

Town of *Bethel*

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Adopted and Certified: July, 2008

Prepared By: Bethel Planning Commission

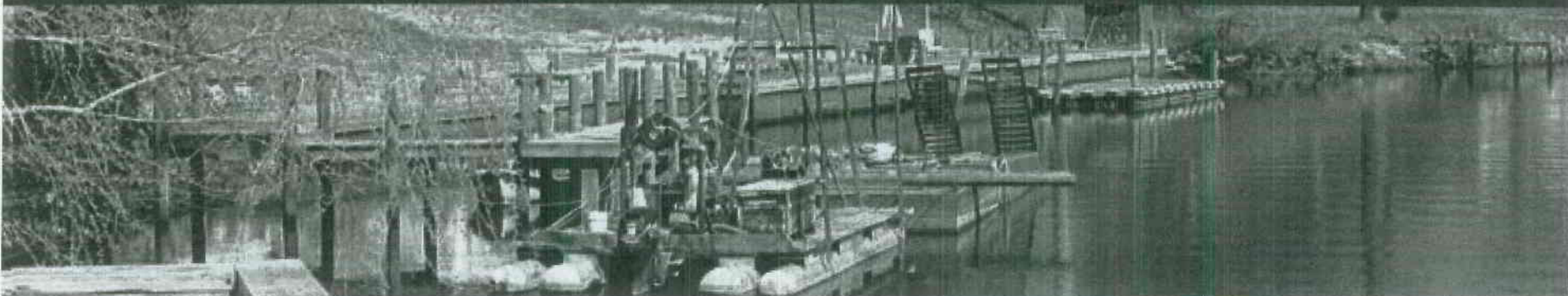


Table of Contents & Comprehensive Mapping Elements

<i>Section Number</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page Number</i>	<i>Map Number</i>	<i>Title</i>
	Town Officials	2	1	Community Location
	County and State Officials	2	2	Strategies for Policy and Spending
	Acknowledgements	3	3	Aerial View
	Introduction	4	4	Area of Concern
			5	Existing Land Use
Section 1.1	Authority	5	6	Future Land Use
Section 1.2	Community Overview	6	7	Environmental Features
Section 1.3	Existing Land Uses	10		
Section 1.4	Public Participation.....	12		
Section 1.5	Goal and Vision	15		
Section 2.1	Governance and Regulation.....	16		
Section 2.2	Demographics	18		
Section 2.3	Environmental Features	29		
Section 2.4	Future Land Use	33		
Section 2.5	Growth and Annexation.....	35		
Section 2.6	Public Utilities	38		
Section 2.7	Community Services.....	40		
Section 2.8	Transportation.....	41		
Section 2.9	Community Design.....	43		
Section 2.10	Redevelopment	45		
Section 3.1	Planning Goals.....	46		
Section 3.2	Vision	46		
Section 3.3	Short / Long Term Objectives	47		

Town Officials

Town of Bethel

President and Council: Jeff Hastings, President
Kevin Phillips, Council
Anna Lee Robinson, Council/Treasurer/Town Clerk
William Rutledge, Council

Council Secretary Patricia Kough

Planning Commission: Jack Chadwick, Chairperson
Patricia Kough, Vice Chairperson
Sandy Wood, Secretary
George Anderson
Glen Jones
David Hillegas
Charles Cole

Town Solicitor: John E. Tarburton

County and State Officials

Sussex County

County Council: Lynn Rogers, Council – 3rd District
Dale Dukes, President – 1st District
Finley Jones, Vice President - 2nd District
George Cole, Council – 4th District
Vance Phillips, Council – 5th District

County Administrator: David Baker

Director of Planning: Lawrence Lank

State of Delaware

Governor: The Honorable Ruth Ann Minner
Lt Governor: The Honorable John Carney
Senate: Robert Venables
House of Representatives: Clifford Lee

Director of State Planning: Constance C. Holland, AICP

Circuit Rider Planner – Sussex: Bryan Hall

Acknowledgements

The Town of Bethel Comprehensive Plan was developed between June 2006 and August 2007 by the Town of Bethel Planning Commission with assistance from the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination. The Town would like thank the following people for their work in developing and drafting this first comprehensive land use plan:

Bryan Hall, Principal Planner, Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination

Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination Staff

Molly Murray, Staff Reporter, News Journal

Mary McCoy, former Planning Commission Chair

Andy Long and Lawrence B. Steele, III, former Commission members

Town of Bethel President and Council

The Town of Bethel Planning Commission

The town also acknowledges the following persons for their contributions in developing this plan:

David Nutter, AICP Planner and Consultant

Staff of Nutter Associates, Community Planners

The Delaware DataMIL Data Mapping & Integration Laboratory

Delaware Department of Transportation

Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control

Delaware Office of Historical and Cultural Affairs

1.1 The Authority of the Plan

Delaware law requires that municipalities engage in the comprehensive plan process to encourage “the most appropriate use of the fiscal and physical resources of the municipality and coordination of growth, development and infrastructure investment actions with those of other municipalities, counties and the State....” This plan complies with the requirements for a municipal development strategy — for towns with a population of 2000 or less — as described in Delaware Code.

The municipal development strategy for small communities such as Bethel — with fewer than 2000 people — is to be a “document in text and maps containing at a minimum, a municipal development strategy setting forth the jurisdiction’s position on population, housing growth within the community, expansion of its boundaries, development of adjacent areas, redevelopment potential, community character, and the general uses of land within the community and critical community development and infrastructure issues.” In addition, the town’s comprehensive planning process must demonstrate coordination with other municipalities, the county and the state during the plan preparation. (22 Del. C. 1953, Sec 702: 49 Del. Laws, c. 415 Sec. 1)

State law requires that planning be an ongoing process and that municipalities identify future planning activities. This document is Bethel’s municipal development strategy as required by law and it is intended to cover a ten-year planning period and be reviewed at least every five years.

In January 2006, the Town Council for Bethel contacted the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination (OSPC) to prepare the Town’s first Comprehensive Plan. The OSPC assembled a team of staff to work with the Town of Bethel, Town Council, and Planning Commission to cooperate on crafting the Town’s Comprehensive Plan.

Severability Clause

Should a court decide that any section or provision of this comprehensive land use plan is unconstitutional or invalid, such decision shall not affect the validity of this comprehensive land use plan as a whole or any part other than the part judged unconstitutional or invalid.

A Municipal Strategy for the Town of Bethel, Delaware

Introduction

The Town of Bethel's Comprehensive Plan was developed for a variety of purposes. The town initiated the development of the Plan in June 2006. The Comprehensive Plan will provide a framework for development and growth for the town and will be used to improve land development codes for Bethel.

The Comprehensive Plan serves as an official statement about the future of the Town and as a unified advisory document for the Council and Planning Commission to address land use and growth issues. It should also be used to guide future development decisions, re-zonings, annexations, and capital improvements throughout the community. Bethel will use this plan as a basis to establish zoning codes, other land use ordinances, and zoning maps.

The plan is also an informational document for the public. Citizens, business people and government officials can

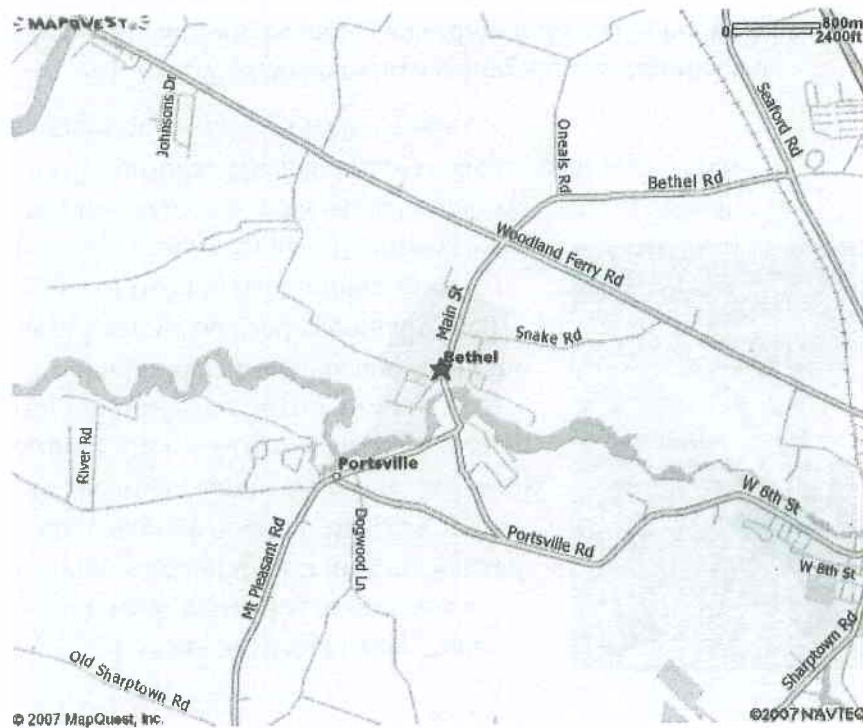
turn to the plan to learn more about Bethel and its policies for future land use decisions. Potential new residents may use this document as an informational resource about the Town, its characteristics, and facilities. This document contains the most current information available on population, transportation, housing, employment, and the environment.

Finally, the Bethel Comprehensive Plan is a legal document. The State of Delaware Code specifies that, "...any incorporated municipality under this chapter shall prepare a comprehensive plan for the city or town or portion 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." (Chapter 702, Title 22, Delaware Code)

1.2 A Brief Overview of the Community

Location

The Town of Bethel is located in Sussex County Delaware, a few miles west of the Town of Laurel. Bethel is situated in a largely agricultural area along Broad Creek and is now recognized as a destination on the Captain John Smith Chesapeake Bay National Historic Water Trail.



1.2 b History of the Town of Bethel

Bethel began as Lewisville in 1840, when Kendall M. Lewis laid out 12 building lots on a farm. Lewis had built a wharf along Broad Creek and quickly had a booming trade as ships arrived from Baltimore and other Chesapeake Bay ports with housewares, tools, and other goods that couldn't be found in a rural area.

Because of the deep water in Broad Creek and extensive stands of virgin oak and pine forests nearby, Lewisville grew into a shipbuilding town. In 1880, a U.S. Post Office was established. To avoid confusion with another Lewisville in Delaware, the name was changed to Bethel, the Biblical name of the holy place where Jacob dreams of a stairway to heaven.

The historic significance of Bethel is the connection to Delaware's maritime history, according to Brian Page, Sussex County's historic preservation planner. A unique and highly specialized sailing schooner, the "ram," was created in Bethel. "It required less water depth to navigate, and that opened trade to remote and often inaccessible areas of Chesapeake Bay," Page said.

To look at Bethel today, “one would never know that at one time a thriving ship building trade ever existed there,” wrote Robert H. Burgess, in his preface to Dr. James Marvil’s 1961 book, *Sailing Rams: A History of Sailing Ships Built in and Near Sussex County, Del.* The shipbuilders used oak and then pine from local woods and eventually used teams of oxen to haul lumber from the great cypress forest near Gumboro. When the pine there was exhausted, lumber was sent in by rail from North Carolina. The giant masts – huge cedar logs – were brought in on rail cars from Oregon.



It took 90 days to build a sailing ram, a ship that was often 100 feet long or more, according to Marvil’s book. When a ship was launched, schools closed and a crowd would gather as the ship was pushed down a greased ramp into the creek. “It hit the water with a big splash, causing a very large wave to travel up and down the river,” Marvil wrote.

The last schooner ram was built in Bethel in 1911. The last ship was launched in 1918. Rail transportation took the place of sailing ships in the region. The area’s captains and

seamen continued to work in transatlantic shipping, and the ship carpenters worked in local construction. The Bethel shipyard was dismantled in 1940.

“At one time, this little town was known around the world, next to Wilmington, because of the shipyard,” said Rudolph Hastings, a local historian who was born and raised in Bethel.

National Historic Place

With the shipbuilding came the rise of master carpenters. Page said that the Bethel shipbuilders used their extensive carpentry skills on boats and houses – filling them with fine and detailed trim. “In a place like Bethel, you find these extremely beautifully, well-built houses,” he said. Bethel has so much history within its boundaries (the Town is just 1.6 miles long) that the entire municipality was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. This Register offers some protection from development projects that get federal dollars — such as road improvements — but it doesn’t protect historic properties when individual developers or property owners are involved, Page said.

Townpeople are also a big part of Bethel's history. At 84, Rudolph Hastings describes himself as the oldest man in Bethel. He is unique among the Bethel old-timers because his roots are in farming and not in shipbuilding. His father pioneered the cultivation of cantaloupes in Western Sussex County; a crop that now has a value of over \$1 million annually in Delaware. Hastings started a greenhouse in town, which his son, Jeff, now runs. Jeff Hastings is also the President of the Town Council.

In 1912, telephones came to Bethel and that same year, Isabell Moore Bell was born. "Bethel isn't like it used to be," she said, noting that she had outlived many of her friends and neighbors. "But Bethel is just wonderful to me even if it's not the same." Former Pastor Richard Walton, the minister at Bethel's only church — Sailor's Bethel United Methodist — came here four years ago. Walton was born and raised in Wilmington and had never been to Bethel before he was assigned to the churches here. His first year in Bethel, he was so fascinated by the history that he encouraged the old timers to gather for a living history dinner. His only disappointment, he said, was that no one brought a video camera.



Family-friendly Streets

Town resident Remy Haynes finds the safety of the town is attractive since she is raising two young children in Bethel. Other positives of the town are the quaint architecture and the tree-lined streets as well as the low property taxes found throughout Sussex County. Haynes moved to Bethel thirteen years ago from Long Island. Bethel has no theater, no arcade, no industry, and few small businesses. However, although you can buy lunch and other items at the Bethel Historic Market on Main Street.

Many Bethel residents work outside of Town. Dover is a one-hour commute. Salisbury, Md., is a half-hour drive away and Seaford and Laurel are just to the northeast and southeast. The only traffic jams come when farm combines pass through town at five miles per hour. Yet today traffic and all of its concerns continue to be a growing problem for the community as more residents from within the county and from the State of Maryland use Bethel's streets to travel within and through Sussex County.

(The preceding information was developed and provided by Molly Murray of the News Journal – Sussex County Office. Molly may be reached at 856-7372 or mmurray@delawareonline.com. The Office of State Planning Coordination and the Town of Bethel extends their thanks to Molly and her contribution to this process.)

Historical District and Historical Properties within Bethel

Due to the efforts of Bethel residents and the State, in September 1974, The Bethel Historic District was created. The district contains lands within the Town boundary and specifies that historical consideration be given to all homes over 50 years old. In addition, there are several homes that are considered to be of significant historical value; some of these homes are:

Locations	Homes & Properties	
West Main Street Historical Streetscape	Williams House	Inslay House
Streetscape featuring Inslay House	4 R's Home	Moore House
Streetscape featuring Ship Carpenter's House	Ship Carpenter's House	

1.3 Existing Land Uses

A land use survey was conducted in Bethel on September 30, 2006 by the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination staff to determine the current land use both within the Town limits, and surrounding the Town. The results of the land use survey can be seen in Table 1.1.

1.3a Land within Bethel

Table 1 gives an overview of the current land use situation in Bethel. The most common use of land is residential, followed next by agricultural/natural resources/open space. It is interesting to note that the natural resources/open space parcels are only 17% of the total parcels in town, but are 66% of the total land. In contrast, residential uses are 75% of the total parcels in Town, but only 27% of the total land within Town limits.

Table 1.1 Existing Land Use in Bethel, 2006

Land Use	Parcels	% Total Parcels	Acres	% Area
Ag/NR/Open Space	25	17.0	198	66.0
Residential	108	75.0	82	27.0
Commercial	4	3.0	14	5.0
Institutional	7	5.0	6	2.0
Total	144	100.0	300	100.0

Source: Town of Bethel Land Use Survey as prepared by OSPC, 2006.

1.3b Adjacent Land Uses

Nearly all the land uses adjacent to the community are rural in nature. Most of the lands to the east, north and west are used for agricultural purposes, while the southern portion of the Town is bordered by Broad Creek. Lands to the south of Town are mostly residential, composed of a mix of single family homes, a major subdivision named Broad Creek Estates, and state wildlife management lands.

All of the lands surrounding the Town are within the jurisdiction of Sussex County and are zoned Agriculture/Residential 1 (AR-1). This zoning classification allows agricultural use and residential use on lots as small as a half acre depending on subdivision size and the types of public utilities available. However, both the Sussex County Comprehensive Plan and the Strategies for State Policies and Spending designate the area surrounding Bethel as a predominately rural area. Because of this designation, no new major infrastructure improvements are proposed at this time by the state or county.

In addition, some areas surrounding Bethel are either part of the State's Agricultural Preservation Program (where development rights have been purchased); or are part of the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) Division of Fish and Wildlife (such as the Nanticoke Wildlife Management Area).

1.4 Public Participation

In January 2007, residents of Bethel were asked to provide input for the comprehensive plan process through a community planning questionnaire. Also, two public participation meetings were held in March 2006 and March 2007.

1.4a Community Planning Questionnaire

The community planning questionnaire was distributed to all the Town's residents in January 2007. From the 111 mailers sent to addresses in the town, 66 responses were received. This 59% response rate is an outstanding participation rate for a community of less than 200 persons. The survey's purpose was to address key issues which Bethel residents thought may impact future quality of life. The following is a summary of the questionnaire results:

- Of the 184 residents, over 120 residents were recognized within the demographic survey of the community. Much like Sussex County, the majority are over the age of 50 and own their homes.
- When asked to consider the community character, 39 survey respondents wanted the community to remain

the same; while 28 respondents asked for modest change.

- In keeping with community character, 52 respondents supported Residential, followed by Agricultural uses (34) and Open Space (23). Many community respondents support commercial and industrial uses. The community expressed a need for these uses to be compatible with the existing uses.
- Many residents favored the overall community land use to be consistent with the existing residential housing types. The community's zoning codes will require revision to meet this goal.
- When considering future population, the majority (42 survey respondents) felt the population should stay close to 200 residents.
- Residents also considered whether to improve community infrastructure. Most responses (38) reflected a desire to improve the community's park facilities and address the need for sidewalks and future wastewater concerns.

- While continuing to consider infrastructure needs, many residents expressed concerns regarding cost and felt that the Town should consider developing measures to protect the Town’s resources.
- When the community was asked to consider annexation; over 50 residents did not favor this approach for Bethel, 10 residents were in favor, and 5 said maybe.
- The community recognized the need to improve the zoning codes. Over 50 survey responses called for this to be the next step for the community’s planning efforts.
- Many residents felt the zoning code should reflect the existing height and design characteristics of existing homes and businesses.
- When asked to consider historical character and the development of ordinances to protect these resources, the community was almost evenly split with 36 for, 33 against, and 5 said maybe.
- Finally, Broad Creek is an important resource to the community and should be protected.

1.4b Public Meeting Participation

The public participation meetings were well attended by residents. These meetings; one in March 2006 and another in March 2007, allowed residents to express their opinions for improving Bethel to officials. For example:

- Many residents agreed, “Bethel should be left alone and stay the same.”
- Some residents felt, “growth was going to occur and we should begin to think proactively and improve the community’s resources to better control it in the future.”
- Others expressed concern with the type of growth, “the growth that has occurred in Seaford and Bridgeville is something that should not occur here.”
- Others felt the need to preserve the cultural resources, “we should protect the historical structures in town and we should adopt Woodland Ferry to ensure its place within the community.”
- All of the community echoed concerns regarding traffic, “it is getting worse and the community should work to correct this problem.” In addition, similar concerns were raised regarding the need to improve infrastructure such as streets and wastewater service, etc.

1.4c Review of Relevant Planning Documents

In addition to public participation, the President, Council, and the Planning Commission consulted a variety of local and regional planning documents to develop the positions and actions in this plan. These included but were not limited to:

- The State Strategies for Policy and Spending which identifies the core community as Level One and Two investment areas with the surrounding town as Level Four (areas that are better suited for preservation and no new large development, as seen in Map 2).
- The Town of Laurel Comprehensive Land Use Plan which discusses the future growth for the Laurel and its impact to the Town of Bethel.
- The Sussex County Comprehensive Land Use Plan that discusses future growth within the County as well as future sewer and other services to support the community of Bethel and the surrounding area.

1.5 Bethel's Planning Goal and Vision

Planning Goals

- Goal:** To maintain the small town atmosphere and rural setting through the adoption of appropriate zoning and land use ordinances.
- Goal:** To encourage modest growth that is in tune with existing growth within the community.
- Goal:** To preserve the rural atmosphere by balancing the protection of rural land with the needs of residents.
- Goal:** To restore and maintain Broad Creek so it continues to be a source of recreation and economic opportunity to the community.
- Goal:** To ensure the protection of natural resources for the enjoyment and health of the existing and future residents of the community.
- Goal:** To encourage the development and implementation of a historical preservation program to protect these cultural resources within the community.

Vision for Bethel

Bethel is a small historic, rural town with a rich history of agricultural and maritime heritage that will maintain its small town character while allowing for modest growth and redevelopment that is consistent with its surroundings and current community character.

Chapter Two – Municipal Development Strategy

2.1 Town Governance, Land Use Planning and Regulation Process

The Town of Bethel was incorporated in 1886 by the Delaware General Assembly. A five member town council governs Bethel and elections are held on the fourth Saturday in February. Council members are elected for rotating terms lasting three years each. Elections are held annually by the Town. The minimum requirements for councilman are determined by the Town's charter and any person considered for the council must be a Delaware resident, a Bethel resident, and over the age of eighteen.

The Town of Bethel Community Hall is located on Main Street and serves as the town hall for all public meetings. Various organizations use this facility to conduct business supporting the town. One example is the Planning and Zoning Commission. In addition, the Town operates a small part-time office in the Bethel Community Hall. Also, the Bethel Historical Society operates a museum at the old school house site, dedicated to the history of Bethel and the surrounding region. This group provides insight to the Town on certain historical uses and supplements the activities of the Town.

The Town Council conducts Town business and provides review and comment on all current and future land use activities within the Town. Buildings and new developments must adhere to zoning codes currently in place. These codes have not been updated since 1980 and should be updated to meet all current building codes and the desires of Bethel's residents.

The Town of Bethel Charter serves as the guiding legal document for the Town.

2.1a Recommendations, Town Governance, Land Use Planning and Regulation Process

Plan Adoption. It is recommended that the Town of Bethel adopt this plan and seek certification through the Office of State Planning Coordination. This plan will serve as a unified advisory document for land use and growth issues within Bethel. More importantly, it will serve as the basis for updating the Town’s current zoning codes and land use regulations.

Develop and Improve Zoning and Land Use Regulation. In order for the Town to continue to allow development within the community, it is recommended that the Town update its current zoning code to meet community wishes and current building standards. These regulations must be in place within eighteen (18) months of the plan adoption in accordance with state law. These zoning codes and land use regulations should address coordination with local, county and state agencies; permitting design; and compliance with relevant environmental regulations.

Develop the capacity to administer land use regulation. When developing or improving the Town’s land use regulations, Bethel should consider the capacity to administer these regulations in a fair and consistent manner. Since the Town has only volunteer part-time staff, it may

consider further developing its partnership with the local jurisdictions such as Sussex County or a private consultant.

Evaluate governance capabilities. Currently the Town relies on part-time volunteer staff, contractual services and volunteer efforts from the community. It is important for the Town to periodically ensure these services meet community needs.

Revise and modernize the Town Charter. The Town Charter continues to serve as the guiding legal document for the Town. It is important that this “living document” be reviewed and updated periodically to ensure it continues to meet community needs, and maintains a voter referendum as defined in the existing charter.

2.2 Demographics, Future Population, and Housing Growth

Data on population, demographics, housing and economic conditions in Bethel are outlined in the following section, along with the appropriate comparisons to Sussex County and the State of Delaware.

The United States Census has been the primary data source for such information. Data is taken from Summary File 1 (SF-1) and Summary File 3 (SF-3). SF-1 is a direct information count considered to be very reliable, while SF-3 is an estimate based upon sample data, which is less accurate for towns like Bethel with small populations.

2.2a Population and Housing

The U.S. Census is intended to be a count of all persons, though errors, omissions and over-counts undoubtedly occur. While small errors have minimal effect on large populations, the same inaccuracies significantly impact small populations, such as Bethel's, creating questions regarding the validity of the data collected.

The information presented about Bethel, especially from Summary File 03, is subject to error and should be taken at face value ONLY. Additionally, factors ranging from government policies to economic conditions can alter trends

and eventually affect population projections. However, the statistics are included for the value gained by comparing them to state and county level data to illustrate demographic and population trends.

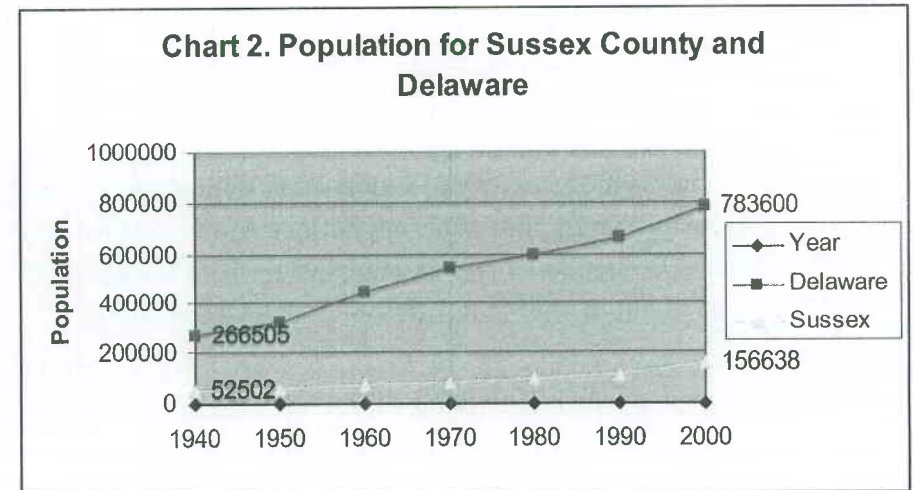
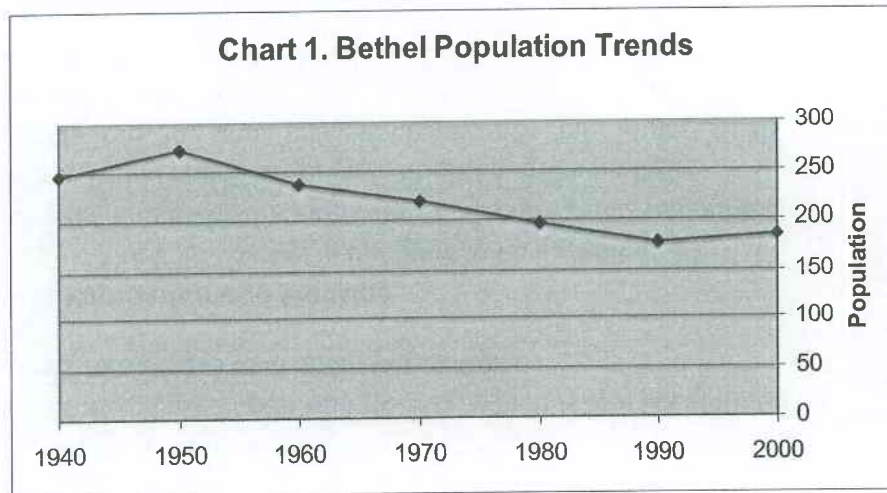
A review of the information collected through the U.S. Census indicates that from 1940 to 2000, while the population in Delaware and Sussex County has steadily increased, the population of Bethel has fluctuated with an overall decrease in population. In 1950, the Town's population peaked at 271 persons.

The 1990 Census reported 174 people living in Bethel and the 2000 Census data shows Bethel's population increased by 10 persons or 6%. During the same time frame, Sussex County's population grew from 113,229 to 156,638, an increase of 28%. The State's population grew by 18% from 666,618 in 1990 to 783,600 in 2000. Bethel's total population in 2000 was 184 persons, of which 47.3% were male and 52.7% were female.

The following charts show the population trends for Bethel, Sussex County, and the State. Chart 1 shows the population trends for Bethel over the period of 1940 to 2000.

Chart 2 shows the population for Sussex County and the State of Delaware for the same time period.

Source: US Census 1940 – 2000



2.2b Population Projections

Population projections for small areas such as the Town of Bethel – though valuable for planning future growth – are extremely difficult to calculate since a single large housing development could significantly impact the Town’s future growth rate.

The population projection in Table 2 was prepared using the 2000 US Census information and growth rates from the Delaware Population Consortium estimates for population growth in Sussex County. This assumes that Bethel will grow more modestly than the current Sussex County growth rate based on information from local residents and the lack of key infrastructure elements such as central sewer and water.

Table 2. Future Population Projections

Population Projection by Year							
Year	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Sussex	156,038	172,890	191,562	212,251	235,174	260,573	288,715
Bethel	184	187	190	192	195	198	201

The issue of accuracy for small towns like Bethel is evident when examining the US Census count on total housing units. The 2000 Census for Bethel reflected 106 housing units within the Town. For this reason, the housing projections

below are based upon the September 2006 Land Use Survey, which showed 108 units in Bethel. The growth rate used in Table 3 is developed based upon current housing stocking data and compared against current population trends. It was derived from several statistical equations assuming a similar growth rate, reflecting recent growth trends. This estimate assumes that Bethel will grow more slowly than Sussex County due to its location and lack of key infrastructure elements such as central sewer and water.

Table 3. Housing Projections

Housing Projection by Year						
Year	2006	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Bethel	108	109	110	111	112	113

These projections show Bethel’s population increasing to 192 by the year 2015 and to 201 by the year 2030. The population increase would create nearly 4 new homes by 2015 and 6 new homes by 2030.

Another population projection method is forecasting how many people a full build-out of Bethel’s developable land would contribute to the population. Full development of agriculture and open space parcels within the Town would result in 250 new homes. Assuming these 250 homes have an

average household size of 2.24 people, once all these homes are occupied the total population in Bethel would increase by about 560 people, bringing the total population to 744. Combining the build-out analysis with the population projections shows that unless there is future annexation, all available land in Bethel could be fully developed by the year 2020.

2.2c Position on Population and Housing Growth

Bethel is a small community in a rural area of western Sussex County. Bethel contains actively farmed agricultural land and environmentally sensitive forest and wetlands. The Town has no central water system and Bethel’s location isn’t conducive to substantial future growth. Bethel is interested in encouraging homeownership to new and existing Town residents. The Town will support modest housing growth for both first and second-time home buyers on available lands within Town boundaries which further their goal to preserve the community’s historic nature.

2.2d Racial Composition

In 1990, Bethel was very homogenous with a 90% white population, contrasting with Sussex County and the State of Delaware which had a population of 79% white and 80% white respectively, as seen in Table 4. Census 2000 data indicates that Bethel remained nearly the same during the

1990’s as white population as a percentage of the total population increased from 90% in 1990 to 96% in 2000. During the same period, the black population decreased from 4% in 1990 to 2% in the year 2000. Bethel is still more homogenous than Sussex County and the State of Delaware, which also are becoming more diverse, as seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Racial Composition of Bethel, Sussex County and State of Delaware
(Source: US Census 1990 – 2000)

Race	Bethel		Sussex County		Delaware	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
White	90.4%	96.2%	82.5%	80.36%	81.68%	79.53%
Black	4.77%	2.7%	16.96%	41.89%	17.17%	19.23%
Other	4.83%	1.6%	.54%	4.76%	1.15%	6.15%

2.2e Age Profile

Census 2000 indicates that the median age of Bethel residents is 44.3 years, slightly older than that of Sussex County (36.4 years) and Delaware (32.9 years). Table 5 shows the age distribution for Bethel, Sussex County and Delaware.

Since the 1990 Census, Bethel’s child population (0-17) has substantially changed. In 1990, the total child population in Bethel was about 11% of the total population, slightly less than

both Sussex County (16 %) and the State of Delaware (19 %). The 2000 Census indicates that the child population as a percentage of the total population in Bethel increased some over the past decade to 18%, while over the same period the child population as a percentage of the total population in Sussex County and the state remained somewhat unchanged.

Table 5. Age Profiles for Bethel, Sussex County and State of Delaware, Census 2000
(Source: US Census 1940 – 2000)

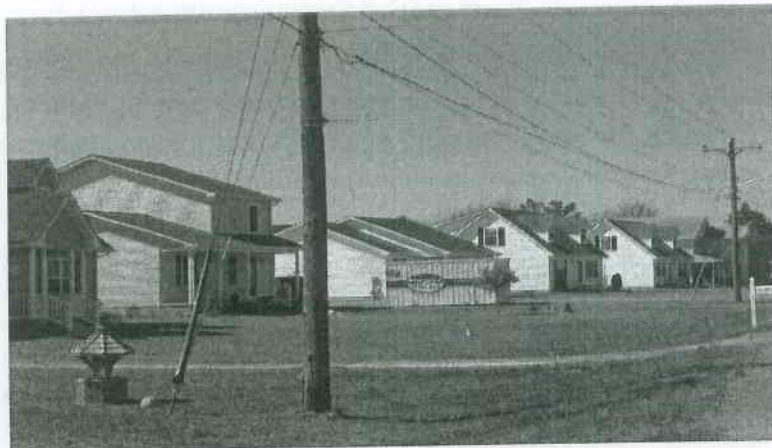
Age	Bethel		Sussex County		State of Delaware	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<5	10	5.4%	9,009	5.8%	51,531	6.6%
5-9	12	3.5%	9,930	6.4%	55,813	7.1%
10-14	13	7.1%	10,250	6.5%	55,274	7.1%
15-19	8	4.3%	9,480	6.1%	55,632	7.1%
20-24	9	4.9%	7,556	4.8%	51,665	6.6%
25-34	18	9.8%	17,811	11.4%	108,840	13.9%
35-44	26	14.1%	23,425	15.0%	127,601	16.3%
45-54	38	20.7%	21,312	13.6%	103,999	13.3%
55-59	11	6.0%	9,615	6.1%	39,320	5.0%
60-64	4	2.2%	9,198	5.9%	32,199	4.1%
64-74	15	8.2%	17,091	10.9%	56,415	7.5%
75-84	13	7.1%	9,362	6.0%	34,762	4.4%
85+	7	3.8%	2,569	1.6%	10,549	1.3%

2.2f Educational Attainment

The average educational level of Bethel’s population age 25 or older differs from that of Sussex County and the State, as seen in Table 6. According to the 2000 Census, 95 % of Bethel’s residents 25 years of age or older have at least completed a high school education, compared to 70 % of Sussex County residents and 78 % of Delaware residents. Table 6 shows the educational attainment percentage of Bethel residents (age 25 or older who have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher) differs from that of Sussex County and the state.

Table 6. Educational Attainment for Bethel, Sussex County and Delaware, 2000 (Source: US Census 2000)

	High School Graduate or higher	Bachelor’s Degree or higher
Bethel	94.8%	29.6%
Sussex County	69.7%	13.4%
State of Delaware	77.5%	21.4%



2.2g Housing

Table 7 compares Bethel’s total housing unit changes to those of Sussex County and the State of Delaware, as recorded by the US Census Bureau. Bethel experienced little growth from 1970 to 1980, during which time the housing stock in both Sussex County and the State of Delaware increased significantly. From 1990 to 2000, there was a net gain of 6 dwelling units in Bethel, an increase of 6 %, in conjunction with the positive housing growth rate in Sussex County (25.3 %) and Delaware (18.3%). Changes in the State and the County are consistent with population trends during the same time period, while the inconsistency seen in Bethel’s population growth and housing decline is likely due to US Census errors.

Table 7. Dwelling Units in Bethel, Sussex County and Delaware, 1970 – 2000

(Source: US Census 1970 – 2007)

Year	Bethel	Change	Sussex	Change	Delaware	Change
1970	78	***	34,287	***	180,233	***
1980	88	11%	54,694	59.5%	238,611	32.4%
1990	95	7%	74,253	35.8%	289,919	21.5%
2000	101	6%	93,070	25.3%	343,072	18.3%
2007	108	6%	*****	*****	*****	*****

As previously noted, US Census results for Bethel are likely to be inaccurate due to the extremely small population size. A field survey of housing units in September 2006,

conducted by the State Planning Office determined that there are 108 residential dwelling units in Bethel. Thus, any recorded loss in housing stock since 1990 was either a miscalculation, or has been offset by new dwelling units in the Town since the 2000 Census.

Type of Housing Stock

Table 8 and Table 9 summarize changes in the types of housing in Bethel, Sussex County and the State. In 1990, 100% of the housing in Bethel was single family housing, which was significantly higher than the same type of housing units in Sussex County (69%) and in the State of Delaware (54%).

Census 2000 reported the total housing units in Bethel increased by 9 units from 1990 to 2000, but the percentage of single family detached housing units remained constant at 100%. Similarly, both Sussex County and Delaware experienced increases in the number of single-family detached dwellings as a percentage of the total housing units during a ten year period.

Table 8. Composition of Housing in Bethel, Sussex County and Delaware in 1990

(Source: US Census 1990 – 2000)

Housing Types	Bethel		Sussex County		State of Delaware	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Single Family Detached	92	100%	42,525	57.3%	155,805	53.7%
Single Family Attached	0	0%	3,381	4.6%	40,576	14.0%
Multi – Family	0	0%	6,765	8.9%	56,679	19.5%
Mobile Homes	0	0%	21,410	28.5%	34,726	12.0%
Other	0	0%	442	<1.0%	2,133	<1.0%
Total	92	100%	74,253	100%	289,919	100%

Table 9. Composition of Housing in Bethel 2000
(Source: US Census 2000)

Housing Types	Bethel		Sussex County		Delaware	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Single Family Detached	101	100	61,175	57.0%	210,872	56.0%
Single Family Attached	0	0	6,522	6.0%	52,430	14.0%
Multi – Family	0	0	13,173	12.0%	69,058	18.0%
Mobile Homes	0	0	26,210	24.0%	42,122	11.0%
Other	0	0	39	1.0%	366	1.0%
Total	101	100	107,119	100%	374,872	100%

It should be noted here that the variation in total number of housing units in Bethel between Table 8 and Table 9 may be caused by census errors due to the small population size; or possibly a reflection of changes within the community since the 2000 Census . Please keep in mind that there are actually about 108 residential dwellings in Bethel as of September 2006 as determined by the OSPC as part of recent dwelling unit survey.

Housing Pipeline

Development activity in and around Bethel is minimal. There is one large planned development proposed for construction near the Town. Currently, only a few single family homes are either being considered for construction or being constructed at this time within the Town.

Age of Housing Stock

Bethel has retained many of its older structures. The 2000 Census reports that 65% of Bethel’s houses were built before 1939. Only 9% of the Town’s structures were built between 1939 and 1959 and 26% after 1959. Sussex County’s mean housing age of 31 years (1976) and Delaware’s at 34 years (1973), shows relatively younger housing stock.

Housing Values

Chart 3 compares Bethel’s median housing value in 1990 and 2000 with housing values in Sussex County and the State of Delaware. With a value of owner-occupied housing units of \$84,300 in 1990 and \$97,600 in 2000, The median housing value of Bethel is similar to Sussex County (\$81,000 in 1990 and \$98,500 in 2000) and Delaware (\$79,600 in 1990 and \$91,300 in 2000) according to the US Census.

Ownership and Vacancy as defined by the US Census

When considering vacant homes, owner occupied units and renter occupied units in Bethel with those in Sussex County and the State, The US Census finds that Bethel fares well with fewer renters and more homeowners than Sussex County and Delaware.

2.2h Economic Profile

This section discusses economic information for Bethel, Sussex County and Delaware. Bethel's median income in 1999 was \$34,107, 26% higher than the median household income in Sussex County (\$26,904) and 2% lower than that of the state (\$34,875). Also, Bethel has a lower percentage of households receiving Social Security and retirement than Sussex County or the State. Of the households in Bethel, 15.2% receive Social Security income, the County and State percentages are higher at 34.9% and 23.8% respectively. Most Bethel residents receive less than the average amount of retirement income at 11.4%; compared to the County's higher 21.5% and the State's significantly lower 5.2%. Of Bethel residents 2.7% are below the poverty level, compared to the State average of 9%. No seniors (65+) in Bethel are below the poverty level and some of Bethel's residents do receive some type of public assistance. Finally, only 30.5% of households within Bethel receive either a wage or salary income, this is explained by the increased

number of 65 and older residents which have moved into Town over the past decade.

Chart 3. Median Housing Values for Bethel, Sussex County and Delaware, 1990 & 2000

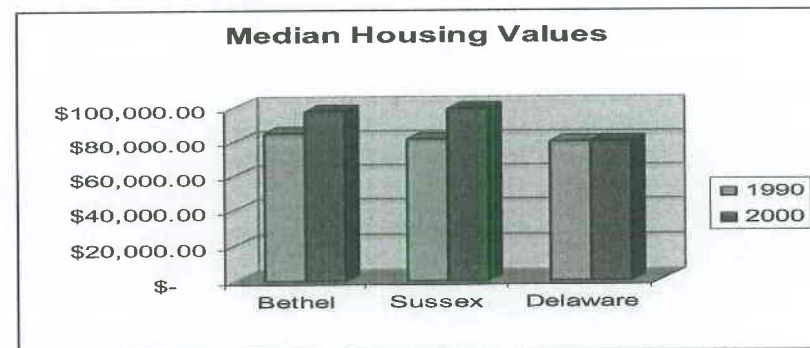
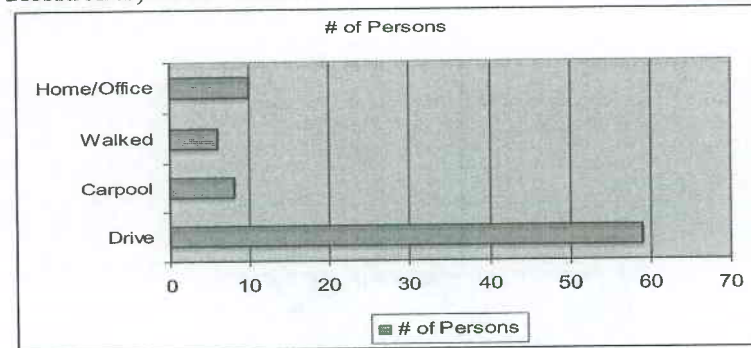


Table 10. Selected Income Data for Bethel, Sussex County and Delaware 2000 Census (Source: US Census 2000)

Income Category	Bethel	Sussex	Delaware
Median household income	\$34,107	\$26,904	\$34,875
% of households with wage and	30.5%	72.7%	80.8%
Mean wage and salary income	\$65,571	\$31,028	\$40,493
% of households with Social Security income	15.2%	34.9%	23.8%
Mean Social Security income	\$11,900	\$7,893	\$8,038
% of households w/ retirement income	11.4%	21.5%	5.2%
Mean retirement income	\$16,357	\$9,843	\$9,987
% of households with public assistance income	1.1%	6.8%	5.2%
Mean public assistance income	\$7,450	\$3,707	\$4,012
% of population below poverty level	2.7%	10.7%	8.7%
% of seniors (65+) below poverty level	N/A	12.2%	10.1%

Of the 184 residents over the age of 16 living in town, 149 persons or 81% are part of the work force and 35 persons or 19% are not. Of those residents who are part of the work force, 5 persons (3.4%) were unemployed at the time of the 2000 census. Chart 4 shows the number of residents in Bethel that commute daily.

Chart 4. Method of Commuting to Work for Bethel Residents, 2000 Census



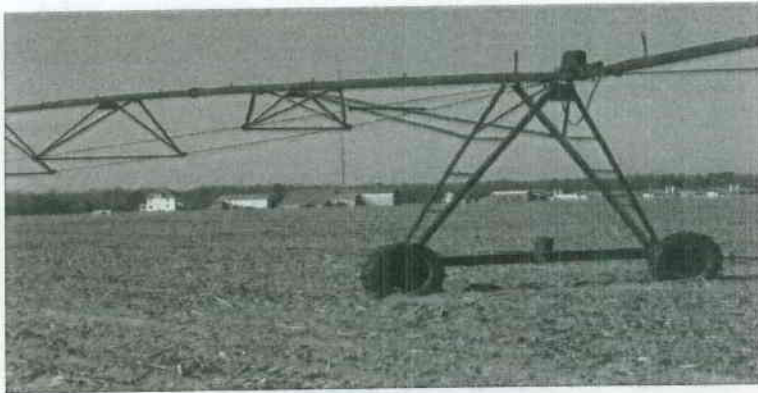


Table 11 shows that the workers in Bethel labor in a variety of industries, the most prevalent of which is education, health and social service (21.7%). Professional scientific, management, administrative, waste management services (16.9%) and manufacturing (14.5%) are also popular employment fields.

2.2i Conclusion

The population and demographic information derived from the US Census is unreliable due to the extremely small population size in Bethel. However, when compared to similar data at the County and State level, some interesting trends emerge. The average education in Bethel is higher than the county. The percentage of residents in Bethel who own homes

**Table 11. Industry of Workers 16 Years and Older
(Source: US Census 2000)**

Industry	Number	Percentage
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	4	4.8%
Construction	9	10.8%
Manufacturing	12	14.5%
Wholesale trade	0	0%
Retail trade	11	13.3%
Transportation and warehousing and utilities	2	2.4%
Information	2	2.4%
Finance, insurance, real estate and rental and leasing	1	1.2%
Professional scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	14	16.9%
Educational, health and social services	18	21.7%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	4	4.8%
Other service (except public administration)	2	2.4%
Public administration	4	4.8%
Total	83	100%

is higher than the County. While the State and the County experienced substantial increases in their housing stock from 1990 to 2000, Bethel experienced little growth. From 1990 to 2000, the child population in Bethel grew at a much slower rate than average. During the same time period the median age of Bethel residents was slightly higher or the same as the County and State average.

2.3 Environmental Features

The Town of Bethel is located along Broad Creek within the larger Nanticoke Watershed in western Sussex County and is surrounded by a mix of forest and agricultural lands. Lands to the east and north are considered to be either good to excellent areas for groundwater recharge. Having no improved water or sewer infrastructure; the Town relies on independent wells and stand alone septic systems to meet the needs of local residents.



2.3a Wetlands

Located in close proximity to Broad Creek, it is no surprise that the Town of Bethel contains wetlands. These wetlands follow Broad Creek and provide a mix of habitat, water quality benefits and help to mitigate flooding from the Broad Creek. In addition, adjacent to the town are some pockets of non-tidal wetlands as identified by DNREC SWAMP Map system. As the Town considers future growth, it will work with DNREC to protect these resources through improved ordinances and regulations.

2.3b Soils

The *USDA-NRCS Soil Survey for Sussex County, Delaware (1972)* shows the majority of soil within and around Bethel is classified as Evesboro Series, Evesboro sandy loam, substratum, 0-2 percent slope (EvA); which consists of very deep, excessively drained, sandy soils on uplands dominated by mainly hardwood vegetation mixed with some Virginia and Loblolly pine. This soil is often dry and less fertile, but less so in Evesboro soils with a loamy stratum. This series is best suited for most major crops and is less likely to erode from water; however, it is subject to wind erosion. In addition, as part of the State's effort to continue to map and evaluate soil characteristics throughout the State; the recent 2002 soils survey now identifies soils within and around Bethel as Fort Mott (FM) Soils which have similar and like characteristics as that of Evesboro soils.

2.3c State Wildlife Areas

The community of Bethel is located near several Delaware Fish and Wildlife Properties that are a part of the Nanticoke Wildlife Area. At the west and south of Town, these properties provide a variety of recreational opportunities; with hunting and fishing as the most popular.

2.3d Broad Creek

Broad Creek is a valuable asset to the community. Much of the Town's history is tied to the use of the river and its abundant mix of resources. The Town currently maintains a river access point for fishing. In addition, the Town is concerned with the long-term health of this resource from excessive boat traffic which erodes the banks, marshes and wetlands of this resource. Agricultural, residential water runoffs, and failed septic systems also impair Broad Creek. The Town will work to partner with DNREC and other agencies (such as the Nanticoke River Alliance, the upstream source (Laurel), and the down stream sources) to protect this resource and improve the overall health and safety of this resource.

2.3e Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL's)

DNREC is currently working within the Nanticoke watershed to develop "Total Maximum Daily Load" (TMDL) values and Pollution Control strategies for Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Bacteria pollutants. The goal of this effort is to reduce the total maximum daily load of nutrient pollutants that enter the watershed to the following reduction values; Nitrogen

30%, Phosphorus 50%, and Bacteria 9%. A TMDL is the maximum level of pollution which a water body may assimilate without compromising its quality, drinking water, shell fish harvest and recreational goals such as swimming and fishing. TMDL's and Best Management Practices to protect the Nanticoke/Broad Creek watershed resource are in development and should be completed by approximately December, 2008. To support this effort, DNREC recommends best management practices (BMP's) for all land uses. Pollution Control Strategies being developed by DNREC will help to pinpoint some of these BMP's that will work to reduce both point and nonpoint source pollutants such as agricultural runoff and the removal of failing septic systems. Recognizing that Bethel is a small town with limited resources, the Town of Bethel will work in partnership with DNREC to implement local land use regulations to protect these valuable water resources as part of the implementation of the comprehensive land use plan.

2.3f Urban and Community Forestry Program

The Delaware Department of Agriculture Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program provides technical, educational and financial resources to develop and improve urban forest resources. Urban forest resources provide a mix of benefits such as increased property values, reduced air and water pollution, reduced crime and improved quality of life for residents. The community of Bethel has an opportunity to increase these resources from the current forest canopy value (the Town's percent of land covered by trees) from 14% to

20% over the next ten years by developing local ordinances, encouraging the planting of trees within new development projects, and by becoming a Tree City USA Community.

2.3g Trash / Litter Control and Burning of Yard Waste / Debris

The Town recognizes the importance of controlling waste of all types; as well as the need to manage the impacts of waste removal, recycling efforts, and burning of trash / debris. Many of the Town residents have a private waste hauler remove trash and other debris. Because of its rural character, some Town residents continue to burn trash and debris. Due to the rural location of the Town, these methods of removal of waste are not likely to change unless the individual residents choose to change on their own. Over time, if state and county programs improve, then the Town may enter into formal agreements to allow for pick up of waste and recyclable materials.

2.3h Use of energy efficient home materials for reducing greenhouse gases

The Town and its residents recognize the need to protect air quality and overall health of the environment, both locally and globally. As the Town considers future growth, it may choose to create ordinances requiring green building technologies, less construction waste, and energy efficient appliances.

2. 3i Recommendations, Environmental Features

- **Work with DNREC and Sussex County to protect natural resources.** The community would serve the residents' interests by expanding this partnership to further protect and enhance these resources. This may include but is not limited to creating the following:
 - source water protection ordinance
 - wetland protection / storm water ordinance
 - landscape and tree preservation ordinance
 - community open space ordinance
- **Continue to utilize, protect and conserve Broad Creek.** The community's history and heritage is tied to this resource. The community should explore opportunities to promote this resource while providing possible protective measures. The town should consider the following to support efforts to protect the Broad Creek:
 - Review and evaluate the public access to the Creek to determine if it is adequate to meet residents needs.
 - Pursue grant funding to improve public access and environmental protection measures.
 - Develop an ordinance specifying buffer requirements.
 - Develop an ordinance for historical preservation.

- **Ensure Town participation in the TMDL development process.** The Naticoke River and Broad Creek are under review for pollutants. The community should consider how to best address this issue through conservation measures, possible regulation, etc.
- **Increase Forest Canopy from 14% to 20% over ten years.** This partnership would provide the opportunity

to expand forest resources while educating residents. The community should work to become a “Tree City USA” community further enhancing the quality of life for residents.

2.4 Future Land Use

The Town of Bethel contains a variety of land uses as described in Section 1.3. While the majority of land use is either residential or agricultural, there are several properties devoted to commercial and institutional purposes. The future land uses for the Town are shown on Map 6. Following is a description of each land use category and the policies that will guide the Town when implementing land use regulations and future development proposals in each area. The Future Land Use plan is comprised of both written policies and the map, and neither should be used without reviewing the other.

2.4a Growth inside Bethel

There are currently about 200 +/- acres of land that are vacant or in agricultural use inside the Town boundaries of Bethel, representing roughly half of the total area of the Town. While not all of this land is available for development due to environmental constraints, it does represent a substantial amount of land that can be developed for residential or commercial uses. The Town of Bethel will consider the development of these lands consistent with the Future Land Use Plan described in this section and within the constraints of the utility infrastructure described in Section 2.7.

2.4b Residential Land Uses

The majority of the Town is designated for future residential land uses. This includes all lands with existing single family homes and lands currently in agricultural production. The Town intends that these areas will either remain as single family homes or be developed from agricultural use into housing consistent with the character of the Town. General policies that will guide residential land uses in Bethel are:

- The preservation and rehabilitation of existing homes in Bethel will be encouraged.
- Homeownership in Town will be encouraged.
- Modest growth controls will be encouraged.
- Tree and shrubbery maintenance will be encouraged.

2.4 c Commercial Land Uses

The majority of commercial uses in Bethel are located along Bethel Road and Main Street in the northern and central parts of Town. The future land use plan proposes concentrating the Town's commercial activity in these areas. Currently, these are only a few commercial properties. Future commercial uses will be encouraged to occupy the central and northern end of Town. The following are some general policies that will guide commercial properties in Bethel:

- Promote and encourage continued agricultural businesses within the town.
- Allow continued operation of existing commercial uses.

- Promote restaurants, retail stores, and recreational uses that provide needed goods, services, and jobs to the Town; but be aware that Town residents do not desire large-scale, regional retail uses.

2.4d Institutional Land Uses

There are a number of institutional uses in Town. It is the intent of the Town to encourage their continued operation and role in the community by designating them for future institutional purposes. The institutional properties include the Church, the Bethel Community Center, Bethel Post Office, the Bethel Museum Community Park and Bethel Community Pier. Some general policies that will guide institutional land uses in Bethel are:

- Existing institutional properties will be encouraged to continue their roles in the community and be allowed to grow and expand in a reasonable fashion that is consistent with the character of Bethel.
- New institutional uses will be considered by the Bethel Town Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission through a conditional use process.

2.4e Cottage Industries

The residents of Bethel have a strong entrepreneurial spirit, which is seen in several home-based businesses throughout the Town. Often called "cottage industries," these are small-scale businesses that residents operate from their homes. While not specified on the land use map, these

businesses do have a presence in Town. Bethel wants to encourage cottage industries, while ensuring they don't infringe on the rights of other residents. Some general polices that will guide cottage industries in Bethel are:

- Cottage industries are encouraged to promote entrepreneurship and self sufficiency among the residents of Bethel.
- Cottage industries should be regulated by the future land use regulations in Bethel, perhaps as a "conditional use" allowed in all zones.
- In future land use regulations, the town should define some parameters to guide the establishment and operation of cottage industries. The parameters should include, but not be limited to, noise and parking regulations, storage requirements for heavy equipment, and requirements for hours of operation. The goals will be to ensure that cottage industries are compatible with their neighbors, but still have the flexibility to operate and flourish economically.

2.5 Growth and Annexation

2-5a. Annexation

Approximately 20 public meetings and a survey completed by more than half of the residents of Bethel, showed no interest in annexation. Thus the Town will not delineate a future growth area at this time. If, in the future, the town

2.4f Agricultural/Natural Resources/ Residential

This proposed future land use is intended to allow for a mix of uses in an effort to preserve and maintain the existing community's character, while allowing for modest residential growth, the continued growth and prosperity of the agricultural industry and the protection of natural resources within and near the community. Through the development of the revised zoning code for the Town, this future land use will be further defined to describe acceptable agricultural activities, encourage and provide incentives to protect and establish natural resources and allow for residential development that is in keeping with the historic and rural characteristic of the community.

2.4g Recommendations, Future Land Use

Follow the Land Use Policies in Section 2.4. Bethel should follow the land use policies listed in this section when considering any land development application and when developing the land use regulations.

residents deem annexation desirable, then an amendment to the town's adopted comprehensive plan will be required. This amendment should include the creation and delineation of a future growth area, assigning of prospective uses to lands within the future growth area, and the creation of an annexation policy / procedure.

Yet, the Town of Bethel recognizes the possibility of growth in areas around their jurisdiction, particularly in boundary-divided parcels. These parcels as currently defined in Map 4, could develop using development codes and standards, both the Town of Bethel and Sussex County. This could create a conflict situation where future growth, directly adjacent to Town, would be developed out of character with the Bethel community. Because of this possibility and their lack of interest in annexation, Bethel will delineate an “Area of Concern” reflecting those parcels that are boundary-divided. This effort will raise awareness of new development proposals adjacent to the town and allow for possible future annexation once the community has completed the following:

1. Certify and Adopt the Proposed 2007 Comprehensive Land Use Plan
2. Review and amend the Town’s Charter
3. Review and amend the Town’s Zoning and Subdivision Codes
4. Amend the Certified and Adopted 2007 Comprehensive Land Use Plan in accordance with Delaware Code Title 9 Chapter 22.

2.5b Preservation of the Rural Character of Bethel

A. Transfer of Development Rights

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is a program that provides a mechanism for governments to concentrate residential and other development in desired areas (such as those already served by sewer, water, roads, and other public facilities) while protecting rural landscapes and environmentally sensitive areas. Under a TDR program, the development rights vested in a zoned property (the “sending area”) can be sold to a TDR bank or to a specific developer. Those rights are transferred to another location (the “receiving area”), where they can be applied to increase the density of a development above the maximum specified by that property’s zoning district.

If Sussex County adopts a TDR program or participates in a statewide TDR program in the future, Bethel intends to

become a sending area for the TDR program, and will encourage its Area of Concern, as shown on Map 6, to do the same. This would result in development elsewhere while protecting the Town's character and natural habitat. This is consistent with supporting the Town's goal of preserving its unique character and environmental attributes.



B. Ag Preservation

The Town supports the continuation of agricultural land uses in the area surrounding the Town where farming has been practiced for centuries. Farming preserves open space for the benefit of residents and visitors and provides a buffer between the Town and encroaching development. Keeping this land in farming restricts the amount of impervious surface cover in the watershed and provides habitat for a variety of species. Agricultural preservation programs should continue to be used to preserve the farmland adjacent to and surrounding the Town of Bethel. The Town encourages the farming community to

practice conservation measures, such as the use of adequate stream buffers to protect riparian zones and absorb runoff and pollutants; no-till and contour plowing to reduce soil erosion and runoff; and organic and sustainable farming practices that reduce the impact that farming has on the critical environmental resources in the Bethel area.

2.5d Recommendations, Growth and Annexation

1. Recommendation: Develop and adopt a zoning and subdivision code

The town's priority should be the development and adoption of a zoning and subdivision code. The Delaware Code requires the town to update its zoning code within eighteen months of the comprehensive plan adoption if it wishes to exercise zoning control. The code can serve as a tool for the town to preserve and enhance its many assets, to regulate land use, and to make the goals of the comprehensive plan a reality.

2. Recommendation: Explore agricultural preservation options

Part of what makes Bethel unique is its rural context, and surrounding farmlands. There are many tools and programs the town can utilize for agricultural preservation. The Delaware Agriculture Lands Preservation Program protects thousands of acres of farmland each year. There are other programs through the County and private conservation organizations that have the same goals. Agricultural zoning is another option the town should explore for agricultural

2.6 Public Utilities and Services

2.6a Water System

There is no public water system in Bethel. Water supply in the Town is currently provided by individual wells located on each property. During the public participation process, Town residents were asked their opinions regarding a public water system with a very mixed response. Of those who responded to the survey, some felt a public water system was most important, while others felt it was the least important issue of those listed on the survey. Further inquiry would be needed before determining whether the Town should pursue a private water system. It is important to note that any new large development project in or around Bethel would be required to install a public water system. In this event, the Town should

preservation. Bethel should start a dialogue with citizens, local farmers, and the Department of Agriculture to determine what role farmland protection can play in the town's development, and the development in adjacent areas of the County.

3. Recommendation: Coordinate town growth with growth in Sussex County

The town should enter into a memorandum of agreement with Sussex County for reciprocal notification and coordination of land use and development activities within the defined Area of Concern for boundary divided parcels.

consider incorporating town residents into the public water system.

2.6b Wastewater Treatment System

There is no wastewater treatment provided by either Sussex County or a private wastewater provider. All wastewater services are stand alone systems maintained by property owners.

2.6c Solid-Waste Disposal

Refuse collection services are the responsibility of each individual property owner. Residents and businesses in Bethel arrange for collection through one of several private companies operating in the area. The Delaware Solid Waste Authority (DSWA) operates a public 'Recycle Delaware' enters within the Town of Laurel, at the Woodland Ferry Terminal, and in

the Town of Seaford. Also, residents may choose to pay for curbside recycling through a private provider. DSWA also operates a collection and transfer station in Hard Scrapple, Delaware. Finally, The Town of Georgetown holds a DSWA Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day each spring to assist County residents with the disposal of waste and debris.

2.6d Storm water Management

Storm water management is an issue for many towns. Specifically in Bethel where residents are located near the flood-prone river areas. Fewer residents complain about flooding on the southern portion of Town near the river and flood plain areas. Some flooding may be caused by high tides or storm water drainage issues on specific properties. As more impervious surfaces are added to the landscape, the storm runoff can increase and cause problems. Currently, there are few storm drains or ditches within the Town. Additional development should include measures to address storm water management, although the Town should be cautious in assuming the responsibility for maintaining these facilities. All new development must meet State of Delaware standards for storm water management. No new development projects (such as new subdivisions on large tracts of vacant land) may be approved without Sussex County Conservation District approval.

2.6e Plan Recommendations, Public Utilities and Services

- 1. Evaluate the need for a public water system.** In the future, Bethel should consider the need for a public water system and evaluate the options for providing this service for residents. Currently the Town has a very small budget and individual wells seem to be working adequately. Should any of these conditions change, Bethel could undertake a study to determine how best to address the needs for a public water system.
- 2. Evaluate stormwater issues.** Storm water problems in Bethel are mainly the result of the Town's location near a wetland. It is recommended that Bethel evaluate what can be done to address the storm water problems regarding drainage into the river and consider developing a master storm water plan in cooperation with the state and Sussex County to address regional flooding concerns.
- 3. Develop a formal relationship with Sussex County to evaluate the impact of County Sewer Service.** It is recommended that Bethel's town leadership contact relevant officials at Sussex County to discuss the County's plans for future expansion of sewer service to the Bethel area. At a minimum, the results of this dialogue could be a Memorandum of Understanding describing the policy for providing and extending sewer service to properties in and around Bethel at a pace acceptable to the community as a whole.

2.7 Community Services and Facilities

2.7a Police

The Delaware State Police provide 24-hour police protection for the residents of Bethel when there is an emergency. Bethel has contracted with the Delaware State Police to provide 10-18 hours of law enforcement per week.

2.7b Fire Service

The Laurel Volunteer Fire Company provides both fire protection and emergency medical services for the residents of Bethel. This is one of 24 volunteer fire companies operating in Sussex County. Although each has its own district, they all provide mutual assistance when needed. The Laurel Volunteer Fire Company consists of 60 +/- active volunteer firefighters. The fire company operates seven fire engines, one brush truck, one rescue truck, one water rescue boat, and a decontamination truck / trailer. There are no fire water systems within Bethel and the Town will develop a cooperative partnership to develop potential dry hydrant sites within the town to provide a source for water.

2.7c Emergency Medical Services

Bethel residents receive basic life support services from the Laurel Fire Department. Emergencies needing advanced life support are handled by Sussex County.

2.7d Education and Library Facilities

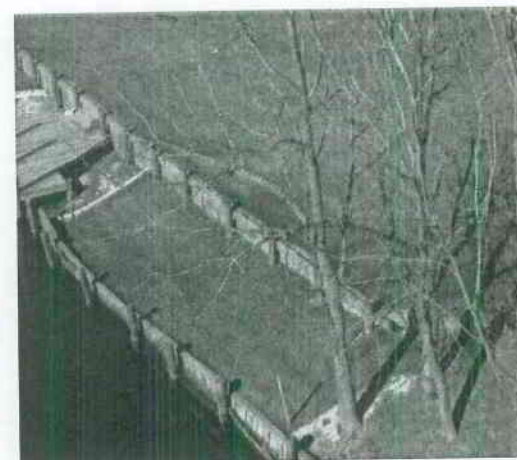
The Town of Bethel is located within the Laurel School District which provides elementary, middle and high schools to local residents. Bethel residents have access to the services of the Laurel Public Library, located off Central Avenue. In addition, The Sussex County Bookmobile visits the Bethel community regularly .

2.7e Senior Services

No senior services are available in Bethel; however, there are resources for seniors outside of the Town. Nearby, Laurel Senior Center can meet the needs of Bethel residents.

2.7f Health Care

There are no health care facilities located in Bethel. The Nanticoke Memorial Hospital in Seaford provides health care for Bethel residents.



2.7 g Postal Service

The US Postal Service has an office located on Main Street in Bethel, which is open every day of the week but Sunday. The postal

code for Bethel is 19931.

2.7 f Parks and Recreation

There are two parks in Bethel; one is located along the river, the other is located off First Street near the museum. Throughout the public participation process, many residents mentioned the need for a better Town park. Improving and expanding the Town park could work in conjunction with other public requests, such as providing recreational opportunities for younger residents and possibly providing canoe access at the local pier. The Town might also want to consider using the vacant land adjacent to the park as part of a park expansion process.

2.8 Transportation

2.8a Regional Transportation

The main roads in Bethel are maintained by the State through the Delaware Department of Transportation. Bethel Road (Sussex County Road 493) and Vine Street/Beagle Club Road (Sussex County Road 487A) are the primary roads connecting the Town to Business Route 13; serving as the route to Seaford, Laurel, and the rest of Delaware.

2.8b Local Roads

The Town of Bethel maintains several streets (totaling about 2 miles) within the Town limits. These streets serve residential uses rather than regional traffic needs. The Town streets are Community Lane, School Road, First Street, West

2.7g Plan Recommendations, Community Services and Facilities

1. Evaluate the feasibility of improving existing Town parks and/or developing new ones. In surveys, during public participation in community meetings, Town residents often mentioned the desirability of an expanded Town park with recreational facilities. Bethel should evaluate the need for and investigate the funding of such a facility in the future to include a canoe and kayak launch into the Broad Creek.

Street, Pine Street, Main Street, Moore Street, Shady Lane, Sailor's Path and Lewis Street. Snow removal for Bethel is provided by the Town. The Town Charter lists different street names than those that Bethel residents and 911 Emergency Services actively use. The Town Charter should be updated to reflect the currently designated street names.

2.8c Transit

There are no state operated DART bus routes passing through the Town regularly. In the future, residents desire access to public transportation to Dover, where connections exist to the rest of the State. As in all of Delaware, paratransit

services are available through DART by reservation to eligible elderly and disabled residents.

2.8d Transportation Issues

There are several transportation issues for the community:

- **The maintenance of local roads to improve health, safety and welfare of residents.** Main Street experiences large volumes of truck traffic since the road is often used as an alternate to US Route 13 and US Route 50 in Maryland.
- **The maintenance and upkeep of the bridge on Bethel Road** (Sussex County Road 493). Over the past several years, this bridge has seen an increase in traffic as it serves as a major connector between the Town and Sussex County. This has effected the safety and appearance of the bridge.
- **Traffic volume along Bethel Road** (Sussex County Road 493) as the road is used as an alternate route for Route 13 through traffic causing speed, noise and additional pollution.
- **The Intersection of Woodland Ferry Road** (Sussex County Road 78) and Bethel Road (Sussex County Road 493). This serves as a major intersection for the community resulting in several traffic accidents each year. Improvements should be considered to address public safety.

The Community is encouraged to work with Del-Dot to develop short term and long term solutions to their concerns.



2.8e Woodland Ferry

The Delaware Department of Transportation Woodland Ferry Terminal offers limited fishing and recreational access to the Nanticoke River. In addition, this daily operated ferry provides a more scenic route to Seaford, Delaware and points in Maryland.

2.8f Recommendations, Transportation

1. **Evaluate solutions to the traffic and heavy truck usage on Main Street and Bethel Road.** Bethel should evaluate both enforcement and design based solutions

2.9 Community Character and Design

2.9a Context

The Town of Bethel was originally established around the Bethel Landing, which provided boat access to Broad Creek. Bethel residents enjoy a tranquil, rural atmosphere in one of the smallest communities in Delaware. Just west of Laurel, Bethel's small-town atmosphere is enhanced by agricultural areas to the north, east and west of Town. The Town of Bethel is defined as a Rural Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This District is recognized for its agricultural landscape. The Town of Bethel has four properties with individual listings in the National Register of Historic Places. The Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs staff has determined that the

to traffic on Main Street and the high volume of heavy trucks that pass through the Town along this road to improve safety, reduce noise and lessen pollution.

2. **Update the street names in the Town Charter.** Bethel should update the Town Charter to list the Town's street names as they are currently being used.

historic core of the Town is eligible for the list because of compliance with federal environmental laws. Bethel's historical context, strong maritime heritage, and small-town atmosphere set it apart from other Delaware municipalities.

2.9b Land Use and Design

The predominant land uses within Bethel are residential and agricultural. The Town is also surrounded by agriculture and open space. One of the Town's defining features is its rural character. In Bethel, the majority of the houses are of the single-family, detached variety. Typical of most historic homes, they sit on a mix of both large and small lots; Contrasting the regular shape of modern home lots. Another characteristic of historic houses and buildings are the small

setbacks from the street, apparent in most homes located in the Town. Bethel has identified an intention to maintain this valuable, historic character. However, Bethel is vulnerable to inappropriate development on the town's remaining open land, since insufficient zoning codes are currently in place. In this scenario, a single out-of-character development could disrupt the historic nature of the Town. It is imperative that the Town develop land use regulations that permit appropriate development and encourage it to fit in with the character of this unique, small Town.

2.9c Recommendations, Community Character

1. Preserve the Town's historic character. Bethel should protect its historic character by maintaining the current historic structures within the Town by creating a historical commission. In addition, Bethel should encourage any new construction to be consistent with the historical style of the current homes. The Town of Bethel should consider working with the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs to list the eligible historical core in the National Register of Historic Places. The Town could also maintain the historical character through the adoption of historical

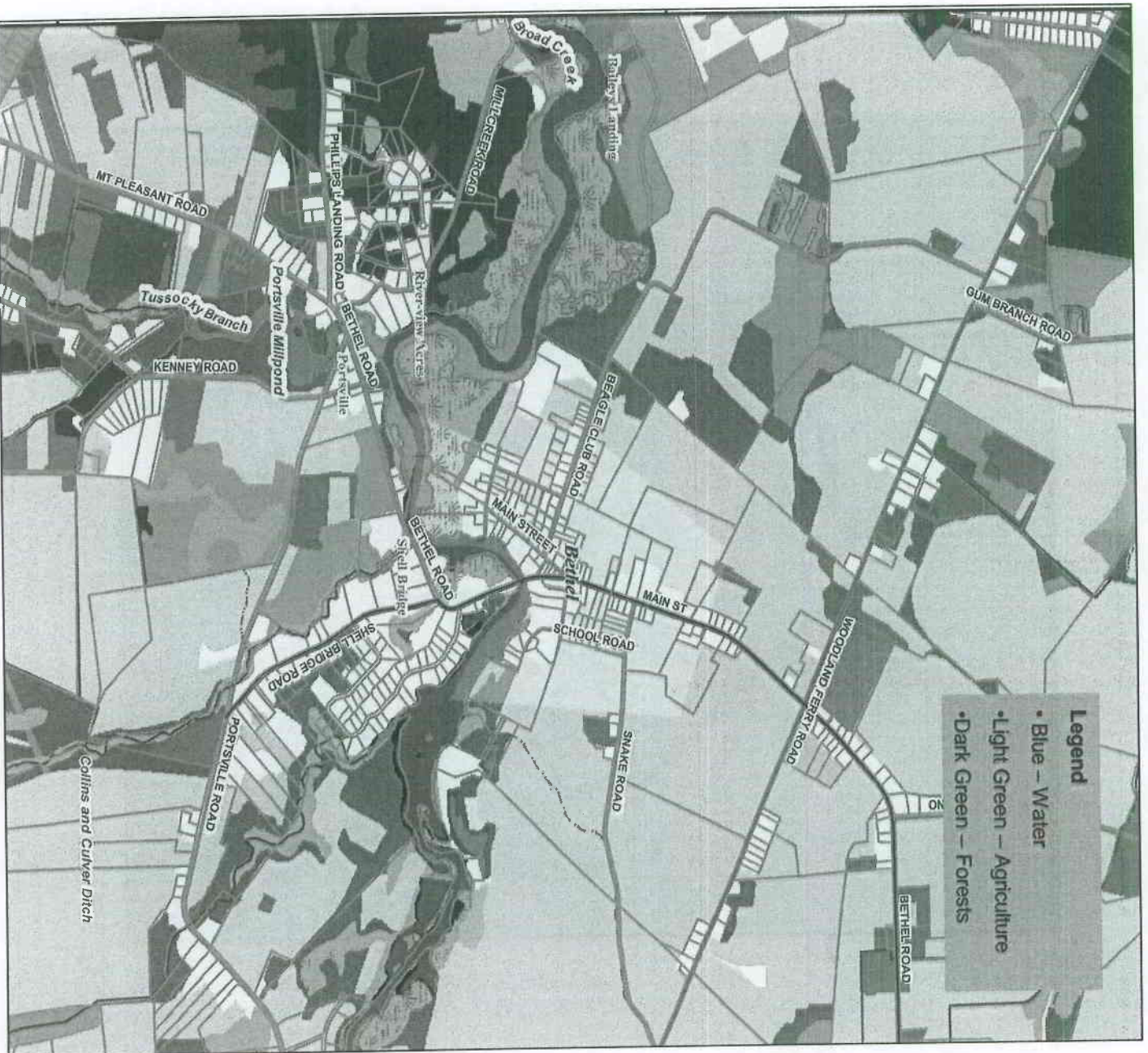
architectural guidelines and/or standards that could be developed in partnership with the State Housing Authority.

2. Encourage new development to fit in with the Town of Bethel. New development should be designed to fit in with Bethel. This can be accomplished by connecting new streets to the existing Town street system and arranging lots and setbacks consistent with existing homes in Town. Bethel can write land use regulations that permit and encourage these techniques.
3. Explore Agricultural Preservation Options. Part of what makes Bethel unique is its rural context and surrounding farmlands. The Delaware Agriculture Lands Preservation Program protects thousands of acres of farmland each year. There are other programs through the county and private conservation organizations that have the same goals. Bethel should start a dialogue with citizens, local farmers, and the Department of Agriculture to determine the role that farmland protection can play in maintaining the rural character of the Town.

Town of Bethel - Map 7 Environmental Features

Sources: Office of State Planning Coordination and State of Delaware DataMill

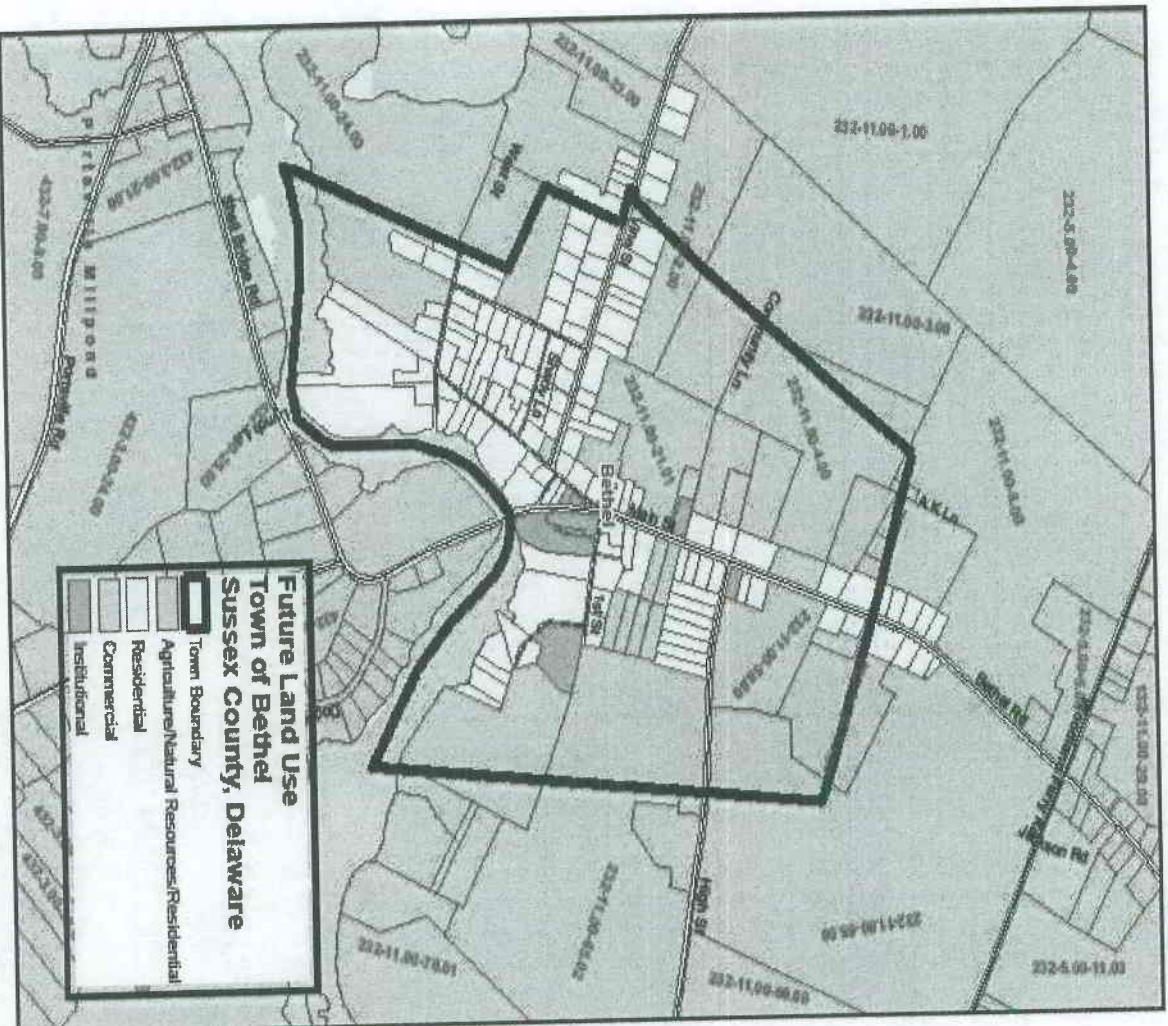
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Town of Bethel - Map 6 Future Land Use for parcels within Town

Sources: Office of State Planning Coordination

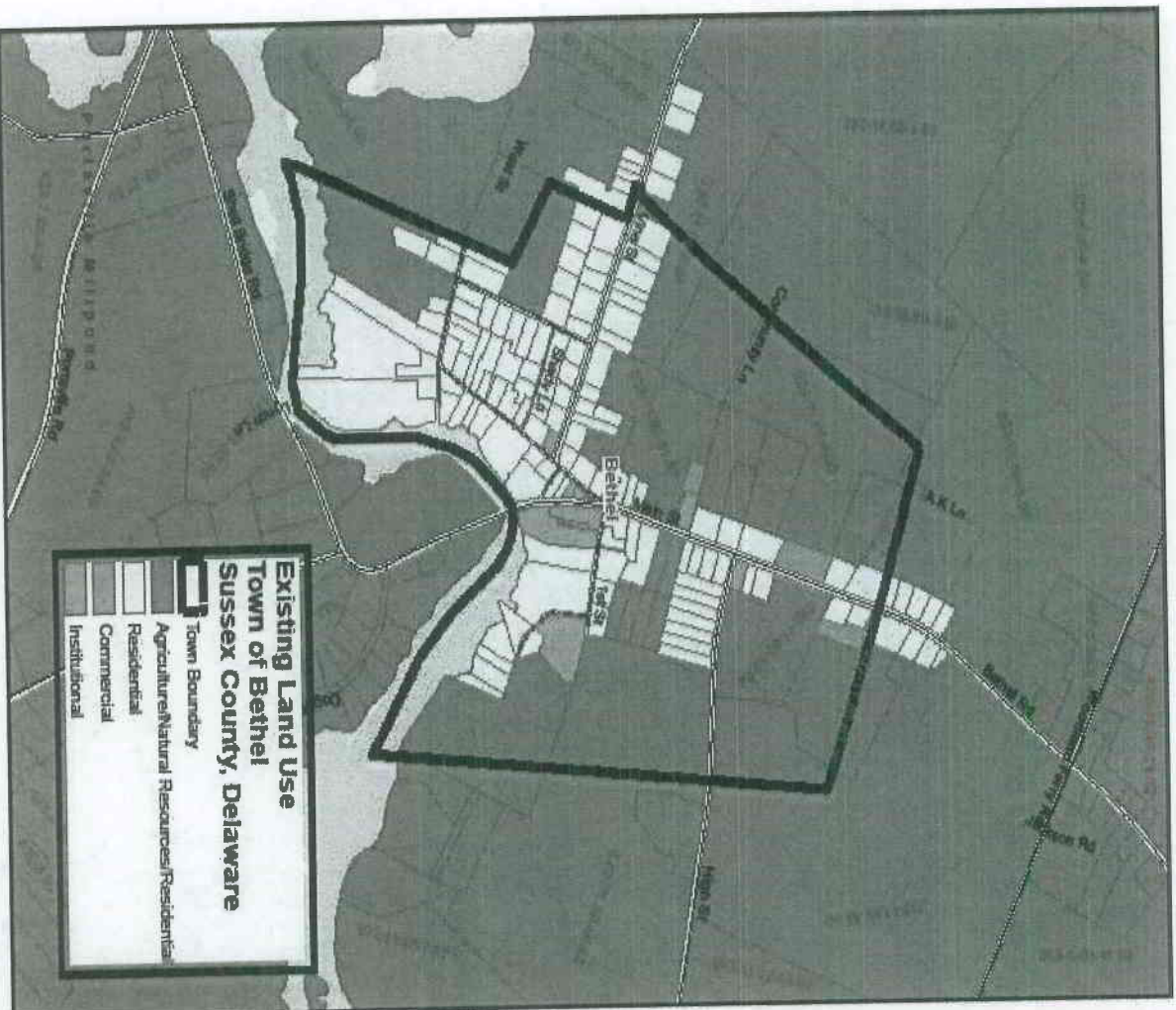
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Town of Bethel - Map 5 Existing Land Use for parcels within Town

Sources: Office of State Planning Coordination

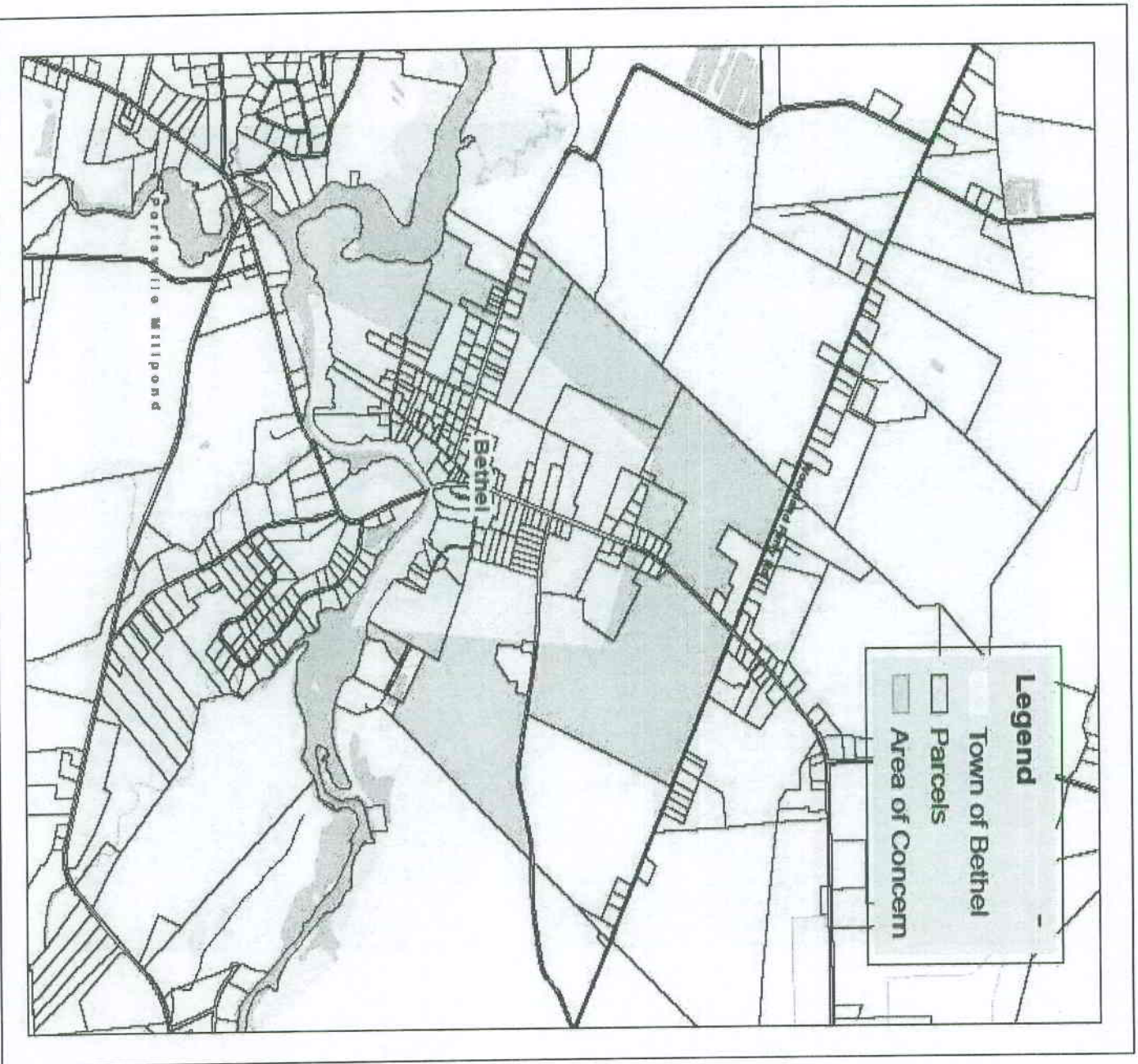
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Town of Bethel - Map 4 Area of Concern

Sources: Office of State Planning Coordination

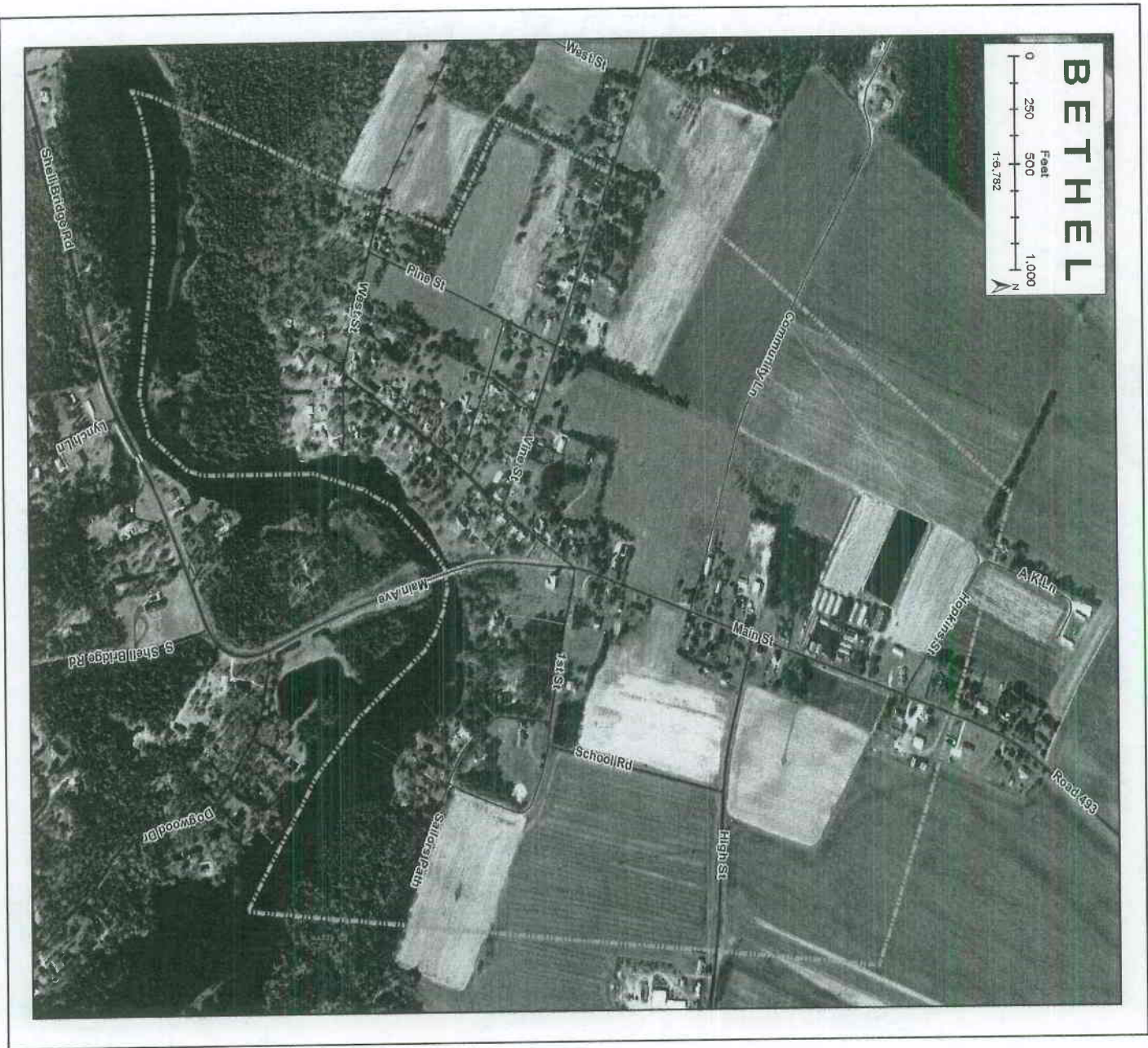
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Town of Bethel - Map 3 Aerial Photography

Sources: Office of State Planning Coordination

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Town of Bethel - Map 2 Strategies for Policy and Spending Classification Map

Sources: Office of State Planning Coordination

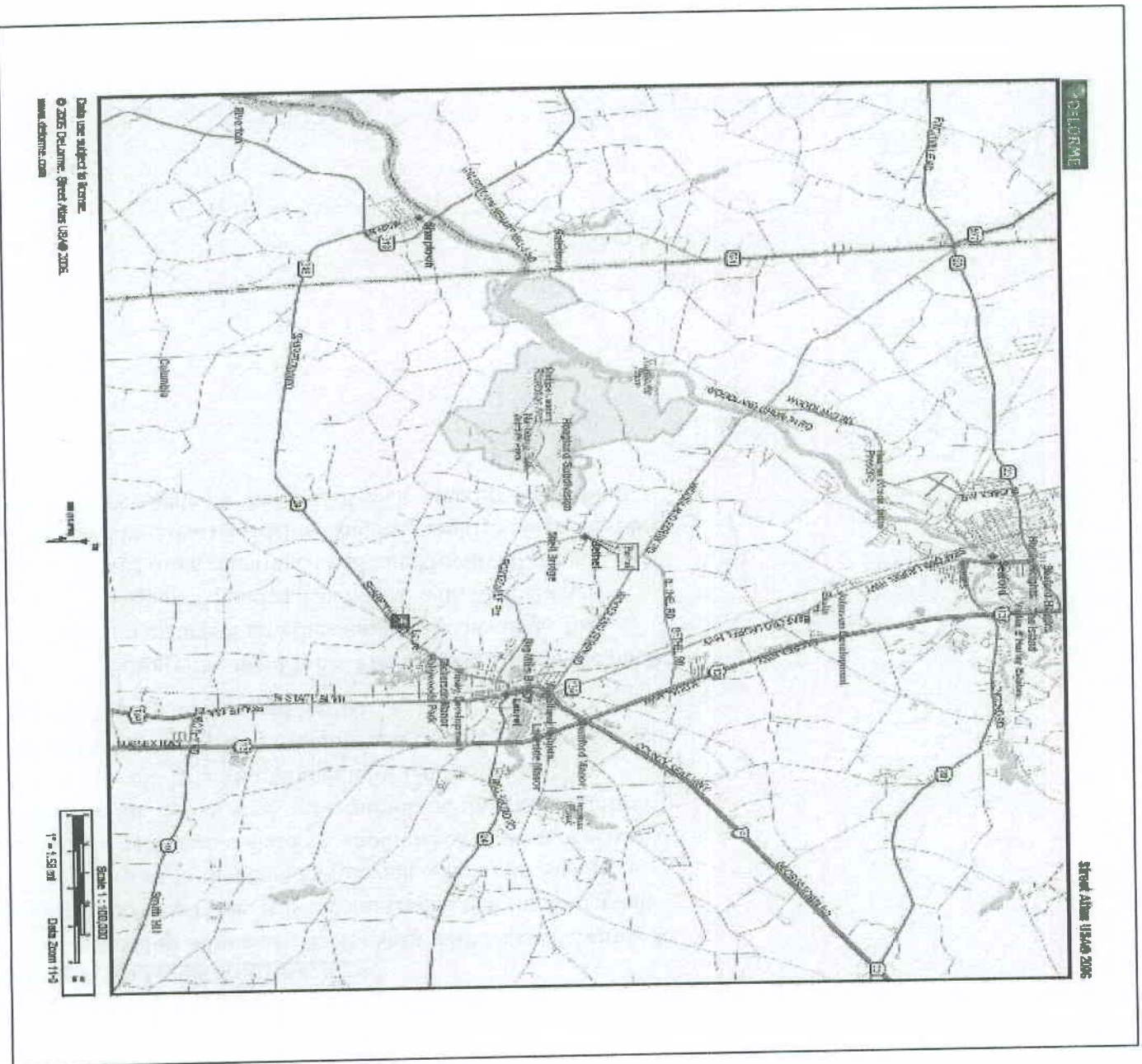
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Town of Bethel – Map 1 Location Map

Sources: Delorme Maps and Atlases

Notes: This map is provided by the Office of State Planning Coordination (OSPC) solely for display and reference purposes and is subject to change without notice. No claims, either real or assumed, as to the absolute accuracy or precision of any data contained herein are made by OSPC, nor will the Office be held responsible for any use of this document for purposes other than which it was intended.



Long Term Goals (continued):

Develop a formal relationship with Sussex County to explore sewer service. It is recommended that the leadership of the Town of Bethel contact relevant officials at Sussex County to enter into a dialogue about the expansion of sewer service to the Bethel area. At a minimum, the results of this dialogue could be a Memorandum of Understanding that describes the policy for providing and extending sewer service to properties in and around Bethel.

Evaluate the need for a Town park. During the public participation exercises and the community meetings, the desirability of an expanded Town park with recreational facilities was often mentioned and rated highly in the survey completed by Town residents. Bethel should evaluate the need for and investigate the funding of such a facility in the future.

Long Term Goals:

Preserve the Town's historical character. Bethel should protect its historical character by maintaining the current historical structures within the Town by creating a historical commission. In addition, Bethel should encourage any new construction to be consistent with the historical style of the current homes. The Town of Bethel should consider working with the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs to list the eligible historic core in the National Register of Historic Places. The Town could also maintain the historical character through the adoption of historical architectural guidelines and/or standards.

Explore Agricultural Preservation Options. Part of what makes Bethel unique is its rural context and surrounding farmlands. The Delaware Agriculture Lands Preservation Program protects thousands of acres of farmland each year. There are other programs through the county and private conservation organizations that have the same goals. Bethel should start a dialogue with citizens, local farmers, and the Department of Agriculture to determine what role farmland protection can play in maintaining the rural character and setting of the Town.

Work with DNREC and Sussex County to protect natural resources. The community would meet many of the residents' interests by expanding this partnership to further protect and enhance these resources.

Continue to utilize, protect and conserve Broad Creek. The community's history and heritage is tied to this resource. The community should explore opportunities to promote this resource while providing possible protective measures.

Work with DNREC to develop TMDL's for the Nanticoke / Broad Creek Watershed. The Nanticoke River and Broad Creek are under review for pollutants. The community should consider how to best address this issue through conservation measures and possible regulations.

Evaluate the need for a public water system. In the future, Bethel should consider the need for a public water system and evaluate the options for providing this service for residents. Currently the Town has a very small budget and individual wells seem to be working adequately. Should any of these conditions change, Bethel could undertake a study to determine how best to address the needs for a public water system.

Evaluate storm water issues as related to wetlands. Storm water problems in Bethel are generally the result of the Town's location near a wetland. It is recommended that Bethel evaluate what can be done to address the storm water problems with regards to drainage into the river and wetlands.

3.3 Short, Mid-Range, and Long Term Objectives

Short Term Goals:

Update Town Charter. Section 2.5 requires the revision and modernization of the Town Charter. The charter should be amended before annexation is considered.

Develop ordinances and regulations. The ordinances and regulations recommended in Section 2.5 should be in place to guide development before annexation is considered.

Update the street names in the Town Charter. Bethel should update the Charter to list the Town's street names as they are currently being used.

Encourage new development to fit in with the Town of Bethel. New development should be designed to fit in with Bethel. This can be accomplished by connecting new streets to the existing Town street system and arranging lots and setbacks consistent with existing homes in Town. Bethel can adopt land use regulations that permit and encourage these techniques.

Work with the Delaware Forest Service to expand Urban Forestry activities. This partnership would provide the opportunity to expand forest resources while educating residents. The community should work to become a "Tree City USA" community which will further enhance the quality of life for residents.

Evaluate solutions to the traffic and heavy truck usage on Main Street and Bethel Road. Bethel should evaluate both enforcement and design based solutions to traffic on Main Street and Bethel Road and the high volume of heavy trucks that pass through the Town along this road to improve safety, reduce noise and lessen pollution.

Mid-Range Goals:

Code Enforcement. Bethel should develop a code enforcement plan which includes penalties to ensure the housing stock is properly maintained. It is crucial that the inspections be systematic, fair, and consistent in order to be effective. Due to Bethel's size, it is unlikely that a full time enforcement officer is needed or could be funded by the Town. Bethel should explore other options, such as hiring part time code enforcement officers or working with Sussex County on enhanced enforcement in the Town.

Work with Sussex County on the Transfer of Development Rights program. Most of the agricultural land surrounding the Town is either part of a Purchase Development Rights (PDR) program or an agricultural district. Bethel should work with Sussex County to explore Transfer Development Rights (TDR) options to further the farmland preservation efforts currently taking place around Bethel.

3.0 Implementation Actions and Recommendations

3.1 Planning Goals

Goal: To develop and implement a historical preservation program which provides options to protect cultural resources within the community.

Goal: To maintain the small town, rural atmosphere through the adoption of appropriate zoning and land use ordinances.

Goal: To encourage modest growth that is in tune with existing community growth.

Goal: To preserve the rural atmosphere by balancing the needs of residents with the protection of rural land.

Goal: To restore and maintain Broad Creek so it continues to be a source of recreation and economic opportunity to the community.

Goal: To ensure the protection of natural resources for the enjoyment and health of the existing and future residents of the community.

3.2 Vision for Bethel

Bethel is a small, historic, rural town with a rich history of agricultural and maritime heritage that will maintain its small town character while allowing for modest growth and redevelopment that is consistent with its surroundings and current community character.

2.10 Redevelopment

2.10a Redevelopment Potential

Although the majority of houses in Bethel are well maintained, there are some residential properties in Town in poor condition and in need of repair / maintenance. Their redevelopment will improve the Town's aesthetic appeal and potentially improve property values in Bethel. The Town needs to remain cognizant of property maintenance issues since the older homes, which make up most of the housing stock in Bethel, often have more maintenance issues than newer ones.

2.10b Recommendations, Redevelopment

1. **Code Enforcement.** Bethel should develop a code enforcement plan which includes penalties to ensure the housing stock is properly maintained. In order to be effective, it is crucial that the inspections be systematic, fair, and consistent. Due to Bethel's size, it is unlikely that a full-time enforcement officer is necessary or affordable. Bethel should explore other options, such as hiring part-time code enforcement officers or working with Sussex County on enhanced enforcement in Town.