housing in Elsmere is in the floodplain. This poses another obstacle in maintaining its housing stock. The town tracks flooding events to determine how many housing units are at risk. Fortunately, Elsmere currently has enough housing to meet its anticipated population growth past the year 2010 if it doesn't lose units. Elsmere's housing goal is to maintain and improve the current housing stock, provide adequate housing options, and provide assistance to lower-income residents.

#### **4-4. Goals and Recommendations**

The housing plan incorporates the following *Goal and Vision* statements:

To take measures to preserve and improve the present quality of housing in Elsmere and to prevent the emergence of blighted areas in the future.

By strengthening the housing in the town and minimizing the effect and existence of poor housing, Elsmere will be able to maintain an elevated standard of living for its residents.

Be a good place to live—people will want to live in Elsmere.

Being able to provide adequate affordable housing stock serves to increase the marketability of the town to non-residents and enhance the quality of life for residents.

Increase ratio of home-ownership to rental units.

Although the town recognizes the need for rental units to provide for affordable housing options, more home ownership will help to stabilize the community.

Maintain strong neighborhood relations.

This will be encouraged through the affordable-housing, property-maintenance, and community-development initiatives.

#### ***Recommendations***

Recommendation One: Property maintenance and housing-code enforcement.

These activities can be used to prevent properties from deteriorating and maintain and improve the current housing stock. This will also protect the health and safety of citizens while protecting property values for homeowners. The town should focus on educating residents regarding existing code requirements for maintenance. One suggested method to achieve this is to distribute brochures that outline requirements.

Recommendation Two: Participate in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.

Coordinate with New Castle County to identify homes in need of substantial rehabilitation to participate in the Community Development Block Grant program administered by New Castle County and the U.S.

Department of Housing and Urban Development. Funds can be used for a variety of activities, such as the repair of substandard housing or infrastructure improvements that support low- and moderate-income housing.

Recommendation Three: Continue to refer at-risk households to proper agencies.

It is recommended that the town keep a library on the many programs in place to assist low-income households. For example, the New Castle County Department of Community Services administers a Section 8 voucher program that provides rental assistance to low-income residents.

Recommendation Four: Review zoning code.

Changes to the zoning code should be considered that encourage affordable housing activities such as allowing accessory dwellings, infill developments, mixed land uses, and easing parking requirements. These changes could be directed to areas where growth is desired, such as Kirkwood Highway, which the town plans to develop into a Main Street commercial center.

Recommendation Five: Revise the town code to increase the maximum building height permitted by right in selected areas.

Since there is very limited vacant land remaining within the town for new development, increasing the current maximum building height permitted (51 feet) in selected areas could provide an incentive for redevelopment.

Recommendation Six: Work with the FEMA and DEMA to address flooding.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) can assist the town in identifying buildings in the floodplain and instituting design standards for upgrading those buildings. Elsmere has worked with the Army Corps of Engineers to address flooding issues.

Recommendation Seven: Take steps to allow the disabled or senior citizens to continue to live in their homes.

This includes considering to allow well-designed accessory dwelling units that are carefully regulated, in appropriate locations to encourage life-cycle housing—housing designed to be adaptable as people age. Another step that can be taken is to waive property tax for low-income elderly homeowners who are able to verify their income. Also Elsmere can provide outreach to organizations that provide loans and grants to modify existing homes, including accessibility improvements.

Recommendation Eight: Maintain Elsmere's varied housing stock and continue to promote quality in future development.

According to the 2000 Census, the vast majority of the town's housing was built prior to 1959. Fortunately, a windshield survey indicates that most of the housing stock is in fair to good condition. The issues are how to maintain the stock, and in many instances modernize it, in order to keep it a safe, desirable, and viable product in today's homeownership market. Older homes were typically not well insulated or may need new wiring to ensure it is energy-efficient and safe. In addition, homebuyers today expect certain amenities such as large bedrooms, kitchens, baths, and plenty of storage space, which are hard to find in older homes. Building codes that require a home receiving any rehabilitation

to be brought completely up to code may indirectly discourage rehabilitations and result in increases in dilapidated, vacant, or abandoned homes. The town should explore creating a separate section of the building code for rehabilitation of older homes to ensure quality rehabilitation of older homes in a manner that is cost efficient to the owner.

Recommendation Nine: Identify absentee landlords and make sure that maintenance of their buildings meets town standards.

Recommendation Ten: Encourage rehabilitation.

The town should consider waiving the transfer tax or other fees for households purchasing and performing major rehabilitation on homes that are in poor condition, vacant, or abandoned and that they plan to occupy as homeowners.

Recommendation Eleven: Increase the number of homeowners in Elsmere to achieve a greater balance between homeowners and renters.

The town has a homeownership rate of 66.5 percent; however, there is a trend of homeowners leaving town and renting their homes, as well as absentee landlords buying houses to rent. The age of the housing stock and their lack of modern amenities are not attractive to potential homebuyers and can be rented instead rather affordably. The town could exempt first-time homebuyers from the town's portion of the realty transfer tax and develop incentives that encourage the modernization of homes to encourage more owner-occupied homes. Elsmere could also consider creating a down payment and settlement-assistance program that ensures homeownership and affordability for homes that were previously renter-occupied. The program could be structured in a manner that funds provided by Elsmere are recovered.

Recommendation Twelve: Encourage infill consistent with the overall goals of the comprehensive plan and in the appropriate locations and at an appropriate scale.

The town has very few vacant parcels to develop; therefore, most of the housing development in Elsmere consists of the redevelopment of existing properties and small-scale subdivisions. Unfortunately, it is occurring in a manner not in character with the surrounding homes. The town would like to restrict this type of infill but finds it difficult under the current zoning and subdivision codes. The town could modernize zoning codes to meet current needs and review codes to ensure that the town is not inadvertently discouraging larger-scale development.

Recommendation Thirteen: Consider developing "permit-ready" housing.

The town could explore collaboration with the University of Delaware, AIA Delaware, Delaware State Housing Authority, and the Office of State Planning Coordination to create a set of pre-approved plans for infill houses. The homes would be designed in a manner and sited on a lot to contribute positively to the town's character. Other municipalities have initiated a competition to design a set of pre-approved plans for infill houses on lots that are more difficult to develop for various reasons (e.g., location or dimensions). To promote the use of these designs, municipalities exempt them from some development standards and approve the house designs as "permit-ready" houses.

Recommendation Fourteen: Ensure that future generations of Elsmere and people who work in Elsmere are able to remain as residents of the town.

Elsmere is a well-established community whose residents embrace hard work and small-town values. However, based on 2000 Census data, their median income is significantly lower than that of either New Castle County or the state and about 15 percent of the residents are over the age of 65. Much of Elsmere's housing stock is considered affordable when compared to that of New Castle County and the state. But discussions with town officials indicate concern that Elsmere remain a town in which residents can continue to reside (in terms of affordability, safety, and accessibility of its housing stock). There are several options that can be considered, so that current and future residents can remain in the town regardless of their occupation or their stage in life. When considering these options, care should be taken to ensure that these strategies enhance their living conditions and do not displace current residents.

## **Chapter 5. Community Facilities and Services**

This chapter provides information and data regarding the facilities and services that are available to the residents and businesses of Elsmere. 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. The town government provides public services that include street repair, snow removal, stormwater management, and the issuing of building permits. Other services are provided by New Castle County, the state, and private businesses.

### **5-1. Town Government**

The Elsmere 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 Adjustments. The council constitutes the legislative body of Elsmere and consists of a mayor and six council members that represent the six districts of Elsmere. All council members are elected and serve two-year terms. The council meets on the second Thursday of every month in the Town Hall.

The Planning Commission consists of seven members who are nominated by the mayor, elected by the Town Council, and serve staggered three-year terms. The 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 council, and serve three-year terms. Members must be residents of Elsmere and may not be candidates or 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 Town affected by any decision of the Building Official and Building Committee."

The town staff of 29 persons includes the following positions: Town Manager, Administrative Assistant to the Town Manager, Account Clerk, Finance Director, Tax Clerk, Maintenance Worker, Town Solicitor, Code-Enforcement Officer, Secretary, Chief of Police, and Police Officer. Funding for full-time staff is financed through taxes, user fees, and fines.

### **5-2. Town Facilities**

Elsmere Town Hall is located at 11 Poplar Avenue. The town's administrative, finance, and code-enforcement staff, and the 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 property within 24 hours of snowfall.

### 5-3. Public Safety

#### *Elsmere Police Department*

The Elsmere Police Department is responsible for protecting Elsmere 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) and not through the Elsmere Police headquarters. The police department consists of the Chief of Police and ten uniformed patrol officers, divided into two patrols, with each patrol commanded by a sergeant.

The police department also includes an Evidence Detection Unit, staffed by two evidence technicians. They are responsible for conducting crime-scene investigations. This unit records all conditions of a crime scene with the use of photography, video, diagrams, and other methods to detect, collect, preserve, and document physical evidence.

The police force's duties also include participation in the Checkpoint Strike Force, a statewide effort to reduce drunk driving. This involves officers from around New Castle County, including Elsmere, setting up checkpoints, and conducting DUI checks. Elsmere makes about one to three DUI arrests a month. Elsmere is also participating in the Cops-In-Shops program that places undercover officers in liquor stores to monitor who purchases alcohol, with the overall goal of decreasing alcohol consumption by minors.

An Elsmere Police bike patrol was initiated in April 2003 and ran until 2008. It had operated between Memorial Day and Labor Day, but did not operate in 2009 and may not be continued.

#### *Elsmere Fire Department*

The community's volunteer spirit is exemplified by the Elsmere Fire Company No.1, a volunteer fire company founded on March 21, 1921. 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, the Elsmere Fire Company No.1 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 multi-family residences and includes commercial, industrial, and municipal buildings.

Elsmere Fire Company No.1 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 No.1 is part of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Working Group administered by the Delaware Emergency Management Team (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.

### ***Emergency Medical Services***

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.

## **5-4. Utilities**

### ***Water System***

Elsmere 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. 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 (AWC) is the largest investor-owned, regulated public water utility in Delaware. AWC provides water to most of the town, excluding the above-mentioned 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 six 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).

Artesian's water supply to Elsmere can also be supplemented through a system interconnection with United Water Delaware located at Cleveland and Taft, and between Artesian and the City of Wilmington located on Maryland Avenue. In 2008, AWC had a supply of 29 million gallons per day (mgd) and a maximum monthly demand of 22.1 mgd. AWC has forecasted its supply to remain at 29 mgd by 2020 with a forecasted maximum monthly demand of 27.1 mgd.

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.

***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 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. As with water supply, wastewater flows are not expected to significantly increase within the next ten years.

***Electricity and Natural Gas***

Electric 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 1990 and was signed with Verizon for the first time in April 2009. Verizon has installed fiber-optic lines within the town. Several other providers offer telephone and Internet services.

***Solid-Waste Management***

Elsmere contracts with a private company, Waste Management Inc., for trash collection and disposal services for residents. Trash is picked up every Thursday, and yard waste is picked up every Wednesday, April through November and remains free of charge for residents. For heavy trash pick-up, removal can be arranged for a fee through Waste Management Inc. The town does not have a recycling program, and there are no Delaware Solid Waste Authority recycling centers located within Elsmere at this time.

**5-5. Educational Facilities**

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 15,000 students attending the schools in the district, which comprise 14 elementary schools, six middle schools, and five high schools. In addition, there are four special-education schools and three charter schools in the district. 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. The budget for 2009 was \$156 million, which is funded from federal and state sources, and a local property tax of \$1.483/\$100 of assessed value. For more information, visit their website ([www.redclay.k12.de.us](http://www.redclay.k12.de.us)). Students living in Elsmere typically attend the schools listed in Table 27.

**Table 27: Red Clay Consolidated School District Schools Serving Elsmere**

Facility	Location	Grades
Austin D. Baltz Elementary	1500 Spruce Ave., Wilmington	K – 5th
Richardson Park Elementary	16 Idella Ave., Wilmington	K – 5th
A.I. du Pont Middle	3130 Kennett Pike, Wilmington	6 <sup>th</sup> – 8th
Stanton Middle	1800 Limestone Rd., Wilmington	6 <sup>th</sup> – 8th
McKean High	301 McKenna Church Rd., Wilmington	9 <sup>th</sup> – 12th

The Elsmere community is also the home of the Corpus Christi School, a private Catholic school based on the Franciscan tradition and founded in 1952. Corpus Christi provides for grades K-8, currently has about 340 students, and serves the residents of the Corpus Christi Parish in Elsmere and the adjoining St. Mary of the Assumption Parish. The school is staffed by the Sisters of Saint Francis of Philadelphia as well as other lay educators, including 19 teachers, four full, and nine part-time assistants, part-time physical education and music professionals, and a Director of Religious Education. Corpus Christi is a source of community pride and has attained national recognition as recipient of the United States Department of Education Exemplary School Award in 1990 and 2001. The school's website is [www.corpuschristielementary.org](http://www.corpuschristielementary.org).

## 5-6. Civic and Social Services

### *Postal Service*

There are no U.S. Post 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 Service*

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 that includes 31,642 volumes, 102 periodicals, 1,149 audiotapes, and 432 videos/DVDs. Presently, the library offers an extensive list of programs including story times for children, library technology classes, workshops in business and health, guest performances in music and theater, and book clubs.

### *Senior Services*

Elsmere's focus on the well-being of its senior citizens is embodied in the nonprofit organization, Oak Grove Senior Center, Inc. located in the Elsmere Town Hall. The space is owned by the town and leased to the center. It organizes events for seniors, ages 55 and older, to promote their social, mental, and physical well-being. The Center provides opportunities for educational programs, services, and group activities important to independent living. Activities include crafts, exercise, dancing, games, Bible study, day outings, and grocery shopping excursions. Hot meals are served on a daily basis for those citizens who are eligible through a program sponsored by New Castle County Senior Services and the State's Division of Aging.

### ***State Service Center***

The Canby Park Service Center 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 human services needs. The center can assist the public obtain services provided through the State Department of Health and Social Services, 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.

## **5-7. Recreational Opportunities and Space**

### ***Community Organizations and Recreational Facilities***

Elsmere's younger residents participate in a variety of recreational and leisure programs offered by Elsmere Recreation, Inc., a nonprofit organization located in Town Hall in space leased by the town to the organization. Originally founded in 1977 as the Greater Elsmere Recreation and Community Center, it was later incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 1990. Elsmere Recreation, Inc., is funded by the state through an annual grant that is subsequently allocated to programs. Activities include day trips, a preschool program for three- and four-year-olds, a Summer Youth Camp, a Slim N' Trim Program, a Latch Key Program with Corpus Christi School, and several special events (e.g., an annual Easter Egg Hunt). These programs are open to residents of surrounding communities. A seasonal newsletter is printed with program information. Additionally, athletic, educational, and cultural programs are available through the Boys and Girls Extension Club at Austin D. Baltz Elementary School. The Elsmere Skating Center is located on New Road adjacent to the south bridge in Elsmere. This facility offers a large skating rink with scheduled programs for pre-teenagers, young adults, and families.

The Wilmington & Western Railroad attraction in Greenbank Park, located one mile west of the town, operates as a holiday-and-weekend excursion adventure through the Red Clay Valley on steam-driven trains. Greenbank Mill, a historic museum that showcases a restored commercial gristmill symbolic of the water-powered technology that was instrumental in Elsmere's development, is located within the park.

### ***Parks and Open Space***

Much of the open space in Elsmere is set aside for parks (Table 28) designed to suit the needs of the town's residents. Many of these parks contain playground areas and amenities for baseball, basketball, and tennis. They also offer picnic tables, concession stands, benches, iron lampposts, and trash receptacles. There are eleven parks located within Elsmere and managed by the town including: Bryan Martin Park, Fairgrounds Park, Junction Park, Joseph R. Walling Park, Maple Park, Town Hall Park, Vilone Park, and Village Circle Park. And, the former Delmarva sub-station at the intersection of Baltimore Avenue and Northern Avenue has been purchased and will be used as a dog park.

Elsmere residents also have access to New Castle County parks (Table 29) and state parks, including Brandywine Park, Rockford Park, and H. Fletcher Brown Park (Table 30). Of these, Brandywine Park (180 acres) is the most extensive, offering such amenities as areas for tennis, soccer, football, biking, hiking, and picnicking. This park also includes a zoo and a stadium. Rockford Park (104 acres) offers

large open spaces suitable for many outdoor activities, including hiking, jogging, and picnicking. Finally, H. Fletcher Brown Park (2 acres) offers a scenic tour of the Brandywine River.

Parks in New Castle County include Albertson Park (6 acres), Banning Park (160 acres), Biden Park (10 acres), Brandywine Springs Park (57 acres), Brandywine Springs Manor (4 acres), Canby Park (119 acres), Chestnut Run Park (10 acres), Dunlinden Acres (3 acres), Faulkland Heights (2 acres), Oakhill III Park (1 acre), Willow Run Park (15 acres), and Woodlawn Run Park (29 acres). These parks offer a wide variety of amenities, including playgrounds, sports fields, picnicking areas, tennis courts, historical attractions, and basketball courts.

**Table 28: Elsmere Public Parks and Other Recreation Facilities**

<i>Public Parks</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Type of Facility</i>
Baltimore Avenue Dog Park	Baltimore Avenue and Northern Avenue	1	Open Space
Bryan Martin Park	Tamarack Avenue	0.1	Playground
Chestnut Run Park	Jefferson Avenue	10.6	Open Space
Elsmere Memorial Park	Route 2 and Route 100	0.5	Open Space / Gazebo and Bus Stop
Fairgrounds Park	Dover Avenue and Filbert Avenue	31.86	Playground, ball fields, picnic tables, and concession stand
Junction Park	Junction Street and Casapulla Avenue	0.48	Playground, basketball courts, picnic tables, and benches
Joseph R. Walling Park	Linden Avenue	2	Playground, basketball and tennis courts, picnic tables, and Pavilion
Maple Avenue Park	Maple Avenue and Sycamore Avenue	6.18	Playground, handicapped table, and benches
Town Hall Park	11 Poplar Avenue	0.34	Playground, picnic tables, and benches
Vilone Park	Olga Road and Marvillo Avenue	18.57	Playground, ball fields, picnic tables, benches, and concession stands
Village Circle Park	New Road and Alvil Road	0.5	Bricked walkway, and gazebo
<b><i>Recreational Facilities</i></b>			
Elsmere Public Library	11 Poplar Avenue		Story times, technology classes, workshops, book clubs, and guest performances in music and theater
Elsmere Town Hall	11 Poplar Avenue		Elsmere Recreation Inc., Child Learning Center, Latch Key, and Senior Trips
Greater Oak Grove Senior Center, Inc.	11 Poplar Avenue		Activities for seniors including arts and crafts, exercise, and dancing

Source: Town of Elsmere, 2009; Delaware DNREC PLUS Letter comments, 5/26/10.

**Table 29: New Castle County Parks and Other Recreational Facilities near Elsmere**

<i>Park</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Features</i>
Albertson Park	Elder Dr. between Rt. 34 and Rt. 2	6.5	Ball field, basketball court, two tennis courts, and a playground.
Austin T. Baltz Elementary School	1500 Spruce Ave.		Boys and Girls Extension Club
Banning Park	Rt. 4 and Middleboro Rd.	160	Playground, multipurpose field, ball fields, soccer fields, basketball and tennis courts, and picnic pavilion
Biden Park	Woodland Ave. and Rt. 2	10	Playground, basketball courts, and ball field
Brandywine Springs Park	Rt. 34 and Rt. 41	57	Playground, ball fields, basketball courts, tot lot, and picnic pavilion
Brandywine Springs Manor	Newport Gap Pike, Rt. 41	4	Multipurpose field
Brookmeade Park	Turnstone Dr.	3	Wooded area and walk trails
Canby Park	Union Street and Lincoln Street	119	Playground, multipurpose field, ball fields, tennis courts, tot lot, and picnic pavilion
Dunlinden Acres	St. John Dr.	3	Playground, basketball court, ball field, and tot lot
Greenbank Park	Greenbank Rd.	17.5	Historical park with museum and steam driven trains
Faulkland Heights	Newall Dr. and Inman Dr.	2	Playground, ball fields, and tot lot
Oakhill III Park	Clifford Rd.	1	Multipurpose Field
Willow Run Park	Montgomery Rd. and Willow Run Rd.	15	Basketball court
Woodland Run Park	Faulkland Rd. and Centerville Rd.	29	Playground, basketball and volleyball court, and ball field

Source: Town of Elsmere; Delaware DNREC, Division of Parks & Recreation; New Castle County Department of Special Services, 2004

**Table 30: State Parks near Elsmere**

<i>Park</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Features</i>
Brandywine Park	North Park and South Park Dr.	180	Fields for baseball, softball, football, soccer; tennis and basketball courts; biking and hiking trails; picnic tables and pavilion
Rockford Park	19th Street and Red Oak Rd.	104	Fields for baseball and softball; tennis and basketball courts; hiking trails; picnic area with grills
H. Fletcher Brown Park	South park Dr. and Marcus Street	2	Bricked walkway and landscaped park

Source: Delaware DNREC, Division of Parks & Recreation, 2004

## 5-8. Goals and Recommendations

### Goals and Vision Statements

To create a desirable and healthy environment in which to live and work.

Extensive recreation facilities and programs should augment residents’ value of outdoor recreational activity and the quality of life in Elsmere.

Maximize participation and use of library.

The New Castle County Public Library at Elsmere offers diverse programs and dynamic recreational resources that should be promoted in the community.

Continue to build upon “re-greening” efforts.

A re-greening program that incorporates existing and potential park areas would encourage an increased physically active lifestyle for all Elsmere residents.

Be known as a town you may walk around—walking trails and a shopping district.

The development of interconnecting greenway trails among parks, public and cultural facilities, and residential neighborhoods would promote Elsmere as a pedestrian-friendly town.

Create connectivity between parks and open space.

Connectivity between Elsmere’s open spaces will benefit the town’s parks and recreation programs.

***Recommendations***

Recommendation One: Determine feasibility of offering trash and recycling pickup for town businesses.

This could help attract businesses to Elsmere and recycling could potentially generate income for the town.

Recommendation Two: Create a re-greening of Elsmere program.

According to the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2003–2008, there was a 6.5 percent increase in the trend of valuing outdoor recreational activity between 1995 and 2002. In addition, the survey portion of SCORP indicated that the top two reasons Delawareans become more active are an increase in the number of outdoor facilities and opportunities and the availability of more information pertinent to these facilities. Based on a DNREC public opinion survey conducted in May and June of 2008, the most needed outdoor recreation facilities in Elsmere include walking and jogging paths, bicycle paths, playgrounds, hiking trails, public swimming pools, access to historic sites, open space/passive recreation opportunities, and picnic areas. Moderate facilities needs include basketball courts, baseball/softball fields, tennis courts, soccer fields, football fields, camping areas, volleyball courts, and a skate park.

Subsequently, Elsmere recognizes that a re-greening program, which incorporates existing and potential park areas, would encourage a more physically active lifestyle for all its residents. This could be attained through an evaluation of the condition of the existing municipal parks and the specific recreational needs of Elsmere’s residents. In addition, Elsmere could coordinate parks programming with New Castle County Department of Parks and Recreation to offer an extensive recreation program to its residents. The implementation of a re-greening program could be supported through funding that may be available from the Delaware Land and Water Conservation Trust Fund (DTF). Inquiries about this funding source should be made through the Delaware DNREC.

The DNREC Division of Parks and Recreation provides matching-grant assistance through the DTF to local governments for land acquisition and park development. Lands that have received DTF assistance must remain as open space for conservation or recreation purposes in perpetuity. All of the nine municipal parks within Elsmere have received funding through the DTF program. The Town of Elsmere may further benefit from this program when incorporating new outdoor recreational facilities or adding amenities to existing parks.

Recommendation Three: Promote Elsmere as a town with greenway trails.

To facilitate pedestrian-friendly areas that are pleasant to walk through, Elsmere should develop interconnecting greenway trails among parks, public and cultural facilities, and residential neighborhoods.

Recommendation Four: Increase use of the New Castle County Public Library at Elsmere.

The Public Library at Elsmere has an extensive programming schedule that is suitable to most residents of the town. These programs should be promoted as a recreational resource through a marketing initiative, utilizing newspapers, the town's website, fliers, and mailings.

Recommendation Five: Look into alternative uses of some parks.

The park at the Route 100 and Kirkwood Highway has accessibility challenges. The town should examine whether alternatives for this land, such as commercial uses, would be more suitable, and, if so, replace this park with more accessible parkland located elsewhere in Elsmere.

Recommendation Six: The town should work to continue and promote existing programs and community services.

While the community resources that already exist in Elsmere are good, the town should continue to nurture its community by providing an expanded variety of services.

Recommendation Seven: Elsmere should maintain and/or expand its services to cater to the current demographics while keeping abreast of changes in population.

With the increasing average age of Elsmere residents, the town should seek opportunities to develop and expand its senior services.

Recommendation Eight: Look into marketing services currently offered by town organizations within and outside of the town to draw participants.

Services already provided by the town should be better promoted to the residents and the surrounding areas.

## Chapter 6. Transportation

The transportation system is essential for facilitating movement into, out of, and around the Town of Elsmere. This chapter describes elements of the transportation system in Elsmere, including streets, buses, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and rail.

### 6-1. Vehicular Transportation

The Town of Elsmere is generally laid out in a grid-like pattern (see *Map 2. Roads and Boundaries*). The town is divided into north and south areas by SR 2, also known as Kirkwood Highway which is a major four-lane road. In addition, Dupont Road (SR 100) runs north through Greenville into Pennsylvania and south to Maryland Avenue (SR 4). The internal street grid is well connected, allowing residents good access to most parts of town without having to drive on these major streets.

The Delaware Department of Transportation is responsible for the maintenance of Kirkwood Highway, Dupont Road, New Road, and Old Dupont Road. The Town of Elsmere is responsible for maintenance and snow removal for all of the remaining municipal streets and alleys (approximately 13.2 miles) within the borders of the town, and in past years received funding from the state for this purpose, although no funding was approved for FY 2010 and the future of state funding is now questionable. The Elsmere Public Works Department handles snow plowing and street sweeping.

In general, accident statistics show that Elsmere's streets are relatively safe, taking into consideration the volume of traffic. Only one fatality occurred during the four-year period of 2004 to 2008. Also, according to U.S. Census 2000 data, a lower percentage (74.5%) of Elsmere residents commute to work by single-occupant vehicle compared to the state (80.1%) or county (79.8%). A relatively high percentage of residents commute by carpool (16%) or public transportation (5.9%), and 11% of Elsmere's households do not have a car.

Throughout the remainder of this chapter, the concept of "Complete Streets" has been interwoven into the analysis and recommendations. The term "Complete Streets," according to Governor Markell's Executive Order number 6 issued on December 7, 2009, "...means a roadway that accommodates all travelers particularly public transit users, bicyclists, pedestrians (including individuals of all ages and individuals with mobility, sensory, neurological, or hidden disabilities), and motorists, to enable all travelers to use the roadway safely and efficiently." The objectives of DelDOT in implementing this Executive Order include in part, the following:

- To define and implement changes to the project development process that will value all transportation modes during the project scoping phase and enhance currently used design practices through updates to DelDOT subdivision and design manuals, design memoranda, and policies.

- To define roles and responsibilities through all phases of a project and implement strategies that will improve safety and convenience for all transit riders, pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists using the Delaware transportation system.

## **6-2. Bus Transportation**

Two DART bus routes make regular stops along Kirkwood Highway/Wilmington Avenue. The Route 6 bus travels between Newark and Wilmington along Kirkwood Highway. The Route 19 bus travels between Wilmington and Pike Creek along Kirkwood Highway, Limestone Road (SR 7), New Linden Hill Road, and Skyline Drive. There are no park-and-ride lots in Elsmere, but bus ridership is fairly high with twelve DART bus stops within and just outside of Elsmere. All of the stops have concrete pads and benches, but only one of the stops has a shelter. Elsmere's bus stops appear to meet Delaware Transit Corporation's (DTC) standards for the provisions of shelters, and, as such, they should eventually be upgraded under DTC's program to bring all of their bus stops up to standards. At this time, the main obstacle to the building of shelters is reportedly ownership of the right of way where the shelters would be located. This issue should be addressed so shelter construction can begin.

DART also provides Paratransit service by appointment to eligible, disabled riders. Those in need of this service should contact DART for eligibility information.

## **6-3. Railroads**

### ***Passenger Rail***

Full-service passenger rail service is available within a few miles of Elsmere at the Wilmington Train Station off Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard in Wilmington. Amtrak service and SEPTA service is available at this station.

### ***Freight Rail***

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. Approximately 36 trains per day pass through Elsmere on this track. This track has no at-grade crossings in Elsmere.

Cargo is mixed but includes automobiles, chemicals, and orange juice. This line also carries a large volume of intermodal cargo-trailers or containers on railcars, which are delivered to terminals and moved by truck to their final destination. CSX also has a major switching and maintenance yard, the Wilsmere yard on the south end of Elsmere. 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. This line averages about 25 trains per month, serves a steel plant in Coatesville, Pa., where it connects with Norfolk Southern. Primary cargo includes scrap and finished steel, agricultural

and food products (with Herr's potato chips as a major commodity), lumber, and propane. There is one at-grade railroad crossing in Elsmere for this line, located on New Road. This crossing does not have an active warning device. At this time, one property is affected—a low-traffic-volume, industrial business. If activities at this site should change, Elsmere should request that this crossing be upgraded.

## **6-4. Non-Vehicular Transportation**

### ***Sidewalks***

There are many pedestrians in Elsmere, including children, elderly and disabled individuals, and bicyclists. Although the town's Code does not appear to require or regulate sidewalks or pedestrian facilities, the town has a good pedestrian system. Sidewalks are present and continuous throughout most of the town, including interconnections to major attractors such as schools and parks. Major pedestrian draws include the shops on Kirkwood Highway and the schools and their associated ball fields and playgrounds. In addition, the Skate Center attracts pedestrians from outside of Elsmere, including, but not limited to, Wilmington.

Similar to other municipalities, property owners are responsible for the maintenance of and snow removal from sidewalks adjacent to their property. Although there is a good system of sidewalks, many are in poor condition and lack curb ramps for accessibility for those with handicapping conditions. Several notable locations lack sidewalks, including Dupont Road, parts of the Northeast quadrant of town, and a few newer developments.

### ***Bicycle Lanes***

Although bicyclists are present in Elsmere, there are no specific bicycle facilities at this time. While bicyclists can ride safely on most municipal streets, Kirkwood Highway and Dupont Road would be considered hazardous places to navigate on a bicycle.

### ***Greenway***

Although there is not a greenway within the Elsmere boundaries, there is one just outside of town. This greenway connects Little Mill Creek with Bancroft Parkway in Wilmington through Canby Park.

### ***Healthy/Walkable Communities Initiative***

Beginning in the summer of 2008, Elsmere took part in the University of Delaware's Healthy/Walkable Communities Initiative. The program, administered jointly by the Institute for Public Administration (IPA) and the Department of Health, Nutrition, and Exercise Sciences, is designed to focus on a particular area within partner municipalities where bicycle and/or pedestrian improvements could be made. The town was interested in creating a greenway trail along the rail line, running east/west in the south of town, to connect two of its more popular parks—Maple Avenue Park and Fairgrounds Park. The town created a sub-committee to work with University staff and subsequently identified its primary area of interest as the lands south of Kirkwood Highway, between Maple Avenue and the Dupont Road overpass to the east.

As noted elsewhere in this document, this area is densely populated and is relatively well serviced by sidewalks. Still, long block-lengths tend to force pedestrian and bicycle traffic use to either Kirkwood Highway (to the north) or a combination of Maple Avenue, Dover Avenue, and service alleys at the southern edge of town. Though the distances are not prohibitive, under a mile in either instance, pedestrians must effectively choose between walking along the bustling, well-trafficked highway, or through the town's high-density residential district, between people's homes, cars, and storage spaces.

Once properly installed and landscaped, the trail will undoubtedly provide a superior experience and serve to seamlessly connect the two parks. The committee and IPA staff identified several key issues. A fence associated with the rail line is a possible impediment, though town staff felt the trail would run along its north side. In order to maximize the trail's utility, it needs to be easily accessible to its users, namely, pedestrians and cyclists. There does not appear to be enough room to construct the amount of surface parking to install a "drive-to trail," nor would such a design be as desirable. Therefore, the trail must interact with the street system it parallels, rather than act as an isolated facility. Connections to Tamarack Avenue and Ohio Avenue are highly desirable. It is also possible that bicycle amenities (signage and bike lanes) be added to Maple Avenue, Dover Avenue, and Ohio Avenue. This would serve the dual purpose of better connecting the trail to the remainder of the town and also allowing pedestrians and slow-moving cyclists and skaters to use the greenway while higher-speed cyclists could use the street network.

These connections would also greatly expand the number of places potential users could park and access the trail, eliminating the need to construct large swaths of costly, aesthetically unappealing parking lots. The assessment also recommends other improvements and policy changes to enhance the pedestrian experience throughout the study area, such as encouraging pedestrian-supportive, commercial land uses (bakeries, delis, banks, etc.) along Kirkwood Highway, as opposed to auto-dependent uses (dealerships, stores that sell large, bulky items, etc.). Significant infrastructure and streetscaping work has been completed along the highway to make it friendlier to pedestrians. Over the long term, it only makes sense that the businesses along the corridor follow suit.

Lastly, it is extremely important that residents north of the highway have access to the trail. In cooperation with DelDOT, special attention should be paid to ensuring safe and convenient pedestrian crossings. Beach Avenue, Bungalo Avenue, and Ohio Avenue appear to be prime locations for pedestrian crossings. Public safety is often a primary concern of residents when new trails and/or paths are added. However, in this instance, existing roadways already connect all of the areas in question. It is likely that a well-used, well-lit trail could actually discourage any potential criminal activity in proximity to it. Even so, the Elsmere Police Department could consider foot or bicycle patrols.

## **6-5. Other Transportation Issues**

The following are issues that the town should address and try to resolve over the next five years.

**Street Flooding**

Because the town is located in the middle of the Little Mill Creek drainage basin and much of the town is in the 100-year-flood plain, there are a number of streets subject to periodic flooding during rain events. These include Tamarack and Maple Avenues on the southwestern part of town and several streets along the eastern border of town in the area of Rodman Road. During storm events, many households are routinely evacuated. There are also a number of paper streets off of B&O Lane that are in an area subject to flooding.

**Kirkwood Highway Bisects the Town**

Kirkwood Highway is a significant barrier for residents. Actual average annual daily traffic counts in Elsmere for 2005/2006 range from 23,176 in the least busy section of Kirkwood Highway to 32,247 in the busiest section of Kirkwood Highway. Table 31 represents actual traffic counts on Kirkwood Highway through the Town of Elsmere. The last actual traffic counts for the section from the western limits of Elsmere to Linden Avenue, and for the section from Dupont Road to the eastern limits of Elsmere were in 2005. Sections of Kirkwood Highway in Elsmere which had traffic counts conducted in 1999 include Route 141 to Elsmere’s western town limits, Elsmere’s western town limits to Linden Avenue, and from Linden Avenue to Dupont Road.

Elsmere would like to see vehicular speed reduced to 25 miles per hour to improve the pedestrian environment and encourage a “main street” atmosphere. To that end, Elsmere is interested in exploring the full array of physical, psychological, and regulatory tools available to achieve this objective.

**Table 31: Kirkwood Highway Actual Traffic Counts**

YEAR	Rt 141 to West Elsmere Limits	W. Elsmere Limits to Linden Ave	Linden Ave to Dupont Rd	Dupont Rd to E. Elsmere Limits	E. Elsmere Limits to Geddes St
1999	34,170	29,498	26,227		
2000					19,445
2001					
2002				24,126	
2003			22,549		
2004					
2005	33,247	28,343		23,501	
2006					23,176
Annual Growth (Decline)	(0.5%)	(0.7%)	(3.8%)	(0.9%)	3.0%

Source: DelDOT PLUS comments, May 2010.

The town would also like to improve its visual image along Kirkwood Highway so as to look more like a main street. Physical enhancements might include street trees and landscaping, arched gateways at the eastern and western approaches to the town, controlled and coordinated signage, enclosed bus stops, and a unified set of street furniture such as coordinated street lamps, benches, and trash cans.

DelDOT conducted a safety improvement study on Kirkwood Highway during 1994 and 1995. As a result, a number of improvements were made to the street in 2000–2001. Changes included closing some median crossings, installing a new traffic signal, and creating several left-turn lanes. In addition, pedestrian crosswalks were added or upgraded at a number of locations, handicapped-accessible ramps were added throughout the corridor, and brick pavers and landscaping were installed. Based on the dramatic reduction in accidents, it can be concluded that this project was highly successful in improving motorist safety.

### ***Street, Signage, and Sidewalk Repair and Replacement***

Many of the local streets are in need of repair, and many street signs are faded and need to be replaced. In addition, many sidewalks need repairs and handicapped-accessible curb cuts must be installed. Elsmere’s Public Works staff should inventory the town and develop a schedule and budget to make necessary street repairs, replace signs, and install handicapped-accessible curb ramps. Assistance is available through the Delaware Center for Transportation at the University of Delaware.

Elsmere may also want to develop a sidewalk-inspection program similar to those in other towns, whereby the town inspects certain areas each year and requires the adjacent homeowners to make repairs or pay the town to do so.

### ***Landscape Maintenance on Kirkwood Highway***

Elsmere signed an agreement with DelDOT to take over responsibility for maintenance of the landscaping along Kirkwood Highway when the contractor is no longer obligated to care for it. Elsmere may want to review other right-of-way maintenance programs to develop a program whereby private businesses and organizations take care of these areas or contribute money for upkeep in return for a small sponsorship sign. The town may also want to review DelDOT’s Adopt-a-Highway program or other municipal landscaping programs.

## **6-6. Goals and Recommendations**

### ***Goals and Vision Statements***

To create a desirable and healthful environment in which to live and work.

A transportation plan that is mindful of the environment will be successful in enhancing Elsmere.

To take measures that encourage the growth of Elsmere’s economic base in order to provide for more job opportunities and a higher level of goods and services to the town’s residents.

Transportation is essential to Elsmere’s economy.

Be a good place to live—people will want to live in Elsmere.

Being a safe place with a good transportation system will be beneficial to people wanting to live in Elsmere.

Change “Kirkwood Highway” to “Main Street” and enter into a “Main Street Affiliate” program.

Ensuring that Kirkwood Highway in Elsmere is a small-town Main Street will benefit the town’s image, economy, and its bikeability and walkability.

Market a positive image of the town.

Transportation planning and a Main Street program will help enhance the town’s image.

Be known as a town you may walk around—walking trails and a shopping district.

Elsmere’s transportation should encourage walkability.

Improve intergovernmental cooperation on transportation issues.

Working together is essential to accomplish Elsmere’s transportation goals.

Create connectivity between parks and open space.

An important part of transportation planning is providing connectivity between Elsmere’s green spaces.

***Recommendations***

Recommendation One: Revise the Elsmere Code to require sidewalks in all new residential and non-residential development and redevelopment.

This would help enhance safe, walkable complete streets, a sense of community, and would be in line with Elsmere’s vision.

Recommendation Two: Institute a sidewalk-inspection-and-repair program.

Elsmere is an older town, and many of its sidewalks are deteriorating due to normal weathering, as well as wear and tear. Tree roots, ice, and salt cause much damage, making sidewalks difficult for aging adults as well as those with disabilities. Sending town officials to inspect sidewalks and repair when necessary could help enhance safety, walkability, and quality of life.

Recommendation Three: Review other municipal right-of-way maintenance programs.

Right-of-way maintenance programs are good because they keep pedestrians and vehicles safe and comfortable. Elsmere would benefit from looking into what other towns in the area do and getting its maintenance program in line with programs of similar municipalities.

Recommendation Four: Continue to work with DelDOT to reduce traffic speeds along Kirkwood Highway by decreasing posted speed limits.

Kirkwood Highway in Wilmington has a reduced speed limit of 25 mph, yet this increases to 35 mph in Elsmere. Elsmere would like its speed limit to be consistent with that of Wilmington, as this may lead to safer streets for vehicles and pedestrians. Since DelDOT establishes speed limits on state streets, only DelDOT can reduce the posted speed limit. Additionally, there are measures that give drivers visual cues that lower speeds are appropriate. Measures can include streetscaping, like adding street furniture or increasing setbacks.

Recommendation Five: Continue to work with DelDOT to address safety and noise issues associated with North Dupont Road in Elsmere.

The town has sent correspondence to DelDOT requesting action on several issues concerning North Dupont Road, including restriction of trucks, reduced speed limit, installation of sidewalks and bike paths, and road repaving to reduce noise. DelDOT has responded to the town's inquiry and is conducting a traffic study to determine what actions may be needed to improve safety conditions. The town will continue to work with DelDOT to address these safety concerns.

Recommendation Six: Work with DART First State to maintain and upgrade the bus stops and shelters along Kirkwood Highway.

More bus shelters would probably encourage more use of public transportation and make it more pleasant for those using buses. Many of the bus users are those who are older or younger and unable to drive. These persons are also more vulnerable to being exposed to inclement weather conditions. The town should formally inform DART of locations where shelters would be most useful to the residents of Elsmere.

Recommendation Seven: Address interconnectivity in Elsmere by updating sidewalks to ADA standards and adding striped crosswalks at necessary intersections.

Sidewalks help create walkable areas and safer streets. ADA-compliant sidewalks are beneficial for a growing aging population, those with disabilities, people using strollers, etc. Striped crosswalks slow traffic and enhance the safety of pedestrians. The town should work to have all sidewalks ADA-compliant and insert crosswalks at regular intervals to promote walkability and pedestrian safety.

Recommendation Eight: Build enhanced working relations with WILMAPCO and become part of their Transportation Improvement Program.

Taking advantage of WILMAPCO's many resources would prove beneficial both for Elsmere and for WILMAPCO.

Recommendation Nine: Continue to pursue a greenway trail along the existing rail line to connect Maple Avenue Park and Fairgrounds Park.

A well-connected trail system would be an asset to the community. Trails commonly improve property values of neighboring homes and businesses. Such a trail would also serve to help fulfill recommendation seven and is in line with the town's stated transportation goals of becoming a walkable, connected, main street-type community.

Recommendation Ten: Continue to monitor activities of CSX.

The town needs to be aware of CSX's plans for future rail traffic both in terms of volume and content of material being transported.

## Chapter 7. Environmental Resources

### 7-1. Water Quality

Elsmere is located within the Christina River Watershed, which encompasses three states—Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Maryland—as well as five counties and over 60 townships, boroughs, and cities. The Christina Watershed is the only source of surface drinking water in Delaware. The Christina Watershed is composed of four major watersheds; Elsmere is in the Christina River Sub-Basin. The sub-basin is further divided into four sub-watersheds.

Under Section 303(d) of the 1972 Federal Clean Water Act, states are required to identify all impaired waters and establish Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) to restore their beneficial uses. A TMDL defines the amount of a given pollutant that may be discharged to a water body from point, nonpoint, and natural background sources and still allows attainment or maintenance of the applicable narrative and numerical water quality standards. In simplistic terms, a TMDL matches the strength, location and timing of pollution sources within a watershed with the inherent ability of the receiving water to assimilate the pollutant without adverse impact. A pollution control strategy specifies actions necessary to systematically achieve pollutant load reductions specified by a TMDL for a given water body and must reduce pollutants to level specified by State Water Quality Standards.

The Christina River Watershed is assigned a range of nutrient (nitrogen and phosphorus) and bacterial TMDL load-reduction requirements that vary with the specific location of the stream segment. The TMDLs for each segment must be met in order to meet the State Water Quality Standards. Table 32 presents the range of nutrient- and bacteria-reduction requirements for this watershed (information about specific loading rates for specific stream segments can be obtained from DNREC).

**Table 32: TMDL Nutrient (Nitrogen and Phosphorus) and Bacteria Reduction Requirements for the Christina River Watershed**

<b>Piedmont Drainage</b>	<b>N- reduction requirements</b>	<b>P- reduction requirements</b>	<b>Bacteria-reduction requirements</b>
Christina River Watershed	0-62% High Flow	0-77% High Flow	29-95% High Flow

One water-quality issue that is especially pertinent to Elsmere is combined sewer overflows (CSOs). Wilmington has a “combined” sewer system, which means that sewage and storm water share the same pipes. When rainfall adds more water than the system can handle, sewage can overflow into waterways and impact water quality.

Using computer modeling, the low-flow (point-source) TMDL was established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in October 2002. By that standard, the Little Mill Creek sub-watershed, which includes Elsmere, does not meet water-quality standards for nutrients and low dissolved oxygen. The Christina Basin high-flow (storm water) TMDL was determined in April 2005.

In June 2003, the Water Resources Agency (WRA), a unit within the Institute for Public Administration at the University of Delaware, issued a report card on water quality. In their report, *A Watershed Restoration Action Strategy*, grades were assigned according to 19 water-quality, habitat, and watershed-health indicators. The Little Mill Creek sub-watershed received a total grade of D+ (a D = unsatisfactory). It received an F (poor) on some of the individual points, including total nitrogen and enterococcus bacteria.

The Christina Basin Clean Water Partnership provides a cooperative interstate effort to improve water quality in the Christina Basin. The local coordinator for the Delaware portion of the basin is WRA.

### ***Flooding***

Flooding problems in Elsmere can be separated into two major groups—widespread regional flooding incidences due to flow in Little Mill Creek and its tributaries and more localized flooding due to lack of or inadequate stormwater-management facilities. An attempt to reduce regional flooding issues on the Little Mill Creek was completed in 2007 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The project mainly involved stream bank and channel modifications, adding more stormwater-storage capacity, and the Town reported that since its completion there has not been a flooding incidence on the south side of town.

To address the more localized flooding issues, Elsmere contracted with Van Denmark & Lynch, Inc., to conduct a survey of flooding problems identified by members of Elsmere Town Council that were not associated with the periodic flooding of Little Mill Creek. The resulting report provided to the town in July 2004 gave recommended actions and estimated costs for 22 potential projects totaling \$2,344,000. The projects mainly involved the installation or replacement of stormwater pipe and catch basins that were either undersized or had collapsed.

Given the geography of the region, it is imperative that Elsmere continue to coordinate its efforts with the City of Wilmington, New Castle County, and state offices, such as DNREC, to address and mitigate flooding issues.

## **7-2. Air Quality**

The EPA is authorized by the Clean Air Act of 1970 to set National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). A pollutant that has an established NAAQS is known as a criteria pollutant. Currently, there are seven criteria pollutants: sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, ozone, lead, particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter (PM<sub>10</sub>), and particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>).

To determine the ambient levels of pollutants for which NAAQS have been established, the state of Delaware created the Delaware Air Monitoring Network. The nearest air monitoring station to Elsmere is on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard in Wilmington. There are only two pollutants in Delaware that

do not meet the NAAQS, ozone and PM<sub>2.5</sub>. Air quality in Delaware is similar to other areas in the region such as Harford County (Maryland), Cumberland County (New Jersey), and Philadelphia. Ozone is a pollutant formed in the lower atmosphere by a reaction of nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and is distinct from the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere. VOCs are created by a variety of chemical compounds, and the main source of NO<sub>x</sub> is combustion engines. Ozone is the main component of smog, which has an adverse impact on people as a strong respiratory irritant. The Wilmington monitoring site does not measure for ozone; the closest site to Elsmere that monitors for ozone is in Bellefonte. In 2008 the Bellefonte site measured ozone eight-hour averages in excess of the NAAQS on five occasions, down from 20 recorded in 1999. This trend in improving air quality for ozone has been measured across the state and is largely due to pollution-control and -prevention programs.

Fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>)—particles that are smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter—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 detected particulate matter over the NAAQS; the Wilmington area has the highest concentrations of particulate matter in Delaware.

### **7-3. Noise Pollution**

Unwelcome noises can become a nuisance to the citizens of the town. Although noise pollution can be highly 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.

### **7-4. Goals and Recommendations**

#### ***Goals and Vision Statements***

To create a desirable and healthful environment in which to live and work.

Improving environmental quality in the town will provide citizens with a healthier environment.

Market a positive image of the town.

Working with surrounding communities and state offices on environmental projects will reflect positively on the town.

Be a good place to live – people will want to live in Elsmere.

Mitigating flooding problems, increasing the greenery, and addressing other environmental issues in the town will make it a more attractive place to live.

Be known as a town you may walk around—walking trails and a shopping district.

Making the town more walkable is seen as an end to the town in and of itself, but it will also contribute positively to the environment.

Create connectivity between parks and open space.

Ensuring connectivity between green spaces will benefit the town's environment.

***Recommendations***

Recommendation One: Elsmere should collect parcel data to track flooding from storm events.

The Institute for Public Administration could provide a parcel map on which this information can be recorded. These maps can be used to identify high-water marks and establish flooding frequencies. This information can then be used to develop a better understanding of the costs and benefits of addressing flooding and provide guidance for creating a capital-improvement plan.

Recommendation Two: Elsmere should continue working with the City of Wilmington to resolve flooding issues and raw sewage overflows.

Wilmington is currently working with a consultant to implement a long-term-control plan to deal with their combined sewer overflows. Collaboration with Wilmington is crucial to address the issues of CSOs 28 and 29 in Canby Park and improve the drainage of Silverbrook Run.

Recommendation Three: Prevent construction in floodplain and flood fringe.

The Town of Elsmere should examine zoning and subdivision regulations to prevent future construction in floodplain and flood-fringe areas and require any major improvements to follow FEMA guidelines for building within floodplains. This should include a reduction of impervious cover, utilizing pervious paving materials in lieu of asphalt or concrete where applicable.

Recommendation Four: Assist residents who ask to be taken off the FEMA floodplain map.

Elsmere should begin to work with residents whose homes are listed as in a floodplain but where there is no history of flooding. To get residences removed from a Special Flood Hazard Area or SFHA, a Letter of Map Amendment (LOMA) is needed from FEMA. It must be proven that the lowest ground touching the structure is at or above the Base Flood Elevation. Elevation information must be certified by a Licensed Land Surveyor or Registered Professional Engineer. Elsmere must also determine that the land and any existing or proposed structures to be removed from the SFHA are "reasonably safe from flooding." For an entire lot and structure to be removed, both the lowest point on the lot and the lowest floor of the structure must be at or above the 1-percent-annual-chance flood elevation. DNREC should be consulted in regards to beginning this process and updating the flood plain study. A FEMA flood insurance study of the area was revised in 2007.

Recommendation Five: Elsmere should utilize FEMA and DEMA assistance for infrastructure improvements.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) sponsors two programs, the Hazard Mitigation Program, which distributes pre-disaster funds, and the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program, which provides funding for planning and technical assistance.

Recommendation Six: Elsmere should work to obtain compliance with state-mandated levels of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs).

Elsmere should participate in the Christina Basin Clean Water Partnership to reduce the nutrient-pollutant loads with the goal of meeting water-quality standards in accordance with the future Christina Basin TMDLs as established by DNREC and the EPA. A project's TMDL nutrient loading rate should be calculated through the use of the Department's nutrient budget protocol. An applicant should be further required to use any combination of approved Best Management Practices (BMPs) to meet the required TMDLs for the affected watershed(s) in question.

Recommendation Seven: Encourage alternative forms of transportation.

Combustion from engines such as in cars, trucks, and yard equipment produces air pollutants, including ozone and particulate matter. By encouraging citizens to walk, bike, and use public transportation, the town would be taking steps to reduce emissions from combustion engines. The town could encourage pedestrian travel by incorporating mobility-friendly design elements into the zoning code, and seeking feedback from citizens to determine if their transportation needs are being met.

Recommendation Eight: The town should work with DelDOT and DNREC to monitor noise and air pollution along Kirkwood Highway and other areas of the town.

Vehicular traffic along Kirkwood Highway has a significant impact on air and noise pollution in the town. It should be monitored to detect any changes in the situation and to see if there are any opportunities to improve conditions.

Recommendation Nine: Continue to work with industry and state agencies.

The town should continue to work with state agencies and local industries to monitor hazardous materials that are transported through Elsmere.

Recommendation Ten: Keep emergency response plan current.

The town currently has an emergency response plan in place to deal with emergency situations arising from hazardous materials. The town should periodically review the plan to keep it current.

## Chapter 8. Land Use Plan

### 8-1. Existing Land Use

Land within the Town of Elsmere boundary, including the roadways, totals 636 acres. When the roads are removed, the town consists of 512 acres. A windshield survey of existing land uses was conducted in 2008 for this plan, and the results were reviewed and verified by town staff. For this analysis, existing land uses have been summarized into categories discussed below based on the primary use or activity (see *Map 3. Existing Land Use and Map 6. Zoning*).

The Elsmere community, which includes portions of the developed areas outside of the town's limits (Wilmington and the suburbs of New Castle County), can trace its early development to the expansion of Wilmington. During the 1920s, residential development of the town occurred as an outward expansion of Wilmington's central core. Between the 1930s and the 1950s, development continued to spread westward from Wilmington along road and rail routes. By the late 1950s, the majority of Elsmere's development was completed. The following is an existing land use description, by category, occurring within the town. Table 33 provides a statistical break-out of the various uses.

#### ***Single-Family Residential***

Single-family residential constitutes the highest use within the town at approximately 235 acres. The smaller single-family lots are located mainly south of Kirkwood Highway in the neighborhoods of Elsmere Gardens and Elsmere Manor. Another area of smaller lots exists north of Union Street in the Silverbrook Gardens community. Several areas of residential development have been built in a more contemporary, curvilinear street pattern (e.g., Vilone Village and Rosemont).

#### ***Multi-Family Residential***

About 31 acres of land are devoted to multi-family residential use. The majority of these uses occur in the Elsmere Park, Oak Grove, and Manchester neighborhoods.

#### ***Commercial***

Commercially zoned property accounts for about 67 acres and is located mainly along Kirkwood Highway and in the eastern part of the town centered at the junction of the rail line and New Road.

#### ***Institutional***

Institutional uses are scattered throughout the town and include such facilities as Town Hall, the Elsmere Fire Station, schools, churches, etc. Institutional uses occupy about 12 acres.

#### ***General Industry***

Approximately 1.8 acres of land are used for general industry purposes. These parcels are located east of Dupont Road.

**Office**

Approximately two acres are devoted to office use. These uses occur predominately along Kirkwood Highway and Dupont Road.

**Parks and Recreation**

The largest concentration of parcels devoted to parks and recreational use is located west of Dupont Road, mainly along the railroad lines and to the far northwest portion of the community along Chestnut Run Creek. These parcels account for about 79 acres. There are several smaller parcels scattered throughout the town.

**Transportation and Utilities**

The transportation and utilities category consists of alleyways and rail facilities and constitutes approximately 61 acres. This category does not include public roads. Alleyways run through the rear of the older residential neighborhoods. The largest component in this category includes the railroad facilities and marshaling areas.

**Vacant Land**

There are several parcels of vacant land in the town, comprising 23.7 acres. A large portion of the vacant land is located to the south of the CSX rail yard, and some of it is within the 100-year floodplain. Other parcels are currently under development (e.g., just north of Elsmere Boulevard). There are several scattered smaller parcels of vacant land throughout the community, especially along the perimeter of the town.

**Table 33: Land Use Acreage in Elsmere**

Land Use	Sum Acres	Percent
Single-Family Residential	234.9	45.9
Multi-family Residential	30.7	6.0
Commercial	67.4	13.2
Institutional	11.9	2.3
General Industry	1.8	0.4
Office	2.3	0.4
Parks and Recreation	78.7	15.4
Transportation/Utilities	60.7	11.9
Vacant Land	23.7	4.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>512.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Compiled by IPA, 2009*

**8-2. Future Land Use Plan**

This future land use plan reflects the fact that most of the town has been built-out and there is little vacant land left for new development. However, there may be some limited opportunities for infill and redevelopment. Future land uses for Elsmere are delineated on Map 7 in the Appendix and are discussed in more detail below.

The majority of future land uses in the town will remain residential. Future commercial uses are located along the Kirkwood Highway corridor as well as a portion of Union Street at the far eastern section of town. The majority of institutional uses are located either on or near Kirkwood Highway between the town's western boundary and Dupont Road. General industry is located along the railroad facilities in the southern portion of the town, extending across Dupont Road, with a large concentration located at the junction of the railroad's right-of-way, New Road, and Wilmington Avenue. Transportation uses are mainly confined to the railroad lines existing in the eastern portion of the town, centered on the junction of New Road, the railroad right-of-way and Wilmington Avenue. Highway development usage is located in the southeastern portion of the town between Dupont Road and Old Dupont Road and from Wilmington Avenue south to Little Mill Creek. Parks and recreational uses exist in several large parcels, with the largest being in the southern portion of the town located between the general industrial area and the residential areas.

Elsmere has designated a "Special Study Area" on its Future Land Use Map. The area is bounded on the north by New Road, on the east by Dupont Road, on the south by Kirkwood Highway and on the west by commercial and residential uses along Northern Avenue. The two parcels in the study area are currently used for commercial and parkland. The future land use issue concerns the potential expansion of a commercial parcel which fronts on Kirkwood Highway eastward into the parkland frontage along the same road. Also at issue is the configuration of the existing residential parcels to the west along Northern Avenue and a commercial parcel to the north along New Road. As Elsmere proceeds with its implementation phase, including zoning code and map changes, a final determination will be made as to the future land uses for this area.

### **8-3. Community Development and Redevelopment Strategy**

Elsmere recognizes the importance of implementing strategies to promote community development and redevelopment throughout the entire town. The community development and redevelopment strategy provides policies and recommended actions that serve to improve the quality of life in the community. It is intended to complement and enhance the closely related goals of the economic-development plan and the affordable-housing plan.

Community development must include marketing a positive image of the town. This may include increasing positive signage throughout the town such as at entrances to business and commercial areas. Signs of various shapes, sizes, and colors detract from a town's image, especially within a historic district. Signs could be added at the intersection of Rt. 100 and Kirkwood Highway, possibly at the park, with information to help identify area businesses (i.e., landmark with maps, arrows). At the gateways to the town, signs could be added to identify now entering Elsmere and add some character to the area with signs and landmarks. Marketing could also involve publicizing the town's current organizations and upcoming events in newspapers, fliers, and mailings.

### ***Kirkwood Highway***

Kirkwood Highway is within walking distance from many Elsmere homes. It is the town's most significant roadway because it connects Elsmere to Newark and Wilmington, and the town recognizes the need to focus on improving this area for the benefit of the town, its residents, and its businesses. During discussions, a predominant concern of local officials and businesses is the town's propensity to blend in with the surrounding area. Presently, commuters and tourists drive along Kirkwood Highway without differentiating Elsmere from New Castle County and Wilmington. As part of its economic development strategy, the town plans to convert the portion of the Kirkwood Highway that runs through Elsmere into a Main Street. It will be developed according to the Main Street affiliate program. A developed Main Street will serve as a symbol of community pride, a gathering place for local residents, an incubator for new and developing businesses, and a way to increase the tax base of the town. The town's challenge is to attain a distinct positive identity for Elsmere that separates it from the surrounding communities.

### ***Parks and Open Space***

Preserving and expanding areas of open space and parkland is an important area for the town to consider to improve the physical appearance of the town and to provide recreational opportunities. This has the potential to improve the image of the town, which would attract visitors, new residents, and businesses.

### ***Property Maintenance***

There are few new developments and houses in Elsmere. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 96.6 percent of the housing in Elsmere was built before 1980, and 82.3 percent of the housing was built before 1959. These older homes face more maintenance issues than do newer homes. In addition, a significant amount of the housing consists of rental units. The 2000 Census indicated that rentals accounted for 32.1 percent of the housing stock, which is above the state average of 24.1 percent. This is a concern since rental properties may not be as well maintained as owner-occupied homes because occupants do not have equity in their homes. In Elsmere, 3.9 percent of the homes are vacant, according to the 2000 Census. Although this is well below the state average vacancy rate (12.6%), Elsmere should focus its attention on these properties because they pose maintenance concerns.

### ***Potential Brownfield Sites***

The Town reports that there are currently no brownfield sites within its boundaries. There are, however, numerous industrial areas in the town that may have the potential to be defined as a brownfield site. Brownfield redevelopment is a priority at both the state and national level, and since this is a high-profile government issue, there are numerous programs and funding opportunities. Only DNREC may certify a property as a brownfield. The Site Investigation and Restoration Branch (SIRB) encourages redevelopment of brownfield sites and can provide assistance when investigating and remediating these sites. A sampling of some of the programs available is as follows:

- Brownfield Cleanup Program (BCP) and Certificates of Completion Remedies (COCRs): These HISPA rules give the state authority to clean up sites through enforcement or volunteer assistance. This is a Delaware program that assists with reducing or eliminating liability concerns for sellers, buyers, and lenders. BCPs are for developers who are not responsible for the property becoming a

brownfield but are liable until they acquire a COCR. This differs from brownfield developer agreements or BDA's, where a developer is not liable for the property from the start and can get financial assistance.

- Hazardous Substance Cleanup Act (HSCA): HSCA provides up to \$250,000 in low-interest loans (not to exceed 3%) to businesses environmental investigations or 90 percent of anticipated remedial cost.
- The Hazardous Substance Cleanup Policy of Brownfields: This provides up to \$5 million on a first-come first-served basis to nonprofits and public entities. Up to a million dollars are provided to investigate and cleanup a site if it is certified as a brownfield. Up to \$225,000 is provided for private entities, with the first \$125,000 at a dollar-for-dollar basis, and the second \$100,000 at 50 cents on the dollar.
- Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund: A \$1.25 million loan is available from the EPA, with \$200,000—\$400,000 available for a ten-year term with between zero to one percent interest.
- FIRST Fund: This fund supplies financial assistance for the removal of orphaned or abandoned underground storage tanks and cleanup of the site.
- Brownfield-Assistance Matching Grants: This program has up to \$1 million available each year to assist businesses in the redevelopment of sites certified as a brownfield by DNREC. The funds can be used for site investigation and remediation.
- Tax Credits: These credits are available to any taxpayer who invests \$200,000 in a qualified brownfield facility and has hired at least five employees.

#### **8-4. Areas of Concern and Annexation**

The circumstances concerning Elsmere's areas of concern and annexations have changed from the plan adopted in 2004. 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 and/or redevelopment. Furthermore, the majority of adjacent lands in both unincorporated New Castle County and the City of Wilmington are zoned and built as residential uses. Notable exceptions to this residential pattern is the "Heavy Industrial" area located on the southwestern border of the town, which is associated with the CSX yards and the former General Motors Plant, and the "Neighborhood Commercial" and "Office Research" areas on the western boundary of the town along Kirkwood Highway.

Recently, it was announced that the former GM Plant site, which closed in the summer of 2009, will be purchased by Fisker Automotive and retooled for the development of hybrid electric vehicles. Also, given the high degree of development both within the town and in the adjacent areas, Elsmere has significant concerns with regard to current and future land use patterns in these nearby areas. The town is greatly affected by the adjacent uses—both its quality of life and its environment (e.g., storm

drainage, air quality, noise, traffic, combined sewer overflows, etc.)—and may consider annexation to better manage land use and activities on these lands.

Thus, the Town has delineated an Area of Concern (see *Map 9*), which it feels is critical to the long-term well-being of the town and its residents. In the future if annexation becomes desirable, then the appropriate amendment to the Town of Elsmere Comprehensive Plan will be prepared. This amendment will designate future land uses as well as the calculations of the cost of services, which, in turn, will be submitted through the state PLUS Process.

## 8-5. Goals and Recommendations

### *Goals and Vision Statements*

To create a desirable and healthy environment in which to live and work.

Land use planning should reflect a vision of an environment that is a good place to live.

To provide a coordinated pattern of land use that prevents the indiscriminant mixture of land uses and that provides for a concentration and clustering of uses to achieve harmony, order, and efficiency.

Intentional land use plans that reflect harmony, order, and efficiency will benefit Elsmere.

To take the measures to encourage the growth of Elsmere’s economic base in order to provide for more job opportunities and a higher level of goods and services to the town’s residents.

Elsmere must have future land use plans that provide for business growth opportunities.

To take measures to preserve quality of housing in Elsmere and to prevent the emergence of blighted areas in the future.

Encouraging redevelopment could help the town increase the quality of housing, and prevent areas from becoming blighted.

Be known as a town you may walk around—walking trails and a shopping district.

Land use planning needs to include walkability and connectivity to business opportunities for Elsmere to thrive. Used effectively, a zoning code can promote a pedestrian-friendly environment.

Continue to build upon “re-greening” efforts.

The “Re-greening” program is an objective in its own right, but it also supports other objectives, such as marketing a positive image of the town. Expanding utilization of parks and open space would also support this objective.

Be able to annex adjacent areas of land if desired.

The town would like to be able to annex land in its future land use plans.

Create connectivity between parks and open space.

Connectivity between parks and open space can contribute to community development in Elsmere.

Be viewed as “small-town Delaware with small-town values.”

By managing the type of development that takes place in the town, Elsmere can shape how they are viewed.

Market a positive image of the town.

Working with surrounding communities and state agencies can be an excellent forum in which to promote the town.

Acquire postal address for Elsmere.

Elsmere can enhance and develop its community by enhancing its sense of place and identity. Acquiring a postal address specifically for the town would help accomplish this.

**Recommendations**

Recommendation One: Review zoning code.

The zoning code should be reviewed to address issues such as residential densities, accessory dwellings, infill developments, nonconforming uses, historic structures, redevelopment, town-center creation, and other contemporary practices. The code can be used to encourage redevelopment activities, including the conversion of the Kirkwood Highway into a Main Street by allowing for mixed land uses.

Recommendation Two: Review general-industry category of zoning code.

The general-industry category should be reviewed in consideration of environmental constraints that hinder the development of existing general-industry-zoned areas. Some of these zoned areas have significant environmental constraints and may not be suitable for development. An analysis is needed to determine whether or not certain general-industry areas need to be rezoned to a different category. If so, this will necessitate a change to the future land use plan.

Recommendation Three: Review subdivision code.

The subdivision code should be reviewed to incorporate contemporary subdivision and design practices. In addition, the approval process should be reviewed with a goal of providing the town with digital data to help streamline recordkeeping.

Recommendation Four: Review zoning and subdivision codes re: environmental protection.

Both codes should be reviewed in order to enhance the town’s ability to provide increased protection of environmental resources, e.g., floodplains.

Recommendation Five: Flag lot.

The zoning code shall be amended to provide that flag lots are generally not permitted within the Town of Elsmere except when a variance is approved from the provisions of the zoning code prohibiting flag lots when such a variance will not be contrary to the public interest in the harmonious development of all areas of the Town in accordance with the appearance of each neighborhood, the preservation and

enhancement of natural features, the prevention of excess traffic flow and the maintenance of traffic safety, the preservation of property values in the Town, the maximum safe use and enjoyment of each owner's property, and that takes into account flood plain management.

Recommendation Six: Resolve issues concerning street names/addresses that are duplicated both inside and outside town limits.

There are street names and addresses that are the same in Elsmere, Wilmington, and/or New Castle County. This causes confusion with the provision of services and should be corrected.

Recommendation Seven: Focus on property maintenance.

The town should place an emphasis on citywide building inspections. These inspections will be systematic, consistent, and repeated periodically to ensure the property stock is properly maintained. Routine inspections can reduce blight, increase the aesthetic appeal of the town, and increase property values.

Recommendation Eight: New Road safety

Steps should be taken to improve the safety around New Road. It should be examined whether blocking it off entirely or creating a crossing would improve conditions.

Recommendation Nine: Convert Kirkwood Highway into the town's Main Street.

The portion of Kirkwood Highway that runs through Elsmere should be redeveloped into a Main Street. Elsmere does not qualify for the national Main Street program but would enter the Main Street Affiliate program. Elsmere should consider changes in traffic patterns that encourage pedestrian safety and are more compatible with a Main Street environment. This would include collaboration with DelDOT to implement controlled signage, traffic-calming measures, and a reduction in the speed limit along Elsmere's portion of Kirkwood Highway.

Recommendation Ten: Make the town more inviting and easy to navigate for consumers who are new to the town.

A prominent, overarching sign or banner gateway to the city ("Welcome to Elsmere") would be useful to separate Elsmere from the surrounding towns with the added benefit of decreasing the amount of truck and large-vehicle traffic through the city. An example of this can be found in Wilmington's Little Italy district, which features a sign that was constructed with the help of CDI Company. A town directory that lists the stores and services offered on Main Street should be posted at the entrances to the town. Banners hung on lampposts also attract attention and highlight Elsmere as a destination.

Recommendation Eleven: Expand the utilization of open space and parks.

Elsmere should develop greenway trails that link parks, public and cultural facilities, residential neighborhoods, and greenway trails inside and outside of the town. Park options, such as a skate park, an area for pets, and a farmers' market should be considered.

Recommendation Twelve: Consider state and county resources for historic preservation and redevelopment.

Elsmere should create a mechanism whereby the Town Council can recognize properties and structures of historic importance. This could include buildings and neighborhoods, such as the Victorian-style houses on Dupont Street and the Town Hall on Poplar Avenue. In addition, Elsmere should consider utilizing resources available through the State Historic Preservation Office and New Castle County historic-preservation program. These resources could assist the town in identifying historic structures and the mechanisms required to protect them.

Recommendation Thirteen: Consider creating a historic overlay district.

It will be important to handle these on a case-by-case basis and to work with the State Historic Preservation Office and the New Castle County Historic Preservation Planner in determining the fate of these buildings. The town can implement an effective program of historic preservation with the joint participation of individual citizens, interested voluntary organizations, and the town government.

Recommendation Fourteen: Direct development so that it is consistent with town values.

Manage future development in a manner that benefits Elsmere's citizens and the business community and is consistent with the residential character of the town. Two methods that could be used to achieve this include architectural guidelines and/or a design-review board. Directing development so that it is consistent with town values will require addressing redevelopment of aging housing stock.

Recommendation Fifteen: Create a "re-greening of Elsmere" program.

Implementing a re-greening program will have many benefits for Elsmere. It will (1) help to differentiate Elsmere from surrounding communities, (2) make the town more visually appealing, (3) attract businesses and residents to the area, and (4) may increase property values. Part of the re-greening effort should include a town budget for a tree-planting program and adoption of a tree-care ordinance that provides clear guidance to residents on planting, maintaining, and removing trees from streets, parks, and other public places. The Delaware Forest Service recommends that the Town of Elsmere develop a formal urban forestry-management plan that addresses a tree-canopy goal. A management plan would focus efforts in the town to care for and manage public trees.

Recommendation Sixteen: Make the town's architecture, especially in the downtown area, more appealing through the development of a business district plan.

The city should work with historic-preservation specialists to design a downtown that preserves the historical significance of the architecture while establishing a mobility-friendly design and encouraging pedestrian traffic. The architecture should be somewhat congruent, and the Main Street should be easily accessible by foot and by car. The storefronts that are currently located in former homes should not be altered, but maintained and enhanced.

Recommendation Seventeen: Publicize funding sources for redevelopment.

Grants, loans, and tax credits are available at both the state and national level for redevelopment activities. The first two programs listed below are operated by DSHA; the last is a federal program managed by DSHA. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Housing-Rehabilitation Loan Program:** This program offers loans up to \$35,000 at 3 percent interest rates to low- and moderate-income homeowners and landlords who rent to low-income tenants in order to make necessary State Housing Code repairs or ADA-compliance modifications.
- **Neighborhood-Revitalization Fund:** The goal of this program is to help entire communities restore their homes to State Housing Code standards. Neighborhoods and communities apply funds that their homeowners can access in the form of low-interest loans. Homeowners residing in approved neighborhoods can access deferred low-interest rate loans of up to \$35,000, and landlords can borrow up to \$25,000. At the time of this publication, the state was not accepting any new applications for this program.
- **Low-Income Housing Tax-Credit Program:** This statewide program provides a direct federal-income-tax credit to qualified owners and investors to build, acquire, or rehabilitate rental-housing units that will be rented to working, low-income Delawareans. It is more frequently used in larger multi-family developments but occasionally in more unique projects.

Recommendation Eighteen: Monitor for brownfield redevelopment opportunities.

Recommendation Nineteen: Review subdivision code to prevent negative infill development.

There is concern that some of the new houses built may appear to be too large for their lots and out of character with the building size, height, and setbacks of homes in the surrounding neighborhood. Sometimes, new buildings may have a negative impact on abutting properties by blocking access to sunlight, reducing open space, blocking views along the established streetscape, and possessing exterior architectural design characteristics that are inconsistent with the established neighborhood development pattern. By outlining what is acceptable and what is not, undesirable negative infill development can be prevented.

Recommendation Twenty: Investigate appropriate code amendments to address aged housing stock that cannot meet current regulations.

Improperly maintained aged-housing stock can lead to poor health conditions, be more susceptible to weather and fire-related incidents, and lower surrounding property values. Updating aged-housing stock to current standards is often unrealistic, cost prohibitive, and would threaten the character of the existing house. Thus, it is important to mitigate potential problems by finding proper code amendments that are adequate for these situations.

Recommendation Twenty-One: Discuss addressing tear-downs.

In some neighborhoods, conditions support tearing down existing buildings and building structures inconsistent with the neighborhood. Often, zoning district regulations that set generous limits on the maximum allowable building floor area, lot coverage, and building height have now become “the basis or standard for what is actually built,” rather than serving as a limit for house construction that is seldom reached.

Recommendation Twenty-Two: Initiate the development of an annexation strategy.

Initiate the development, as future conditions warrant, of an annexation strategy. This strategy should be developed in collaboration with New Castle County.

## Chapter 9. Intergovernmental Coordination

### 9-1. Description of Intergovernmental Relationships

The Town of Elsmere is involved in a series of intergovernmental relationships. Issues requiring intergovernmental coordination include stormwater management (TMDLs), transportation, housing, libraries, recreation programs, open space, emergency-management services, comprehensive planning, land-development activity, and public water supply. These activities involve agencies at the federal, state, county, and municipal level and coordination with private-sector companies. These agencies and companies include DelDOT, DNREC, OSPC, City of Wilmington, New Castle County, and the Artesian Water Company.

### 9-2. An Analysis and Comparison of Other Relevant Planning Documents

The future land use plan for Elsmere is compatible with the state's investment strategy and the 2007 New Castle County Comprehensive Development Plan (see *Map 4. Strategies for State Policies and Spending*). The majority of the interface between Elsmere, New Castle County, and the City of Wilmington consists of residential areas that are mostly built-out. The character and density of these areas are similar, and it is difficult to distinguish where one jurisdiction begins and another ends. The Neighborhood Comprehensive Development Plan for Southwest Wilmington (August 15, 1991) is also compatible with the proposed future land use plan for Elsmere. The WILMAPCO Regional Transportation Plan and the proposed future land use plan for Elsmere are compatible both in uses and intensity.

### 9-3. Goals and Recommendations

#### *Goals and Vision Statements*

To create a desirable and healthful environment in which to live and work.

Having a healthy and desirable environment will involve working with the state and neighboring jurisdictions.

To provide a coordinated pattern of land use that prevents the indiscriminate mixture of land uses and that provides for a concentration and clustering of uses to achieve harmony, order, and efficiency.

Land use planning must be coordinated with other governments to achieve desired results.

To take the measures to encourage the growth of Elsmere's economic base in order to provide for more job opportunities and a higher level of goods and services to the town's residents.

Economic development requires both a local and regional approach.

To provide a sound basis for local government operations and revenues and a viable opportunity for annexation.

Annexation of areas outside Elsmere will require dialogue with other jurisdictions.

Be a good place to live – people will want to live in Elsmere.

Crossing jurisdictional lines to benefit Elsmere will make the town a good place to live.

Be viewed as “small-town Delaware with small-town values.”

Intergovernmental cooperation will allow Elsmere to maintain its sense of place.

Maintain strong neighborhood relations.

In order to maintain and improve neighborhood relations, strong intergovernmental cooperation is needed to make sure governments that impact Elsmere are working towards common goals for the town.

Improve intergovernmental cooperation on transportation issues.

Transportation issues require a positive working relationship with WILMAPCO and DeIDOT.

Acquire own postal address.

Elsmere must work with the federal government to accomplish this goal.

### ***Recommendations***

Recommendation One: Increase intergovernmental coordination.

The town should continue to strengthen its intergovernmental-coordination activities by becoming more proactive with federal, state, county, and municipal agencies. The town should consider establishing a standing committee to analyze and pursue intergovernmental issues and opportunities.

Recommendation Two: Monitor state, county, and municipal planning activities.

The town should continue to strengthen its monitoring activities of various jurisdictions’ planning activities (e.g., state, county, and municipal). These activities include zoning map and text changes, subdivision and land-development plans, capital-improvement programs, and comprehensive plan revisions/updates. The town should consider executing memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with the Office of State Planning Coordination, City of Wilmington, and New Castle County in regards to the coordination of development activity.

## **Appendix. Maps**

- Map 1. Aerial View**
- Map 2. Roads and Boundaries**
- Map 3. Existing Land Use**
- Map 4. Strategies for State Policies and Spending**
- Map 5. Environmental Features**
- Map 6. Zoning**
- Map 7. Future Land Use**
- Map 8. Open Space**
- Map 9. Area of Concern**