

Developing walkable, bikeable and transit-connected communities

The development of mixed-use, walkable, bikeable and transit-served communities depends on the coordination of land use planning and multimodal transportation investments. A new state law in Delaware, passed earlier this year, created a mechanism for state and local governments in Delaware to align their decision making and to jointly put in place the interconnected and interdependent policies necessary to enable this type of development.

MOTIVATION

Walkable, bikeable, transit-served, mixed-use, vibrant and entrepreneurial neighborhoods, towns and cities advance multiple public policy priorities simultaneously, including promoting improved public health, enabling seniors to age in place and reducing air pollution from the transportation sector. They are also a critical economic development strategy in terms of both **attracting a talented and mobile workforce that brings competitive advantage** to communities and in terms of reducing household transportation expenses and **increasing demand for local products and services**.

Despite their many advantages, however, the price to live in walkable, bikeable and transit-rich places in the U.S. is often extremely high, with fierce demand and high prices often failing to translate into increased supply. Instead the market tends to deliver a less-in-demand portfolio of single-use residential subdivision, office park and strip mall projects because these projects are the only ones that are economically practical when government land use and transportation regulations and investments are uncoordinated.

In addition to the public health and pollution costs, uncoordinated development also places a permanent, long-term strain on government budgets because of the comparatively high cost of providing public infrastructure and services for this type of development in relation to the increased tax receipts that it generates.

COMPLETE COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE DISTRICTS

With new legislation passed this year Delaware is pioneering a new partnership approach for developing "complete communities," or compact, walkable, transit accessible, and mixed-use neighborhoods.

Under the new law in Delaware, local governments and the state department of transportation (DelDOT) can jointly designate "Complete Community Enterprise Districts". Within a designated District, the local government partner must zone and plan for mixed uses and higher density development (necessary for transit service to be operationally efficient) and relinquish counter-productive and burdensome parking regulations. In return, DelDOT must design streets in the District to be slow so that both walking and cycling are safe and inviting and must also prioritize capital investments in transit, walking and cycling improvements.

The Healthy and Transit-Friendly Development Act was supported by a diverse coalition of business, public health and environmental organizations including the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce, the Delaware Association of REALTORS®, the American Heart Association, Nemours, the League of Women Voters of Delaware, Bike Delaware, AARP Delaware, the Delaware Nature Society and the Delaware Council on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention. The Act was signed into law at the Walkable Bikeable Delaware Summit by Governor Jack Markell on May 5, 2016.