

Town of **Blades**

Comprehensive Plan



prepared by



Institute for Public Administration
College of Human Services, Education & Public Policy
University of Delaware

The Town of Blades Comprehensive Plan

**Approved by the Blades Planning Commission
and the Blades Town Council**

September 2002

Prepared by the Town of Blades
Planning Commission

with assistance from the

University of Delaware
Institute for Public Administration
College of Human Services, Education, and Public Policy

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Town, County, and State Officials

Town of Blades

Council of Blades

Mr. B.J. Hardin, Mayor
Mr. Russell T. Joseph, Vice Mayor
Mr. Donald Trice, Councilperson
Mr. David L. Ruff, Councilperson
Mr. Wayne Chaffinch, Councilperson

Planning Commission

Mr. B.J. Hardin – Chair
Mr. David Ruff – Housing Commissioner
Mr. Martin Evans, Planning Commissioner
Mr. Wayne Chaffinch, Planning Commissioner
Mr. Edward Whaley, Planning Commissioner
Ms. Ellen Nelson, Planning Commissioner

Town Staff

Ms. Julie A. Chelton, Town Administrator
Mr. Glenn S. Condon, Chief of Police
Mr. Dewey Evans, Captain, Police Department
Mr. Earl E. Chaffich, Jr., Technician, Water Department
Mr. Michael Vonthenen, Code Enforcement Officer
Ms. Cheryl Ruff, Administrative Assistant

Sussex County

Mr. Dale Dukes, County Council Member, First District
Mr. Robert Stickles, County Administrator
Mr. Lawrence Lank, County Planning Director

State of Delaware

The Honorable Ruth Ann Minner, Governor
The Honorable Robert L. Venables, Sr., Senator, Twenty First District
The Honorable Tina Fallon, Representative, Thirty Ninth District
Ms. Connie Holland, AICP, State Planning Director

Institute for Public Administration

This plan was prepared by the Institute for Public Administration of the College of Human Services, Education & Public Policy at the University of Delaware. The Institute links the research and resources of the University of Delaware with the management and information needs of local, state, and regional governments in the Delaware Valley. The Institute provides assistance to agencies and local governments through direct staff assistance and research projects as well as training programs and policy forums.

Jerome R. Lewis is the director of the Institute. David L. Edgell, AICP, served as project manager, coordinated efforts of the staff, was the Institute liaison with officials and staff from the Town of Blades, and served as the primary author of the plan. Stephanie Moody, Rachel Garrison, and William Fasano assisted with various portions of the planning process and wrote portions of the text. The Water Resources Agency developed the maps and Geographic Information System for the plan. A number of staff from the IPA Planning Services Team reviewed and edited drafts of this document.

Institute Director

Jerome R. Lewis, Ph.D.

Blades Comprehensive Plan Team

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Other Collaborators

Ann Marie Townshend, Principal Planner, Office of State Planning Coordination

Staff Review Team

Mr. Edgell wishes to thank the following IPA staff members, who reviewed drafts of this plan and provided valuable comments and ideas: Lori Athey, Mark Deshon, Ed O'Donnell, Linda Raab and Martin Wollaston.

The Authority to Plan

The preparation of a comprehensive development plan is the legal responsibility of the Town of Blades planning commission under Delaware enabling legislation. Title 22 of the Delaware Code Chapter 7 Section 702 specifies that

"[a] planning commission established in any incorporated city or town under this chapter shall make a comprehensive development plan for the development of the entire area of such city or town or of such part or parts thereof as said commission may deem advisable."

Section 702 also establishes the contents of such a comprehensive development plan as the following:

"Such comprehensive development plan shall show, among other things, existing proposed public ways streets bridges, tunnels, viaducts, parks, parkways, playgrounds, sites for public buildings and structures, pierhead and bulkhead lines, waterways, routes of railroads and buses, locations of sewers, water mains and other public utilities, and other appurtenances of such a plan including certain private ways."

Section 703 provides additional legal authority for the planning commission as stated:

"The planning commission shall have the full power and authority to make such investigations, maps and reports of the resources, possibilities and needs of the city or town as it deems desirable..."

In 2000, the Mayor and Council of the Town of Blades received a Limited Funding Pool of the Infrastructure Planning Assistance Fund grant from the Governors' Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues. The following excerpts from the grant application define the requirements for the grant:

"The Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Blades will include an analysis of the Town's demographic data as well as a statement of the Town's position on growth, expansion of its boundaries, development of adjacent areas outside the Town of Blades, potential for redevelopment and revitalization within the Town, and the overall character of the Town. The Comprehensive Plan will also address critical community issues, including the condition and adequacy of transportation infrastructure, water and wastewater facilities, affordable housing, health and welfare services, public safety, recreation and open space, and economic development."

Part 1

Background Information

Chapter 1-1 Introduction

Preface

The Town of Blades Comprehensive Plan has several purposes. The planning project that led to the creation of this document was initiated by the town in response to a variety of growth, development, transportation, and annexation issues resulting from the new marina currently being built within Blades and increasing levels of urban growth both within and around Blades.

The plan serves as an official statement about the future of the town. First and foremost, the plan is a unified advisory document to the Council and the Planning Commission on land use and growth issues. It should be used to guide future development decisions, re-zonings, annexations, and capital improvements throughout the town.

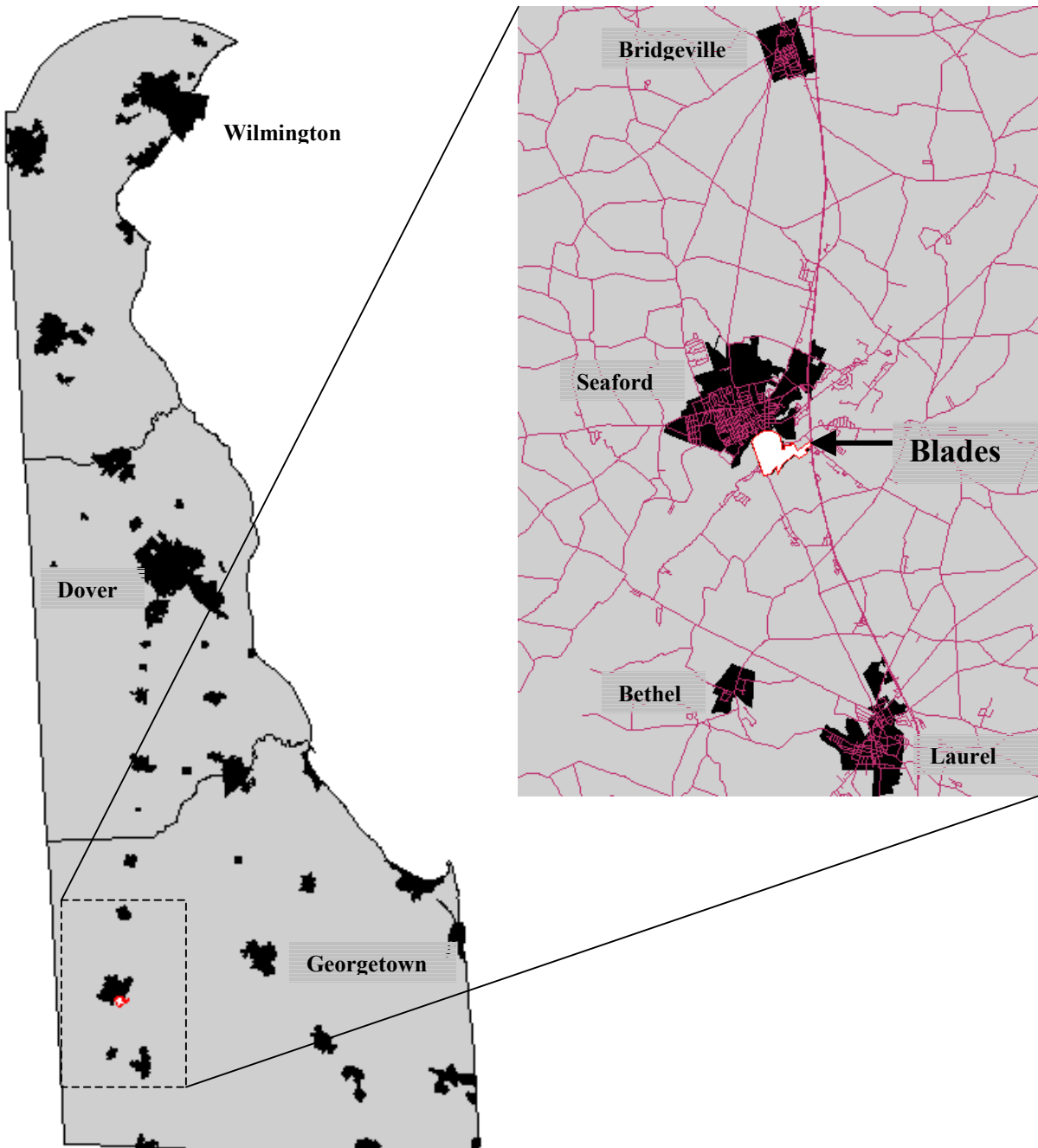
The plan is also an informational document for the public. Citizens, business people, and government officials can turn to the plan to learn more about Blades, and its policies for future land use decisions. Potential new residents can use the documents as an informational resource about the town, its characteristics and facilities to help them make decisions about moving to Blades. This document contains the most current information on population, transportation, housing, employment and the environment, which will be of interest to land developers, economic development professionals, and financiers.

Finally, the Blades Comprehensive Plan is a legal document. The Delaware Code specifies that “. . . any incorporated municipality under this chapter shall prepare a comprehensive plan for the city or town or portions thereof as the commission deems appropriate.” The code further specifies that, “after a comprehensive plan or portion thereof has been adopted by the municipality in accordance with this chapter, the comprehensive plan shall have the force of law and no development shall be permitted except as consistent with the plan.” (§ 702, Title 22, Delaware Code)

Location

The Town of Blades is located on the south shores of the Nanticoke River in western Sussex County, Delaware. Blades is adjacent to Seaford, Delaware, at its northern boundary. Blades is near U.S. Route 13, at a point that is 21 miles north of Salisbury, Maryland, and 39 miles south of Dover, Delaware.

Map 1. Blades Location Map



History of Blades

The Town of Blades was one of the last municipalities to be incorporated in the State of Delaware. In 1910, Blades was granted a charter by the Delaware General Assembly and officially became the Town of Bladesville. The Town of Bladesville officially became the Town of Blades in 1929 when the Bladesville and Seaford post offices were consolidated in order to facilitate a new mail home delivery system. Although incorporation did not take place until 1910, the town itself is likely as old as its sister community, Seaford.

During the mid 1800s, the Pennsylvania Railroad arrived in Seaford. Around 1850, a railroad employee named James Blades purchased a tract of land that includes the present Causeway and the area corresponding to High and Market Streets in Blades. Shortly thereafter, several local families settled in James Blades's community. For the convenience of the fledgling community, James Blades opened a small store on a street formerly known as Concord Road, at what is now the intersection of Market and High Streets. This tract of land later came to be known as Bladesville after its owner.

By 1870 Bladesville had acquired a church and a school. The Methodist church was located on Concord Road. The first school, founded in 1870 at East Second and Cannon Streets, consisted of a few elementary grades.

In 1910 when Bladesville was chartered, Henry Riggin became the town's first mayor. By the time that Bladesville was incorporated, a new school had been built to replace the original one-room schoolhouse. The new school building was constructed on the hill at West Fourth Street, which is now occupied by the town hall. The new two-room school was later expanded to three rooms and eventually provided the equivalent of a seventh-grade education. Eighth grade and high school classes were conducted in Seaford.

Through the early 1900s, the Town of Bladesville generally attracted artisans who worked in Seaford. Blades produced many fine craftsman who were well known in this area, including furniture-makers, carpenters, masons, painters, and well-drillers. The Blades area was also sparsely populated with farmers, although the soil was fairly sandy, forcing them to locate on the inland portions of the town. However, when the trucking industry began to replace the railroad as the principal method of hauling freight, many Blades residents entered the field of trucking.

Blades seniors recall a close-knit village of quiet tree-lined streets, graded with oyster shells. A unique civic attraction that Bladesville residents were proud of was a musical group known as the Blades Concert Band. The Blades band pre-dated the Seaford Band. The Blades Band was organized, trained, and conducted by Charles Robinson, a local merchant who later lived in Seaford. Charles Robinson was the father of the renowned Wright W. Robinson, former editor and publisher of the *Seaford Leader*.

As the Town of Blades grew, its business expanded. At one time there were seven grocery stores in Blades. One of the most well-known stores was operated in Blades by Clarence Chipman and his son Alan for a period of 76 years.

The Blades Volunteer Fire Company has been in operation since 1934, when it began operation out of a one-car garage on West High Street. Soon thereafter a firehouse and fully equipped company came into being. The second firehouse, located on East Second Street, was used until 1974, when a larger and more modern structure was dedicated on East Fifth Street. The new fire building is located near Blades School, which was built in 1952. The new school, constructed at cost of \$200,000 was partially funded by the Blades School District, which raised \$20,000. The remainder of construction costs was funded by a special state appropriation. Today Blades School is part of the Seaford Special School District. It provides elementary classes and has complete facilities including a cafeteria, recreation hall, and outdoor recreational activities.

In 1948 Delaware's first female mayor was elected in the Town of Blades. Margaret Hastings assumed the office after a lively campaign by a close margin of nine votes. She was the first Republican to hold the office in many years. Mayor Hastings was very active in the Republican Party and was named a delegate to two National Republican Conventions. She was later honored by President Nixon at the International Conference for Women in 1979 for her dedication to the international women's movement. Mayor Hastings also became the first Delaware woman to be awarded a license to drive a school bus. Her political clout opened a door for thousands of women school bus drivers of the future.

In 1981, the citizens of Blades voted to improve the water and sewage facilities by establishing a central water supply and tying all town properties into the Seaford Sewer System. In February of 1982, these projects were completed. Since then the town has enjoyed a modern, safe, clean, and sanitary municipal water supply and sewer system.

Today, the Town of Blades is a tranquil, residential community, keenly interested in preserving the good life that has become a tradition in Sussex County. As we have seen, Blades has an illustrious history and is working toward a better tomorrow.

Town of Blades 1978 Comprehensive Plan

Brown Associates, a planning consultant from Dover, completed the first comprehensive plan prepared for the Town of Blades in 1978. The 1978 plan includes an introductory chapter on the planning process, two detailed chapters on Blades "existing environment" (including climate, the natural environment, demographics, and urban development suitability), a set of planning goals, and finally "A Plan for Community Development Policy and Objectives". Although there are a number of maps in the document, the land use map has been misplaced over the years.

As the title of the final chapter suggests, the 1978 plan relied mostly on written policy statements rather than on maps. The plan included recommendations regarding land use, housing, economic development, community services, parks and open space, transportation, and government management.

One of the primary recommendations in the plan was the adoption of zoning regulations and a zoning map. The town accomplished this shortly after the plan was adopted, and it appears that the zoning map generally corresponds to the recommendations found in the text of the land use section of the plan. The town still uses this zoning map and ordinance today

The town has also accomplished a number of other substantial recommendations since 1978. Most notable of these accomplishments are the provision of public water and sewer service to Blades residents, and the development of Blades Community Park.

Chapter 1-2 Community Profile

Introduction

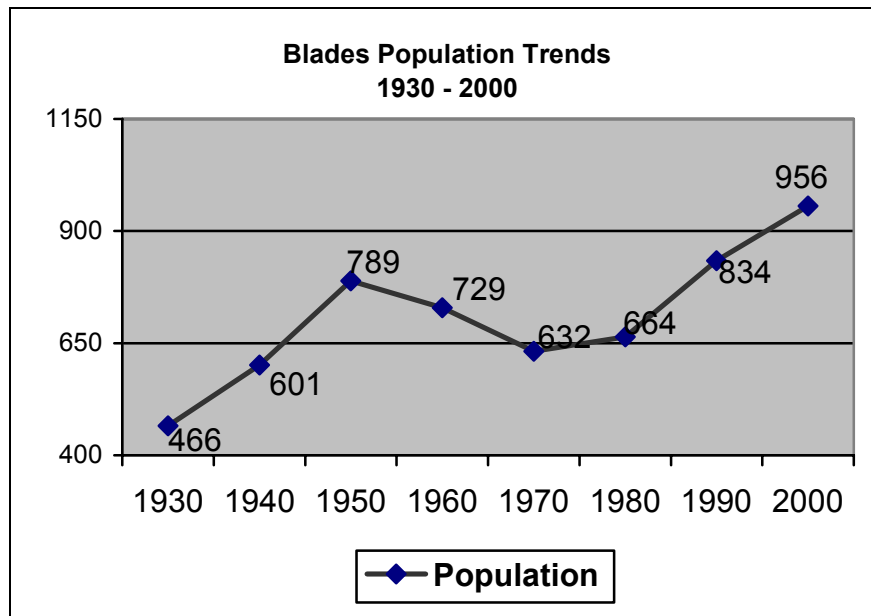
This chapter outlines data on population, demography, housing, and economic conditions in Blades and the surrounding areas. Where appropriate, comparisons are also made to Sussex County and the State of Delaware. The data for this analysis have been derived from a number of sources, most notably the United States Census.

Total Population

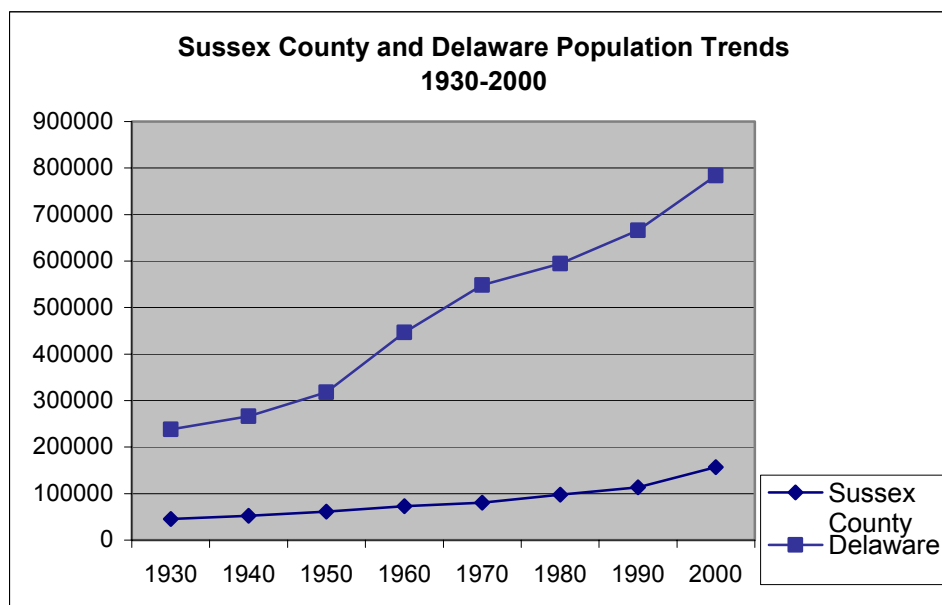
Chart 1 depicts the population trends in Blades from 1930 to 2000 using US Census data. As the chart shows from 1930 to 1990 the population in the state and the Sussex County has been steadily increasing, while the population in Blades has varied when compared to county and state trends. The town population initially peaked at 789 in the 1940s, then steadily declined through 1970. The town's population remained generally static throughout the 1970's and then began a continuous pattern of growth throughout the past two decades.

In 1990 there were 834 people living in the Town of Blades. The total population for Sussex County was 113,229, and 666,168 for the State of Delaware. Compared with the population in 1980, there was an increase of 25.6% for the town, an increase of 15.5% for Sussex County, and an increase of 12.1% for the State of Delaware. During this period Blades increased its population at a much faster rate than either the State or the County. This population influx is likely due to the quiet atmosphere and availability of affordable housing within the town. These factors, when combined with public sewer and water systems, create desirable conditions for the combination of young families and retired seniors who tend to reside in Blades.

Census 2000 data show a further increase in population for the Town, as well as the State and the County. During the 1990s the State of Delaware grew by 17.3% to 783,600, and Sussex County grew by 38.3% to 156,638. Blades grew more slowly than the State or the County but still increased its population by 14.6% to 956 in 2000.

Chart 1. Blades Population Trends

Source: US Census 1930 to 2000. Compiled by IPA

Chart 2. Sussex County and Delaware Population Trends

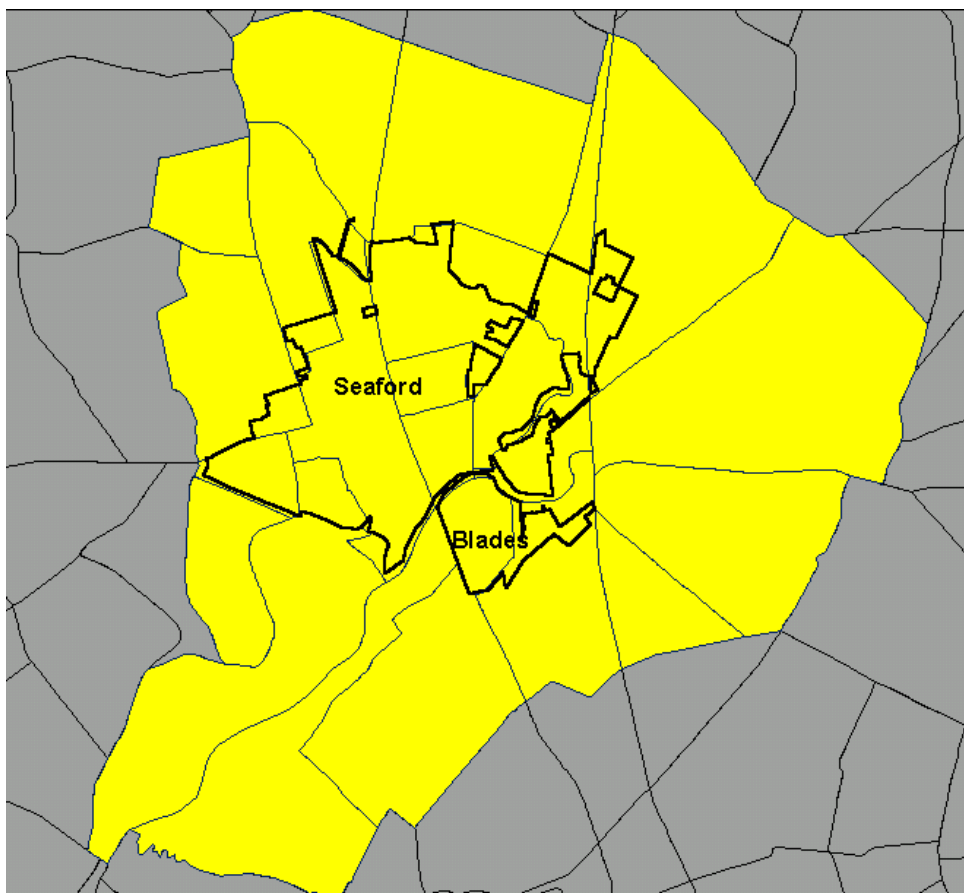
Source: US Census 1930 to 2000. Compiled by IPA

Population Projections

Assuming that the town does not annex a significant amount of new territory, it is possible to estimate the future population. However, projections for small populations (Blades) are very difficult to prepare accurately. The small size of the population makes it likely that slight inaccuracies or data errors in the current Census figures can become very large errors when projected into the future. ***These projections should not be considered accurate or binding and should be relied upon with caution.***

We have prepared two very simple population projections for Blades. The first method is a conservative projection we have labeled the “Low Projection.” The University of Delaware’s Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research prepares a series of population projections for the Delaware Department of Transportation based on small geographic areas called “Modified Grids.” These projections are used for transportation planning purposes. We have selected a group of modified grids that correspond to the area surrounding the town that includes Blades, Seaford, and the surrounding areas. This area is shown on Map 2 which may be found below.

Map 2. Blades and Seaford Area Modified Grid Study Area



Source: Draft Population, Employment, and Household Projections for Sussex County prepared by the Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research at the University of Delaware under contract with the Delaware Department of Transportation, 2001. Blades and Seaford Area delineated by IPA for purposes of this plan.

The population of the Blades and Seaford Area shown on Map 2 is estimated to be 15,241 in the year 2000. Blades's population in 2000 (956) is 6.3% of the Blades Area. Table one depicts the Low Projection, which assumes that the town will continue to make up 6.3% of the Blades and Seaford Area through the year 2025.

Table 1. Blades Low Population Projection – Town as 6.3% of the Blades and Seaford Area

	2000	2025
Blades and Seaford Area	15,241	17,528
Town (6.3%)	956	1,104
Pop. Increase	***	+44

Sources: US Census, 2000; Draft Population, Household, and Employment Projections for Sussex County, prepared by the Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research at the University of Delaware under contract with the Delaware Department of Transportation, 2001. Blades and Seaford Area delineated by IPA for purposes of this plan. Projection by IPA.

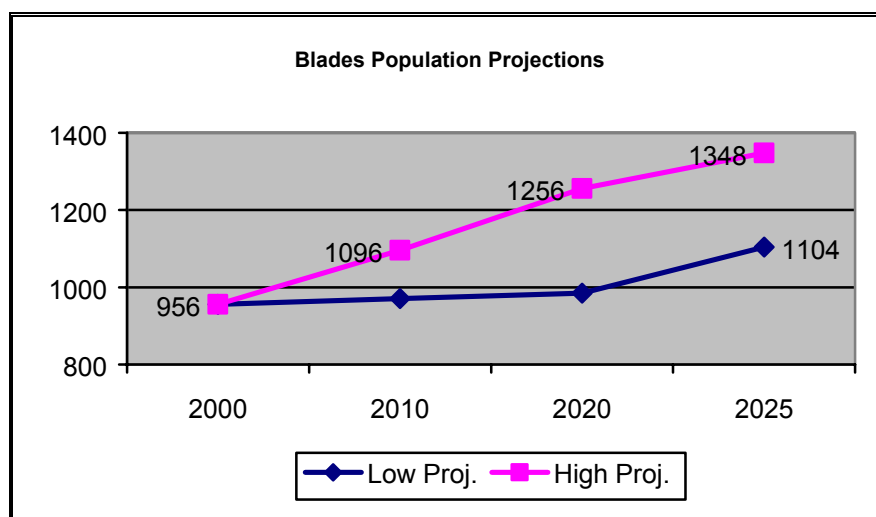
The second population projection is called the “High Projection.” In this projection, we have assumed that the growth rates for each decade will be 14.6%, which was the town's rate of population growth between 1990 and 2000.

Table 2. Blades High Population Projection – 14.6% Decennial Growth Rates

	2000	2010	2020
Population	956	1096	1256
Pop. Increase	***	+140	+160

Source: US Census 1990, 2000. Projection by IPA.

Chart 3. Blades Population Projections



Sources: US Census, 1990 and 2000; Draft Population, Household, and Employment Projections for Sussex County, prepared by the Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research at the University of Delaware under contract with the Delaware Department of Transportation. Projections by IPA.

It appears reasonable to assume that Blades's population will grow by between 44 and 392 persons over the course of the next 25 years. This assumes that the town's boundaries stay relatively static over this time period. Blades's population could substantially increase if the town annexes adjacent land that is then developed as residential units.

Racial Composition

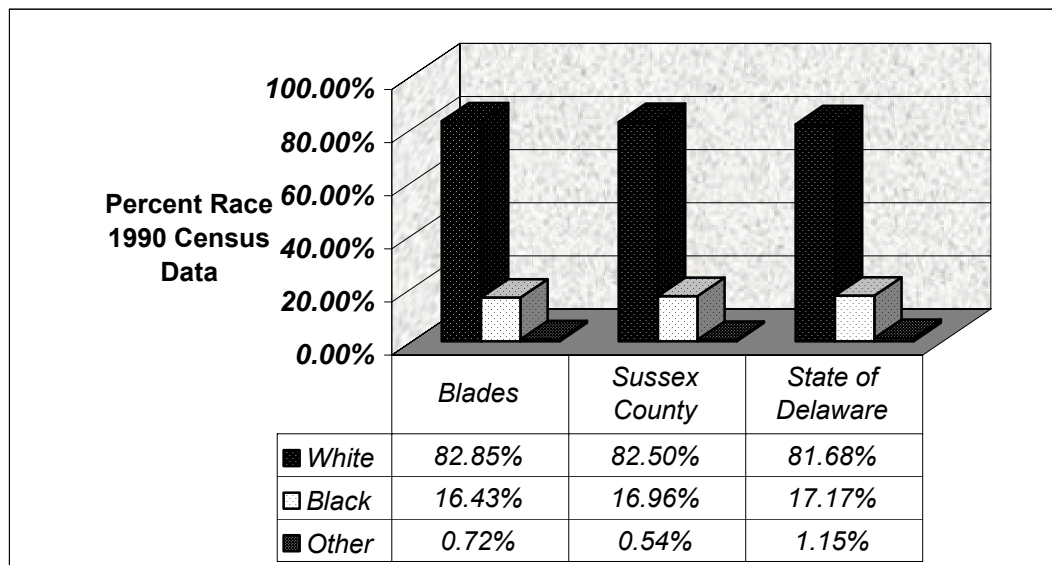
Charts 4 and 5 compare the racial composition of Blades, Sussex County, and the State. In 1990, Sussex County and the State of Delaware showed a very similar racial composition: Sussex County's population included 82.5% white, 16.96% black and 0.54% other; and the State of Delaware's population included 81.68% white, 17.17% black and 1.15% other.

The recently released Census 2000 Redistricting Data indicates that both Sussex County and the State of Delaware became more diverse over the past decade.¹ Sussex County's white population decreased by 2.15% during the 1990's. At the same time, Sussex County's black population decreased by 2.07%. The increase in diversity was principally due to a 4.22% increase in the population of people who are neither white nor black. The State of Delaware, as a whole, had a much greater increase in non-white populations (7.05%) than the County. The State's black population increased from 17.17% to 19.23% and the population of races other than white or black increased from 1.15% to 6.15%.

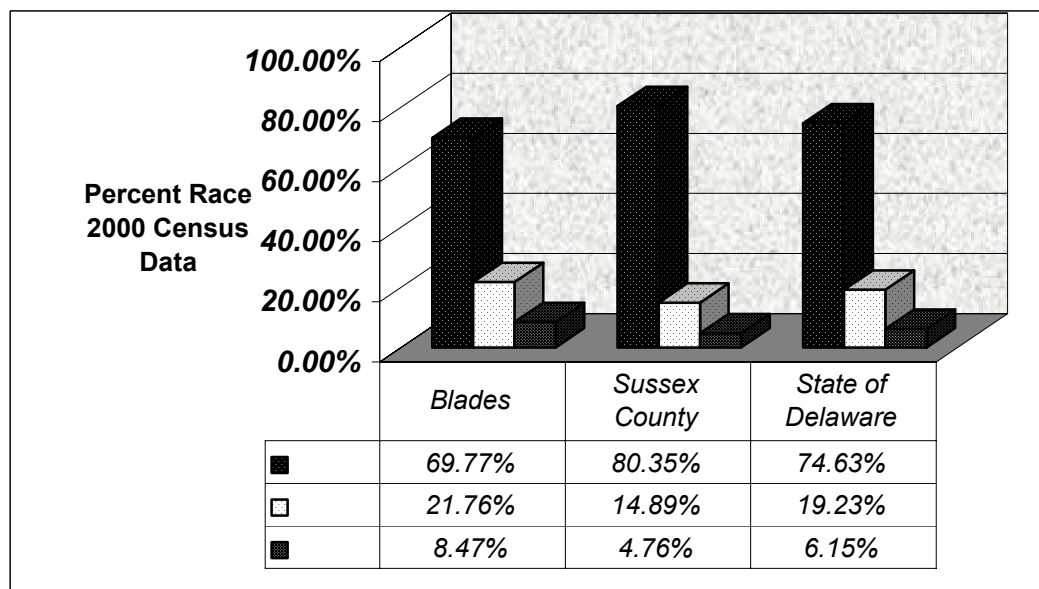
Blades's racial composition was very similar to that of both the County and the State in 1990. The proportions of the population for all groups were within one percentage point of both the county and the state (82.85% white, 16.43% black and 0.72% other).

However, 2000 Census Data indicates that Blades has become more diverse than either the County or the State during the 1990s. The white population has decreased to 69.77%, a net percentage change of -13.08%. The population of black residents has increased to 21.76%, a net percentage change of 5.33%. The population of those of other races has increased to 8.47%, a net percentage change of 7.75%.

¹ The 2000 Census methodology for recording race changed from the 1990 Census. A category was added which allowed respondents to answer "two or more races" when reporting their race. Thus, the 1990 and 2000 figures cannot be directly compared without acknowledging this disparity. This new category may have contributed to the increase in the population of "other races" discussed in the text and shown in the charts.

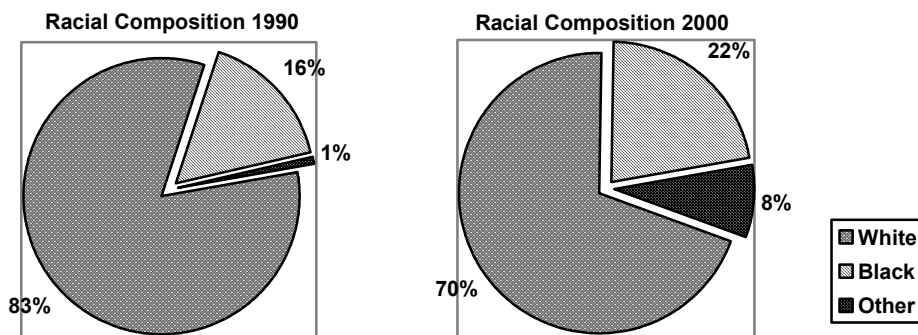
Chart 4. Census 1990 Racial Composition of Blades, Sussex County, and Delaware

Source: 1990 US Census

Chart 5. Census 2000 Racial Composition of Blades, Sussex County, and Delaware

Source: 2000 US Census

Charts 6 and 7. Change in Blades's Racial Composition 1990-2000

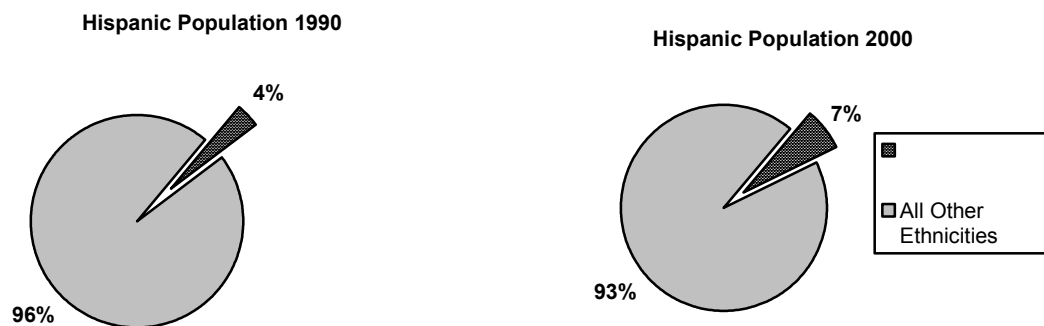


Sources: 1990 and 2000 US Census

Hispanic Population

Blades's Hispanic population nearly doubled during the 1990s. In the 1990 Census, 29 people, or 3.50% of those living in Blades, were of Hispanic origin. The Hispanic population had grown to 63 by the year 2000, or about 6.59% of the town's population. The proportion of Hispanics living in Blades is higher than the State or the County. (Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race).

Charts 8 and 9. Blades's Hispanic Population in 1990 and 2000



Source: US Census, 1990 and 2000

Table 3. Hispanic Population Growth and Comparison – 1990 and 2000

	Blades		Sussex County		State of Delaware	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Population	29	63	1221	6915	15151	37277
Percent (of total population)	3.50%	6.59%	1%	4.4%	2.2%	4.8%

Note: Persons of Hispanic Origin may be of any race

Source: US Census, 1990 and 2000

Age Profile

Table 4 presents age profiles for Blades, Sussex County, and Delaware. Blades has maintained a somewhat younger population than either the State of Delaware or Sussex County. Census 2000 indicates that the median age of Blades is 32.7 years. This is 3.7 years younger than that for Sussex County (36.4) and .2 years younger than that of the State of Delaware (32.9).

In 1990, School age children (ages 5-17) accounted for 159 residents, with a total child population (ages 0-17) of 234, or 28.3% of all residents. The percentage of children was more than both Sussex County and the State of Delaware (23.9% and 24.5% respectively).

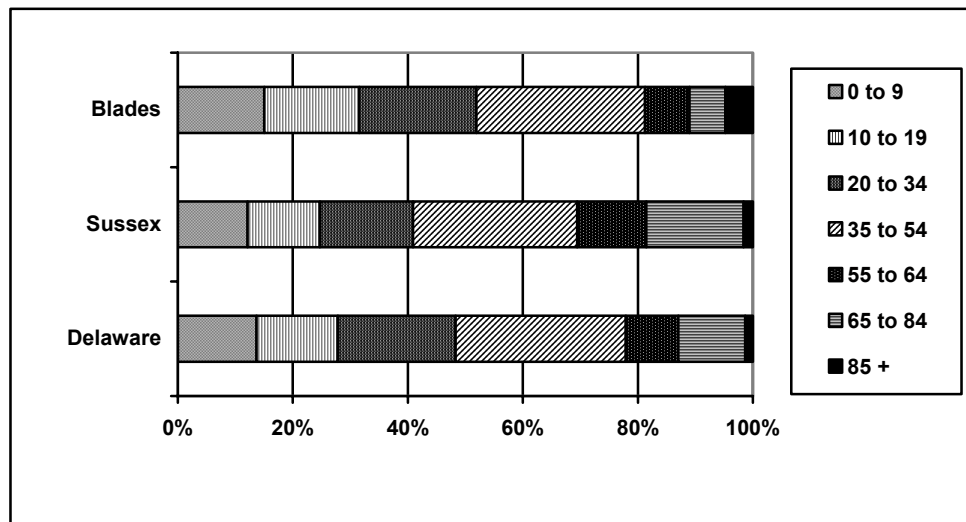
The 2000 Census indicates that the population of school aged children and young adults (5-19 years) had increased to from 185 to 249, or 26.1% of the total population. This is also significantly higher than the State of Delaware (21.3%) and Sussex County (20%).

The population of young, working aged adults was more concentrated in Blades in 2000 than in Sussex County or the State of Delaware. There were 303 individuals in this age group, which represented 21.3% of the total population in the Town. There were relatively fewer individuals in this age group in Sussex County (16.2%) and the State (20.5%).

Table 4. Age Profiles for Blades, Sussex County, and Delaware, 2000

Age	Delaware		Sussex County		Town of Blades	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<5	51,531	6.6%	9,009	5.8%	66	6.9%
5-9	55,813	7.1%	9,960	6.4%	84	8.8%
10-14	55,274	7.1%	10,250	6.5%	87	9.1%
15-19	55,632	7.1%	9,480	6.1%	78	8.2%
20-24	51,665	6.6%	7,556	4.8%	52	5.4%
25-34	108,840	13.9%	17,811	11.4%	152	15.9%
35-44	127,601	16.3%	23,425	15.0%	170	17.8%
45-54	103,999	13.3%	21,312	13.6%	123	12.9%
55-59	39,320	5.0%	9,615	6.1%	40	4.2%
60-64	32,199	4.1%	9,198	5.9%	37	3.9%
65-74	56,415	7.2%	17,091	10.9%	47	4.9%
75-84	34,762	4.4%	9,362	6.0%	15	1.6%
85+	10,549	1.3%	2,569	1.6%	5	0.5%

Source: 2000 US Census

Chart 10. Age Profiles for Blades, Sussex County, and Delaware, 2000

Source: 2000 Census, Compiled by IPA

Educational Attainment

In 1990, the level of education of Blades's population is lower than the average of the County and the State. According to the 1990 Census, 54.2 percent of Blades residents 25 years old and older were high school graduates, had attended college or were college graduates. In comparison, 69.7 percent of Sussex County residents, and 77.5 percent of Delaware residents reported that they had received a high school diploma, attended college or received a college degree. 6.4 percent of Blades residents had earned a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 13.4 percent for Sussex County and 21.4 percent for the state.

Table 4. Educational Attainment

Jurisdiction	High school graduate or higher	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Blades	54.2%	6.4%
Sussex County	69.7%	13.4%
State of Delaware	77.5%	21.4%

Source: 1990 Census, Compiled by IPA

Housing

This section describes Blades's housing stock. Table 5 compares changes in the number of dwelling units in Blades, Sussex County, and the State of Delaware as recorded by the US Census. Between 1970 and 1980, all three jurisdictions increased their housing stock, but the rate of growth in the State and the County was much higher than Blades. Between 1980 and 1990, Blades grew at a rate similar to the County and greater than that of the State. But from 1990 to 2000, there was a net increase of 44 new dwelling units added to the town, which is an increase of 12.6%. A portion of these dwelling units were new units constructed within the town boundaries, yet some (11) were unaccounted for in the town's building records. This perhaps implies an inaccuracy in Census data. It is likely that these 11 units were already present in 1990 but were not counted. During the 1990s, Blades's housing stock grew by 12.6%. This was a less than half the growth rate of Sussex County (25.3%), and was also significantly less than that of the State (18.3%).

The following two tables detail the changes in Blades's housing stock from 1970 to 2000.

Table 5. Dwelling Units in Blades, Sussex County, and Delaware, 1960-2000

Year	Blades	Change	Sussex County	Change	Delaware	Change
1970	243	***	34,287	***	180,233	***
1980	261	7.4%	54,694	59.5%	238,611	32.4%
1990	349	33.7%	74,253	35.8%	289,919	21.5%
2000	393*	12.6%	93,070	25.3%	343,072	18.3%

Sources: US Census 1960 – 2000. Compiled by IPA.

Table 6. Net Dwelling Unit Increase in Blades, 1990 to 2000

Unit Type	Status	Number of Units
Single Family Detached	Constructed	34
Single Family Detached	Annexed	0
Single Family Detached	Demolished	1
Single Family Attached	Constructed	0
Apartments	Constructed	0
Apartments	Annexed	0
<i>Net Increase, 1990 to 2000</i>		33*

Source: 2000 data for the Town of Blades is derived from the Town of Blades building permit and annexation records. Compiled by IPA.

*Preliminary housing data from the 2000 Census reports a net increase of 44 housing units. However, this discrepancy may be a result of inaccurate counts during the 1990 Census.

Type of Housing Stock

Single-family dwelling units are the predominant type of dwelling in Blades. In 1990, 77.1% of all housing units were single-family detached or attached dwelling units. This number is higher than that in both Sussex County and Delaware: the corresponding percentage of single-family homes is 65.5% for Sussex County and 63.2% for the State. During the 1990s, 34 new single-family units were constructed in the town. The net increase was 33 single-family units when taking into consideration the unit that was demolished between 1990 and 2000.

The other significant style of housing in Blades is multi-family units (apartments). In 1990 there were 60 apartment units in the town, which comprised 17.2% of the housing stock. During the 1990s, no multi-family units were constructed or annexed into the town. Because, there was a net increase in single-family detached homes, the apartment portion of the town's housing stock has decreased to 15.7%.

The town questions the 1990 Census determination that there are 12 mobile homes within the town boundaries. Town records do not indicate the presence of these units, nor were they located during the land use survey conducted by IPA in 2001 as a part of this planning effort. There is a community of mobile homes just west of the town on River Road, and it is possible that these units were mistakenly calculated inside of the municipal boundaries by the Census.

Table 7. Composition of Housing Stock: Blades, Sussex County, and Delaware in 1990

Housing Type	Blades	% of total	Sussex County	% of total	Delaware	% of total
Single Family Detached	269	77.1%	42,525	57.3%	155805	53.7%
Single Family, Attached	3	<1%	3,381	4.6%	40576	14.0%
Multi-Family	60	17.2%	6,765	8.9%	56679	19.5%
Mobile Homes★	12	3.4%	21,140	28.5%	34726	12.0%
Other	5	1.4%	442	<1%	2133	<1%
Total	349	100%	74253	100%	289919	100%

Source: 1990 US Census.

★ The presence of these 12 mobile homes within the town boundaries cannot be verified.

Table 8. Composition of Housing Stock, Blades, 2000

Housing Type	Blades	% of total
Single Family Detached	302	79.1%
Single Family, Attached	3	<1%
Multi-Family	60	15.7%
Mobile Homes★	12	3.1%
Other	5	1.3%
Total	382**	100%

Sources: US Census 1990. 2000 data for the Town of Blades is derived from the Town of Blades building permit and annexation records. Compiled by IPA.

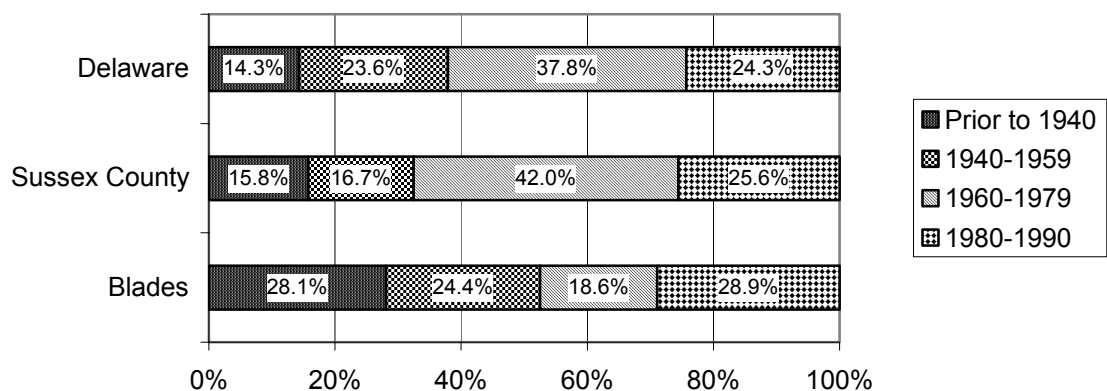
** Census 2000 reports a total of 393 housing units, housing type data was not available for the 11 units that could not be accounted for using building permit records.

★ The presence of these 12 mobile homes within the town boundaries cannot be verified.

Age of Housing Stock

As of the publication of this plan draft (July 2002) the detailed housing data from the 2000 Census has not been released. The release of this data is due by September of 2002. For the purposes of the following sections regarding housing, the 1990 Census data has been used to show the general relationship between Blades and other areas of the State.

Chart 14 compares the age of Blades's housing stock with that in Sussex County and Delaware. As this chart shows, a little more than 28% of Blades's housing stock was built before 1940. Another 28% was constructed between 1980 and 1990. Generally speaking, the Blades area has a higher proportion of both very new and very old houses than either the County or the State.

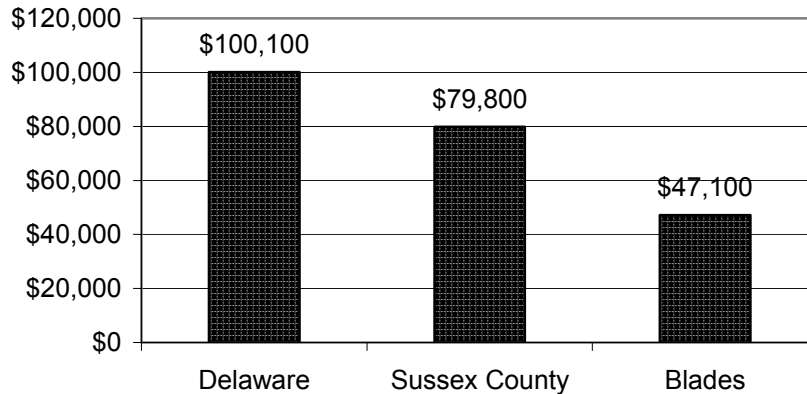
Chart 11. Age of Blades Housing Stock, 1990

Source: 1990 US Census. Compiled by IPA

Housing Value

Chart 15 compares Blades's 1990 median housing value with housing values in Sussex County and the State of Delaware. With a median value of owner-occupied housing units of \$47,100 in 1990, Blades has lower median housing values than the county (\$79,800) and state (\$100,100) as a whole.

Chart 12. Median Housing Values, 1990

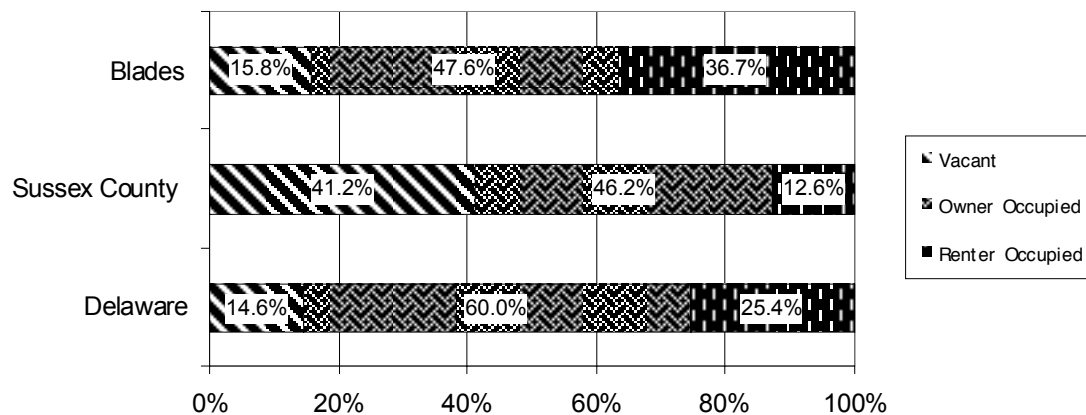


Source: 1990 US Census. Compiled by IPA

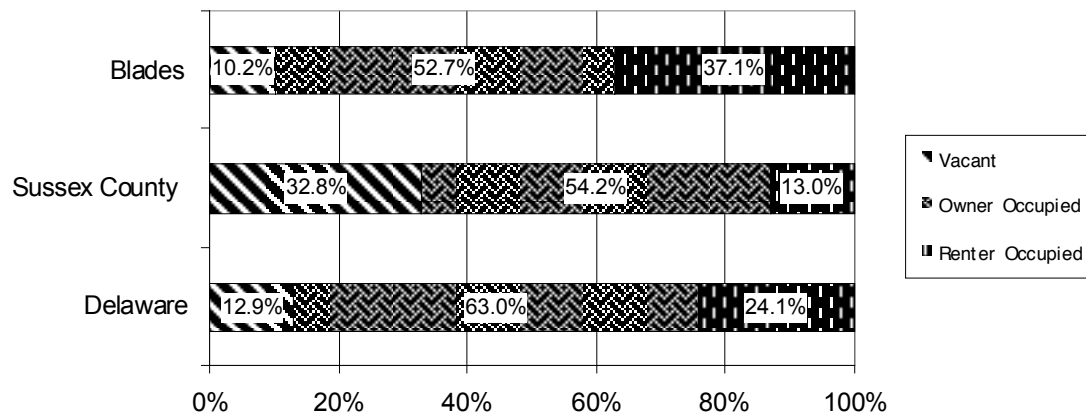
Ownership and Vacancy

Charts 13 and 14 compare the proportion of vacant units, owner-occupied units, and renter-occupied units in Blades with those of Sussex County and the state for 1990 and 2000. As seen from Chart 14, while 13.0% of Sussex County's housing stock and 24.1% of the State's housing stock were renter-occupied housing units in 1990, Blades showed a higher percentage of renter-occupied units (37.1%). At the same time, a higher percentage of housing units were occupied in Blades (89.8%) than in either the County (67.2%) or the State as a whole (87.1%) during the 1990s. Similar trends were seen throughout the 1980s. It must be acknowledged that the high percentage of seasonally occupied homes (i.e. summer rental properties) contribute to the low occupancy rate in Sussex County.

In Blades, there was a 27.3% decrease in vacant housing during the 1990s. Both owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing markedly increased. At the same time the number of housing units in the municipality increased by 12.6%.

Chart 13. Ownership & Vacancy Rates in Blades, 1990

Source: 1990 US Census. Compiled by IPA

Chart 14. Ownership & Vacancy Rates in Blades, 2000

Source: 2000 US Census. Compiled by IPA

Table 9. Change in Ownership & Vacancy Rates in Blades 1990-2000

	1990	2000	% Change
Vacant	55	40	-27.3%
Owner Occupied	166	207	24.7%
Renter Occupied	128	146	14.1%
TOTAL	349	393	12.6%

Source: US Census 1990 and 2000

Economic Profile

As of the publication of this plan draft (July 2002) the detailed income and economic data from the 2000 Census has not been released. The release of this data is due by September of 2002. For the purposes of the following sections regarding income and economics, the 1990 Census data has been used to show the general relationship between Blades and other areas of the State.

Table 10 provides selected income information for Blades, Sussex County, and Delaware. Blades's median household income in 1989 was \$21,094, 21.6% lower than the \$26,904 median household income in Sussex County and 39.5% lower than the \$34,875 median household income of the state as a whole. At the same time, the proportion of Blades residents that receive public assistance (8.7%) is higher than that of the State (5.2%) or the County (6.8%). Similarly, the mean public-assistance income for Blades is higher than the State or the County. A higher proportion of senior citizens (and the population in general) live below the poverty level in Blades than in either the State or the County. This is expected, as Blades receives a greater amount of public assistance than surrounding areas.

Table 10. Selected Income Data for Blades, Sussex County and Delaware, 1990

Item	Blades	Sussex County	Delaware
Median household income	\$21,094	\$26,904	\$34,875
% of households with wage and salary income	78.2%	72.7%	80.8%
Mean wage and salary income	\$25,615	\$31,028	\$40,493
% of households with social security income	26.3%	34.9%	23.8%
Mean social security income	\$7,584	\$7,893	\$8,083
% of households with retirement income	11.4%	21.5%	5.2%
Mean retirement income	\$4,577	\$9,843	\$9,987
% of households with public assistance income	8.7%	6.8%	5.2%
Mean public assistance income	\$5,219	\$3,707	\$4,012
% of population below poverty level	14.0%	10.7%	8.7%
% of seniors below poverty level	21.5%	12.2%	10.1%

Source: 1990 US Census. Compiled by IPA

Blades Workforce

The residents of Blades are more likely to be employed by private firms than residents of Sussex County or the State. The 1990 Census reported that 86.9% of employed Blades residents 16 years and older worked for private firms, while in Sussex County 77.5% and at the State 81.4% of residents aged 16 and older were employed in the private sector.

Only 2.6% of Blades residents are public-sector workers who work for local, state, or the federal government, as compared to Sussex County (13.8%) and the State (13.3%).

Table 11. Employing Industry of Blades Residents

Industry	Number	Percent
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing	6	1.5%
Mining	0	0.0%
Construction	43	11.1%
Manufacturing	97	25.0%
Transportation	28	7.2%
Communication and other Public Utilities	0	0.0%
Trade	106	27.3%
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	11	2.8%
Business and Repair Services	19	4.9%
Personal Services	8	2.1%
Entertainment and Recreation Services	8	2.1%
Health Services	20	5.2%
Educational Services	15	3.9%
Other Professional and Related Services	17	4.4%
Public Administration	10	2.6%
TOTAL	388	100%

Source: 1990 Census

According to the 1990 Census, the majority of Blades residents work in the trade (27.3%) and manufacturing (25.0%) industries. A significant portion of the population also works in the field of construction. (11.1%).

Projected Characteristics of Blades's Economy – 2000 to 2025

The *Draft Population, Household, and Employment Projections for Sussex County*, which have been utilized previously in this Chapter, include a detailed employment projection series. Employment (jobs) are projected based on 10 standardized sectors of employment (known as the “Standardized Industrial Code” or SIC). Table 12 describes the sectors used. Projections are made based on information compiled by the Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research using traffic analysis zones, developed and used by the Delaware Department of Transportation for traffic analysis and planning purposes.

Projections are included for an area called the Blades and Seaford Area, which is shown on Map 2 earlier in this chapter. This area includes Blades, Seaford, and many of the immediately adjacent surrounding areas. This area was used because many Blades residents work in the nearby Seaford area. Additionally, Blades and Seaford are sister communities. What affects one, largely affects the other. Including Seaford in our

projections allows us to make calculations using a larger sample, which reduces the margin of error for the calculations and gives a more accurate picture of the local economy.

Table 12. Employment Sectors used for Projections

Employment Sector	Description
Construction	Jobs in the construction industry
Manufacturing	Jobs in manufacturing, i.e. the primary production of goods
TCPU	Transportation, Communications, and Public Utilities
Wholesale	Jobs in wholesale trade, sales of goods from manufacturers to merchants
Retail	Jobs in retail trade, sales of goods to consumers
FIRE	Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate
Business Services	Jobs providing services to businesses
Personal Services	Jobs providing services to individuals
Professional Services	Services of a professional nature, i.e. lawyers and doctors
Public Administration	Jobs in government (Town, County, or State)

Source: SIC, summarized by IPA

The following table depicts the estimated composition of the Blades and Seaford Area economy in 2000 and compares it with the projected composition of the economy in 2025.

Table 13. Projected Composition of the Blades and Seaford Area Economy – 2000 and 2025

	2000 (est.)	% of total jobs	2025 (est.)	% of total jobs	Change in Jobs	% Change
Cons.	667	5.3%	868	5.8%	+201	+30.1%
Manu.	4,922	39.2%	4,634	31.0%	-288	-5.9%
TCPU	233	1.9%	288	1.9%	+55	+23.6%
Whol.	916	7.3%	802	5.4%	-114	-12.4%
Retail	1,957	15.6%	403	2.7%	-1,554	-79.4%
FIRE	271	2.2%	2,683	18.0%	+2,412	+890.0%
Bus Svcs.	505	4.0%	939	6.3%	+434	+85.9%
Per Svcs.	842	6.7%	728	4.9%	-114	-13.5%
Prof. Svcs.	2,111	16.8%	3,449	23.1%	+1,338	+63.4%
Pb Admin.	139	1.1%	141	<1%	+2	+1.4%
Total	12,563		14,935		+2,372	+18.9%

Source: Draft Population, Employment, and Household Projections for Sussex County

Prepared by the Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research at the University of Delaware under contract with the Delaware Department of Transportation. Compiled by IPA.

Based on an analysis of the data prepared by The Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research for the Delaware Department of Transportation, it appears that the manufacturing, wholesale, retail, and personal service industries will decrease over the next 25 years in the Blades and Seaford area. At the same time it predicts that there will be a great increase in the fire, insurance, and real estate industries and lesser increases in the business and professional-service industries. This suggests that there will be a shift to a service-based economy in coming years. The projections also indicate that the construction industry will remain an important component of the economy in Blades and Seaford.²

² The IPA has prepared the analysis of this data for the Blades and Seaford area. The original data set was developed for transportation planning purposes, and does not represent a detailed economic study of the economy in Blades and Seaford.

Chapter 1-3 Government Services and Resources

Town Government

The formal title of the legislative body of the town is the “Mayor and Council of Blades.” This body is made up of the mayor and five councilpersons. The mayor serves as chief executive of the town, as specified in the Town Charter. The registered voters in the town elect all council members at-large. Each year either three councilpersons or two councilpersons and the mayor stand for election. Each elected candidate serves a two-year term in office.

After the election, the mayor appoints each councilperson to one of the town’s commissioner positions. Each commissioner is responsible for a different function of government (e.g., parks & cemeteries, police, water, streets, or housing) and reports to the council on activities in his/her particular area.

Public Safety

Blades Police Department

The Blades Police Department provides the majority of police service to Blades residents. The department employs three fulltime officers, including the police chief. Officers work variable shifts in order to ensure that an officer is on duty during peak times in the municipality. All officers have their own take-home vehicle, which is used for patrol purposes. Because there is a maximum of a single officer on duty in the Town at any given time, the Blades Police Department has entered into a mutual-aid agreement with the Seaford Police Department. If the Blades officer on duty needs assistance with a complaint, a Seaford officer will respond at his request.

All officers are trained and certified at the Delaware State Police Academy. The police department’s operating budget is derived mainly from town revenues. However, approximately fifteen percent of funds are obtained from various state and federal funding programs.

State Police

When a local officer is not on duty, Delaware State Police respond to complaints in the Blades area. Located in the greater Blades area, Troop 5 of the Delaware State Police, consists of 31 sworn officers, a criminal investigative unit, and a variety of other law-enforcement resources available to Delaware residents.

Fire Company

The Blades Volunteer Fire Company operates out of the Fire Station located at 200 East Fifth Street. The company has approximately 60 active members who are all volunteers

from the local community. The company is fully equipped with three engines, two brush trucks, a tanker, a new rescue truck, a boat, and two ambulances. The company's dive team has 16 members, and is trained in underwater search and rescue. The Fire Company serves Blades and surrounding areas.

Library Facilities

The Seaford Public Library provides library services for the Town of Blades. The Seaford Public Library, located at 402 Porter Street in Seaford, Delaware, was established in 1902 and is a member of the Sussex County Department of Libraries. Member libraries are connected via the internet and participate in a county-wide interlibrary loan program. The library is supported by state and county funding and currently employs three fulltime and 11 part-time employees. The library houses over 53,000 books, including a special Delaware collection containing historical information and documents.

Health Care

Medical service is available for Blades residents at Nanticoke Memorial Hospital in Seaford, which offers emergency, in-patient, and outpatient care. Additionally, Sussex Medical Center of Blades, which has two medical doctors, is located in town. This facility has in-house pharmacy and x-ray capabilities. The doctors can perform minor surgery at the center.

State Service Center

Public-assistance services are available to Blades residents via the Anna C. Shipley State Service Center, located at 350 Virginia Avenue in Seaford, Delaware. The State Service Center houses satellite offices of the Division of Probation and Parole, the Division of Health and Social Services, the Division of Public Health, and Child Protective Services. The center also offers access to the Medicaid, Welfare/food stamp, Well Child, Blood Pressure Screening, and WIC programs. Additionally, clients can obtain access to emergency assistance, rental assistance, vocational rehabilitation, and a children's dental clinic.

Postal Service

The U.S. Postal Service operates a full service post office at its facility located on Alternate US Route 13 in Seaford, Delaware. The Seaford Post Office has serviced Blades residents since the Blades/Seaford post office merger in 1929.

Chapter 1-5 Public Participation

The Blades *Community Planning Workshop: Planning Together for our Future* was held from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. on November 28, 2001 at the Blades Town Hall. The purpose of the workshop was to involve the public in the preparation of the Blades Comprehensive Plan.

The workshop was widely advertised in an attempt to encourage participation from throughout the community. Postcards were mailed to residents of the town and surrounding area. Twenty-one members of the Blades community attended, including town officials and members of the Planning Commission.

Staff from the University of Delaware developed three exercises designed to allow citizens and local officials to express their preferences and opinions about land use issues in Blades and develop ideas for Blades's future. The first exercise involved a narrated slide show and a questionnaire about land use issues. A group brainstorming exercise was conducted next. Groups of participants developed lists of their likes, dislikes, and ideas for the future of Blades. Finally, a land planning activity was conducted. Participants developed land use suggestions for various areas of the town using maps and colored markers to graphically depict their ideas.

The following chapter will summarize the results of the three exercises of the workshop. A final section will analyze these results and propose a set of "planning principles" that will guide the development of the Blades Comprehensive Plan.

Exercise One: Slide Show and Questionnaire

This exercise began with a narrated slide show about land use issues in and around Blades. After the slide show was completed, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire related to the issues covered in the slide show. Of the 21 people in attendance, all of them returned questionnaires that were fully completed. The following sections summarize the responses to the questionnaires and are arranged by topic area, beginning with a demographic profile of the attendees.

The Attendees

The questionnaire began by asking for some basic demographic information. Roughly three-quarters (76.2%) of the attendees live in Blades and own their own home. The other one-quarter (23.8%) also own their own home, but reside outside of the town of Blades. None of the participants, residing in or out of town, indicated that they were renters. About half (52.4%) of the respondents indicated that they work in town or the immediate area, and about one-quarter (23.8%) of them own property in town other than their home.

The ages of the participants covered a wide range. A third of the attendees (33.3%) indicated that they were between ages 25 and 45, and another third (33.3%) indicated being that they were between ages 46 and 65. The remaining third of the participants (33.3%) were over the age of 65.

Remarkably, there was a very uniform racial demographic among the attendees. All 21 participants indicated their race to be “white,” while one person was also of Hispanic origin.

Commercial and Industrial Areas

A series of questions was asked regarding the current state of commercial areas in the town of Blades and the potential uses of the town’s commercial and industrial areas. The first question focused on the present and future mix of land uses along Market Street from the Nanticoke River to High Street, an area that seems to be the most viable commercial area in Blades. The respondents were split on the idea of future changes to the mix of residential and commercial uses in this area. While almost half (47.6%) of the attendees agreed or strongly agreed with the general idea that the current mix is best, many of them (38.1%) felt that some changes were in order. However, the general idea that Market Street should become a mostly commercial street was agreed or strongly agreed to by almost half of the attendees (47.6%). Further, more than half of them (52.4%) agreed that local institutions should be concentrated around Market Street and that it should serve as the “community center.” A third of the group (33.3%) agreed that the residences along Market Street’s commercial center should be converted to commercial or institutional uses over time, and two-thirds (66.7%) agreed that the area should be redeveloped with land uses that complement the new marina. Only one person agreed that Market Street should become a purely residential area.

The second question in this section asked participants to rate a list of potential new commercial land uses meant to complement the new marina in Blades. The respondents were asked to indicate the desirability of the potential new uses based upon appropriateness in supporting the marina’s success. Overwhelmingly, the participants chose “specialty retail shops for boaters” as the most desirable new use (85.7% indicating at least “desirable” and 100.0% indicating at least “acceptable”). The group also favored the idea of “new or used boat sales” as a future potential commercial land use, 90.5% calling it at least “acceptable.” Further, the concept of “new restaurants and eateries” was very appealing to the group, as 71.4% of the respondents called this use either “desirable” or “highly desirable.” The group was split on the idea of “new housing developments” along the waterfront, as only about half (52.4%) rated this use at least “desirable.” Further, over half of the attendees (57.1%) rated the idea of “bars and nightclubs” either “undesirable” or “highly undesirable.” This was by far the least popular potential new use.

Along with commercial viability come important issues. The third question in this section asked participants to rate the importance of dealing with specific issues and problems related to the commercial district along Market Street. Overall, the issues of

“property maintenance” and “pedestrian safety” were considered most important by the attendees (95.2% rated these issues either “important” or “extremely important”). The next highest issues of importance were “traffic congestion,” “crime and safety,” and “vacant properties,” which were each given ratings of “important” or “extremely important” by 81.0% of the group. “Parking” and “lack of shopping opportunities” were considered important by 71.4% of the respondents, and only two-thirds (66.7%) of the attendees considered “preservation of historic buildings” to be an important issue.

The last question of this section asked the group to rate the desirability of specific potential businesses in the town of Blades. “Retail or service commercial” businesses were given the best rating (81.0% rating this business type either “desirable” or “highly desirable”). Second in this area was “marina or boating related” businesses, rated at least “desirable” by 76.2% of the respondents. “Tourism or resort related” businesses were rated at least “desirable” by 71.4%, while 85.7% of the attendees rated “light industry” at least “acceptable. According to the results, the least desirable potential business for Blades was “heavy industry” (only 14.3% of the group rated this type of business as either “desirable” or “highly desirable”).

Neighborhoods and Community Design

The questions in this section dealt mostly with types of housing and features of neighborhoods and communities in Blades. However, the initial question asked the attendees to simply respond to a statement regarding the preservation of historic older homes in the town. Remarkably, a full third (33.3%) did not “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement that historic homes should be preserved. However, two-thirds did at least “agree” with the idea.

The second question in this section asked respondents to rate the desirability of specific neighborhood and community features. “Parks and other open spaces” proved to be the most popular feature, 90.5% of the group rating it as at least “desirable.” The next most desirable feature was “sidewalks along neighborhood streets,” with 85.7% of the attendees rating this feature at least “desirable.” Other popular features, according to the group, were “sidewalks along main roads” and “trees and landscaping,” which both were rated at least “desirable” by 81.0% of the participants. “Streets designed to have little traffic and slow speeds” and “condominium living” were also quite attractive to the respondents, as 76.2% of them rated these features at least “desirable.” Seventy-one percent of attendees gave at least a “desirable” rating to “nearby neighborhood shopping” and “streets that allow quick access to major roads.” To a lesser extent, most of the respondents also felt favorably regarding features such as “bike paths,” “a house on a large lot,” “streets that connect to adjacent neighborhoods,” and “a network of streets that allows many travel options” (all of these features received at least “desirable” ratings from more than half of the participants). The least favored neighborhood features as indicated by the group were “a house on a small lot in town” and “cul-de-sacs,” which were given at least “desirable” ratings by only 38.1% and 23.8% of the respondents respectively.

The success of future housing developments will depend on the need and acceptance of particular types of housing. The third question in this section asked respondents to rate the desirability of specific types of housing stock for the town of Blades. The housing type that did not receive any type of negative reaction from the participants was “single-family homes on modest lots,” which was rated at least “desirable” by 81.0% of the group. All of the other types of housing showed no definitive approval, but more than half of the participants gave at least a “desirable” rating to “townhouses” and “suburban style single family homes on large lots.” Very even distributions of positive and negative ratings were given to “apartment complexes,” “neighborhoods which include a mixture of single-family homes, townhouses and apartments,” and “accessory apartments.” The least desirable of the housing types were “manufactured housing” and “large older homes converted to apartments,” which were given “desirable” ratings by 14.3% and 4.8% of the group, respectively.

Transportation Planning

Efficient and functional roads and streets are the most important building block of a successful community or town. The participating group was given two questions regarding transportation in and around Blades. The first question required attendees to rate the importance of specific transportation related issues in Blades. There were three areas of major concern to the participants: streets in new developments, sidewalks, and the intersection of Route 13 and High Street. Eighty-five percent of respondents rated at least “important” that “streets in new developments should be linked to the existing street network.” Issues regarding inadequate sidewalks on both major roads and neighborhood streets were rated at least “important” by 81% of the participants, and the issue of adding more sidewalks was found to be at least “important” to 76.2% of the group. Navigation problems at the intersection of High Street and Route 13 were found to be at least “important” issues to 76.2% of the respondents. All other issues received at least “important” ratings by more than 50% of the group, but were not as statistically significant. These issues included: too many trucks using Market Street, too many through travelers on Market Street, and inadequate public transportation (receiving ratings of at least “important” from 71.4%, 61.9%, and 52.4% of participants respectively).

The second question regarding transportation in Blades required attendees to rate the desirability of specific potential transportation improvements. The most desirable (and least contentious) potential transportation improvement was “improving the geometry of the intersection of Route 13 and High Street,” which received at least a “desirable” rating from 76.2% of the participants and no negative ratings. “Greenways, bike paths, and sidewalks along major roadways” was also a popular improvement, receiving at least a “desirable” rating from 71.4% of the group and only one negative rating. Although the idea of “installing a traffic signal at the intersection of Market Street and High Street” received a rating of at least “desirable” by 71.4% of the attendees, the idea was found to be either “undesirable” or “highly undesirable” by 19.0% of the group. Although this idea may be popular, it may also be fairly contentious. Least desirable and most contentious of the potential improvements was the idea of “adding controls or restrictions

regarding access to and parking along Market Street” which was found to be at least “desirable” by only 47.6% of the respondents and almost as equally undesirable (38.1% of them rating it as “undesirable” or “highly undesirable”).

Land Use and Annexation

The future of any town relies on successful use of its available land and resources. The three questions in this section deal with future land use projects and annexation in Blades. The first question in this section asked respondents to rate the desirability of potential uses for vacant or undeveloped land in Blades. Without a doubt, the most desirable use was “residential uses and new housing,” with 90.5% of the attendees giving this use at least a “desirable” rating. “Community commercial” uses and “parks and recreational facilities” were also popular, receiving at least “desirable ratings from 76.2% and 71.4% of participants, respectively. None of the remaining proposed land uses received overwhelmingly positive ratings. However, 76.2% of the respondents gave a rating of at least “acceptable” to “institutional uses” and “regional commercial” uses. “Industrial uses” and “agricultural uses” received the least desirable ratings, receiving ratings of at least “desirable” from 33.3% and 19.0% of the attendees, respectively.

The second question in this section required participants to indicate how strongly they agreed with proposed development concepts for Blades. The most popular concept proposed was the idea that “Blades’s small town atmosphere should be preserved,” with which 85.7% of the participants agree and none disagree. The idea that “new roads should be designed to link in with the existing town street system” was also quite popular, as 76.2% of the respondents agreed to this and none disagreed. The four remaining concepts were all agreed to by 71.4% of the attendees, but had dissimilar levels of disagreement. Only one individual disagreed with the idea that ‘suburban sprawl’ should be avoided in the Blades area,” while 9.5% disagreed with the statement that “new developments should be linked to the existing town with sidewalks and bike paths.” The concepts that raised the most disagreement were the ideas that “properties adjacent to town should be developed before other lands more distant” and “Blades should seek to annex adjacent properties that will be developed, especially if town services are provided.” Nineteen percent of the participants disagreed with each of these concepts, making them appear to be the most contentious.

The final question asked respondents to simply rate the importance of preserving the the Nanticoke River, keeping in mind that many businesses and developments depend on the river for their success. As one might expect, 95.2% of the group rated this concept as being either “important” or “extremely important.”

Written Comments

There was space allocated at the end of several of the questions and also at the end of each section for participants to include written comments. A number of attendees chose to add comments in the provided spaces. The written comments are found in Appendix 1 at the end of this document.

Exercise Two: Group Brainstorming

The second exercise required participants to work in three teams. Working together, each team was asked to compile three lists: things they like about Blades, things they dislike about Blades, and ideas for positive changes in Blades. At the end of the exercise, a spokesperson from each group reported the results to everyone. This stimulated some additional discussion and allowed the participants to discover what ideas they had in common. In order to create clear results, the responses of each group were compiled into a larger list. The attendees were then asked to vote for the most important item on each list. The responses of each group and the collective lists and votes can be found in Appendix 2.

Likes

Three of the 13 items listed under “likes” were the most popular of the ones mentioned. Overall, the attendees voted for “great potential,” “sewer and water hookups,” and “good family town,” which received six, five, and four votes, respectively. These were the only items on the collective list that received more than one vote.

Dislikes

There were two major dislikes on the list that garnered the most votes from the group. The participants overwhelmingly selected “zoning code and enforcement” as the most profound dislike, giving this item eight votes. To a lesser extent, participants selected “truck traffic” as an important dislike, giving this item four votes. Three other items received two votes each: “lack of small businesses,” “overcrowded housing,” and “irresponsible development.” No other items on the collective list of “dislikes” received more than one vote.

Ideas for the Future

Out of 19 compiled items on the list, only four of them received more than one vote from the group. Of these four, the two most popular ones were “annexation” and “preservation or replacement of old housing,” which received five votes each. The next two most popular items were “traffic light at Market Street and High Street” and “mix residential and business use,” both of which received three votes. Decidedly, the participants had many ideas for the future of Blades, but made some firm choices regarding those that are most important.

Exercise Three: Land Use Planning

The third exercise gave the participants the opportunity to plan their community visually, using maps and aerial photographs. The participants were organized into four teams for this exercise, and given an aerial photo of the town, a blank map of the town (showing parcels, roads, and natural features), and a set of magic markers indicating land uses (red

for commercial, yellow for residential, etc). Each team reviewed the aerial photos to find vacant areas of the town that will be developed and other areas that were in need of redevelopment or change. Using the markers, they colored, marked, or otherwise indicated desired land uses and development patterns throughout the town.

Each group came up with unique ideas, but there were also striking similarities to their concepts for the various areas in town.

Market Street from River to High Street

All four teams favored a commercial district along Market Street. One team suggested putting the town hall in this area. All of the teams suggested open space/green space in the wetland area and one group wanted to include green space and recreation corridors throughout the area.

One team suggested commercial development all the way down Market Street to the southern town boundaries and also along High Street to Route 13.

Vacant Land in Southeast Portion of the Town

All teams agreed that this vacant land should be used for residential purposes. One group suggested parks and open space in the middle of the residential development. One group suggested street connections between the town and this development, eventually connecting to Route 13.

Three teams suggested commercial uses on the parcel which fronts on Route 13. One team suggested industrial uses for this parcel.

Brownfield Site South of Town Hall

Three teams suggested non-residential uses for this parcel. One team thought commercial was appropriate, another felt it feasible to mix commercial and industrial uses, and a third suggested a Farmers Market that would be an asset for the community. The fourth team thought that this property should be redeveloped as apartments.

Existing Developed Areas of Town

While some teams colored in existing land uses, none suggested any changes to the existing uses that are present in the currently developed areas of town. However one team suggested moving the fire company from its present location to a parcel just to the west of the railroad tracks.

Annexation Areas

Three teams planned for areas outside the current town borders. Two noted a continuation of the commercial and industrial uses west of and along the railroad tracks.

One team indicated the desire to annex the trailer park area southwest of town, as well as the properties along High Street leading to Route 13 and also the properties along Route 13 to the north of the currently annexed area.

Intersections

One team identified several intersections in need of improvement, including Market and High Street; Market Street/East 5th Street/River Road; East High Street/South Arch Street; and East High Street/South Cannon Street.

Open Spaces

Several teams identified parks, open spaces, and trails throughout the town. All teams indicated some open space and/or environmental features along the river. Another park was suggested in the middle of the new residential area. Another team suggested greenway trails connecting the various areas of town.

Summary and Conclusions

The teams generally agreed that Market Street between the River and High Street should be a commercial area, perhaps with some community institutions. The vision is that this area will be developed into Blades downtown.

It was also agreed that the remainder of the existing land uses should continue, with no major changes to the current pattern. One exception is the site containing an old warehouse and commercial buildings south of the town. The consensus is that this site should be developed with commercial or industrial uses that would provide needed jobs or services for the community.

The primary area where annexation may be considered is along High Street to Route 13 and also along the Route 13 corridor where it is adjacent to Blades.

The Planning Principles

The following set of general principles were derived from this public participation exercise. These principles will guide the development of the Blades Comprehensive Plan.

- 1) The community considers the Market Street and High Street area to be the downtown center of the town. It should be redeveloped to include commercial, institutional, and recreational uses that benefit the community as a whole and complement the new marina.
- 2) The town should review and enhance their enforcement of building and property maintenance codes in order to protect the health, safety, and welfare of town residents, enhance the image of the Town, and protect property values for all property owners.

- 3) The town should encourage residential development on lands within and adjacent to the town to be compatible with the existing patterns of Blades neighborhoods, and include street patterns that link to the existing street system, sidewalks, and parks and open space areas.
- 4) The Delaware Department of Transportation and the Town of Blades should work together to solve transportation issues and improve the function and safety of problematic intersections in the Town, considering both the needs of vehicles and pedestrians. The comprehensive plan should develop land use strategies that are compatible with realistic transportation options.
- 5) Blades should seek to preserve and improve the patterns and character in its existing neighborhoods, especially the current mixture of housing, which serves a broad range of people in the community.
- 6) The town should continue to work with the Blades Economic Development Corporation (BEDC) to implement economic development initiatives in Blades.
- 7) The town should seek to attract land uses that will complement the new marina and encourage economic development.
- 8) Blades should pursue a development strategy that complements the small town atmosphere.
- 9) Blades is a part of the larger region and is influenced by what happens in Seaford and the outlying areas of Sussex County. The town should coordinate planning, development, and other policies with these other government entities.
- 10) The Nanticoke River is a very important environmental feature that greatly increases the quality of life for area residents. Blades should seek to protect the river by adopting appropriate development practices and land use strategies adjacent to the river and its wetlands.

Part 2

The Blades Plan

Chapter 2-1 Land Use Plan

NOTE: The Land Use Plan comprises the text in this section in conjunction with the Future Land Use Map (Map 6, located in the Map Appendix). In the following section, the term “Land Use Plan” refers to both the text and the map, and, in practice and use, neither should be considered nor relied upon without referencing the other.

Background – Land Use

The existing land use pattern in Blades is derived largely from the town’s historic patterns of development and role as a small commercial and residential river town. Blades is connected to Seaford by the Nanticoke River Bridge, and early development of the town appears to have been focused along Market Street, which connected the two communities. Today the riverfront area of Blades at the bridge is dominated by Peninsula Oil Company, and includes storage tanks, offices, and an Uncle Willey’s convenience store and gas station. The remainder of Market Street developed as a mixture of commercial, industrial, and residential uses.

The other main transportation route in Blades is High Street / Concord Road, which connects Market Street to Route 13. Historically, this street was dominated by residential uses, but that is changing. A number of small commercial establishments and a large doctor’s office have located along High Street. Towards Route 13 there are many stately homes that overlook the Nanticoke River. However, most of these homes are outside of the current municipal boundaries.

The Norfolk Southern railroad traverses along the western edge of Blades. Numerous manufacturing uses have located along this rail line over the years. To the east of the rail line (which is within Blades town boundaries) there are a number of miscellaneous industrial uses involving plating, storage, welding, and auto repair. Notably, there is also the vacant Peninsula Plating site that has been identified as a “brownfield” and designated for redevelopment. To the west of the rail line (outside Blades current boundaries) is the Wyoming Concrete Company and a company that ships and receives bulk stone via the Nanticoke River.

Blades primary residential neighborhood is located southeast of the Market/High Street intersection. This neighborhood comprises a large portion of the land area in the town, and is made up of mostly single-family detached residences. This neighborhood is interspersed with a few institutional uses, notably the Blades Fire Company, as well as a large park. The Blades Kindergarten is located in this area. The school is part of the Seaford School District and is the only school located in the town. Additional residential uses can be found along both Market and High Streets, and include single-family homes as well as the Hunters Court apartment complex.

Institutional uses are interspersed throughout the neighborhoods. There is a notable cluster of institutional uses along West Fourth Street, which is the location of the town hall, a meeting hall that was previously a church, and some vacant property owned by the town.

The Nanticoke River represents the most significant natural feature in the area and is an outstanding aesthetic, environmental, and recreational resource for the town. Previously, the river was fairly inaccessible to the town, because the shoreline was dominated by industrial uses, woodlands, and wetland areas. This situation changed with the recent opening of the Blades Marine Park that includes an 87 slip marina, boat ramp, and other amenities for the general public. This marina and park have already prompted some redevelopment in the surrounding area. There are two other parks in Blades, the large Blades Park and the smaller Triangle Park. There are also some recreational facilities located at the Seaford Kindergarten, which is located on S. Arch Street in Blades.

Table 14 summarizes the amount of land in the various land use categories, based on the existing land use as depicted on Map 6:

Table 14. Existing Land Use in Blades

Land Use Type	Acres +/-	% of Total	% of Developed*
Residential	103.63	35.88%	62.01%
Commercial	24.63	8.53%	14.74%
Industrial	12.05	4.17%	7.21%
Institutional	10.80	3.74%	6.46%
Public Utilities	1.92	.66%	1.15%
Recreation and Open Space	14.08	4.87%	8.43%
Redevelopment	5.89	2.04%	
Vacant Developable	75.87	26.27%	
Right-of-Way / unclassified	39.96	13.84%	
Total	288.83	100%**	100%**

Source: IPA / WRA GIS Analysis of Blades Existing Land Use Survey (completed in June, 2001).

*total developed land = total area of town less right of way, redevelopment and vacant developable lands (167.11 acres)

** totals may not equal 100% due to rounding. All acreages are approximate.

Relevant Planning Principles

- 1) The community considers the Market Street and High Street area to be the downtown center of the town. It should be redeveloped to include commercial, institutional, and recreational uses that benefit the community as a whole and complement the new marina.
- 3) The town should encourage residential development on lands within and adjacent to the Town to be compatible with the existing patterns of Blades neighborhoods, and

include street patterns which link to the existing street system, sidewalks, and parks and open space areas.

5) Blades should seek to preserve and improve the patterns and character in its existing neighborhoods, especially the current mixture of housing which serves a broad range of people in the community.

6) The town should continue to work with the Blades Economic Development Corporation (BEDC) to implement economic development initiatives in Blades.

7) The town should seek to attract land uses that will complement the new marina and encourage economic development.

8) Blades should pursue a development strategy that complements the small-town atmosphere.

10) The Nanticoke River is a very important environmental feature that greatly increases the quality of life for area residents. Blades should seek to protect the river by adopting appropriate development practices and land use strategies adjacent to the river and its wetlands.

Goal Statement – Land Use

Blades should encourage economic development and land use changes that preserve and improve the small town atmosphere of the community while capitalizing on the town's advantageous location on the shores of the Nanticoke River and in the larger Seaford region.

Plan Recommendations – Land Use

The Land Use Plan addresses both existing and future land uses in the Town of Blades. There are two categories of parcels that are addressed by this plan. There are currently few, if any, serious land use conflicts in Blades, and the land use plan suggests that many of the existing land uses continue or change to similar uses. Two areas, described below as the *Blades Downtown / Marine District* and the *Blades Neighborhood Business District*, are recommended to evolve over time into new combinations of uses to enhance economic activities and services for Blades residents. There are also a number of properties in Blades that are currently vacant and available for development. Future land uses for these properties have been designated that are compatible with the existing patterns of growth in the town and consistent with the town's vision for future growth.

The following recommendations describe the proposed future land use categories and policies for lands inside the current town limits of Blades.

Recommendation 1: Existing Land Use

In order to avoid creating a large number of non-conforming properties, the Land Use Plan recommends that existing land uses be continued. When property owners wish to convert their properties to different land uses, the Land Use Plan provides guidance to town officials regarding the types of new uses that would be acceptable. For many areas of the town, similar or less intense land uses may be acceptable. In other areas, such as in the *Blades Downtown/Marina District* conversion to more intense land uses may be acceptable or, in fact, desirable.

Recommendation 2: The Blades Downtown/Marina District

Unlike other small towns, Blades does not have a well-defined “downtown” district. Market Street, from the Nanticoke River Bridge to the intersection with High Street is currently the most developed “downtown” area in Blades, and the area that most residents seem to identify as its business district. Currently, this area is a combination of industrial, commercial, and residential uses. However, the recent completion of the Blades Marine Park has represented a major public improvement that has already started to have an impact on redevelopment activities in the surrounding area.

The concept behind the *Blades Downtown/Marina District* is to encourage development and redevelopment of this area with a mixture of uses that will complement and enhance the new marina, and the community in general. The boundaries of the *Blades Downtown/Marina District* are shown on Map 6, located in the map appendix. This area should redevelop with a downtown scale, including sidewalks and buildings situated close to the street and to each other.

The following are some guidelines for town officials to use when considering new development or redevelopment activities in this area:

- The development of this area should be designed to minimize the impact on sensitive natural areas and the river itself. Large portions of the lands designated as the *Blades Downtown/Marina District* on Map 6 may be impacted by wetlands and floodplains. Blades Flood Hazard Ordinance may govern construction in this area. There may also be other permitting requirements for construction through the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and/or the US Army Corps of Engineers. See Chapter 2-8 Environmental Protection for more information.
- Appropriate uses in this area include commercial uses (stores and restaurants), light industrial uses that cater to marine operations (such as boat repair or fabrication of marine hardware), institutional uses, and residential uses developed in conjunction with other projects.
- Current industrial uses in this area should be allowed to continue and should not be made into non-conforming uses. However, conversion to any of the other uses described above should be permitted and encouraged.
- Sidewalks and other pedestrian connections should be provided along Market Street and to other uses in the area that will attract pedestrians. It is important to

create an environment where people will feel comfortable walking and shopping. This is critical if the area is to be friendly to transient boaters.

- Design guidelines should be adopted to encourage the development of a consistent streetscape along Market Street. In general, parking should be located behind storefronts. A consistent landscaping theme is also desirable.
- Wherever possible, parking should be consolidated behind structures. Ideally, a number of smaller parcels should collaborate to provide one central parking facility to serve all uses. In this way the number of spaces can be maximized, while the number of entrances can be reduced.
- The town should consider the establishment of public parking in this area to allow the most efficient use of land.

It is recommended that the Town of Blades adopt a new zoning district for this area that encompasses the uses and concepts described above.

Recommendation 3: Blades Neighborhood Business District

Traditionally in Blades, businesses and homes have coexisted along Market and High Street. The *Blades Neighborhood Business District* is envisioned as a community-oriented, mixed-use area that will formalize this combination of land uses while at the same time providing guidelines to address common issues such as parking, entrances, and sidewalks. The boundaries of the *Blades Neighborhood Business District* are shown on Map 6, in the map appendix. The following are some guidelines for town officials to use when considering new development or redevelopment activities in this area:

- Residential and community-scaled commercial establishments should be allowed to locate in this area. Community-scaled commercial can be interpreted to mean small stores, shops, café style restaurants, personal services, professional offices, and home businesses.
- The overall size of any one non-residential establishment should be limited to no more than 2,500 or 3,000 square feet. This will discourage the consolidation of smaller parcels into large development sites, which could result in an erosion of the neighborhood character.
- Sidewalks and other pedestrian connections should be provided along Market Street and to other uses in the area that will attract pedestrians. It is important to create an environment where people will feel comfortable walking and shopping.
- Wherever possible, parking should be consolidated behind structures. Ideally, a number of smaller parcels should collaborate to provide one central parking facility to serve all uses. In this way the number of spaces can be maximized while reducing the number of entrances.
- The town should consider the establishment of public parking in this area to allow the most efficient use of land.

It is recommended that the Town of Blades adopt a new zoning district for this area that encompasses the uses and concepts described above.

Recommendation 4: Infill Lots

Throughout Blades there are a number of vacant lots that could be developed. It is recommended that these lots be developed in a manner that is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood and land uses. The Future Land Use Map (Map 8 in the map appendix) specifies future uses for these vacant lots.

Recommendation 5: Large Vacant Parcels

Within the current town limits of Blades there are some parcels of vacant land that could be the site of future large-scale development projects. The Future Land Use Map (Map 8 in the map appendix) specifies uses for these parcels. The following are some specific guidelines that can be used by town officials when considering large-scale development activities on these parcels.

- The large parcels in the southeast portion of the town (between the currently developed area and the Little Meadows subdivision) should be used for residential purposes. The density of these new developments should be consistent with the existing neighborhoods. However, a mixture of housing types (including townhouses, duplexes, or condominiums) could be desirable as long as they are attractively designed and well integrated into the fabric of the neighborhood. For more information see Chapter 2-7, the Housing Plan.
- There is an opportunity to connect the new residential developments to the existing town street pattern. These connections should be sought and encouraged, in order to continue to pattern and character of Blades into the new developments. This will provide the new residents with multiple points of access to the town and nearby services; allow emergency, service, transit, and school buses better access to the new neighborhoods; and reduce traffic congestion along High Street.
- The parcel adjacent to Route 13 is designated for commercial uses. Access to this site should be coordinated with the Delaware Department of Transportation and specifically with the Corridor Capacity Preservation Program. There is an in-depth discuss of this site and others along the highway in Chapter 2-4.

Chapter 2-2 Growth and Annexation Plan

NOTE: The Growth and Annexation Plan comprises the text in this section in conjunction with the Growth and Annexation Plan map (Map 9, located in the Map Appendix). In the following section, the term “Growth and Annexation Plan” refers to both the text and the map, and, in practice and use, neither should be considered or relied upon without referencing the other.

Background – Growth and Annexation

Population and Housing Growth Trends

The town of Blades has grown slowly over the years, but there are indicators that the pace of growth has been increasing recently. Blades grew at a particularly high rate during the 1980s, and that growth continued through the 1990s. Blades population increased over 25% between 1980 and 1990, a rate that exceeded both the State and the County. Although the rate of growth slowed somewhat during the 1990s, by the year 2000 Blades population was 956, a historic high for the community. This is noteworthy because many small towns in Delaware have shown negligible increases during the same periods, and are today well below historic peak populations reached earlier in the century.

Construction activity has also increased in Blades since 1980. Between 1980 and 1990 there was a surge in residential construction in Blades, with 88 housing units being constructed during that decade. This represented a 34% increase in the town’s housing stock. Although the pace of construction slowed somewhat in the 1990s, between 33 and 44 housing units were constructed between 1990 and 2000.³

Area Growth Trends

The population growth and residential construction activity that is being experienced by Blades is representative of the growth occurring in the greater Blades / Seaford area. This area is the largest urban area in western Sussex County, and is the center of a great deal of economic activity. Blades cannot be considered an isolated rural small town. Rather, it must be considered in context as a small municipality in the center of a very active and growing urban area.

³ There is an 11 unit discrepancy between the town’s records for the 1990s (33 new units built) and the 2000 US Census (44 new units built).

Town Services

Blades owns and maintains a town water system that has capacity to expand into adjacent areas. The town has the infrastructure and equipment to be the primary water service provider for the area south of the Nanticoke River. The town's sewer service is provided through a collaborative agreement between Sussex County (the transmission system) and Seaford (waste treatment). These two entities will have to be consulted prior to any town expansion that will require sewer. Water and sewer service and capacities are described more fully in Chapter 2-3, Infrastructure Plan.

The town also provides a number of other services that will benefit new residents if and when the town expands its boundaries. Blades has a police department, an active fire company, and operates several parks.

Recent Annexations

The boundaries of Blades have been relatively static over time. The town did annex two fairly large properties to the east of the original town boundaries in 1995. One of these properties is under development now as the Little Meadows housing development. The other property has been zoned commercially, and has frontage along Route 13.

Strategies for State Policies and Spending

With the formation of the Governor's Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues, the State of Delaware has adopted an active role in land use planning issues in recent years. The current state policies for coordinating spending are described in the document *Managing Growth in 21st Century Delaware: Strategies for State Policies and Spending*. This strategy document was adopted by the Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues on December 23, 1999, after an extensive process of public consultation with citizens and municipal leaders. The strategies are predicated on the fact that, while local governments exercise control over land use decisions in their own jurisdictions, state investment and policy decisions can influence land use and the pattern and pace of growth. The strategies were created as a tool to help manage new growth in Delaware while revitalizing existing towns and cities and protecting the state's environment and unique quality of life. The Strategies map for the Blades area may be found as Map 3 in the Map Appendix at the end of this document.

In March 2001, Governor Ruth Ann Minner announced the Livable Delaware agenda to address sprawl, congestion, and other growth issues through legislation and policy changes that will direct growth to areas where the state, counties, and local governments have planned for it to occur. It builds on the significant foundation laid by the 1999 *Shaping Delaware's Future Strategies for State Policies and Spending*.

The agenda includes an Executive Order directing state agencies to implement the 1999 Strategies through implementation plans that outline program, policy, budgetary and legislative changes. A new Advisory Council on Planning Coordination, which includes

representatives of county and local governments and others with a stake in growth and land use issues, will examine such concepts as developing a graduated impact fee structure, developing annexation standards, and approving and monitoring "Livability Indicators" to measure intergovernmental progress toward curbing sprawl. Other actions will look at encouraging the redevelopment of brownfields, establishing a transfer of development rights program and bank, and facilitating dispute resolution among levels of government.

One of the core principles guiding Livable Delaware is to direct urban development to occur in and adjacent to existing towns and developed areas. The strategies maps designate Blades as a "Community," which is described as the highest priority for State investment and spending. The strategies indicate that the state will invest in infrastructure and public facilities in Community Areas. As such, the State should be supportive of additional development within Blades boundaries.

The lands west of Blades, along River Road, are also designated as "Community" areas. This area encompasses existing industrial uses, as well as an existing trailer park on the western edge of the town of Blades. The remaining lands adjacent to the town limits are designated "Developing Areas." The strategies recognize that growth is occurring in this suburban area and supports infrastructure investments that enhance the quality and viability of new development in Developing Areas.

The State Strategies designate an area south of the town as a "Secondary Developing Area." This is the area that the State and the County have designated as the extents to which urban development is expected in the future. Development should be timed to occur in these areas after the "Developing Area" is substantially built out.

To summarize, the State Strategies seek to limit sprawl by supporting and encouraging the growth and redevelopment of communities. New growth outside of communities should be located adjacent to existing infrastructure and services. Development activity within Blades current boundaries or within the designated "Community" and "Developing Area" should be encouraged by the State.

Relevant Planning Principles – Growth and Annexation

3) The town should encourage residential development on lands within and adjacent to the town to be compatible with the existing patterns of Blades neighborhoods, and include street patterns which link to the existing street system, sidewalks, and parks and open space areas.

6) The town should continue to work with the Blades Economic Development Corporation (BEDC) to implement economic development initiatives in Blades.

7) The town should seek to attract land uses that will complement the new marina and encourage economic development.

- 8) Blades should pursue a development strategy that complements the small Town atmosphere.
- 9) Blades is a part of the larger region, and is influenced by what happens in Seaford and the outlying areas of Sussex County. The town should coordinate planning, development, and other policies with these other government entities.

Goal Statement – Growth and Annexation

The Town of Blades should encourage the development and redevelopment of lands within the town boundaries, and annexation of areas south of the Nanticoke River that are adjacent to the existing town boundaries which are functionally related to the community, its infrastructure, and services.

Recommendations – Growth and Annexation

The Role of the Planning Commission and Town Council

The Growth and Annexation Plan identifies a number of parcels that the town is interested in annexing. These parcels are currently under the jurisdiction of Sussex County, and, as such, the Town Council has no authority to regulate land use on these parcels unless they are annexed into the town. Regardless of whether or not the town annexes the property, the town is concerned about the future type, scale, and intensity of land use.

This chapter is meant to serve as a set of guidelines for the town when faced with development in these areas. Specifically, the recommendations may prove useful in the following circumstances:

- When a development or rezoning is proposed in Sussex County's jurisdiction, these recommendations may allow the Town to make informed comments through the County's land use review process.
- These recommendations may assist the town in preparing plans for utility services in the adjacent areas, and they may also be useful when negotiating with developers in these areas.
- If annexation is proposed, these recommendations will be available to guide the town as to the appropriate types of land uses and scale of development.

Proposed Annexation Areas

The town has identified the area on the southern shore of the Nanticoke River as its priority annexation area. For purposes of analysis, this plan identifies seven distinct annexation areas totaling 359.45 +/- acres. These annexation areas are shown in more detail on Map 9, Growth and Annexation Areas, which may be found in the map appendix. All of these areas are either in the “Community” or “Developing” areas as depicted on the State Strategies for Policies and Spending map which was adopted on December 22, 1999 by the Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues. They are also shown as “growth areas” on the 1997 Sussex County Comprehensive Plan, although that plan is currently being revised.

Table 15 summarizes these areas and the remaining vacant areas in the town. The developable acres calculation has been designed to only include land that can likely be built upon. Using the 1997 Land Use/Land Cover data available from the Office of State Planning Coordination the developable acres calculation includes only land use categories associated with uplands typically containing few constraints to construction (agriculture, barren land, forest). It is important to note that this analysis is based on land use data and aerial photography dating from 1997, and does not represent an actual field survey of the entire area. Development that has occurred since 1997 will not be represented in the calculations. There may also be environmental or other factors on the land that restrict development to less than is indicated in the table.

Table 15. Blades Growth and Annexation Calculations

Area #	Total Acres	Existing Uses	Developable Acres
1	35.23	23 houses	11.17
2	46.96	None	29.52
3	81.75	50 houses (trailers and single family)	24.73
4	96.92	3 houses; 6 commercial uses	47.31
5	27.18	7 commercial uses	4.20
6	46.95	2 industrial uses	22.74
7	24.42	5 commercial uses	4.30
Town	288.83	Existing town development	67.77
Totals	648.24		211.74

Source: IPA/WRA GIS Analysis of 1997 Land Use/Land Cover data and aerial photography available from the Office of State Planning Coordination. Annexation areas selected by the Town of Blades Planning Commission at their meeting of May 20, 2002. All acreages are approximate, and the “developable acres” calculation was completed without benefit of detailed site or engineering analysis of the relevant parcels. Actual developable acreage may vary.

Table 15 demonstrates that the total growth area proposed by the Blades plan is approximately 648 +/- acres, including all annexation areas and the existing town itself. The majority of this land (67%) has already been developed with some urban use, or is undevelopable due to environmental constraints. The remaining 33%, approximately 212 +/- acres, is available for future development.

According to the existing land use survey described in Table 14, Chapter 2-1, the existing land use in the developed area of the Town of Blades is approximately 62% residential, with the remaining 38% comprised of commercial, industrial, institutional, and other uses. Assuming that future development follows the same ratio of land uses, there is the potential for as many as 147 houses (at 3.5 dwelling units per acre) and 26 acres of additional development within the current town boundaries even if the town does not annex more property.

If the town annexes all seven annexation areas proposed by this plan there will be a total of 212 acres which may be developed into urban uses (including the 68 acres in the current town boundaries). Assuming that the 212 acres of undeveloped land develops at a similar ratio of land use types, there is the potential for as many as 459 houses (at 3.5 dwelling units / acre) and 81 acres of commercial, industrial, and other development.

Growth and Annexation Area Descriptions

Map 9 in the map appendix shows the seven individual annexation areas and assigns future land uses to them. The following section provides more details about these areas:

Lands in the Existing Town Limits

There are approximately 68 acres to be developed within the existing town limits of Blades. There is some vacant and developable land in the northern portion of the town in the Downtown/Marina district described in Chapter 2-1. These lands are expected to be developed as commercial or mixed land uses. It should be noted that much of the land in this area that appears to be vacant is heavily impacted by wetlands and floodplains and will not be suitable for urban development. There are a variety of vacant lots within the towns neighborhoods which may be developed as single-family houses compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods. Several large tracts of vacant land exist in the southern portion of the town, located between the Seaford Kindergarten and the Little Meadows subdivision, which is currently under development. The land use plan in Chapter 2-1 specifies residential uses for these parcels. Finally, there is a vacant parcel located east of Little Meadows that the land use plan specifies for future commercial use.

Annexation Area 1 – Concord Road Corridor

This annexation area consists of 35 +/- acres of mostly developed land along both sides of Concord Road between the town limits and Route 13. The majority of land in this corridor is currently in residential use, and the Growth and Annexation Plan recommends that it remain residential through the balance of the planning period. Many existing homeowners in this area have expressed an interest into annexing into town to obtain sewer and water service. There are approximately 11 +/- acres undeveloped land in this area, and it is conceivable that additional residential uses could be built.

Annexation Area 2 – Southern Town Extension

This annexation area consists of 76 +/- acres immediately adjacent to the southern town boundaries. Approximately 47 +/- acres are suitable for future development. The Growth and Annexation Plan recommends that this area be developed with residential uses. Because access to this property is limited, it is most likely that these lands will be developed in conjunction with the adjacent lands to the north, which are currently within the town boundaries.

Annexation Area 3 – Western Town Extension

This annexation area consists of 82 +/- acres of land along the River Road corridor west of Blades. The area contains more than 50 existing homes, including a neighborhood of mobile homes (single-wide “trailers”) and several subdivisions of conventional single family homes. These neighborhoods are currently served with septic systems and wells, and it is anticipated that in the future it will be desirable for them to annex into the town to obtain sewer, water, and other municipal services. Providing sewer service would be a notable environmental improvement, considering that these properties are in close proximity to the Nanticoke River. The remaining vacant land in this area suitable for development (25 +/- acres) is designated by this plan for future residential use.

Annexation Area 4 – East of Route 13

This annexation area consists of 97 +/- acres east of Route 13. These lands currently contain some commercial businesses along the highway corridor. The remaining 47 +/- acres suitable for development is designated by this plan for commercial uses along the highway corridor, and residential uses behind the commercial areas.

Annexation Area 5 – Northern Highway Corridor

This annexation area consists of 27 +/- acres along the western side of Route 13 from the Nanticoke River to Concord Road. Except for one lot, the entire area is developed as commercial businesses, including a restaurant along the river. These businesses have long expressed a desire to annex into the town to obtain sewer and water service, and, as in Area 3, the provision of this service would be an environmental improvement for the river. The vacant lot is designated by this plan for commercial use.

Annexation Area 6 – Industrial Area

This area consists of 47 +/- acres of industrial land west of the town limits along River Road. The area is dominated by two existing industrial uses: Wyoming Concrete and the Arundle Corporation’s stone depot. Although the land use analysis shows that there is approximately 23 +/- acres remaining in this area suitable for development, the digital aerial photography predated the development of the stone depot. In reality, this area is virtually built out.

Annexation Area 7 – Southern Highway Corridor

This annexation area consists of 24+/- acres on the west side of Route 13 immediately south of the town boundaries. This land is almost completely built out with commercial uses along the highway corridor.

Plan Recommendations

Recommendation 1 – Reserve Sewer Allocation for Town Use before Annexation

The Infrastructure Plan, Chapter 2-3, indicates that sewer capacity is currently a limiting factor in Blades growth. The town currently meets or exceeds the agreed upon allocation for treatment capacity, although the County and the City of Seaford are currently in negotiations to upgrade that capacity. However, even under the most optimistic scenario being discussed, there will only be excess capacity for about 100 new homes or some combination of new homes and other businesses. Considering that this analysis shows that there is the potential for as many as 147 new homes in Blades as well as many new businesses, the town will need all of its allocation and probably more to accommodate lands currently in the town boundaries. The Town of Blades should work collaboratively with Sussex County and the City of Seaford to secure additional sewer capacity prior to annexation. The town should not annex unless it has adequate capacity to serve the areas within the town as well as the new areas.

Recommendation 2 – Annexation Strategy

The Town Council may utilize the following policies when considering annexation requests:

- The town should put the highest priority on annexing properties that are directly adjacent to the current town boundaries and properties that are partially within the town boundaries.
- Properties that are partially or minimally adjacent to the town boundaries should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. These parcels may range from small lots to large vacant tracts that are the subject of sizable development proposals. The town should avoid creating enclaves of unincorporated land.
- Through annexation, the town may take control of areas that have not traditionally been served by town services. Each annexation request should be evaluated by the town to determine the project's impact on town services. The evaluation of these annexation proposals may include:
 - The potential benefit to the town in terms of tax revenue, jobs, services, or facilities to be provided.

- The desirability of controlling the type and style of development using town codes if development is imminent.
- The impact of the development on town services and utilities. These impacts include sewer, water, fire service, police service, administrative costs, long-term maintenance of infrastructure, impact of the development on town facilities, as well as other criteria to be defined by the Town Council.
- The property's location within the State Investment Strategies Map. Parcels within the Developing Area classification should be considered favorably. The State has defined these areas for growth in the near term future and will be most likely to commit to infrastructure improvements in the area. Proposed annexations in the Secondary Developing Areas or in Rural Areas should be approached cautiously. None of the seven annexation areas currently fall within the Secondary or Rural designation, but the town should monitor changes to the State Strategies for Policies and Spending maps and the Sussex County Comprehensive Plan. State resources may not be available in Secondary or Rural areas, which may greatly increase the financial burden on the town.

Recommendation 3: Sprawl Avoidance Strategies

Suburban sprawl is a commonly used term to describe a number of perceived issues resulting from development, ranging from traffic congestion to the loss of open space. For the purposes of this plan, the term “sprawl” refers to discontinuous development that occurs away from currently developed lands in and around the existing town. Sprawl has numerous negative consequences and potential impacts on the services offered by the Town. These impacts may include:

- Traffic can be increased due to longer travel distances. Pedestrian and bicycle connections may not exist, making it necessary to travel to and from the newly developed area by car.
- The cost of providing utility services can be increased because of the greater distance from the established urban area, and the potential need for force mains, pumping stations and the like. Maintenance costs to the town increase due to the additional equipment and lines to maintain.
- Similarly, the cost of providing other town services can be increased due to additional travel time for police and other maintenance workers.
- Development occurring far from the existing urban area of the town can encroach on productive farmland. Large tracts of farmland may be segmented, making it less viable. Also, new residents may consider farming practices a nuisance, leading to complaints.

The following are some specific policies the Town Council could consider, when and if, they have any role in reviewing development proposals or providing utilities in areas adjacent to the town:

- Parcels that are adjacent to the current town boundaries should be developed first, before the development of more remote parcels is considered.
- Utility services should be extended only to areas that are anticipated for development and are consistent with the location and goals for the seven annexation areas. Utilities should not be extended to remote areas without a full evaluation of the costs and the benefits to the town.
- The town should encourage sidewalks to be provided in developments that are adjacent or near the town so that they may be one day connected to the town's pedestrian network.

Chapter 2-3 Infrastructure Plan

Background – Infrastructure

in·fra·struc·ture

- 1 : the underlying foundation or basic framework (as of a system or organization)
- 2 : the permanent installations required for military purposes
- 3 : the system of public works of a country, state, or region; also : the resources (as personnel, buildings, or equipment) required for an activity

Source: Merriam – Webster Collegiate Dictionary

As the above definition points out, the term infrastructure can refer to a “system of public works” or to an “underlying foundation or basic framework.” Drawing from this broad definition, this chapter will discuss two types of infrastructure that are essential to the functioning of the Town of Blades. The first is the town’s public utility infrastructure, which comprises of its water and sewer systems. The second is the town’s school facilities, which are a part of the Seaford School District. The public utility infrastructure is essential to serve the basic needs of the population. The school infrastructure of the community is essential to educate its citizens and enable them to become active and productive members of the community.

Sanitary Sewer

The Town of Blades does not operate its own wastewater treatment facility. In the late 1970s the Blades Sanitary Sewer District was developed by Sussex County. The County installed the sewer collection and transmission infrastructure within the original district boundaries, which were the then existing limits of the Town of Blades. Rather than construct a freestanding wastewater treatment plant for Blades, the County entered into an agreement with the City of Seaford to treat the waste from the district. The original agreement with Seaford limited the district to a flow of approximately 80,000 gallons per day (gpd), although it also contained some provisions limiting the type and intensity of wastes to be treated by the plant.

Since the inception of the district, Seaford has upgraded their sewer treatment plant. The plant now has the capacity to treat two million gallons per day. The City of Seaford reports that it is currently using approximately half of that capacity, with the remainder reserved for future growth in Seaford. The plant has also been upgraded to comply with the most recent environmental regulations, commonly know as “Total Maximum Daily Loads” (TMDLs), which are administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control. The Blades District has been expanded to include new areas that

have recently been annexed into Blades. The district is currently contiguous with the town boundaries.

Sussex County and the City of Seaford are currently in negotiations to update the agreement and wastewater flow allocations. Due to the technical upgrades to the Seaford plant, some of the limitations on the quality of wastewater found in the earlier contract may no longer be relevant. The Blades District has also been operating at or slightly above the 80,000 gpd limit in the original contract, indicating that additional capacity is needed. The average wastewater flow from the district for the past 12 months has been 90,760.55 gpd.

The current discussion with the City of Seaford would allow the County and Blades to have a capacity of 100,000 gpd of wastewater flow into the Seaford plant. This would be adequate for existing development but will not allow much opportunity for additional growth within the town or annexations of additional areas. An element of the new contract proposal would give the County the option of purchasing up to 120,000 gpd of capacity in the Seaford plant, should conditions ever warrant.

Should the new agreement be ratified by both the County and the City of Seaford, the new capacity would allow for some modest growth in Blades. According to Sussex County Engineering, the average house generates 300 gpd⁴ of waste. Considering that the Blades district is currently operating at an average of 90,000 gpd, an increase to the maximum being considered (120,000gpd) will allow only 30,000 gpd for growth in Blades. This is only enough capacity for 100 new homes. However, new commercial or industrial users of the sewer system could use a great deal of this extra capacity.

Clearly, sanitary sewer capacity will be one of the most critical limiting factors in Blades growth. This situation is complicated by the fact that Blades has little direct control over the provision of wastewater capacity for the town. Collaboration with the County (which operates the collection and transmission system) and Seaford (which operates the treatment plant) will be very important for the future of the Town of Blades.

Public Water System

The Town of Blades owns and maintains a public water system that serves the area currently within the town boundaries. The water system consists of two wells located behind the town hall on West Fourth Street, and a 150,000-gallon storage tank located on the corner of Seventh and Arch Streets. Table 16 below provides some details about the town's wells:

⁴ This is an accepted engineering estimate for the average amount of wastewater used per household per day. Source: Russell W. Archut, Assistant County Engineer, Sussex County.

Table 16. Water Supply Wells in the Blades Municipal Water Service

Well # - ID #	Date Drilled	Screen Interval	Aquifer	Pumping Rate
1 - 40024	June 1978	66-96 feet	Columbia	150 gpm
2 - 40025	June 1978	66-96 feet	Columbia	150 gpm

Source: DNREC, Division of Water Resources, 2002

The system currently has permits from the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control to withdraw up to 320,000 gallons per day from the aquifer (160,000 gallons per well). The current system usage is currently 80,000 to 90,000 gallons per day. The system runs with one well operating every other day, so the current usage is approximately half of the capacity of the system.

A major system upgrade is currently funded and should be starting construction in the near future. This upgrade will provide a new pump building, filters, piping, and controls at the town hall location. The existing wells and tank will still be utilized. The project is expected to take one year to complete, once construction has commenced. The new system will include a 300 gallon per minute filter, which will allow the system to pump up to 432,000 gallons per day, if permitted by DNREC in the future. However, it is likely that the wells would have to be upgraded in order to do so.

Considering that the average daily usage has been approximately 80-90,000 gpd, the current system has adequate capacity given the current water withdrawal permit to allow for considerable growth. The average household in Blades uses approximately 200 gpd⁵ of water. Using this average, the water system could serve as many as 350 additional houses per day using just one of the wells as is the practice. Water supply is not as much a limiting factor for growth as the wastewater system.

In 1992 the Town of Blades was issued a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) by DNREC to serve the town and an area outside of the town with water. There is no indication that this CPCN was updated after the 1995 annexation. The authority governing the granting of CPCNs was transferred to the Public Service Commission (PSC) in 2001. The PSC also adopted some additional regulations regarding CPCNs at that time.

Schools

The Town of Blades is located in the Seaford School District. This school district serves approximately 3,700 students in Seaford, Blades and the surrounding areas. Table 17 details the schools operated by the district.

⁵ This is the average amount of water used per household, per day in the Blades municipal water system. This estimate was derived through a review of water billing records. Source: Julie Chelton, Blades Town Administrator.

Table 17. Public Schools Operated by the Seaford School District

School Name	Location	Date Built	Design Capacity	Enrollment (2000 – 01)
Seaford Senior High School	Seaford	1967	1,166	1,005
Douglas (Frederick) Intermediate School	Seaford	1921	592	564
Seaford Central Elementary School	Seaford	1959	447	392
Seaford Kindergarten	Blades	1921	152	275
West Seaford Elementary School	Seaford	1953	532	481
Seaford Middle School*	Seaford	1929	1,019*	995*
Sussex Orthopedic Facility*	Seaford	1929		
<i>Totals (design capacity / enrollment)</i>			<i>3,908</i>	<i>3,712</i>

Source: Seaford School District, Delaware Department of Education. Compiled by IPA.

* These schools are located in the same structure. There were 43 students enrolled in the Sussex Orthopedic Facility during the 2000-2001 school year.

The majority of the Seaford School District schools are located in the City of Seaford. The one exception is the Seaford Kindergarten, which is located at 900 S. Arch Street in Blades. The kindergarten is the only school in the district with an enrollment exceeding its design capacity during the 2000 – 2001 school year. To remedy this situation the school has undergone a major addition, and will be reprogrammed as a kindergarten through fifth grade school for the 2002 – 2003 school year. This school is located in the heart of a quiet residential neighborhood, providing excellent opportunities for children from the neighborhood to walk to school.

Trash Service

Although trash removal service is not technically an element of physical infrastructure, it is a basic service than some people expect and rely upon when living in a small town. Blades does not currently operate a municipal waste collection service. Residents and businesses in the town must contract for waste removal on an individual basis. Periodically, the town does sponsor town clean ups, during which waste is removed by the town.

Relevant Planning Principles – Infrastructure

9) Blades is a part of the larger region, and is influenced by what happens in Seaford and the outlying areas of Sussex County. The town should coordinate planning, development and other policies with these other government entities.

Goal Statement – Infrastructure

Blade's public utility infrastructure and schools should be maintained and expanded to meet the needs of current residents and serve anticipated growth and annexation areas. Maintaining an adequate system of public utilities and schools will make Blades a desirable place to live and work, attract economic development, and will protect the environment.

Recommendations – Infrastructure

Recommendation 1: Blades Sewer District Sewer Needs Study

It is recommended that the Town of Blades collaborate with Sussex County to develop a sewer capacity needs study for the Blades sewer district. The study should evaluate both the current needs of the district and the future needs based on the annexation areas described in Chapter 2-2. Chapter 2-2 provides area calculations, future land use recommendations, and proposed densities to provide a starting point for this study. The study should also analyze various alternatives for providing sewer service to the Blades district, including but not limited to: continuing to purchase sewer capacity from Seaford, developing a regional county sewer treatment plant, or developing a municipal treatment plant for Blades.

Recommendation 2: Future Sewer Treatment Allocation

The Town of Blades should collaborate with Sussex County and the City of Seaford to acquire an adequate sewer treatment allocation for the town and the future growth areas identified in Chapter 2-2. The sewer capacity needs study described above should provide the relevant data to set realistic capacity needs for the Blades District.

Recommendation 3: Growth Coordination with Sussex County and Seaford

Sewer treatment capacity is a limiting factor in Blades growth and annexation potential, at least in the short term before recommendations 1 and 2 above are completed. Blades should develop a formal procedure for reviewing the sewer treatment capacity with the County and the City of Seaford prior to any municipal annexation or new development project within the current town limits. The capacity of the system should also be reviewed whenever there is a new industrial user or process in an existing facility that may generate additional wastewater discharges.

Recommendation 4: Proactively Acquire a CPCN for Growth Areas

The current Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) only covers the town boundaries as they existed in 1992. The Town of Blades should apply to the Public Service Commission to acquire a CPCN to include the current town boundaries and for the proposed growth and annexation areas described in Chapter 2-2. Proactively

acquiring the CPCN will give the Town of Blades the legal authority to provide water service in those areas.

Recommendation 5: Policies for Utility Expansion

The town should review its policies for providing water and, through Sussex County, sewer service to properties outside of the town boundaries. Having a consistent policy in place will make it much easier to deal with requests from out of town property owners. Two policies the town might consider are: 1) only provide water service to properties willing to annex into the town; or 2) develop a different rate structure for users outside the town boundaries. The town should work with Sussex County to ensure that the County's policies for providing sewer service are consistent with the town's policies for providing water service. Ideally, no property should get water service without providing sewer service and vice-versa.

Recommendation 6: Annexation Agreements

It should be the policy of the town to annex areas for which utility service is provided; however, this is not always possible because some areas are not immediately adjacent to the town boundaries, although they are within the growth and annexation areas described in Chapter 2-2. In cases where it is deemed desirable to provide such service to non-adjacent areas it is recommended that the service be provided only if the property owner enters into an "annexation agreement" with the Town of Blades. The annexation agreement would stipulate that the property owner will agree to annex into the Town of Blades when the town boundaries become adjacent. The Town should work with their solicitor to draft model language for the agreements.

Recommendation 7: Sprawl Avoidance through Utility Expansion Policy

The town should not extend utilities past the areas designated for annexation in Chapter 2-2, especially until all of these areas are developed and served with water and sewer service. This policy will avoid "leapfrog" development and allow the town to leverage public investments in the areas designated for growth.

Recommendation 8: Consider Contracting for Residential Municipal Trash Pick-Up

Blades should consider contracting with a waste hauling company to provide a consistent residential trash pick up program for the town. Such a contract could be negotiated by the town and billed directly to residents through tax billing mechanisms already in place. There would be a number of benefits of this system. First, the town may be able to negotiate a better rate for residents than they are currently paying as individuals. Second, the presence of a consistent system of trash removal may alleviate instances of residents not removing trash and debris in a timely manner. Third, a consolidated trash service may result in fewer trash vehicles driving through the town. Finally, this service may be a feature that will appeal to future residents as they consider buying a home in Blades.

Chapter 2-4 Transportation Plan

Background – Transportation

As is the case with most small towns in Delaware, Blades developed because of its location in relation to important transportation routes. The most significant transportation resources in late 19th and early 20th century Blades were the Nanticoke River and the causeway to Seaford. The town historically developed along the waterfront, the causeway, and the road that is today known as Market Street. The railroad, which was extended to the town in the mid 1800s, is another important transportation resource that enabled industrial development along the western end of town.

Overview of Transportation Network

Today, there are no commercial shipping activities in Blades, although shipping activities are still prominent in Seaford and elsewhere along the Nanticoke. There are two major roads that run through Blades. Market Street connects Blades to Seaford at the Nanticoke River Bridge and continues through to the town in a southerly direction. This road is marked as SR 20. River Road intersects Market Street and continues west out of town and along the shores of the Nanticoke. The other major road is known as High Street. It connects Market Street to Route 13 in the northerly portion of the town. After High Street leaves Blades town limits it is known as Concord Road. These roads are depicted on Map 2 in the Map Appendix.

These roadways provide access to Blades, but they are also significant through traffic routes. These routes are used by a significant number of residents and businesses located to the west and south of town. Most troubling to the town is the truck traffic that is generated by Wyoming Concrete and The Arundel Corporation, both located just west of town along River Road. Trucks from these two businesses continually use River Road, Market Street, and High Street/Concord Road to access Route 13. Blades residents have noted that the traffic volumes and truck traffic cause delays, especially during peak periods. The Market Street / High Street intersection is noted as particularly problematic. It is not signalized.

The major roads through the town (Market Street, High Street, and River Road) are owned and maintained by the Delaware Department of Transportation. The Town of Blades owns and maintains all local streets within the town boundaries.

US 13 Corridor Capacity Preservation Program

As a part of a 1995 annexation, Blades acquired property east of the traditional town limits. A portion of this property was zoned for commercial uses and has frontage along

Route 13, which is a major regional highway. Route 13 is part of the Delaware Department of Transportation's Corridor Capacity Preservation Program.

The Corridor Capacity Preservation Program was established in 1996 under Title 17, Section 145 of the *Delaware Code* to preserve selected existing transportation facilities. Four corridors are currently identified for the Program: SR 48, SR 1, US 113, and US 13. The limits of the Program on US 13 are DE 10 south of Dover to the Maryland State line, including the portion of US 13 adjacent to the property recently annexed into Blades.

The Program has five primary goals:

- Maintain an existing road's ability to handle traffic safely and efficiently.
- Coordinate the transportation impacts of increased economic growth.
- Preserve the ability to make future transportation-related improvements.
- Minimize the need to build an entirely new road on new alignment.
- Sort local and through traffic.

In addition to these goals, the Program is designed to maintain the regional significance and intended function of the existing designated routes. The social, environmental, and in particular, economic benefits gained through a management and preservation program outweigh the impacts associated with the construction of a new route on new alignment.

The coordination between land use and transportation planning is critical in order to preserve the U.S. 13 corridor. Governor Minner's Livable Delaware initiatives along with the Delaware Strategies for State Policies and Spending further indicate the need for coordinated growth. The Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) has coordinated its preservation strategies for the Program with the investment areas identified in the document *Managing Growth in the 21st Century: Strategies for State Policies and Spending* adopted in 1999 by Governor Carper and the Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues, and reaffirmed by Governor Minner under Executive Order 14. These strategies identify key investment areas across the State including Community, Developing and Secondary Developing Areas.

Blades should coordinate any intended development of this or other property along Route 13 with DelDOT and this program.

Traffic Data Analysis

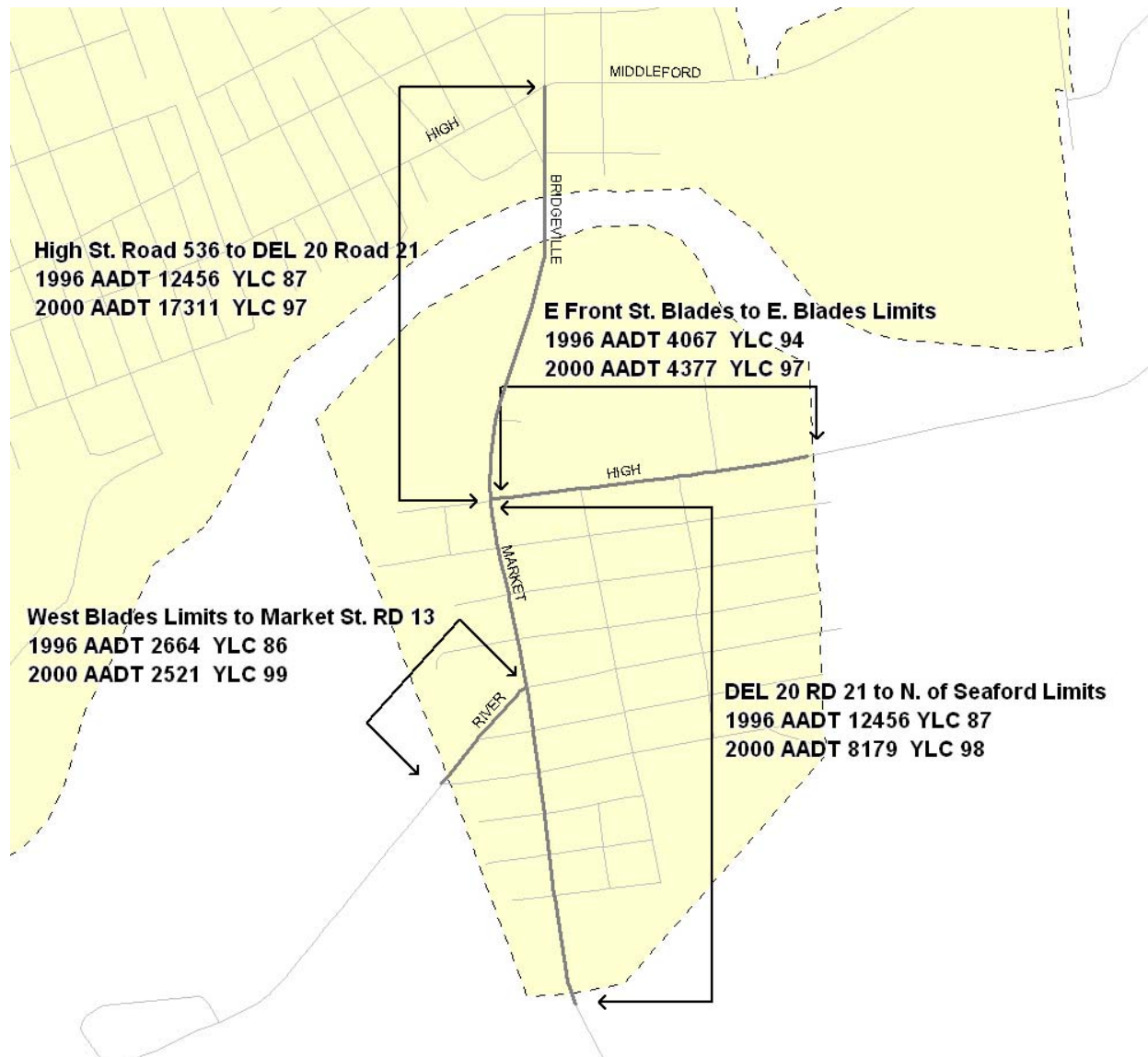
DelDOT monitors traffic on these roads on a yearly basis. The most recent traffic counts available are from the 2000 Annual Traffic Survey available from the department, and are shown in Table 18 and Figure 1 below compared to counts from 1994. The traffic counts are averages known as "Annual Average Daily Traffic" or AADT.

Table 18. AADT – Major Roads in Blades 1994 and 2000

Roadway Segment	AADT 1994	AADT 2000	% Change
Market St., High St. (Seaford) to High St. (Blades)	12,456	17,311	39%
Market Street, from High St. to S. Blades limits	12,456	8,179	-34%
High St from Market St. to E. Blades limits	4,067	4,377	8%
River Rd. from Market St. to W. Blades limits	2,664	2,521	-5%

Source: Delaware Department of Transportation, 2000 Annual Traffic Survey

Figure 1
AADT – Major Roads in Blades 1994 and 2000



Source: Delaware Department of Transportation, Statewide and Regional Planning Division

The AADT figures depicted above do not indicate great increases in traffic volumes along the major roads in Blades. In fact, two road segments indicate a decrease in traffic volume over the period. Traffic crossing the Nanticoke River Bridge increased by 39%, yet this increase did not correspond to increases on any of the other major roadways. This may indicate that there are more trips that start and end in the town, rather than traveling through. This may also explain the 34% decrease in traffic volume that was recorded on Market Street from the High Street intersection to the southern town limits. The other two road segments measured stayed about the same from 1994 through 2000.

It is important to note that these AADT figures represent extrapolations of actual traffic counts taken years earlier, and may in fact not represent actual conditions being experienced in Blades today. However, the trends noted by the figures may have several possible explanations. Through travelers may be choosing to take Route 13 rather than Market Street (SR 20) though Blades. In the last decade there has been a great intensification of land uses along the Route 13 corridor and more travelers may be utilizing those services rather than driving through Blades into Seaford. A second trend may be the intensification of land uses in Blades itself. As more people live and work in Blades, fewer through trips are being recorded.

Pedestrian Network

There are sidewalks along some of the main streets in Blades, including Market Street. However, the sidewalk network is not continuous and the sidewalks themselves are not very wide in many locations. There are few sidewalks along the local streets in Blades. However, the low traffic along many neighborhood streets makes them conducive to pedestrians and vehicles sharing the roadway except during peak hours. Unfortunately, the narrow right-of-ways would appear to make the installation of sidewalks along some of the local streets challenging.

Public Transit

There is currently no local public transit service available to serve Blades residents. The Delaware Transit Corporation (DTC) operates a regional transit service called *DART First State* with stops in nearby Seaford. DART First State Route 212 links Laurel, Seaford, Bridgeville, and Georgetown. From Georgetown, riders can take other routes to Milford or the beach resorts. In Seaford, this route has stops at the Nanticoke Memorial Hospital, the Shipley State Service Center, and the Seaford Wal-Mart. There is a bus stop located on Market Street in Blades in the vicinity of the Hunter's Court apartment complex. In addition to the DART First State service, the DTC offers Paratransit service in Blades. Paratransit provides door-to-door service to those with disabilities.

Relevant Planning Principles – Transportation

- 3) The town should encourage residential development on lands within and adjacent to the town to be compatible with the existing patterns of Blades neighborhoods and include street patterns that link to the existing street system, sidewalks, and parks and open space areas.
- 4) The Delaware Department of Transportation and the Town of Blades should work together to solve transportation issues and improve the function and safety of problematic intersections in the town, considering both the needs of vehicles and pedestrians. The comprehensive plan should develop land use strategies that are compatible with realistic transportation options.

Goal Statement – Transportation

The Town of Blades should work with the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) to improve both public transit service and the road network in Blades to balance the needs of vehicles (including trucks), pedestrians, transit riders and bicycles while providing adequate capacity to manage anticipated economic growth and redevelopment.

Recommendations – Transportation

Recommendation 1: Coordination of Transportation and Land Use

The town should carefully review future land use decisions to ensure that the existing and planned roadway improvements can accommodate the future traffic. In order to accomplish this recommendation, it will be necessary to coordinate with DelDOT on larger proposals and possibly require Traffic Impact Studies for larger projects.

Recommendation 2: Truck and Traffic Study for Blades

The existing traffic data are outdated, and it is not clear that there has ever been a complete study of the impact of traffic, particularly truck traffic, in Blades. The Town of Blades should work with DelDOT to prepare a study that accurately reflects the traffic volumes using Market Street, High Street, and River Road. This study should evaluate the impact of truck traffic, and suggest improvements to accommodate anticipated traffic volumes and types.

Recommendation 3: Market Street / High Street Intersection Evaluation

The Town of Blades should work with DelDOT to evaluate the Market Street / High Street intersection and develop a plan for improving the intersection. Currently, the intersection lacks clear pedestrian crossings or sidewalks on all approaches. It is also a very busy intersection that handles a great deal of truck traffic. The study should consider geometric improvements for truck turning movements, pedestrian /bicycle access, and the feasibility and desirability of installing a traffic signal.

Recommendation 4: Pedestrian and Bicycle Study for Blades

It is recommended that the Town of Blades work with DelDOT to undertake a pedestrian and bicycle study to identify key improvements that could lead to a more continuous system of sidewalks and bike paths in the town. Particular attention should be paid in this study to the Downtown / Marina District that is more fully described in Chapter 2-1.

Recommendation 5: Encourage the Construction of Sidewalks in New Developments

The town should require sidewalks in all new developments, except where sidewalks are difficult or impossible to construct due to limited right – of – way or other physical constraints. Sidewalks should be provided along subdivision streets, as well as along major roadways upon which developments front. It will be important to provide both sidewalks along the frontage of the roadways and sidewalks that provide linkage from the frontage to buildings.

Recommendation 6: Corridor Capacity Preservation

Land use decisions made by the town could have a significant impact on the regional traffic capacity of Route 13. Any development activity that occurs along Route 13 should be coordinated with DelDOT's Corridor Capacity Preservation Program. This will be particularly important when and if the town annexes additional property along the corridor.

Recommendation 7: Interconnected Street System

In new development, street patterns should be linked in with the existing town's street pattern wherever practical. At a minimum, pedestrian and bicycle connections should be provided. The street and circulation patterns of the new development can be designed to minimize the possibility of through traffic, while giving the new residents multiple connections to the town and regional street pattern.

Recommendation 8: Review Transit Service Levels Periodically

As Blades and Seaford grow, there will undoubtedly be the need for additional public transit services to serve residents and employees. The Town of Blades should work with the Delaware Transit Corporation to help identify these future needs.

Chapter 2-5 *Historic and Cultural Resources Plan*

Background – Historic and Cultural Resources

Although Blades was one of the most recent municipalities in Delaware to be incorporated, the town has a long and distinguished history dating back at least to the first half of the 19th Century. The town's history is more fully described in Chapter 1-1. The general layout of the town and existing land use patterns are a legacy of Blades's historic connection to Seaford across the Nanticoke River. There are also many structures in the town that date back to the late 19th and the early 20th century.

In 1999 the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office evaluated the town and determined that there is a collection of structures that would be eligible for inclusion in a National Register Historic District. This area is roughly bounded on the north by High Street, on the east by Arch Street, on the south by Eighth Street, and on the west by the railroad tracks. This collection of residences and churches has retained enough structural integrity to convey the history of the community as it grew from the 1880s through the 1940s. Unfortunately, many of the structures have been altered and some are in very poor repair.

Clearly these structures are very important to the character of the community, and if repaired and / or restored can enhance Blades's unique small town atmosphere. At this time town officials do not have a strong interest in creating a historic district or any of the associated regulatory controls. However, the revitalization of structures in poor repair is a priority, and the preservation of some significant individual structures may result from a combination of increased code enforcement, private investment, and economic development activities.

Relevant Planning Principles – Historic and Cultural Resources

5) Blades should seek to preserve and improve the patterns and character in its existing neighborhoods, especially the current mixture of housing, which serves a broad range of people in the community.

8) Blades should pursue a development strategy that complements the small town atmosphere.

Goal Statement – Historic and Cultural Resources

It is the goal of the Town of Blades to balance the preservation and enhancement of significant historical and cultural features in the town with appropriate revitalization and economic development activities in order to create a unique and vital small town.

Recommendations – Historic and Cultural Resources

Recommendation 1: Encourage Stabilization and Repair of Older Structures

As noted above, there are some old and potentially historic structures that are in poor repair. The town should encourage and enable the stabilization and repair of these structures in order to bring them back into productive economic use and to improve housing conditions for those who live in them. Some methods for accomplishing this recommendation may include increased code enforcement, the acquisition of CDBG funds for rehabilitation through Sussex County or the State of Delaware, and perhaps working with real estate developers interesting in repairing and reselling older homes. Chapter 2-7 has some additional recommendations for how the town can assist homeowners in maintaining and repairing their homes.

Recommendation 2: Consider pursuing a National Register District

Town officials should discuss the creation of a historic district with the staff of the State Historic Preservation Office. There may be some advantages to creating such a district which would enhance economic development and revitalization activities in Blades.

Recommendation 3: Identify and Protect Important Historic and Cultural Sites in Blades

There may be many sites and features in the town that are important to the community. Some may have been constructed long ago, and be worthy of designation as historic sites. There may also be sites that are important culturally, but are not historical in nature (the marina, for example). The town should undertake a community-based process to identify and document these sites. Once identified, it may become apparent that some of the sites might need protection or enhancement.

Chapter 2-6 Economic Development Plan

Background – Economic Development

The economy of Blades has developed around its traditional role as an historic host to artisans and its geographic proximity to Seaford's bustling commercial center. The Nanticoke River has proven to be a valuable source of economic development and support in the past, and the river will certainly play a role in the economic future of the town. Both industrial and commercial institutions are situated in and around Blades, and although this internal economic infrastructure does not completely support all of the town's residents, many people choose to live and work in town. The area of Blades along the northern portion of Market Street is definitely the most developed commercial zone, although this area still hosts a fairly equal mix of commercial and residential structures. Home business offices and residential commercial establishments are scattered throughout the town and play a seemingly marginal role in Blades's economic development.

Secondary areas of potential commercial vitality in Blades include the area along High Street from its Market Street intersection to its Route 13 intersection and the area along the Route 13 corridor itself. Each of these areas seems to have unique potential for economic development as well as the necessary infrastructure to support it.

During the Blades Community Planning Workshop, residents of town indicated their opinions regarding future economic development, and two important directions emerged from the exercise. First, the members of the workshop almost unanimously agreed that the area of town around the northern section of Market Street should, as mentioned above, be redeveloped with the goal of creating a mostly commercial district in which residential uses are permitted only when mixed with commercial land uses. Residents clearly identified this area of town as having the most potential for commercial uses and other applicable economic development projects. This area currently serves as the most commercially developed portion of the town.

A second important idea that stemmed from the Blades Community Development Workshop was the concept that the newly constructed Blades marina should play an important role in the future economic development of the town. The marina is a unique feature in the region, and is anticipated to bring new economic and social opportunities to the Blades community. As such, economic development in Blades should complement the new marina and its users as well as accommodate the various types of consumers and merchants that will come to the town as a result of the marina. The successful operation of the marina is a chance for the town of Blades to diversify its economic structure, distinguish itself from other small towns in the region, and secure its success in the near and distant future. In all, the marina may provide Blades with the momentum it needs to create the foundation for many economic initiatives that cannot be found elsewhere in the area.

In the town's recent history, industrial and commercial institutions situated to the south of the Blades town hall abandoned their property. This abandonment left a large, vacant, contaminated site in the center of the town. This "brownfield" site has been identified by both the community and town officials as a targeted area of desired commercial and industrial redevelopment; however, the process involved in making this area a viable part of the town's economic environment is complicated. Partnership and collaboration with the state Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC), the Delaware Economic Development Office (DEDO), and the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will be necessary to bring the site to a usable state. The town has shown considerable interest in obtaining the property for some public use. While the site has several usable structures and holds the promise of being a central part of the town's future economic viability, the town must carefully plan its future actions regarding this site in order to ensure the project's success.

Finally, it must be mentioned that the town of Blades has an able partner in the pursuit of its successful economic development. The Blades Economic Development Corporation (BEDCO) holds a vested interest in the economic development of the town of Blades. Working in cooperation, the town of Blades and BEDCO are dedicated to ensuring the ongoing development and improvement of the town's economy. The existence of this special interest organization should prove helpful for Blades in securing necessary support, financing, and research for development projects.

Goal Statement – Economic Development

Blades, in cooperation with the Blades Economic Development Corporation, should seek to establish a well defined area of economic development in the town while promoting the establishment of commercial and service projects that complement both the town's residents and the new consumers brought to Blades by the Blades marina.

Relevant Planning Principles

Principle 1: The community considers Market Street between the Nanticoke River and High Street to be the downtown center of the town. It should be redeveloped to include commercial, institutional, and recreational uses that benefit the community as a whole and complement the new marina.

Principle 6: The town should continue to work with the Blades Economic Development Corporation (BEDCO) to implement economic development initiatives in Blades.

Principle 7: The town should seek to attract land uses that will complement the new marina.

Plan Recommendations – Economic Development

Recommendation 1: Secure Adequate Utility Capacity for Growth

Growth of the town may be limited due a shortfall in sewer allocation, which is discussed in detail in Chapters 2-2 and 2-3. Blades needs to resolve this issue before any substantial redevelopment or annexation into new areas can occur. Suggestions for how to resolve these issues may be found in Chapter 2-3.

Recommendation 2: Develop a workable strategy to establish a well defined town center containing commercial, institutional, and recreational uses.

As illustrated by the town community, the area along Market Street between the Nanticoke River and High Street is the prime location for establishing the foundation for a viable town center. Keeping in mind the existing commercial goods and services that are available in neighboring Seaford, it is recommended that the town of Blades create a strategy for making this area of town a place where residents and visitors can obtain goods and services that are unique in the region. The characteristics of this area—to be called the *Blades Downtown/Marina District*—are further described in the land use section (Chapter 2-1) of the plan.

Recommendation 3: Promote the development of a mixed-use commercial and residential area along Market Street and High Street.

Another identified area of economic development in Blades comprises the land that straddles both Market Street from High Street south to Fourth Street and also High Street from Market Street East to the municipal boundary. The town should promote economic development that complements both the commercial needs of the towns and the neighborhood characteristics of the area. The specific characteristics of this area—to be called the *Blades Neighborhood Business District*—is further described in the land use section (Chapter 2-1) of the plan.

Recommendation 4: Create an economic environment that welcomes new commercial and institutional projects that complement the Blades marina.

The marina promises to be an economic benefit to Blades in a few ways. First, the very existence of the marina will bring new consumers and visitors into the town. Second, new commercial ventures will be established in response to these new consumers and their need for more numerous and diverse goods and services. Third, the marina is geographically situated along the area of Market Street that has previously been identified as the prime location for Blades's town center. Working toward the establishment of a viable and distinct commercial and recreational center in the town, the marina in this area will create a firm foundation upon which to build future initiatives for this purpose.

Recommendation 5: Seek to utilize the resources, assistance, and support of the Blades Economic Development Corporation (BEDCO) in all town activities that deal with economic development.

Special interest corporations such as BEDCO tend to have access to resources and information that the town government may not readily have available. By working

cooperatively with and including the BEDCO in the town's economic development activities, decisions promise to be more focused, clearer, and better supported.

Recommendation 6: Develop a strategic plan for the economic redevelopment of the industrial "brownfield" site south of the Town Hall.

In order to begin the process of changing this land parcel into a viable economic benefit to the town and to the region, the town must first develop a strategic plan that will serve as a guide to future activity regarding the project. This plan will encompass a number of important steps, and must incorporate an established timeline that includes at least the following steps.

- 1) **Investigate the certainty of the town's desire to take control of the site.** The first step in the process involves a study and evaluation process by which the town will make certain that it desires to take control of the property in question. This may take the form of an informal leadership caucus, an internally or externally executed cost benefit study, or a simple recorded affirmation. Regardless, the town must be convinced of the benefits that can be expected by the action of transferring the property to the town's control.
- 2) **Complete a "visioning" process to illustrate the future of the project.** In order to secure both funding and "buy in" from residents and agency administrators, the town must be able to accurately convey its vision for the future of this land parcel. This "visioning" process can include written descriptions, landscape designs, and other descriptive tools. The process may involve town residents, local investors, and agency officials.
- 3) **Arrange for the transfer of the property to the town's control.** An inquiry must be undertaken to determine the status of the property including any pre-existing debts, burdens, or other hindrances. The town must then arrange for the transfer of the land parcel from its current owner to the town. The town may choose to involve DNREC in this stage due to the issue of debt owed for past cleanup activities on the property.
- 4) **Arrange for the enrollment of the land parcel onto the state's voluntary cleanup program.** By working with DNREC on the cleanup of the property, the town can ensure that the project will qualify for financial relief monies from state and federal sources.
- 5) **Investigate the available funding from DEDO.** The Delaware Economic Development Office has funds available for land redevelopment that benefits the economic viability of state residents. The town should attempt to secure this funding for both demolition of unwanted structures on the land and the construction of new infrastructure.

Chapter 2-7 Housing Plan

Background – Housing

Blades' housing stock is mostly single-family detached homes, but there is a fairly large component of multi-family apartments. As of the year 2000 there were a total of 302 single-family homes in the town (79% of the total housing stock) and 60 multi-family units (16% of the total housing stock). The 2000 US Census reports that there are also 12 mobile homes in Blades, but this appears to be an error. The mobile home park adjacent to Blades's western boundary may have been mistakenly tabulated as inside the town limits. There is one subsidized, low to moderate-income apartment complex located within the town boundaries. The Hunters Court apartment complex on Market Street is a 33-unit project funded by the USDA Rural Housing Service.

About 28% of Blades housing stock was built before 1940. However, as noted in Chapter 2-2 Growth and Annexation, there was a significant amount of new construction in Blades during the 1980s and 1990s. A full 28% of the housing stock is newer than 1980.

The housing value data from the 2000 Census are not yet available. The 1990 US Census reports that housing values in Blades were lower than the State or County averages. This would tend to indicate that the housing stock in Blades is particularly affordable when compared to other housing in Sussex County.

The most significant housing issue raised during the public workshops was the need for additional property maintenance code enforcement. This was also one of the central concerns of the Blades 1978 Comprehensive Plan. Clearly, the condition of housing in Blades and property maintenance and housing code enforcement are important issues for the Blades community to address.

Relevant Planning Principles – Housing

- 2) The town should review and enhance their enforcement of building and property maintenance codes in order to protect the health, safety, and welfare of town residents, enhance the image of the town, and protect property values for all property owners.
- 3) The town should encourage residential development on lands within and adjacent to the Town to be compatible with the existing patterns of Blades neighborhoods and include street patterns that link to the existing street system, sidewalks, and parks and open space areas.
- 5) Blades should seek to preserve and improve the patterns and character in its existing neighborhoods, especially the current mixture of housing, which serves a broad range of people in the community.

8) Blades should pursue a development strategy that complements the small town atmosphere.

Goal Statement – Housing

The Town of Blades should seek to provide new housing opportunities consistent with the character of the town, while using proven code enforcement and housing revitalization strategies to improve housing conditions for all residents of Blades.

Recommendations – Housing

Recommendation 1: Property Maintenance and Housing Code Enforcement

It is recommended that the town review its property maintenance codes and, if necessary, develop new codes and a comprehensive strategy for enforcing property maintenance and housing codes. The code-enforcement strategy should be comprehensive and consistent in order to be effective. Additional trained housing inspectors may be required. Successful implementation of this recommendation will improve housing conditions for all residents and has the opportunity to increase property values throughout Blades' neighborhoods.

Recommendation 2: Assist Homeowners with Maintenance and Repair

There may be some homeowners in town who lack the expertise and funding to properly maintain their older homes. The town or a local community oriented group may be able to develop local resources to assist these homeowners. Here are some suggestions that might be useful for the town to consider:

- Keep a library of information on maintaining older homes.
- Publicly recognize well-maintained structures and newly fixed up structures. (Newark takes a photo, posts it in town hall, & publishes it in the newspaper.)
- Keep a list of registered contractors –elderly residents in particular are more likely to be victims of home-repair scams.
- Keep a warehouse of donated building materials available for free or low cost to residents (such as lumber, paint, carpet, doors, hardware). Solicit donations from local contractors (see the list above) and others in the business or doing home repairs.
- Investigate low or no cost loans for repairs to historic homes or for elderly, disabled or low-income homeowners. Advertise that these resources are available, and bring in the providers once a year for a workshop.
- Distribute a brochure to all property owners explaining the code requirements for maintenance.

Recommendation 3: Diversification of Housing Opportunities.

In order to provide a range of housing opportunities for all ages and economic groups, it is recommended that Blades encourage the construction of some townhouse, duplex, or condominium units in new developments. These housing types are currently rare in

Blades housing stock but do represent important housing choices that can be an asset to the community. For example, townhouses and duplexes can allow singles and young couples who cannot afford a single-family home to purchase a home and build equity. These types of units can be incorporated into new developments without increasing the overall density. This concept is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2-2.

Chapter 2-8 Environmental Protection Plan

Background – Environmental Protection

General Environment

Blades is located on the southern shore of the Nanticoke River, a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay. The Nanticoke watershed drains a portion of southwestern Sussex County and a large area of Maryland's eastern shore. The Nanticoke River is known as one of the least developed and most scenic of the Chesapeake Bay's major tributaries. This is the only watershed in Delaware that drains into the Chesapeake Bay.

The river is clearly the most significant environmental feature in the town. The majority of the river shoreline is currently undeveloped, except for the area in the vicinity of the Nanticoke River Bridge and the Market Street corridor. North of High Street there are numerous limitations to urban development including wetlands, mature woodlands, and floodplains. South of High Street the elevation of the town generally rises, and the soils and drainage improve, making it more suitable for urban development.

Floodplains and Wetlands

The shoreline of the river is characterized by a well defined floodplain that is depicted in blue on Map 5. The flood elevation appears to be between five and 10 feet above sea level. A large area of the town north of High Street is impacted by this floodplain. Ideally, floodplains should remain free from obstructions and structure in order to preserve the capacity of the river system to transmit and store water during storm events. However, in Blades some of this area has historically been built on, notably the Market Street corridor. Structures within this area are in jeopardy of being damaged by floodwaters unless they are constructed above the base flood elevation and with special flood resistant construction methods. The town currently has a flood hazard ordinance that regulates construction in these areas. Additional permitting for construction in the floodplain is required through the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC).

Wetlands in the Blades area are generally associated with the river shoreline and the floodplain areas. Map 5 depicts wetlands based on GIS data obtained from the DNREC. Wetlands are typically inundated with water all or part of the year and contain wetlands vegetation and soft or marshy soil that is poor for building. While wetlands are severe constraints to urban development, they perform a number of very important ecological functions including floodwater storage, improving water quality, and wildlife habitat. The wetlands along the Nanticoke River may also be home to rare or endangered species of plants and animals. These characteristics demonstrate that it is important to preserve the integrity of wetland areas along the river.

Soils

The majority of the soils in the town are of the Evesboro-Rumsford Association and are defined as “excessively drained and somewhat excessively drained soils with permeable subsoils of sand and sandy loam.” The upland areas of the town are mostly Evesboro loamy sand, which drains rapidly and has low moisture-holding capabilities. These soils do not have many constraints for urban development, although the rapid permeability of the soils may allow septic systems to contaminate shallow wells and the river system. This was one important stimulus for the creation of the Blades sewer district in the late 1970s. There are some small areas of tidal marsh and swamp soils that are associated with the wetlands along the river shoreline.

The permeable soils in the town result in very good aquifer-recharge characteristics. Rainwater can easily percolate through the soil and into the underground aquifer, where Blades gets its drinking water. There is one area in the town, shown in pink on Map 5, which is categorized as “excellent” for aquifer recharge. Ideally, pervious surfaces (buildings, paving) should be limited in this area to not impede the recharge of rainwater. In addition, the storage of materials that could easily contaminate the aquifer should be subject to increased management in this area.

Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)

DNREC is currently running a program known as “Total Maximum Daily Loads” or TMDLs. As the name of the program suggests, the goal is to reduce the total maximum daily load of nutrient pollution that is reaching the Nanticoke River. The Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for the Nanticoke Watershed call for a 30-percent reduction in non-point source⁶ nitrogen and a 50-percent reduction in non-point source phosphorous. To that end, DNREC recommends best management practices (BMPs) for all land uses. Pollution Control Strategies, being developed by DNREC in conjunction with the Tributary Action Team for the Nanticoke, will help to pinpoint some of these BMPs. Some BMP's that will help to reduce non-point source pollution include conservation design and the removal of septic systems.

Relevant Planning Principles – Environmental Protection

10) The Nanticoke River is a very important environmental feature that greatly increases the quality of life for area residents. Blades should seek to protect the river by adopting appropriate development practices and land use strategies adjacent to the river and its wetlands.

⁶ Non-point source -- Pollution of surface or groundwater supplies originating from land use activities and/or the atmosphere, having no well defined point of entry.

Goal Statement – Environmental Protection

Blades should balance the economic growth predicted by this plan with stewardship of the town's natural resources and the protection of water quality in the Nanticoke River.

Recommendations – Environmental Protection

Recommendation 1: Protection of Wetlands and Woodlands on River Shore

It is recommended that Blades protect the wetlands and woodlands that line the shore of the Nanticoke River. These areas have ecological values associated with flood protection and wildlife habitat. These areas are also consistent with floodplains and poor soils, making them difficult and unwise to develop. Alteration or development of these areas may be under the jurisdiction of other State or Federal agencies, notably DNREC and/or the US Army Corps of Engineers.

Recommendation 2: Design Standards for Blades Downtown / Marina District

Any development in the Blades Downtown/Marina district should carefully consider the preservation of environmental features in the site design proposal. It is recommended that the new zoning district anticipated by Chapter 2-1 for this area should contain some design standards that provide guidance to developers when considering construction in this area.

Recommendation 3: Construction Standards in the Floodplain

The town has enacted a Flood Hazard Ordinance regulating building activity in the floodplain. Ideally, structures should not be located in the floodplain. However, if construction of structures is unavoidable then a higher standard of construction should be required. In all cases the lowest occupied floor level should be located above the base flood elevation. The town should continue to utilize the Flood Hazard Ordinance, and amend it if necessary as new information and techniques become available.

Recommendation 4: Flood Study

The town, BEDCO, or both should commission an engineer to do a flood study for the area encompassed within the Blades Downtown / Marina District. Such a study would involve the preparation of a detailed topographic survey of the area in order to accurately determine the extent of the floodplain. The study could then be sent to FEMA in order to obtain a "Letter of Map Revision" (LOMR). This is FEMA's formal acceptance of the new boundaries. The completion of this study and obtaining a LOMR should be seen as an economic development activity. It will provide accurate data to allow better planning of future public and private improvements in the area. It may also assist property owners who are outside of the floodplain by making it unnecessary to carry flood insurance.

Recommendation 5: Best Management Practices for Development

The town should coordinate with DNREC regarding Best Management Practices (BMPs) that could be used in Blades to reduce nutrient pollution in the Nanticoke River.

Recommendation 6: Aquifer Recharge

Blades should adopt limits on impervious surfaces in the “excellent” aquifer-recharge area shown on Map 5. The University of Delaware’s Water Resources Agency suggests that impervious cover (buildings, paving, etc.) should be limited to no more than 20% of the lot in this area. In addition, there should be some additional guidelines that regulate the storage and management of toxics and other substances that could easily contaminate the aquifer in this area. One method to accomplish this would be to adopt an overlay zone specific to the aquifer recharge area.

Chapter 2-9 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Background – Open Space and Recreation

There are two municipal parks in the Town of Blades. The first is known as Blades Public Park, and consists of approximately two acres of land located in the vicinity of Fifth and Arch Streets in the south central portion of the town. This park was constructed in part with funding from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund and includes playground equipment, a picnic area, and public restrooms. This park is conveniently located in the middle of Blades's largest residential neighborhood.

Triangle Park is the other municipal park in Blades. It is a small triangular piece of land located along River Road at the western boundary of the town. This park contains some picnic tables and a swing set.

In addition to these two municipal parks, there is some recreational space available that is associated with the Seaford Kindergarten, which is located on South Arch Street in Blades.

Another important recreation resource is the new public marina that has been constructed by the Blades Economic Development Council (BEDCO) in the northwestern portion of the town. This marina will provide boating and fishing opportunities for boat owners and residents of Blades and the surrounding areas.

In addition to the recreational facilities located in Blades, the City of Seaford manages a fairly extensive system of parks. Their facilities include tennis courts, playgrounds, ball fields, picnic areas, a boat ramp, picnic areas, etc. The City of Seaford's parks total over 112 acres. Because of the proximity of these two communities, it is reasonable to assume that Blades residents could take advantage of facilities and programs in Seaford, especially those that are not offered in Blades.

Relevant Planning Principles – Open Space and Recreation

- 1) The community considers the Market Street and High Street area to be the downtown center of the town. It should be redeveloped to include commercial, institutional, and recreational uses that benefit the community as a whole and complement the new marina.
- 3) The town should encourage residential development on lands within and adjacent to the town to be compatible with the existing patterns of Blades neighborhoods, and include street patterns which link to the existing street system, sidewalks, and parks and open space areas.

10) The Nanticoke River is a very important environmental feature that greatly increases the quality of life for area residents. Blades should seek to protect the river by adopting appropriate development practices and land use strategies adjacent to the river and its wetlands.

Goal Statement – Open Space and Recreation

The goal of the Town of Blades is to provide attractive, safe, and accessible recreational opportunities to town residents.

Recommendations – Open Space and Recreation

Recommendation 1: Evaluate Condition of Parks and Equipment

The town should evaluate the condition of the existing parks and the playground equipment within them to ensure that they are up to current standards. If any upgrades are needed, funding may be available from the Delaware Land and Water Conservation Trust Fund. Inquiries about this funding source should be made through DNREC.

Recommendation 2: Coordinate parks programming with Seaford

Blades may be too small to have an extensive municipal parks and recreation program, but the town's proximity to Seaford can be an advantage. The town should evaluate collaboration with Seaford's programs to allow Blades residents to fully participate in sports, after school programs, and the like. This need not be a one way street, as perhaps facilities in Blades (Blades Park or the Marina) could be used as the venue for some of these programs.

Recommendation 3: Park and Open Space Policy for New Developments.

The town should require that all residential developments include some type of park or open space amenities with their site designs. These facilities should be appropriate to the size of the project and the age group of the intended residents. Exceptions could be made for small projects or projects adjacent to existing park or recreational facilities. Parks facilities could remain in the ownership of homeowners associations or dedicated to the town for ownership and maintenance, depending on the situation.

Recommendation 4: Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections.

The town should explore opportunities to provide pedestrian and bicycle connections among parks, public and cultural facilities, and residential neighborhoods.

Recommendation 5: Nanticoke River Protection

The Nanticoke River is the largest, most visible, and most important natural resource in Blades. The new marina provides a previously unprecedented opportunity for members of the community to have access to the river for boating, fishing, canoeing, and kayaking. The town should protect the water quality of the river and the woodlands and wetlands on its shore by only permitting environmentally responsible development in sensitive areas.

Chapter 2-8, Environmental Protection contains additional information about how this might be accomplished.

Part 3

Implementation Strategies

Chapter 3-1 Intergovernmental Coordination

Intergovernmental coordination is essential to accomplish the goals identified through the planning process. The coordination of planning and other activities with those of Seaford, Sussex County, and the State of Delaware will have a direct impact on the well being and quality of life for all residents living in or near Blades.

Coordination with Agencies

- For land use planning and transportation, establishing and maintaining close coordination with the Office of State Planning Coordination, the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), the City of Seaford, and Sussex County is crucial. Other important state agencies, the actions of which may interact with the town's activities are the State Historic Preservation office (SHPO), the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC), and the Delaware Economic Development Office (DEDO).
- Coordination with the State is also relevant with respect to various funding opportunities. For example, Federal TEA 21 grants administered through DelDOT may be available for improving local streets. Infrastructure grants, which can be significant sources of funding for the town, are administered by the State.
- The Quality of Life Act requires counties to adopt procedures for coordination of land use planning in neighboring jurisdictions. Therefore, Sussex County is an important partner for the town, particularly with regard to annexation and development in peripheral areas and for economic development in general. The town should work closely with the Sussex County Planning Department and Economic Development Department regarding issues surrounding Blades.

Development that is occurring outside the town limits is highly relevant to Blades, because land uses outside the town have economic and social impacts on the town.

- The town should make an effort to keep itself apprised of land use applications in nearby areas that will impact the town. The town should comment through the State's LUPA review process, the County's planning process, or the City of Seaford's planning process where applicable.
 - It is recommended that Blades develop a coordination strategy with the County regarding zoning, subdivision plans, and the type of development occurring in neighboring areas. The recommendations found in Chapter 2-2 of this plan can form the basis for discussions with the county. A formal memorandum of agreement with the county may be one mechanism to define the process for coordination and interaction.

- It is recommended that Blades develop a coordination strategy with the City of Seaford regarding zoning, subdivision plans, and the type of development occurring in neighboring areas. The recommendations found in Chapter 2-2 of this plan can form the basis for discussions with the city. A formal memorandum of agreement with Seaford may be one mechanism to define the process for coordination and interaction.

Coordination with Planning Activities

The town should become involved in planning activities of other agencies when they are addressing land use, transportation, infrastructure, or service delivery in and around the Blades area. The town should provide representatives to serve on committees drafting and reviewing plans. The town should also review and comment on draft plans and otherwise become an active participant in planning activities that impact Blades's future.

The following are some current or intended planning activities in which the town should participate:

- The Sussex County Comprehensive Plan, 2002 update
- The Sussex County Long Range Transportation Plan (DelDOT)
- The Delaware Transit Corporation Strategic Plan (DelDOT)
- The City of Seaford Comprehensive Plan
- Livable Delaware, and the Governor's Advisory Panel on Planning Coordination

Chapter 3-2 Implementation Tools

The comprehensive plan is the first step in the municipal planning process. The land use map and text recommend the general locations for, character of, and density of development. As such, it serves as a basis for the community's subsequent decisions concerning new development and redevelopment. This section identifies several tools to be used to help the town to carry out the development pattern depicted on the land use map, and details policies and recommendations that will help the town achieve the goals set forth in the plan.

Zoning

Zoning is the chief means for implementing a comprehensive plan. The zoning ordinance consists of a written document and a map. It divides a municipality into districts or zones in order to regulate the use of land. The ordinance specifies the types of activities (uses) that can occur in each district either as a matter of right (in all circumstances) or under certain conditions (conditional uses). It also regulates building height, lot sizes, setbacks, yards and green space, the number and sizes of signs, and spaces for off-street parking. Once adopted by the governing body, the zoning ordinance is law with penalties for violations.

Within 18 months of adopting a comprehensive plan, each Delaware municipality must rezone its entire jurisdiction so that the zoning map reflects the plan's land uses.

The Blades Town Council adopted the current zoning ordinance on September 11, 1978. This ordinance has served the town well, and a preliminary review of the zoning ordinance reveals that its basic provisions and general organization are fundamentally sound. Nevertheless, the ordinance should be modernized by utilizing tables to display information (especially permitted uses and bulk standards) and incorporating graphics to supplement definitions and to clarify design standards. In addition, the entire document should be reviewed for internal consistency and references to other laws and regulations.

This plan also recommends creation of new zones or the revision of existing zones for the following areas.

Blades Neighborhood Business District

This area is located along the High Street corridor from the town limits west and along the Market Street corridor from the High Street / Market Street intersection south to approximately River Road. The boundaries for this area are clearly depicted on Map 8, the Future Land Use map, and described in Chapter 2-1.

This area currently consists of a mix of commercial and residential uses. Most of this area is zoned either R-1 or R-2, which does not permit new commercial uses. The non-conforming status of these commercial uses prohibits commercial property owners in this

area from undertaking substantial improvements. Even if some or all of the properties in this area were in one of Blade's commercial zones, property owners would find it difficult to comply with current setback, building coverage, and parking requirements.

A new or revamped zone for this area should:

- Permit a mix of residential and non-residential uses. This mix should:
 - Consist of a variety of residential, community service, office, and retail uses.
 - Allow residential and non-residential uses in a single building.
 - Have limitations on size in order to encourage a mix and maintain small-scale.
 - Provide for continuation of single and two family homes.
- Tailor the development standards—setbacks, building coverage, lots widths and depths—towards small-scale design and orientation to the street.
- Allow current residents to improve their properties with non-residential uses. They could continue to live in part of the building or convert the entire structure to commercial uses as long as the new uses remain small-scale.
- Encourage improvements to existing structures as well as assemblage of properties for redevelopment.
- Provide flexibility in off-street parking requirements by permitting agreements for sharing parking spaces among nearby businesses with different peak hour patronage or parking waivers.
- Provide for architectural compatibility within the zone.
- Encourage pedestrian amenities, such as sidewalks and pathways connecting the zone to other parts of the town.
- Provide a transition and buffer between properties in the new zone and adjacent residential zones.

Blades Downtown / Marina District

This area is anticipated to encompass most of the lands in the town north of High Street into a single zoning category that supports uses complementary to the marina. The boundaries for this area are clearly depicted on Map 8, the Future Land Use map, and described in Chapter 2-1.

A new or revamped zone for this area should:

- Permit a mix of non-residential uses that will support and complement the marina and encourage additional economic development. The following are some examples of potential uses:
 - Land and water storage of boats
 - Sale of boat supplies and equipment
 - Boat repair, maintenance, and fueling
 - Boat sales, rental, and chartering
 - Commercial and recreational uses, such as restaurants, coffee shops, bed and breakfasts, or other facilities for boaters
 - Residential uses, when located in mixed-use projects
 - Institutional uses
- The zone should allow continuation of existing uses, but allow the conversion to other uses as specified in the zone.
- New heavy industrial uses, especially those which generate heavy truck traffic, should be discouraged in this area.

Subdivision Ordinance

Subdivision refers to the process of splitting up or assembling land for development. The ordinances governing this process are often called the subdivision regulations. The subdivision regulations designate lot sizes, street rights-of-way, open space, and common areas. They also outline what services, such as water, sewer, gas, electricity, and amenities a developer must supply prior to sale of the subdivided land. Like the zoning ordinance, the subdivision regulations are laws with penalties for violations.

The subdivision regulations work together with the zoning ordinance and the comprehensive plan to ensure that development takes place in an orderly manner. The comprehensive land use plan recommends general locations, character, and density of development. The zoning ordinance legislates the permitted densities for each zone. The subdivision regulations stipulate how vacant land can be made suitable for development. For example, a developer must design lots so that they meet the minimum size requirement for the zone in which the lots will be developed.

Blades does not have regulations governing subdivision. This plan strongly recommends adoption of subdivision regulations. Subdivision regulations can be separate from zoning regulations or combined in a single land development ordinance. Whether separate or combined, subdivision regulations should be consistent with and tied to zoning regulations.

Building Code

A building code establishes standards for the construction of new buildings as well as for additions or substantial changes to existing buildings. Building codes specify the types of materials that may or may not be used and they mandate standards for plumbing, electric

wiring, structural integrity, and general design. To ensure compliance with the provisions of the building code, inspectors make routine inspections at certain milestones of the construction process.

Housing Code

A housing code establishes standards regarding how a residence is to be used once it is built. It is different from a building code that specifies regulations for the construction of buildings. Housing codes deal with occupancy (number of persons per room), plumbing and heating (e.g., minimum and maximum temperature), and fire safety. They also set standards for getting into, getting out of, and moving around a residence by regulating such things as corridors, obstructions to exits and entrances, and access to bedrooms and bathrooms. Like the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations, a housing code is law with penalties for violations.

A typical enforcement program includes periodic inspection with notices issued to homeowners whose properties are in violation of housing code standards. Often, a jurisdiction with an established program can steer homeowners toward financial assistance to correct violations.

Capital Improvements Programming

Capital improvements programming is a process of scheduling public physical improvements over a number of years with a typical program covering five to six years. A capital improvements program (CIP) is the document that reflects the outcome of capital improvements programming. Once adopted, this program would become Blades's fiscal plan or schedule for financing public improvements over time. A capital improvement is a new or expanded physical facility that is relatively large in size, expensive, and permanent. Typical capital improvement projects include street construction or resurfacing, water transmission lines, street lighting, downtown redevelopment projects, sidewalk improvements, and land acquisition. The CIP schedule balances a jurisdiction's need for public facilities with its ability to pay for them. By planning its capital improvements over a number of years, a jurisdiction stabilizes public expenditures and avoids sharp fluctuations in the tax rate. In addition, the process of programming capital improvements includes setting priorities on capital expenditures based on available funds, public need, and community support.

Chapter 3-3 Summary: Policies and Projects

The Blades Plan section of the document recommends a number of implementation actions in each section. These recommendations come in two forms: Town Policies and Implementation Projects. The policies are intended to serve as guidelines that the Planning Commission and the Town Commission should use to direct and encourage future growth, development, and town revitalization. The implementation projects include code revisions, additional planning studies and physical projects that are intended to allow the town to meet the goals envisioned by the plan.

Town Policies

The following are the most significant of the town policies that have been identified in the “Blades Plan” section of the document.

- 1) *The Land Use Plan.* Chapter 2-1 is essentially a set of policies that should be used by the town to guide and direct future land use activities. The Planning Commission and the Town Council should refer to Chapter 2-1 whenever there are land use applications or changes to be considered by the Town.
- 2) *The Growth and Annexation Plan.* Chapter 2-2 is very similar to Chapter 2-1 in that it is a series of policies for the town to use when, and if, faced with annexations or other land use issues in adjacent areas.
- 3) *Utility Capacity and Expansion.* The town should continue to monitor the capacity of the water and sewer system, especially in regard to the limited sewer capacity described in Chapter 2-3. Utilities should be expanded only to areas where additional growth is desirable, as described in Chapters 2-1 and 2-2.
- 4) *Adequate Sewer Capacity.* As discussed in Chapter 2-3, the town should work collaboratively with Sussex County and the City of Seaford to assure that adequate sewer capacity exists for the town prior to annexation.
- 5) *Land Use and Transportation Coordination.* The Town should coordinate land use decisions with transportation infrastructure, as suggested in Chapter 2-4.
- 6) *Sidewalks and Bicycle Paths.* The town should continue to look for opportunities to provide sidewalks and bicycle paths and should require these amenities in new developments where practical.
- 7) *Continue to work with BEDCO.* As discussed in Chapter 2-6, the town should continue to work with the Blades Economic Development Corporation (BEDCO) to develop future economic development initiatives.

8) *Increase Housing Choices in Blades.* The Town of Blades should support the construction of some townhouses, duplexes, condominiums or other types of residential structures to diversify the housing stock in the town. As discussed in Chapter 2-7, the housing stock in Blades is currently limited to single-family homes and apartments.

9) *Open Space in New Developments.* Blades should encourage or require open space and / or recreational facilities in new developments built in the town.

Implementation Projects

The following implementation projects are achievable within the ten-year period between the plan's adoption and the required plan update.

1) *Develop and Adopt a New Zoning Ordinance.* Blades should develop and adopt a new zoning ordinance which updates the provisions of the old ordinance and includes new zones for the Neighborhood Business District and the Blades Downtown Marina District, as described in Chapter 2-1 and earlier in this chapter.

2) *Adopt a New Zoning Map.* Blades should adopt a new zoning map concurrently with the new zoning ordinance.

3) *Develop and Adopt a Subdivision Ordinance.* Blades should develop a subdivision ordinance as described earlier in this chapter. The subdivision ordinance can, and probably should, be combined with the zoning ordinance as a unified "land development ordinance."

4) *Blades Sewer District Needs Study.* Blades should work with Sussex County to complete a study to determine the future sewer service needs for the Blades Sewer District, as discussed in Chapter 2-3.

5) *Acquire a CPCN for Annexation Area.* Blades should proactively acquire a CPCN to permit the town to be the water utility of record for the areas designated by this plan for annexation in Chapter 2-2.

6) *Consider Contracting for Residential Trash Service.* Blades should consider contracting for residential trash service for all residents.

7) *Traffic Study for Blades.* Blades should work with DelDOT to complete a traffic study for the town that includes a review of truck traffic volumes and routes.

8) *Market Street / High Street Intersection Evaluation.* Blades should work with DelDOT to evaluate design improvements to this busy intersection. This project may, and probably should, be combined with the overall traffic study listed above.

- 9) *Pedestrian and Bicycle Study for Blades.* Blades should work with DelDOT to complete a pedestrian and bicycle study for the town.
- 10) *Community History and Culture Project.* The town should work with citizens to determine important historical and cultural places in the town, as discussed in Chapter 2-5.
- 11) *Develop a plan for Redevelopment of the Brownfield Site.* Blades should work with DNREC to develop a plan for the re-use of the brownfield site behind the Town Hall.
- 12) *Property Maintenance and Housing Code Enforcement.* Blades should review its procedures for enforcement of property maintenance and housing codes and develop a strategy to provide more consistent enforcement.
- 13) *Environmental Protection Regulations and Practices.* Blades should adopt appropriate regulations to protect sensitive wetlands and woodlands along the Nanticoke River. These regulations may be incorporated in the zoning and subdivision ordinances. Blades may also work with DNREC to develop “best management practices” for urban uses, which will further the goals of the TMDL program.
- 14) *Detailed Flood Study – Blades Downtown Marina District.* To enhance economic-development opportunities, Blades should work with BEDCO to complete a detailed flood study of the Blades Downtown Marina District to determine which land is most suitable for future urban development and which land should be preserved.
- 15) *Evaluate Condition of Parks and Equipment.* The town should evaluate the condition of its parks, and apply for grants where available to upgrade equipment.

Appendix 1 – Questionnaire Written Comments

This appendix includes the text of all comments that were written on the questionnaire forms during the Blades Community Planning Workshop. They are organized by the section and/or question in which they appeared. The grammar of the text has not been altered, but commonly misspelled words have been corrected.

Commercial Areas

Question 2: What types of activities or projects would be appropriate to compliment the new marina? Other (please specify):

- “Gift, novelty, etc.”
- “Retail shops/open areas”
- “Repair & storage”
- “Recreational – fishing, canoeing, family activities for people that do not have large boats but enjoy water activities”
- “Other small businesses – drug store, banking, post office annex”
- “Retail shops on east side”
- “Shops of a variety of items”

Question 4: What types of businesses do you foresee in Blades to make it a better place to live and work? Other (please specify):

- “Town needs some kind of industry to make jobs for its people. Since DuPont has gone down good people have left the area in search of jobs to support their families. A town can’t grow when young folks leave. How about a factory or two?”
- “Home industry”
- “Ecotourism”
- “I think we need all kinds of businesses to make Blades successful”
- “Be able to annex in some existing business along Rt. 13”
- “Specialty retail shops”

Additional comments about Blades’ commercial areas:

- “I see businesses start up and fail in a few months. Blades and Seaford need more good-paying jobs so the people have more income to spend to support these businesses. From where I am, I see a town that needs more money to function properly. If people have money they will spend it. How about a farmer’s market in Blades where people could purchase fresh fruits and vegetables each week?”
- “If industry should arrive, we should be mindful of the current residences: parking, heavy trucks, noise and safety. How will development affect retirees on fixed income? Or single families? Will taxes, sewer, and water rates keep rising? When roads are improved, will they drain properly into storm drains, so that run-off water does not harm properties? Or, when big buildings are built, should there

be drain ponds that never drain and keep stagnant water for mosquitoes to increase?”

- “I believe home work impart to the people”
- “The current commercial area is owned by Pen Oil. I personally see no pleasant mix as you mentioned. Ownership or use of this land is unlikely to change. Any change for development would be if residences were removed and rezoned. Until then I feel or see no future as the commercial district is operated by an oil Co. and wealthy boaters.”
- “Market Street commercial area should extend from Nanticoke River south to High Street. Underdeveloped property on River Road should become light commercial use. Commercial development in residential areas should be discouraged.”
- “I feel there are a lot of people in Blades who would like to have home business. But which the board of Blades will not give them a chance. For example a person on 4th St. who would like to have a gift shop, a person on 3rd St. who would like to have a beauty shop, a person on 3rd St. who would like to have a welding shop. I feel all these people should be able to work at their home, not just the people’s business that is grandfathered in.”
- “Need plan & legal clarification on property at Market St. & River Road”
- “Roads, infrastructure leading to & from need to be evaluated. Traffic lights & restricted truck traffic”
- “Need more small stores and shops”
- “More restaurants, shopping opportunities”

Neighborhoods and Community Design

Additional comments about Blades’ neighborhoods and community design:

- “Many bad situations with absentee landlords & the state of their properties. This wave is on the rise and would be nice to discourage the practice by being able to attract owners that wished to live here.”
- “Many older homes have become rental units & need to be kept in better repair.”
- “I like the look of Blades. I don’t feel you need to tear down someone’s house to build a larger one.”
- “Bank and post office, doctors offices”
- “High St. and Market St. need old housing removed”
- “The town needs some nice signs welcoming you into town.”
- “Nice homes on nicely landscaped yards, small town, modest living, cute & quaint town.”

Transportation Planning

Question 9: Please rate these potential future projects. Other (please specify):

- “Enforcing restrictions”

Additional comments about transportation planning:

- “A traffic light at Market/High St. would cause long back-ups of traffic during rush hour.”
- “Consider ways to divert traffic.”
- “Traffic lights are definitely needed in town”
- “Lights at Market & High, Market & River Road, Market & 5th, will discourage through traffic and make access to Market St. easier for residents”
- “Traffic control is very important, Market & High”
- “Traffic light at Market & High restricting heavy truck use”
- “New signs and American flags!”

Land Use and Annexation**Additional comments about land use and annexation:**

- “Town should not assume more expense than taxpayers can handle.”
- “Recent annexation has been small time, developers slow to move. The land sites, slow to improve. I think annexation should look for stronger commitments.”
- “I feel there should be more small businesses in Blades. Let the people who like here make a living here. Not just the big man with a lot of money. I also feel that should annex more land. I have no problem with them making Blades larger.”
- “Development requires flexibility in regulations. Zoning variances should have a low cost for application and a higher cost for the permit if the change is approved. This would encourage potential builders to consider Blades over other communities.”
- “With growth comes change. Increased traffic and commercial development may not be in keeping with the ‘small town atmosphere,’ but is a natural progression of growth and success for a small town. Some of it must be not only tolerated, but welcomed.”
- “Brownfield areas should be utilized before row land developed for commercial properties. Annexation in areas where wanted by ownership”
- “Building setbacks should be changed”
- “Keep Blades to ourselves not developers.”
- “I would like to see the town stay small but quaint; much like a St. Michaels type.”
- “Want sewer and water.”

Appendix 2 – Brainstorming Group Responses

Group One:

<u>Likes</u>	<u>Dislikes</u>	<u>Ideas For Changes</u>
Quiet	zoning issues	neighborhood businesses
Small town	absentee landlords	residential zones
Good to raise kids	unkempt properties	better signage
Safe for citizens	lack of town involvement	
Homey town	staff/officials	
Close to areas of interest	lack of small businesses	
Water and sewer available	overcrowded houses	
Open spaces	lack of zoning enforcement	
Proximity of fire & police	truck traffic	

Group Two:

<u>Likes</u>	<u>Dislikes</u>	<u>Ideas For Changes</u>
Good mayor/council	high taxes	upgrade property
Quiet neighborhood	no traffic lights	traffic lights
Close to where the action is	high water rates	improved intersections
Difficult to get lost	heavy traffic	more greenways/parks
Great potential	poor property conditions	light high-tech industry
	25 mph speed limit	condos/townhouses
	too few stores	new central location for town hall
	no bank, drycleaner, or drug store	widen Market St.
		improve High St./River Rd.
		intersection
		truck bypass routes
		river boat casino
		southern annexation

Group Three:

<u>Likes</u>	<u>Dislikes</u>	<u>Ideas For Changes</u>
Sewer and water hook-ups	irresponsible development	limit development
Quiet, residential area	dangerous intersection 13/High	traffic light at 13/Highsmall town
atmosphere	older, run down houses	preservation or replacement of old
Park	not enough businesses	houses
Marina	no sidewalks in parts of town	more industry for employment
Fresh clean air		sidewalks throughout town
Preservation of river		farmer's market
(natural resource awareness)		make sure residential is not overrun
by commercial or industrial		
		community festivals & fairs

Final Lists and Votes:

Like	Vote Count	Dislike	Vote Count
Great potential	6	Zoning code/enforcement	8
Sewer & Water Hookups	5	Truck traffic	4
Good family town	4	Lack of small businesses	3
Marina	1	Overcrowded housing	2
Quiet, close knit area	1	Irresponsible development	2
Low crime rate	1	High water rates	1
Convenience to other areas	1	Vacant commercial properties	1
Good town staff/officials	1	Absentee landlords	0
Fire protection & police	1	Little involvement of officials	0
Parks	0	Traffic lights	0
Natural resources	0	No sidewalks	0
Difficult to get lost	0		
Schools	0		

Idea For the Future	Vote Count
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Annexation	5
Preservation or replacement of old housing	5
Traffic light at Market Street and High Street	3
Mix residential and business use	3
Limit development	1
More commercial and industry	1
Upgrade storm drains	1
Create a truck bypass	1
More signs	1
Add sidewalks	0
Create a farmer's market	0
Separate residential areas	0
More community festivals and fairs	0
Create downtown shopping	0
More street lights	0
More greenways/parks	0
Townhouses/Condos	0
Widen Market Street	0
Riverboat casino	0

Appendix 3 – Map Appendix

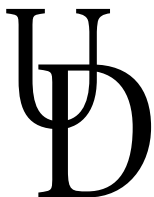


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