IV. SUSTAINABLE GROWTH



4.1 INTRODUCTION

Growth through new development or redevelopment is an important element in achieving the goals set forth in this plan and securing a higher quality of life for the Claymont Community. The provision of business opportunities, jobs, adequate housing, community services and recreational and cultural amenities are critical to sustainability and growth of the Claymont Community.

To be effective, this plan will not stifle commercial, residential and industrial growth. In fact, this plan and the Community welcome development in Claymont. However, the Community, as articulated in this plan, wants to see growth help to create a sense of place by creating a new "town center" and through the preservation of the character of its existing historic neighborhoods and enhancement through compatible redevelopment.

4.2 COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Throughout the community planning process it became clear that the underlying community fabric of Claymont was one of the greatest strengths upon which to build the foundation of revitalization upon. After a planning process that lasted almost four years, it is clear that this plan will succeed because of the Claymont Community. Claymont serves as a shining example of civic participation in community issues. Many active civic and community organizations provide Claymont with the needed voice to confront controversial issues and to provide a voice to the individual citizens.

The Claymont Coalition is one such civic organization. Established in the early 1990's to promote the interests of the residents of the greater Claymont area, to maintain and improve their quality of life, and to promote civic improvements in Claymont, the Claymont Community Coalition is the primary force behind the current community planning effort.

Claymont Business Owners Association, Inc. (CBOA) is another organization that provides not only a voice for the business community, but also works for the revitalization of the community as a whole. Founded to promote economic revitalization and historic preservation of the Community of Claymont, the Claymont Business Owners Association is committed to a livable, prosperous Claymont and encourages economic investment, sustainable growth and opportunities for all its residents.



Source: Thomas Comitta

Founded in 1998, the Claymont Historical Society works for the preservation of greater Claymont's historic buildings, sites, and heritage. Given the tremendous amount of historical resources that remain in the Claymont area, the work of the Historical Society serves as a critical link between Claymont's past and its planned future.

The Claymont Renaissance was created in cooperation with the Claymont Coalition, Claymont Business Owners Association, the Claymont Historical Society and New Castle County to create opportunities to live, work and shop in a small-town environment. The Renaissance has driven the planning process and will provide the vehicle for its implementation with the creation of the Claymont Renaissance Development Corporation.

Claymont Renaissance Development Corporation's (CRDC) mission is to develop and implement strategies that will increase the economic vitality of the Claymont community, enhance Claymont's reputation as an attractive and desirable place to live, and build on Claymont's unique history and character to strengthen its role as an area of cultural and social activity.

As a public/privately funded, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, CRDC will work in partnership with the New Castle County Executive, County Council, State, Federal officials, and with private, public and not-for-profit organizations that support economic development of the Claymont Community.

Claymont Renaissance Development Corporation will work to:

- Increase employment, support existing businesses, attract new businesses including retail, restaurants and entertainment;
- focus on connecting community and civic assets, and creating a attractive place where people can live, work, shop, learn, and worship;
- Promote an attractive, friendly and pedestrian oriented environment;

- Stimulate educational, arts, cultural activities and events;
- Encourage collaborative efforts with community organizations and surrounding areas; and.
- Attract an increasing number of visitors from throughout the region and beyond.

Finally, the Claymont Community Center, located in the former Claymont High School, is the human and social services hub of the community. The Center unites the community and serves the needs and aspirations of the Claymont/Brandywine Hundred community.

Some of the Center's key core programs are:

Crisis Alleviation Center – offering short-term emergency assistance to families for food, utilities and housing;

Counseling Center – proving family, individual and group mental health services for the uninsured;

Learning Center – improving the academic skills of school-age children, engaging families in learning activities, offering education for adults and providing job readiness skills;

Family Health Service - the "medical home" for adults and children with little or no health insurance, providing full service affordable health care including immunizations, lab services and physical exams; and

Brandywine Senior Center – offering recreation, education, and enrichment activities as well as a daily lunch option to area residents 60 and older.

4.3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In order to achieve the success envisioned by this Community Redevelopment Plan, new economic activity must be created and sustained. Through this plan and with the help of the Claymont Renaissance, the Claymont Renaissance Development Corporation and State and County governments, the economic future of Claymont can be developed, implemented and ensured.



Source: Congress for New Urbanism

To ensure long term viability, a diverse mix of businesses should be development to provide the opportunity for healthy employment and income growth. This will be achieved by encouraging a mix of uses in Claymont Center and on commercially zoned parcels in Neighborhood Transition areas. Use mixing will occur not only horizontally but vertically to help provide affordable space for "local small businesses".

Support for economic activity will be bolstered by attracting visitors from throughout the region and beyond. Marketing of the community and the community redevelopment plan will be the primary focus of the Claymont Renaissance and the Claymont Renaissance Development Corporation.

4.4 HOUSING

The need for quality housing for existing and future residents of all income levels has been identified by the community as an important element of the Claymont Renaissance's efforts. Most importantly, how to increase homeownership opportunities throughout the community has been identified as critical to revitalization.



Source: Congress for New Urbanism

To accomplish this purpose, residential growth will be encouraged not inhibited. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are 4,193 housing units within the Claymont census designated place. The number of vacant units (401) reduces the actual number of occupied units to 3,792 of which 46% are rental properties. This high percentage of rental properties has contributed to a diminished sense of community pride and often leads to the substandard appearance of the housing stock. Also contributing to both the diminishing appearance of Claymont housing is the fact that over 80% of it was constructed prior to 1960. Although the longrange vision for Claymont is to bring additional housing to the community, much can be accomplished through rehabilitation of the existing housing stock and an increase of homeownership.

Below is an outline on how this might be achieved (also see Figure #3):

- Encourage homeownership by working with the real estate industry by providing marketing materials on the benefits of the Claymont Area;
- Provide information on various homeownership programs offered by the Federal and State governments and private financial institutions;
- Provide the opportunity for sufficient housing growth to meet the demands of a housing market with changing demographic and income conditions;and
- Encourage housing rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of older housing to meet the needs of low to moderate income households.

4.5 Infrastructure

The Unified Development Code requires all land development applications to conduct a carrying capacity analysis to determine the maximum intensity of allowable development based on actual infrastructure capacity. Concurrency must be achieved for transportation facilities, sewer infrastructure, schools, water and natural resources. In simpler terms, all land use applications must have adequate transportation systems, sewer capacity, water supply, public or private, and school capacity or no building or zoning permits will be issued.

Concurrency analysis is designed to ensure that the public health, safety, welfare and quality of life of the citizens of this County are protected by preventing development from exceeding the existing carrying capacity of public facilities needed to sustain the proposed development. In Claymont, County sewer service may represent the primary limiting factor for development. Through extensive analysis and computer modeling, the sewer capacity of all sewered areas, within New Castle County, is monitored. Sewer capacity is allocated based upon a first come first serve basis.

Currently, sewer capacity is limited in not only Claymont, but the entire Brandywine Hundred. The limitation is primarily due to an aging and antiquated system that is subject to problems such as infrastructure failures and stormwater infiltration. The Department of Special Services is currently undertaking a tremendous rehabilitation project within the Brandywine Hundred to correct existing problems and to update the system. As a result of this project, additional sewer capacity will be available in Northern New Castle County and in particular the Claymont Community. Phasing for this project positions the Claymont area in the front years of this effort and sewer capacity should be available in the future. Although capacity is limited, redevelopment efforts will still be able to occur as existing capacity in the area can be reallocated and is not lost as a result.