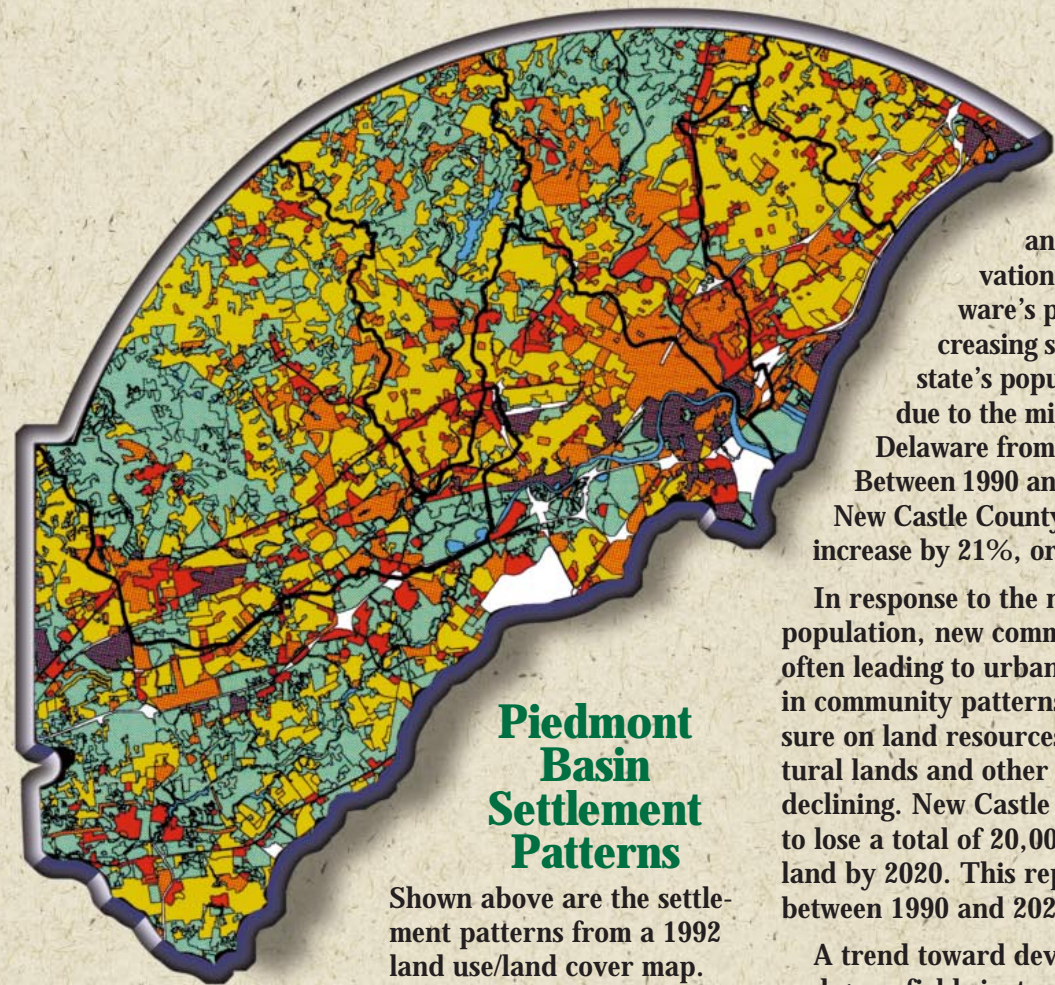


Land Use & Comprehensive Planning



Piedmont Basin Settlement Patterns

Shown above are the settlement patterns from a 1992 land use/land cover map.

- Transportation/Communication
- Other Urban Built-Up Land
- Undeveloped
- Water
- Basins
- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial

Indicators	1990	2020
Population	443,580	538,426
Agricultural Land	87,134 acres	67,134 acres
Automobile Trips	91% of total trips	95% of total trips
Public Transit Trips	3% of total trips	1% of total trips

New Castle County is at a crossroads in maintaining a balance between development and environmental preservation. Since the 1960s, Delaware's population has been increasing steadily. In the 1980s, the state's population grew substantially due to the migration of people to Delaware from neighboring states. Between 1990 and 2020, the population of New Castle County alone is expected to increase by 21%, or nearly 100,000 people.

In response to the needs of an ever-growing population, new communities were developed, often leading to urban sprawl. Such changes in community patterns have put added pressure on land resources in Delaware. Agricultural lands and other open spaces are fast declining. New Castle County is expected to lose a total of 20,000 acres in agricultural land by 2020. This represents a 23% decrease between 1990 and 2020.

A trend toward developing open spaces and greenfields instead of directing growth to abandoned, vacant, or underutilized properties (commonly referred to as *brownfields*) also exists. The City of Wilmington alone contains 10.8 square miles of brownfields.

Transportation trends also foretell increasing land-use pressures. Current trends denote less reliance on public transportation and greater reliance on private automobile trips. It is expected that by the year 2020, trips made by automobiles will rise to 95% of total trips (a 4.4% increase compared to 1990). Also, public transit trips will decrease by 66% in 2020. As a consequence, traffic congestion will triple.

KEY ISSUES/GOALS FOR DELAWARE

In response to the growing concern about the viability of comprehensive planning to direct and manage new development and make land-use decisions, the Delaware General Assembly enacted Senate Bill 116 in June 1995. Through this act, known as "Shaping Delaware's Future," the state began to exert a direct role in the land-use planning process. "Shaping Delaware's Future" established the following 10 goals to improve the effectiveness of land-use decisions made by state and local governments:

1. Direct state investment and future development to existing communities, urban concentrations, and designated growth areas.
2. Protect important farmlands from ill-advised development.
3. Protect critical natural resource areas from ill-advised development.
4. Develop methods for assessing the fiscal impact and cost-benefit of development that can be used by both state and local governments when considering land-use policies and infrastructure.
5. Streamline regulatory processes and provide flexible incentives and disincentives to encourage growth in desired areas.
6. Encourage redevelopment and improve livability of existing communities and urban areas, and guide new employment into underused commercial and industrial sites.
7. Provide high-quality employment opportunities for citizens, and attract and retain a diverse economic base.
8. Protect the state's water supplies, open spaces, farmlands, and communities by encouraging revitalization of existing water and wastewater systems and the construction of new systems.
9. Promote mobility for people and goods through a balanced, multi-modal transportation system.
10. Provide access to educational opportunities and health care for all Delawareans.



New Castle County is expected to lose 20,000 acres in agricultural lands by the year 2020.

Challenges for the Future

The following land-use goals have been identified for Delaware's Piedmont Basin:

- ◆ Connect land use with environmental quality, and support ecologically oriented planning.
- ◆ Link transportation to land use, and improve mobility.
- ◆ Support revitalization of brownfields.
- ◆ Protect vital farmland, open spaces, and natural resources.
- ◆ Enhance land-use planning and decision making through the use of new tools such as the Geographic Information System (GIS), with its layers of maps and data.
- ◆ Continue cooperation and coordination between state and local planning authorities in making land-use decisions.