

# 1<sup>st</sup> District NPC Community Plan



This plan reflects the collective thoughts and ideas of community residents living within the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> districts of the city of Wilmington, Delaware as presented at the Community Planning Workshop on April 14, 2012 sponsored by the 1<sup>st</sup> District Neighborhood Planning Council. The objective is to provide a vision for our community and action steps to address issues of concern.

The goal is a vibrant, clean, safe community whose economy is managed to benefit the community as well as the businesses and their owners. A collective responsibility of residents, business owners and public officials is needed to accomplish this goal.

Issues of concern and ideas and actions steps to address them were presented at the Community Planning Workshop. This information is what makes up this plan.

## **I. Community Economic Development**

The development and growth of a community can be directly correlated with the development and growth of its businesses. A plan to improve neighborhoods must have a focus on how to improve business growth within that neighborhood. Community economic development involves developing and growing businesses that create jobs for people who live in the community and support the institutions and organizations of that community.

Community economic development is the foundation for the success of all the strategies mentioned in this plan. The resources to implement and maintain the steps necessary to achieve the goal of a vibrant, clean, safe community can come from the businesses.

As a strategy to provide the resources to implement our plans and to involve all stakeholders in the community, the 1<sup>st</sup> District Neighborhood Planning Council has chosen the model of a Business Improvement District to be the core element of our Plan.

### **Business Improvement District**

#### **What is a BID?**

A Business Improvement District is a public/private partnership in which property and business owners elect to make a collective contribution to the maintenance, development and promotion of their commercial district. Several advantages result from this arrangement:

- A cleaner safer and more attractive business district
- A steady and reliable funding source for supplemental services and programs
- The ability to respond quickly to changing needs of the business community
- The potential to increase property values, improve sales and decrease commercial vacancy rates
- A district that is better able to compete with nearby retail and business centers

#### **What does a BID Do?**

Business Improvement Districts deliver a range of supplemental services in coordination with municipal services and invest in the long-term economic development of their districts.

Supplemental Services / Improvements may include:

- Street/sidewalk cleaning
- Planting trees and flowers
- Improved streetlights
- Public safety officers
- Custom trash receptacles

- Directional street signage
- Holiday decorations
- Special events
- Fundraising
- Charitable events
- Youth services
- Business mix improvement
- Commercial vacancy reduction
- District public relations

### **How are BID Program and Services Paid For?**

The City of Wilmington currently has a BID in the downtown area which is administered by Downtown Visions. Formed in 1994, Downtown Visions is a non-profit organization that acts as the management company for the Wilmington Downtown BID. The Wilmington Downtown BID includes 730 properties and has worked to help transform the downtown area to a safer and cleaner area.

Funds to pay for BID programs and services are generated from a special assessment paid by the benefited property owners. The assessment is billed and collected by the city and then disbursed to the BID, which in turn delivers the district's services.

### **Summary**

A concentrated focus on small businesses within the neighborhoods can generate success similar to those achieved in the downtown and waterfront districts. This focus can be managed and implemented by using the model of a Business Improvement District. Community economic development must have systems in place to insure that resources and wealth is contributed to the community/neighborhoods as well as to the businesses and their owners.

The North Market Street corridor includes the major franchises of McDonalds, Walgreens, Rite Aid and Shell Oil, as well as over 100 other businesses with a broad range of sizes and services. 1<sup>st</sup> District NPC is advocating for a Business Improvement District on North Market Street between Lea Boulevard and the Brandywine River. We strongly believe that a BID will help to stabilize and improve the neighborhoods of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> districts.

## **II. Education**

City students' performances in criterion of education are markedly lower than their suburban counterparts. Test performances are lower, drop out rates are higher and behavior disturbances are reported more frequently. The impact on the community can be seen in increased truancy, loitering, and nuisance crimes. Lack of direction, being less prepared and not having developed critical thinking skills is contributing to a breakdown in our community.

Better support systems to address the needs of city students should be put in place.

- After school tutoring programs for all grade levels in the areas of Math and English at community schools, centers and churches.
- PSAT and SAT tutoring
- Provide transportation for Bachelorate and other advanced academic programs
- Basic Computer Skills program
- Partnership with school districts and businesses for funding
- GED programs
- More Trade Programs
- Workforce Development
- Volunteerism by high school students to meet graduation requirements
- Marketing of support programs/services

## **III. Crime Hot Spots**

There are clusters of criminal activity within our community that are clearly identified. These areas are negatively impacting the quality of life for all of us. Property values are affected adversely, business is stifled, safety is compromised and fear is made prevalent.

Problems identified are:

- Drug use – corner drug markets
- Drug users coming into quiet neighborhoods to use drugs in “safe areas”
- Shootings and robberies
- Nuisance properties
- Fear of victimization/retaliation
- Teenagers lack of constructive use of school programs
- Businesses being taken over by criminal element
- Prevalence of Liquor stores in neighborhoods

Solving these problems involve a partnership between the Community, Police and City

- Active civic/neighborhood associations
- Create phone trees (networking)

- Provide specific information on individuals and properties to appropriate authorities
- Clean up areas. Pick up trash. Keep yards maintained properly. Show respect for self and community
- Partnership with Community Based Organizations
- Wilmington Police Dept. conduct neighborhood watch training
- WPD bike patrols
- Community Policing
- Apprenticeship and job development
- Quality education
- Increase Home Ownership
- Zoning codes to address property violations, loitering and liquor store issues

#### **IV. Streetscapes / Facades**

The overall appearance of the community has an impact on the perception of the community and contributes to how people will act. A clean community with trees, plants, well-maintained sidewalks, yards and driveways demonstrates that residents care about where they live. If residents show that they care then others will take more care.

Areas of concern are:

- Business that do not clean their areas. Post too much signage. Do not maintain their buildings
- Vendors setting up illegally
- Street cleaning
- Need more public trash receptacles
- Vacant lots
- Adequate public lighting
- Street potholes
- Deteriorating housing facades
- Landscape commercial corridors
- Enhancement of city parks

Addressing these issues involve communication between residents and civic associations with city service officials and business owners. Improvement in communication and response can have immediate positive impact.

- Identify specific stores and report them to License & Inspections
- Vendors should be licensed and set up in appropriate spaces. Police and L& I can check credentials
- Vacant lots may become public gardens. Landlords are to be held responsible for clean-ups
- Reporting of street potholes to Dept. of Public Works

- Cleaning and maintenance of parks by Dept. of Parks & Recreation and upkeep of park equipment
- Report inoperable city lights to Delmarva Power
- Work with Neighborhood Planning Councils to identify landscaping and streetscape projects
- Businesses should organize to collectively clean the commercial corridors
- City to provide information on resources for housing facades and home maintenance

## **V. Zoning Issues**

Use of zoning laws to implement and enforce parts of the plan as identified during the Community Planning Workshop is very important. Residents and their elected officials should work to insure that steps taken during comprehensive planning strategies are not overturned by those whose interests are different from the people who live in the community.

Neighborhood Planning Councils should provide forums to educate the community on the zoning laws and its impact on them.

## **VI. Health and Wellness**

Neighborhood Wellness Centers

- Access to care / Prevention
- Early Detection
- Education

Partnership with Daycare & Senior Centers

- Urban Promise
- Faith Communities
- Wilmington HPC & NPCs

Health is more than absence of disease

# Community Plan Summary

The implementation of a Business Improvement District on North Market Street between Lea Boulevard and the Brandywine River will help stabilize and improve the neighborhoods of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> districts. The supplemental services of the BID can address issues and concerns identified in the areas of:

## Education

- Education can be supported with funding via fundraisers and business contributions
- Workforce development programs and jobs for people who have developed trades
- Apprenticeship and job development
- Business owners can share their knowledge

## Crime Hot Spots

- Street/sidewalk cleaning
- Improved street lighting
- Public safety officers
- Reduction in loitering
- Reduction in vacant buildings and nuisance properties
- Removal of criminal element from businesses and corner drug markets

## Streetscapes / Facades

- Business mix improvement
- Custom trash receptacles
- Street cleaning
- Reduction in vacant lots and buildings
- Planting trees and flowers
- Holiday decorations
- Improved streetlights

## Zoning Issues

- Better enforcement of zoning codes
- No illicit vending

## Health and Wellness

- Support special events
- Public relations

This plan recognizes the need to involve all stakeholders in the community. Residents have to do their part in taking ownership of their neighborhoods, being responsible, and communicating with public officials. Public officials have to respond to the concerns of residents and address their needs. Business owners should support the community that supports them.

This vision moves us toward achieving our goal of a vibrant, clean, safe community whose economy is managed to benefit the community as well as the businesses and their owners.

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1<sup>st</sup> District Neighborhood Planning Council  
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## References

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April 14, 2012

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