Please complete this “PLUS application in its entirety. All questions **must be answered.**
**If a question is unknown at this time or not applicable, please explain.** Unanswered
questions on this form could lead to delays in scheduling your review. This form will
enable the state staff to review the project **before** the scheduled meeting and to have
beneficial information available for the applicant and/or developer at the time of review.
If you need assistance or clarification, please call the State Planning Office at (302) 739-
3090. Possible resources for completing the required information are as follows:

- [www.stateplanning.delaware.gov/](http://www.stateplanning.delaware.gov/)
- [www.firstmap.delaware.gov/](http://www.firstmap.delaware.gov/)
- [www.dnrec.state.de.us](http://www.dnrec.state.de.us)
- [www.dda.delaware.gov](http://www.dda.delaware.gov)
Preliminary Land Use Service (PLUS) Application

Municipal Comprehensive Plans

Delaware State Planning Coordination

122 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., South • Dover, DE 19901 • Phone: 302-739-3090 • Fax: 302-739-5661

Name of Municipality: Houston, Del.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address: Town of Houston</th>
<th>Contact Person: Angelo Abbate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.O. Box 196</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston, DE 19954</td>
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<tr>
<th>Phone Number: 302 422-5541</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fax Number: 302 422-7650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail Address: <a href="mailto:abbate.houston54@gmail.com">abbate.houston54@gmail.com</a></td>
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Date of Most Recently Certified Comprehensive Plan: April, 2007

Information prepared by: Institute for Public Administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address: University of Delaware Institute for Public Administration</th>
<th>Contact Person: William DeCoursey</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>185 Graham Hall, Academy St. Newark, DE 19716</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>E-mail Address: <a href="mailto:decourse@udel.edu">decourse@udel.edu</a></td>
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Maps Prepared by: Institute for Public Administration

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<th>Address: Room 109</th>
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<th>Hugh R. Sharp Campus</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>University of Delaware</td>
<td>805 Pilottown Road</td>
<td>Lewes, Delaware 19958</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Contact Person: Nicole Minni</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Phone Number: 302-645-4353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax Number: 302-645-4332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail Address: <a href="mailto:nminni@udel.edu">nminni@udel.edu</a></td>
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Preliminary Land Use Service (PLUS) Application

Municipal Comprehensive Plans
Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination
122 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., South • Dover, DE 19901 • Phone: 302-739-3090 • Fax: 302-739-5661

General Plan Approval Process

Step 1: Draft prepared by local government.

Step 2: Planning Commission and/or Legislative Body approves to send to PLUS at the time the plan is released for public review.

Step 3: PLUS meeting, application submitted by 1st business day of the month for that month’s meeting.

Step 4: State comments submitted to local government within 20 business days of meeting.

Step 5: Local government replies to state comments in writing and submits revised plan to Office of State Planning Coordination (OSPC) for review.

Step 6: OSPC requires 20 working days to reply to revised plan. State sends a letter accepting changes or noting discussion items.

Step 7: Once you receive the Office of State Planning Coordination letter stating that all certification items have been addressed, your Planning Commission and Council should adopt the plan pending State certification. We strongly recommend that your Council adopt the plan by ordinance. The ordinance should be written so that the plan will go into effect upon receipt of the certification letter from the Governor.

Step 8: Send our office a copy of the ordinance (or other documentation) that formally adopts your plan along with an electronic or paper copy of the final plan. We will forward these materials to the Governor for consideration. At the discretion of the Governor a certification letter will be issued to your town. The plan is effective on the date of adoption.

Step 9: Once you receive your certification letter, please forward two (2) bound paper copies and one electronic copy of your plan to our office for our records. It is suggested that you incorporate a copy of the State’s PLUS letter and the Governor’s certification letter into the final comprehensive plan document.
### Comprehensive Plan / Amendment Checklist

Please check yes or no as to whether the following information has or has not been included in the comprehensive plan and indicate page numbers where information may be found.

<table>
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1 Please go to the following website for detailed checklist information:  
http://www.state.de.us/planning/services/circuit.shtml.
### Community Character

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- History of the Town or City
- Physical Conditions
- Significant Natural Features
- Community Character
- Historic and Cultural Resources Plan
- Community Design Plan
- Environmental Protection Plan

### Land Use Plan

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- Existing Land Use
- Land Use Plan

### Critical Community Development and Infrastructure Issues

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- Review of Community Conditions
- Inventory of Community Infrastructure
- Inventory and Analysis of Community Services
- Water and Wastewater Plan
- Transportation Plan
- Community Development Plan
- Community Facilities Plan

### Intergovernmental Coordination

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- Description of Intergovernmental Relationships
- Intergovernmental Coordination Strategy
- Analysis and Comparison of Other Relevant Planning Documents

### Economic Conditions

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- Economic Base / Major Employers
- Labor Market
- Income and Poverty
- Economic Development Plan

### Open Space and Recreation

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- Inventory of Open Space and Recreation Facilities
- Open Space and Recreation Plan
## Implementation Strategies

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## Other State Programs, Policies, and Issues

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<td>x</td>
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<td>44-48</td>
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### Additional Comments:

For a town of its size, Houston has taken considerable planning steps to address all of the relevant planning themes. Houston is a small town that, like many before it, has worked hard to remain just so. Somewhat unusually, it has successfully done so, perhaps largely due to its very deliberate annexation procedures. Aside from limited residential growth beyond its borders, the town was virtually untouched by the housing and development boom and has so far withstood the housing market's apparent revitalization. This is also due to thoughtful planning and code revisions on the part of Kent County.

Houston has little to report regarding community services and infrastructure. A goal of the town throughout the process was to greatly simplify the document and objectives from its 2007 version.

### Summary:

* The implementation checklist at the end of this document will be turned into a table during final design and layout.
2018 Update to the 2007

Town of Houston

Comprehensive Plan

Adopted _____ 2018 and certified

_______ 2018

Prepared by

Institute for Public Administration
School of Public Policy & Administration
College of Arts & Sciences
University of Delaware

[Logo: University of Delaware]
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Town, County, and State Officials

**Town of Houston**
Mayor: Angelo Abbate
Vice Mayor: Greg Gilmore
Councilman: Bill Moore
Councilman: Jim Aquilani
Councilwoman: Carroll Jester
Treasurer/Tax Collector: Dawn McDonnell
Secretary: Kit Schmulling
Planning Committee Member: Leon McDonnell

**Kent County**
County Administrator: Michael J. Petit de Mange, AICP

**State of Delaware**
Governor: John C. Carney Jr.
Senate: F. Gary Simpson, Senator 18th District
House of Representatives: Charles Postles, Representative 36th District
Office of State Planning Coordination: Constance Holland, AICP-Director
This plan was prepared by the Town of Houston Comprehensive Planning Committee with assistance from the Institute for Public Administration (IPA), a unit within the School of Public Policy & Administration at the University of Delaware. IPA links the research and resources of the University of Delaware with the management and information needs of local, state, and regional governments in the Delaware Valley. IPA provides assistance and research projects as well as training programs and policy forums.

Comprehensive plans produced by IPA are a true team effort. Troy Mix managed the IPA Planning Services group. William DeCoursey served as project manager for the Town of Houston Comprehensive Planning Committee Plan. IPA Senior Planner, Linda Raab, was instrumental in assisting with training and visioning. Mapping and geo-spatial analysis was performed by Nicole Minni.

**Institute Director**  
Jerome R. Lewis, Ph.D.

**IPA Planning Services Manager**  
Troy Mix, AICP

**Houston Comprehensive Plan Team**  
William J. DeCoursey – IPA Assistant Policy Scientist  
Danielle Metcalfe – IPA Graduate Research Assistant

**Mapping and GIS Development**  
Nicole Minni – IPA GIS Specialist

**Editorial Review and Cover Design**  
Lisa Moreland – IPA Policy Scientist  
Sarah Pragg – IPA Assistant Policy Specialist
CHAPTER 1. Background

1-1. Authority to Plan
A document prepared and adopted by a Town, coordinated with its County and reviewed and certified by the state of Delaware, according to the provisions of Title 22, Chapter 7 and Title 29, Chapter 92 of the Delaware Code. A Comprehensive Plan contains a long-term community vision, goals and objectives, policies and action projects for the physical growth, revitalization, conservation, preservation and development of the community. It respects tradition, upholds individual property rights, is general interest in nature, is based on community participation and open communication and is positive. It contains text, data analysis, maps and graphics. It defines a municipal development strategy setting forth the jurisdiction’s position on population and housing growth within the municipality, existing and future land use and current and recommended zoning, community economic development, community design, expansion of its boundaries through potential annexation, development in adjacent areas, redevelopment of existing deteriorated and blighted areas, existing and enhanced community character, community facilities, public utilities, historic preservation, town center revitalization, conservation of natural resources, hydrology, open space, transportation, and critical community development and infrastructure issues. The comprehensive planning process must demonstrate consideration of and coordination with adjacent areas, with the county of jurisdiction and with the state of Delaware. The Plan is subject to the State review and certification process set forth in §9103 of Title 29, Delaware Code. All annexations by the municipality must be consistent with its most recently adopted and certified Comprehensive Plan meeting the requirements of Title 22, Chapter 7, Delaware Code. An area being considered for annexation must be depicted as an area for potential annexation in the adopted and certified plan. The Comprehensive Plan must be reviewed every 5 years and updated every 10 years. Comprehensive Plans are prepared and updated under the direction of the municipal Planning Commission, if there is one, adopted by Ordinance of the Town Council after public hearing and certified by the State of Delaware. The Comprehensive Plan guides the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision and Land Development Regulations, other codes and ordinances as applicable, annexation policy and procedure, planning and zoning review fees, development impact fees and capital improvements projects for the municipality.

1-2. Planning Process
Delaware law requires that municipalities engage in comprehensive planning activities for the purpose of encouraging “the most appropriate uses of the physical and fiscal resources of the municipality and the coordination of municipal growth, development, and infrastructure investment actions with those of other municipalities, counties and the State...” This plan was written to fulfill the requirements of a municipal development strategy as described in the Delaware Code for towns with a population of 2,000 or fewer persons.

The municipal development strategy for a small community like Houston is to be a “development strategy setting forth the jurisdiction’s position on population and housing growth within the jurisdiction, 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, Kent County, and the state of Delaware during plan preparation. (22 Del. C. 1953, § 702; 49 Del. Laws, c. 415, § 1.)
In the absence of a Planning Commission, the Town Council has served as the guiding agency for the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan. This has been very valuable because only the Council has a complete and holistic overview over all Town affairs, including fiscal affairs. The Comprehensive Plan project has enabled the Council to work closely with the citizenry to systematically organize its feelings and aspirations regarding the future of Houston. This suggests a healthy scenario in which the Town Council becomes, and remains, highly involved in the planning for the Town in future years.

1-2a. Reason for Plan Update

Houston has long been a special Town in Delaware and Kent County. It was laid out as a classic railroad-era town with formal streets when the Junction and Breakwater Railroad was built through farmland in southeastern Delaware. Surrounding the Town is a still largely green and rural countryside of farms, woodlands, watercourses and small hamlets like Williamsville.

Houston’s most recent comprehensive plan was adopted in 2007. Though there have not been significant growth or development pressure within the municipality, growth has occurred just north of town in unincorporated Kent County. The Town also wishes to revisit the issue of blighted, vacant, and underutilized properties along its historic railroad corridor and develop a vision for its industrial lands. In either case, the state code sets a ten-year review period, and the Town feels it is an appropriate time.

1-2b. Comprehensive-Planning Approach

Houston understands that planning is a continuous process. The plan is based on the foundation that if a community knows where it wants to go, it possesses better prospects of getting there. From the outset, Houston has endeavored to cast as wide a net as possible and to gain a fuller understanding of its citizens’ concerns, business community’s interests, and the regional context, in which, the Houston Plan will function.

The comprehensive-planning process involves establishing goals for the future of a municipal government, analyzing current and projected conditions, and laying out steps that can be taken to help a municipality reach its goals. Considerable time was invested in updating information and data to summarize existing and projected conditions Houston faces, and will likely face in terms of demographic, infrastructure, environmental, economic, and land-use conditions.

1-3. Public Participation

Houston has striven to fully engage its citizenry in this planning initiative. The town began the planning process with a training session for town officials in August of 2017 and then held publically advertised comprehensive plan development meetings an hour before regularly scheduled town council meetings in September, October, November, and December of 2017. The same format of meeting was held in January 2018. There was no meeting in February 2018, and two were held in March.

In April 2018, the town held two public workshops, one in the afternoon and another in the evening of the same day, to present the draft text and maps to interested citizens.
Moreover, the town undertook an online survey to gauge residents’ opinions. A postcard with the hyperlink was mailed to every resident and the survey was open for several months during the last weeks of 2017, through February 2018. The survey yielded over a ten percent response rate. Responses to the ten questions posed are available in the appendix of this document. All but two of the respondents indicated they lived within incorporated Houston. Twenty two were long-time residents of at least ten years; however, there was also strong participation from newer arrivals. All respondents owned their residence and all but three described it as a single-family home. Sixteen reported working in Kent County, followed by ten who identified as retired.

Respondents were then asked their opinions on the town, potential annexation, preferred types of growth, and the desirability of various amenities and potential public services.

Overwhelmingly, residents liked Houston’s small town atmosphere, location (off the beaten path), and reasonable cost of living. Dislikes were a mixed bag. Lack of water/sewer, traffic, and lack of businesses and entertainment stood out somewhat. Respondents were relatively undecided on the question of annexation, though, disapprove and strongly disapprove slightly edged out those in favor. Nearly a third took to position. However, if growth is sought, respondents left little doubt about their preferred pattern of development. All but three indicated they’d prefer single-family homes. Of the three respondents who chose anything higher density, two were for the next least-dense alternative, townhomes. One respondent favored apartments.

Having more options for phone and internet was the most sought after potential amenity, followed by water and sewer and a children’s park. The need for a DART bus stop ranked fourth, but all who approved did so strongly, possibly indicating some residents have truly limited mobility options. Dog parks and community gardens did not score well.

Summary of meetings incorporating PLUS comments, recommending plan for adoption by council, council public hearings, ordinance readings, and vote for adoption TBD

1-4. Overall Community Vision and Goals

Houston’s Vision –

Houston is a small, railroad-era community. It is a neighborhood in the truest sense of the word. The town values its tranquility and small town atmosphere, connected streets, and agricultural surroundings. It wishes to maintain its current character, accepting incremental growth, and carefully reviewing any major developments to assure they are compatible with the town’s established character.

Community Character

Goal – Preserve Houston’s agricultural character and neighboring farms

Goal – Protect the Town’s most valued historic resources

Goal – Encourage home-ownership and citizen investment in the community

Goal – Favor less-dense, neighborhood-scale, residential and community commercial uses.
**Goal** – Preserve and enhance the town’s quiet, peaceful lifestyle.

*Community and Government Services*

**Goal** – Explore new, or expanded, municipal services and community facilities, including infrastructure and utility improvements that will improve Houston.

**Goal** – To improve the Town’s capacity to directly serve its citizens, including a greater role in planning, community development, and code enforcement.

*Housing*

**Goal** – Encourage home-ownership and citizen investment in the community

**Goals** – Encourage family living and small scale residential development in good neighborhoods, in keeping with the life and feeling of a quiet residential town.

**Goals** – Provide affordable opportunities for existing and prospective residents to rent or own homes

*Transportation*

**Goal** – Enable the safe and efficient mobility of residents utilizing all modes of travel, be they pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, or transit riders, via a safe and interconnected transportation system.

*Economic Development and Redevelopment*

**Goal** – Explore new, or expanded, municipal services and community facilities, including infrastructure and utility improvements that will improve Houston

**Goal** – Encourage and work toward the redevelopment of blighted, deteriorated, or under-utilized properties and work proactively with land-owners to encourage redevelopment consistent with the town’s favored uses and intensities.

**Goal** – Grow and promote agri-tourism

*Environmental Protection*

**Goal** - Coordinate with relevant agencies and committees to improve water quality in the Mispillion and Murderkill watersheds.

**Goal** - Preserve the water quality and water supply for Houston’s citizens.

**Goal** - Pursue agricultural preservation of high-value agricultural parcels, in keeping with the town’s small-town, agricultural heritage.

**Goal** - Limit the growth of harmful atmospheric emissions attributable to Houston.
Parks and Open Space

**Goal** - Ensure Houston’s residents have adequate access to active and passive recreational activities

Future Land Use and Annexation

**Position on Housing and Population Growth**

*Houston welcomes modest gains in population and housing units consistent with the development of vacant lots and the redevelopment of underutilized properties at densities consistent with its desired future land uses.*

**Goal** - To accommodate a mix of uses within the predominantly single-family residential character of the Town and the predominantly agricultural and natural character of the surrounding area.

**Goal** - Preserve appropriately zoned lands for employment and economic development
CHAPTER 2. Community Character

Vision

Houston is a small, railroad-era community. It is a neighborhood in the truest sense of the word. The town values its tranquility and small town atmosphere, connected streets, and agricultural surroundings. It wishes to maintain its current character, accepting incremental growth, and carefully reviewing any major developments to assure they are compatible with the town’s established character.

2-1 Location

The Town of Houston is located in Kent County. Houston is bounded by Delaware Route 14 (the Harrington-Milford Highway) on the north, Blairs Pond Road on the east, the Beaver Dam Branch of the Mispillion River on the south and Deep Grass Lane on the west. Houston is situated between the City of Harrington, five miles west of town, and the City of Milford, six miles east of town. It is only 10 minutes to shopping, schools and employment in Harrington and Milford and only 20 minutes to regional shopping and medical services in Dover.

Figure 1. Houston Location
2-2 History, Historic & Cultural Resources

Houston, the only village in Milford Hundred, was warranted to Luke Watson on January 21, 1681, under the name of ‘Hunting Quarter’. First founded as a town in 1854, the year of the arrival of the railroad, and named in honor of John W. Houston, president of the Delaware, Virginia, and Maryland Railroad (the Delaware Breakwater Railroad). The Town of Houston was reincorporated in 1976 and again in 2005 by the Delaware General Assembly, each time reestablishing and updating the Town Charter. Houston, similarly to other settlements in the area, grew where trade centers were created and trade routes converged, and where, as a result, economic development was promoted. For Houston, this occurred where the new Junction and Breakwater rail line crossed a slight natural ridge along today’s Broad Street.

A variety of industries were attempted in Houston during the nineteenth century to draw people to the town, including a brick yard and peach evaporator. None proved successful until canning was introduced. The first cannery was built before the turn of the century by David Scott and L.W. Councelman. It was the principal industry in town for many years. During the busiest season 300 hands were employed. A fire in 1914 destroyed the structure.

Another cannery was built 1911 by Stetson, Ellison, and Company processing locally grown produce. Libby, McNeil and Libby purchased the cannery in 1932 and continued canning operation on site for the next 37 years. During the boom years before and after World War II, the cannery employed as many as 3,000 people in three overlapping shifts. The cannery was sold to Mark Seven Seafood Industry in 1969, and then to Dunkin Donuts in 1976. Presently, the cannery is owned by the Trappe Packing Corporation (a subsidiary of Paris Foods) who continues to use the facility for food storage and freezing.

Lumber also proved to be a successful industry in Houston for a time. In 1884 E.C. Peck moved a steam sawmill from Frederica to Houston. One of the mills main items of production was peach crates. The increasing scarcity of lumber brought about the decline of these ventures. The last successful lumberyard, Houston Lumber, was founded in 1924 by G. A. Wilson, on the location of the Councilman cannery. There are still lumberyard structures remaining, although no longer in use.

The first school in Houston was started in 1883. A schoolhouse was built in 1884 and was in use until 1905. At that time a brick school was built on School Street and continued in use until 1923. It is still standing, but has been converted into a dwelling. During this period, the Houston Methodist Episcopal Church (Est. 1899) emerged as a central religious and social center.

In the early part of 1926 the town experienced a series of disastrous fires, which brought the community together to form the Houston Volunteer Fire Company. On March 8, 1926, at 7:30 p.m., a goodly representation of residents of Houston and the nearby countryside assembled in the Houston Public School building and elected the first officers. In April 1934, ground was broken on the land that had been purchased the year previous from the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. In the early autumn of that year, the new Firemen’s and Community Building was completed and turned over to the Fire Company and community. In the mid-1990s a new truck bay was added, and by 2015 the Fire Company started providing EMS services. Most recently, interior renovations to the meeting hall began in the spring of 2017 and concluded in August of 2017. The Fire Company also functions as Houston’s Town Hall hosting town council meetings, elections, and other community events.
2-2a Historic Structures and Districts
Houston’s Potential Historic District is roughly bounded by Maple St, School St, Broad St, Front St, and Pine St. The town currently lacks zoning ordinances/codes addressing how the district could be maintained. The Town of Odessa’s historic preservation plan could be a good example for Houston to model.

In 1996, Houston’s historical district was identified as potentially qualifying for the National Register of Historic Districts. Additionally, Houston West Elementary was identified as a potential historic property for the National Register of Historic Places in 2002. Listing in the National Register does not mean that limitations will be placed on the properties by the state or federal government. Public visitation rights are not required of owners. Neither the state nor federal government will attach restrictive covenants to the properties or seek to acquire them. In addition to honorific recognition, listing in the National Register opens opportunities for tax credits and potential grants.

Creating a Historic Commission with preservation guidelines could increase the attractiveness of Houston as a destination for heritage tourism. There are existing programs in Delaware that provide funding for housing rehabilitation. The town should promote individual involvement in the variety of funding programs administered by the Delaware State Housing Authority and in the Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program administered by the State Historic Preservation Office.

A list of Houston’s Historic properties can be found in Appendix 1.

2-3 Community Design

Houston’s town plan is remarkably formal, with grid pattern streets, and civic buildings or open spaces at several key points in the grid. Broad Street and Railroad Avenue are the visual “Main Streets” of Houston. The railroad tracks add a very large, continuous element of open space, with long vistas, through the length of Town.

Houston’s architectural styles include several mid-nineteenth century brick landmarks, notably the Houston United Methodist Church, the Broad Street townhouses and the oldest surviving school structure, now apartments, on School Street. Along the north edge of Railroad Avenue are small Victorian houses with porches. On other streets, there is a mix of early to late Victorian, “Four Square”, early to mid-Twentieth Century and new, single story homes. Lot sizes vary with a preponderance of 20,000 square foot lots and 20-40 foot front yard setbacks. While some streets have sidewalks, others do not, which is in character with a rural Town.

Farmhouses, many stately, occur on farmlands within the edges of Town and immediately outside its boundaries. The resultant atmosphere is one with many views of green and open fields punctuated with town streets. The mix of styles is an architectural asset to the Town.

Within the Town there are examples of multi-family, or attached housing. These include the brick townhouses on Broad Street; the original brick schoolhouse on School Street and the former department store property at Broad and Mill Streets now converted to two apartment uses. In order to allow for a modest amount of these housing types in the future, it is recommended that a “scattered site” approach be used and that the new Land Conservation and Development Ordinance allow
“townhouses” and “apartment units” as specially permitted uses within the residential and town center zones. Provision for accessory apartment units will be preserved in the new Land Conservation and development ordinance, which will also give encouragement to second-floor apartments above retail uses.

2-4 Community Character and Design Goals and Recommendations

Goal

Preserve Houston’s agricultural character and neighboring farms

Objectives

- Periodically communicate with farm operators and neighboring agricultural land-owners
- Work with the Delaware Department of Agriculture to preserve agricultural and natural resource lands in and around the Town of Houston
- Work with Kent County’s Department of Planning services to best make use of the county’s TDR program, particularly as it relates to adjoining agricultural parcels.

Goal

Protect the Town’s most valued historic resources

Objective

- Consider the development of design guidelines as part of the ordinance update that reflect Houston’s unique character.
- Consider allowing interested property owners to opt-in to a Houston Historic Preservation District

Goal

Encourage home-ownership and citizen investment in the community

Objectives

- Explore hiring a part-time Code Enforcement Officer
- Work to obtain CDGG funds to assist homeowners with serious property maintenance and repair needs

Goal

Favor less-dense, neighborhood-scale, residential and community commercial uses.
Objective

- Update Houston’s existing zoning and subdivision ordinance to regulate permitted uses and densities, reflect the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, and replace the town’s existing Zoning Ordinance.

Goal

Preserve and enhance the town’s quiet, peaceful lifestyle.

Objectives

- Consider code changes consistent with the Dark Skies policy
- Review model ordinances and policy suggestions of the IDA (International Dark Sky Association) to determine their applicability in Houston.
- Pursue any opportunities to have roadside utilities buried
CHAPTER 3. Community Profile

3-1. Population Trends
Table 1 summarizes the town’s population between 1940 and 2010, alongside those of Kent County and Delaware as a whole. Since 1940, Houston has experienced growth, but often in peaks and valleys. A population surge in the 1990’s saw the town approach 500 residents. However, these gains were lost in the subsequent decades. The town’s 2010 population now sits below its mark for 1980. It is unclear if this is just the latest valley, or if the town can expect a continued decline. In practical terms, the town’s future population will hinge on the materialization (or not) of development in the housing pipeline, the build-out of major regional employment hubs, the availability of utilities and municipal services, and continued in-migration of retirees and families from elsewhere in Delaware and from neighboring states.

Table 1. Population and Housing Units, 1940 to 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Houston</th>
<th>Kent County</th>
<th>Delaware</th>
<th>Houston</th>
<th>Kent County</th>
<th>Delaware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>34,441</td>
<td>266,505</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>10,362</td>
<td>75,567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>37,870</td>
<td>318,085</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>12,242</td>
<td>97,013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>65,651</td>
<td>446,292</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>19,915</td>
<td>143,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>81,892</td>
<td>548,104</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>25,242</td>
<td>180,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>98,219</td>
<td>594,338</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>35,354</td>
<td>238,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>110,993</td>
<td>666,168</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>42,106</td>
<td>289,919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>126,697</td>
<td>783,600</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>50,481</td>
<td>343,072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>162,310</td>
<td>897,934</td>
<td>157*</td>
<td>65,338</td>
<td>405,885</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1940 through 2010 Censuses
x- data unavailable
* Declining number of housing units attributable to a change in the town’s zoning ordinance around mobile homes, and the demolition of blighted properties.

3-1a. Population Projections

For the purposes of this demographic section, population projections will rely upon the established methodology used by the Delaware Population Consortium and estimates derived from the U.S. Census. Table 2, below, shows the projected population for Houston by year 2050.
Table 2. Houston Population Scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario 1 – Historic 40-year Growth Rate</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2030</th>
<th>2040</th>
<th>2050</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>397</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>474</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario 2 – 20-year Trend</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2030</th>
<th>2040</th>
<th>2050</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>328</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>221</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario 3 - Growth Follows Kent County Projections</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2030</th>
<th>2040</th>
<th>2050</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>418</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>520</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Population projections for small communities like Houston are difficult. There are few Houston-specific data and even small errors in projected growth rates can equal wild swings in potential population levels over 20-30 years. Moreover, recent history has shown that growth and population are indeed often influenced by political events, market forces, or other factors beyond the purview of traditional demography.

A somewhat more reliable option is to try and establish a range, given certain assumptions, applicable to possible scenarios.

Scenario 1 (Historic 40-year Growth Rate) – Houston’s population grew by 170 residents from 1970 to 1990, but has since been on a decline. This scenario captures the Houston’s historic growth and decline pattern. During this time, Houston’s population grew by a rate of 6.08% on average. This growth rate was used to calculate the population projections for scenario 1.

Scenario 2 (20-year Trend) – Since 1990, Houston’s population has been on a 12.36% average rate of decline. Scenario 2 projections are calculated as though that rate of decline continued to 2050.

Scenario 3 (Growth Follows Kent County Projections) – Another approach is to project Houston’s growth relative to projections for Kent County. Projections for larger geographic areas are more reliable than for small cities and towns. While there may be greater certainty regarding likely populations, there is more variability in where, within these larger areas, that population will reside. Kent County’s population has grown by an average rate of 8.61% since 2010.
The Delaware Population Consortium (scenario 3) projects growth to slow considerably for Kent County in the coming decades. In the fairly near-term, Houston could expect to grow to 520 residents by 2050.

**Position on Housing and Population Growth**

Houston welcomes modest gains in population and housing units consistent with the development of vacant lots and the redevelopment of underutilized properties at densities consistent with its desired future land uses.

**3-1b. Demographic Characteristics**

The Census Bureau has changed the method by which it now collects and disseminates much of its information. The Bureau no longer distributes the old long-form survey that historically provided data on a number of demographic factors that were published as “Summary File 3 & 4.” These included indicators on social statistics such as education, poverty, income, and commuting patterns. These summary files were replaced by the American Community Survey (ACS) data, available in one, three, and five year estimates.

The difference in the ACS (survey) and the old long form (count) data is analogous to polls versus elections. A poll extrapolates likely data based on a sampling of respondents. Whereas a full on counting of all respondents is akin to tallying votes. Obviously, a full count is much more accurate, but is also more costly. Surveys can be conducted more often. Unfortunately, in the case of municipalities or geographic areas below a threshold population of 50,000, the margin of error for the survey data can be very significant.
Household and Families

Table 3 summarizes household and family characteristics for Houston, Kent County, and the State of Delaware. A household is any occupied housing unit comprising all of those people living in the unit. A family is a household with a householder and at least one other related person, whether it is by marriage, birth, or adoption. Families are also households, but households can sometimes consist of unrelated persons.

Houston’s average family size was reportedly the same as the State’s, roughly equal to Kent County and a little higher than that of Delaware. Seventy-six percent of Houston’s households were classified family households. This is a higher proportion than for Kent County (70%) and the State of Delaware (67.4%). The average household and family size in Houston was similar to Kent Country and Delaware.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Houston</th>
<th>Kent County</th>
<th>Delaware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>162,310</td>
<td>897,934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Households</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>60,278</td>
<td>342,297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Family Households</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>42,290</td>
<td>230,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Household Size</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Family Size</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2010 Census

Racial Composition, Hispanic or Latino Origin

Table 4 summarizes racial composition in Houston, Kent County and the state in 2010. Houston’s racial diversity in 2010 was far less diverse than Kent County and the State as a whole. Only 8% of Houston’s population identified as nonwhite, compared to 32.3% in Kent County and 31.1% in Delaware.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Houston</th>
<th>Kent County</th>
<th>Delaware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>109,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>38,913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>13,398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>162,310</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2010 Census, * White = reporting one race, Black- (or African American reporting one race) Other (including those reporting two or more races)

Table 5 summarizes the changes in racial composition in Houston between 2000 and 2010. Racial diversity actually decreased from 2000 to 2010. In 2000, 10.7% of the population identified as nonwhite compared to only 8% in 2010. This reduction in diversity can be attributed to 3.1% decline in residents reporting as black in 2010.
Table 5. Changes in Houston’s Racial Composition, 2000-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>Change, 2000 - 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2000, and 2010 Censuses, * White = reporting one race, Black- (or African American reporting one race) Other (including those reporting two or more races)

Table 6 summarizes the changes in Houston’s population reporting Hispanic or Latino origin between 2000 and 2010. 96.3% of residents reported as not Hispanic or Latino in 2010 vs 95.4% in 2000. This increase can be attributed to the .9% decline in residents reporting themselves as Hispanic or Latino origin from 2000 to 2010.

Table 6. Houston’s Population Reporting Hispanic or Latino Origin, 2000-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino (of any race)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>95.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2000 and 2010 Censuses

Table 7 shows Houston’s age distribution of its population. The town has a lower percentage of children under five than Kent County or the state as a whole. Roughly half of Houston’s residents are in their prime working years, a touch higher than the state and Kent County. Adults over 60 years of age accounted for nearly a quarter of the population, which is similar Kent County and the state.

Table 7. Age Distribution, 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Houston</th>
<th>Kent County</th>
<th>Delaware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 Years</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>11,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 19 Years</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34,775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 59 Years</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>85,429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 Years and Over</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>30,956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>162,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Age</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2010 Census

Table 8 shows which age cohorts grew fastest in Houston from 2000 to 2010. Every category declined except those age 60 years and over, which grew by 4.9%. Children under 5 years old saw the greatest decline of 3.1%. Based on these trends, the town can expect increased service demand on senior care in the future.
Table 8. Houston’s Age Distribution Change, 2000 to 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 Years</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 19 Years</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 59 Years</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 Years and Over</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2000 and 2010 Censuses

Education

Table 9 compares Houston’s educational attainment for the population age 25 years or more with that of Kent County and the state. As the table shows, Houston compares favorably with the county and the state in regards to high school graduation and associate’s degrees, but trails when comparing bachelor’s degrees or greater. There is a higher percentage of not high school graduates compared to the state, but has slightly less not high school graduates than Kent County.

Table 9. Educational Attainment, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Houston</th>
<th>Kent County</th>
<th>Delaware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not HS Graduates</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated HS, No Degree</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>64,925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate's Degree</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>9,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree or</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>24,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2014 American Community Survey

Economic Characteristics

Tables 10 summarizes the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS) income and poverty data for Houston, Kent County, the state, and nation as a whole. ACS data show below average median household and family incomes for Houston residents. Though the typical household in Kent County and the state surpass the national figures, Houston’s figures are significantly lower. Median household incomes are $39,545 versus $55,169 in Kent Country, $60,231 in Delaware, and $53,482 in the United States. Likewise, Median Family Incomes were shown as $46,563 compared to $64,357 in Kent County, $72,683 in Delaware, and $65,443 in the United States.
Table 10. Household and Family Annual Income, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Amount in Dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Houston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>39,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Family Income</td>
<td>46,563</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2014 American Community Survey

Table 11 summarizes the 2014 ACS on income distribution and poverty data comparing Houston, Kent County, Delaware, and the United States. The ACS data suggests poverty is an issue in Houston. Single-parent, female headed households under the poverty line account for twenty percent of households and the number of individuals below the poverty line was nearly double the national average. There were also more individuals over 65 living below the poverty line in Houston than in Kent County or the state.

Even though there were a higher percentage of households with an annual income under $25,000, the number of families living below the poverty line was actually lower. This may be attributed to the traditional nuclear family structure common to small towns like Houston.

The number of households with an annual income of $100,000 or more was approximately six percent higher than in Kent County, but the same (twenty-sex percent) as Delaware.
## Table 11. Selected 2014 Income Distribution and Poverty Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Houston</th>
<th>Kent County</th>
<th>Delaware</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households with annual income under $25,000</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12,213</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households with annual income of $100,000 or more</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11,924</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families below poverty level</td>
<td>(x)</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4,019</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female-headed families, no husband present, with related children</td>
<td>(x)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2,014</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>under 18 years, below poverty level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals below poverty level</td>
<td>(x)</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>20,938</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals 65 years and over, below poverty level</td>
<td>(x)</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>1,635</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey
3-2. Summary of Key Issues

The town’s 2010 population now sits below its mark for 1980. It is unclear if this is just the latest valley, or if the town can expect a continued decline. Also, though Houston’s small population can make minor changes appear somewhat dramatic, the most recent trend shows a town that is aging in place and losing working-aged adults and young children. Another concern is Houston’s median household income which falls $15,624 below Kent County, and $20,686 below the average in Delaware.
CHAPTER 4. Government, Community Services, and Infrastructure

4-1. Government

Houston’s governing body consists of a Mayor and four Council members. The annual municipal election is held at a place designated by the Town Council on the last Saturday in March of each and every year. The Mayor and two Councilmen are elected for the term of one year, and two Councilmen for the term of two years, or until their successors shall be duly qualified. Each term commences at the annual meeting of the Town Council following the election and continues until a successor is duly elected and qualified. In the absence of a dedicated Town Hall, the Town Council meets in the Houston Fire Hall.

A Planning Commission has been established in accordance with Title 22, Section 701 of the Delaware Code. Section 702(a) charges municipal planning commissions with the task of preparing comprehensive plans. The Planning Commission also has the responsibility to review zoning changes, propose amendments to the zoning and subdivision ordinances, and make recommendations to the council on planning and development matters. The Mayor, Council members, and a lay resident serve as the Planning Commission.

Municipal services now provided by the Town include general administration, provision of paid secretary/treasurer and tax collector services, contractual town attorney services, annual contract support for the Houston Volunteer Fire Company, trash collection, street lighting, snow removal, local street maintenance, signs and banners, lawn mowing, participation in zoning compliance and building permit authorization in cooperation with the Kent County Department of Planning Services, and police service through contracting with the Delaware State Police. The fiscal year 2017 Town Budget reported $88,294.37 in revenue and $66,558.37 in expenditures. The Town had a tax base of $10,000 in fiscal year 2016/2017 between its assessed valuation and per-capita revenues.

4-2. Community Services

Police Service
Police services are provided through contracting with the Delaware State Police.

Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
The Houston Volunteer Fire Company provides fire and emergency response for Houston and the surrounding area. The Fire Company is located at 143 Broad Street, with approximately 64 volunteer members and Basic Life Support Emergency Medical Services staffing.

Solid-Waste Disposal
Weekly trash and bi-weekly recycling removal is contracted through Peninsula for a fee of $250 a year per household. The bid will reopen in 2018 when the current 3 year contract expires.

Libraries
The nearest public library is Milford Public Library located on 11 SE Front Street. The Library provides a Children’s Library, computers with English and bilingual educational programs, a Teen area, a computer lab, the Delaware Research Room and meeting rooms to accommodate small to large groups.
Postal Service
Houston is served by the United States Postal Service located at 156 Broad Street. Houston’s zip code is 19954. At the post office in town residents can send mail and receive mail via P.O. box. Mail delivery to residents home is facilitated by the Milford Post Office.

Senior Services
Senior centers are located in the neighboring cities of Milford and Harrington, Delaware. The Milford Senior Center is a non-profit organization which provides free services Monday through Friday, during business hours. Services include nutrition, counseling and recreational activities. The Harrington Senior Center is open Monday through Friday as well. Activities include socialization, shopping, overnight trips, card groups, bible study, and exercise.

Health Care
The nearest hospital, Bayhealth Milford Memorial Hospital, is located 6 miles outside of town at 21 W Clarke Ave. Bayhealth is currently in the process of relocating the hospital to 160-acres of land located at the intersection of Wilkins Road and Cedar Creek Road as part of a larger health campus.

State Service Center
Houston is served by The James W. Williams State Service Center at 805 River Road in Dover. The center offers a wide variety of public services to help people with their health and human needs. The center can assist the public in obtaining services provided through the state Department of Health and Social Services, the State Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families, and the Delaware Department of State, as well as many nonprofit community service groups.

Veterans Services
Established in 2007, the Delaware Veterans Home provides long-term care to Delaware Veterans with the mission of upholding dignity and respect while sustaining and improving quality of life. The 150 bed facility is located 5 miles away from Houston in Milford’s Independence Commons Business Park, and provides skilled nursing care.

4-3. Education
Houston is located within the Milford School District. During the 2016-2017 school year, the district will have served over 4,100 students in southern Kent County and northern Sussex County. The district currently operates one early childhood center, three elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. Mispillion Elementary, Benjamin Banneker Elementary, Lulu M. Ross Elementary, Milford Central Academy and Milford Senior High School are located within the Milford City limits. The Evelyn I. Morris Early Childhood Center is located in Lincoln. Table 12 provides the enrollment for each school from 2006-2017.
Table 12. Milford School District Enrollment, 2006-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evelyn I. Morris Early Childhood Center</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>696</td>
<td>696</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mispillion Elem.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>536</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>559</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Banneker Elem.</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lulu M. Ross Elem.</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>664</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milford Middle School</td>
<td>969</td>
<td>969</td>
<td>965</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>619</td>
<td>663</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milford Central Academy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>590</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>1002</td>
<td>1024</td>
<td>1017</td>
<td>969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milford Senior H.S.</td>
<td>1103</td>
<td>1156</td>
<td>1178</td>
<td>1217</td>
<td>896</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>854</td>
<td>1064</td>
<td>1043</td>
<td>1008</td>
<td>1016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District Totals</strong></td>
<td>4010</td>
<td>4127</td>
<td>4151</td>
<td>4114</td>
<td>4090</td>
<td>4155</td>
<td>4195</td>
<td>4203</td>
<td>4197</td>
<td>4119</td>
<td>4101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4-4. Water Supply, Wastewater Disposal, and Stormwater Management

4-4a. Water Supply

The Town is currently dependent on individual wells. Most private wells down state are shallow, less than 100 feet deep. These wells almost always draw from the Columbia aquifer. This is an unconfined aquifer, meaning it is replenished via infiltration. It is also susceptible to contamination from surface pollutants.

Houston is generally pleased with the volume and quality of water available to its residents. However, any community reliant on private wells must consider factors that could threaten the aquifer, such as over-pumping and contamination. Houston is aware that neighboring developments rely on community water systems drawing from deeper, confined aquifers. Even so, as part of its reciprocal intergovernmental cooperation with Kent County, it would ask to be notified of any proposed or planned development in the vicinity of Houston that may also draw upon the Columbia Aquifer.

4-4b. Excellent Recharge Areas

A recharge area is land on top of an aquifer. Precipitation falling on the land surface provides the water that recharges aquifers. Recharge areas are classified as excellent, good, fair, and poor according to how rapidly rain water filters through the ground to the underlying aquifer. Aquifers are layers of gravel and sand, within which, water is stored and moves underground. Maintaining good water quality in local aquifers is especially important because Houston obtains drinking water from private wells drilled into aquifers. Care must be taken when developing within recharge areas to ensure that precipitation is not contaminated with surface pollutants which could potentially carry these contaminants into the aquifers. It is also vital that excellent recharge areas remain permeable and allow sufficient infiltration to recharge the aquifer below. Impervious surfaces such as rooftops, roads, parking lots, and soils compacted through construction or landscaping generally cause runoff, not infiltration. The ability of soils to recharge groundwater resources has been approximated and mapped
by the Delaware Geological Survey. Areas of excellent recharge are shown on the Environmental Features map.

In general, the vast majority of Houston and its surroundings are classified as excellent recharge areas. Within town, only the Northwestern portion of the municipality is not classified as such. Excellent-recharge areas consist of predominantly sandy soils that allow precipitation to rapidly infiltrate to the underlying aquifer. Good-, fair-, and poor recharge areas have respectively slower infiltration rates. DNREC regulations require municipalities with populations of 2,000 or above to protect excellent recharge areas, through limitations on the percent of impervious area permitted by new development. Houston’s population does not meet this regulatory threshold. However the town may wish to consider such measures, given its reliance on private wells.

4-4c. Wastewater Disposal
The Town is currently dependent on individual wells and septic tanks. Periodic interest has been expressed in acquiring access to public sewer. Houston should explore the possibility of a future public sewer system by working with Kent County on a possible tie in to the existing sewer line north of town between Harrington and Milford.

4-4d. Stormwater Management
Houston has no tax ditches located within the town limits. There are catch basins located at every intersection of state maintained roads in town. The state periodically comes in to clean these basins. Only the catch basin at the intersection of Railroad Avenue and Broad Street takes water out of town, funneling the water towards the beaver creek ditch. A $3 million dollar storm water management project was proposed in the last comprehensive plan. However, no funding assistant is available to support the project because Houston is not considered to be in a hazard area.

4-5. Electricity
Houston currently provides electric service to approximately 374 residential/commercial customers. This service is facilitated through the Delmarva Power Company. Delmarva Power delivers the electricity, but allows customers to choose their power supplier based on cost, environmental impact, and power source.

4-6. Telecommunications
Verizon holds the franchise agreement for providing land line telephone service in Houston. Rather than having a landline, several residents are using voice over IP technology for their telephone service. Comcast is the sole cable and internet provider in Houston.

4-7. Natural Gas
Natural gas is currently not available in town. Houston residents currently rely on refillable propane tanks at their homes.

Goal
Explore new, or expanded, municipal services and community facilities, including infrastructure and utility improvements that will improve Houston
Objectives

- Conduct a study, poll, or referendum to determine community interest in public sewer.
- Conduct a planning study for a new town office, community center, parking lot, access road, and small park on the town-owned land east of Broad Street.
- Explore any alternatives to single-provider internet service
- Pursue any opportunities to expand recreational lands and activities within Houston
- Pursue any opportunities to have roadside utilities buried
- Encourage the appropriate use of low-impact development and resilient stormwater management practices contained in the Delaware Green Infrastructure Primer.
- Review mutual aid agreements with surrounding jurisdictions and confirm their adequacy.

Goal

To improve the Town’s capacity to directly serve its citizens, including a greater role in planning, community development, and code enforcement.

Objectives

- Establish a Town of Houston Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment
- Attend relevant workshops and training seminars, often hosted by the DLLG, the American Planning Association, and some of the State’s universities and colleges.
- Explore hiring a part-time Code Enforcement Officer
- Develop a new set of planning, zoning, subdivision, and annexation application review fees.
- Request notification of significant development in proximity to Houston that would draw from the Columbia Aquifer.
CHAPTER 5. Housing

5-1. Housing Characteristics
Approximately 60% of the town’s area is now in residential use, with the remainder a mix of agricultural and commercial/industrial uses. The predominant housing type is single-family, although there are historic townhouses on Broad Street and School Street and apartments at the corner of Mill and Broad Streets.

The overwhelming majority of homes in Houston are single-family, detached structures situated on modest lots. Generally speaking, the town’s reliance on on-site septic for wastewater treatment, has served to limit overall density.

Within the Town there is some moderate density housing. These include the brick townhouses on Broad Street; the original brick schoolhouse on School Street and the former department store property at Broad and Mill Streets now converted to two apartment units. In order to allow for a modest amount of new housing in the future, it is recommended that a “scattered site” approach be used and that the town’s updated zoning and subdivision ordinance allow “townhouses” and “apartment units” as specially permitted uses within the appropriate zones. Multi-family housing is important as a way to provide affordable housing for the elderly, and others with limited financial means. The plan recommends that provision for accessory apartment units be preserved in the updated zoning and subdivision ordinance, which will also give encouragement to second-floor apartments above retail uses.

Position on Housing and Population Growth

Houston welcomes modest gains in population and housing units consistent with the development of vacant lots and the redevelopment of underutilized properties at densities consistent with its desired future land uses.

5-2. Housing Inventory

Table 13 summarizes the distribution of housing unit types in Houston and contrasts Houston’s housing stock with the counties it straddles, the state, and the nation. Houston’s proportion of single-family detached units is considerably higher compared to Delaware and the nation. Approximately 96% of the housing in Houston is single-family detached units.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Type</th>
<th>Houston</th>
<th>Kent County</th>
<th>Delaware</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-family detached</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td>43,592</td>
<td>64.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-family attached</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>5,919</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Home</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>8,996</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2011-2015
*Houston does not have multi-unit housing.
Table 14 shows the occupancy status for structures in Houston, Kent County, Delaware, and the nation. As of the 2011-2015 American Community Survey, Houston’s vacancy rate of 11% was just higher than that of Kent County, but compared very favorably to Delaware’s rate.

Table 14. Occupancy Status, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Houston</th>
<th>Kent County</th>
<th>Delaware</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupied</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>60,571</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6,744</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>67,315</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2011-2015

Table 15 compares the age of Houston’s occupied housing stock to Kent County, the state, and the nation. Over half of Houston’s home were built before 1960. Between 1970 and 1979, the rate of home construction in Houston surpassed that of Delaware and the nation. Since then, Houston’s has produced homes at about half the rate of Kent County and the state.

Table 15. Age of Housing Stock, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Built</th>
<th>Houston</th>
<th>Kent County</th>
<th>Delaware</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 or later</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 to 2013</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2,328</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 to 2009</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>18,862</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990 to 1999</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>12,680</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980 to 1989</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>8,553</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970 to 1979</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>8,323</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960 to 1969</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>5,994</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950 to 1959</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>4,213</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940 to 1949</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>1,467</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939 or earlier</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>4,708</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>67,315</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2011-2015
5-3. **Housing Pipeline**

After nearly a decade of very little construction, Houston again began to see some activity in 2016 and early 2017. Six permits for new construction and/or demolition were issued. Most of the activity has been in proximity to Minner Street. However, of the permits issued, only one was for construction of a new residence, which has since been completed. There were no further homes in the pipeline at the time of this document’s preparation.

5-4. **Housing Needs**

Basing Houston’s housing needs solely on census-reported numbers is somewhat problematic. The town’s populations has declined somewhat recently, and the peaks and dips in the town’s population over the last 30 years are easily and clearly attributable to periodic bursts of building and the gradual loss of some of the municipality’s older homes.

Likewise, the demographics of the town (somewhat older, somewhat less affluent), paired with the existing housing inventory (predominantly single-family, detached) would suggest a need for multi-family and attached units. However, the town’s reliance on private wells and on-site septic serves to make this style of development less practical. Also, though the town is accepting of limited development of this type, it continues to see itself primarily as a less dense, quiet, country town.

5-5. **Affordable Housing and Housing Rehabilitation**

As of November, 2017 five residential properties were listed for sale excluding foreclosures, auctions, and short sales. The properties range from 2-4 bedrooms with 1-3 baths. Three of the five homes are listed between $75,000-$110,000. In this price range, two of the homes are manufactured and one is a single-family home. The manufactured homes could both benefit from some work. The other two properties are single family homes listed for $259,900 and $262,900. Both homes have been newly renovated.

Even for a family earning $25,000 a year, debt service on a $100,000 home would be considered “affordable.” The town’s median family income measure of $46,000 puts even the $260,000 homes within reach of the average family in Houston.

The issue of affordable housing in Houston appears to be more a matter of the condition and safety of the existing housing stock, particularly the more modest structures and those that have been converted into rentals. A windshield survey in October, 2017 noted a handful of homes that were clearly vacant, or had serious maintenance issues that were apparent, even at a distance.

The same snapshot of homes for sale revealed a surprising number of foreclosures and auctions for a town of its size. Presumably, this inventory will be bought at a discount, rehabilitated, and placed back on the market. The town might consider promoting itself as a venue to “flip this house.”

The town has also had some issues with absentee landlords and property owners. It has recently taken steps allowing it to place liens on persistent nuisance properties and is in the process of hiring a part-time code-enforcement officer.

Overall, the town’s affordable housing strategy is to continue to entertain multi-family proposals as conditional uses, utilizing a “scattered site” approach to prevent concentrating or segregating lower-
income households. It also envisions continuing to permit accessory dwelling units, stepping up code-enforcement, and continuing to seek CDBG funds to assist homeowners with property maintenance.

**Goal**

Encourage home-ownership and citizen investment in the community

**Objectives**

- Work to obtain CDBG funds to assist homeowners with serious property maintenance and repair needs
- Promote DSHA home-ownership initiatives to current and prospective residents
- Explore hiring a part-time Code Enforcement Officer

**Goal**

Encourage family living and small scale residential development in good neighborhoods, in keeping with the life and feeling of a quiet residential town.

**Objectives**

- Update Houston’s existing zoning and subdivision ordinance to regulate permitted uses and densities, reflect the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, and replace the town’s existing Zoning Ordinance.
- Consider the development of design guidelines as part of the ordinance update that reflect Houston’s unique character.
- Encourage the redevelopment or rehabilitation of blighted or deteriorated properties

**Goal**

Provide affordable opportunities for existing and prospective residents to rent or own homes

**Objectives**

- Ensure all town regulations adhere fully with the Fair Housing Act
- Pursuing available funding and available tax credits from DSHA and the State Historic Preservation Office
- Permit some development of duplex housing.
- Consider allowing accessory dwelling units within existing structures (Granny Flats).
CHAPTER 6. Transportation

This chapter provides an inventory of the transportation system in Houston and identifies issues that may need to be addressed. It details planned transportation improvements and makes recommendations to foster maximum mobility, via all modes, for residents and visitors using Houston’s transportation network.

The Roads and Boundaries map in the appendix shows Houston’s transportation network. It includes streets and roads, sidewalks, trails, and bicycle routes.

6-1. Transportation Planning Trends and Developments

The State has increasingly focused on non-motorized transportation modes, namely walking and cycling, in many of its planning and policy initiatives. Motor vehicle projects do, and likely will continue to be the largest recipient of infrastructure projects. However, the State has made significant investments in a series of trails and paths within major population and employment centers. Moreover, updated planning and engineering procedures have been enacted with the goal of ensuring bicycle and pedestrian improvements are incrementally built into the State’s transportation network as regularly scheduled maintenance and construction is carried out.

Governor Jack Markell signed Executive Order Number Six in 2009, providing the policy underpinning of the administration’s Complete Streets policy. A key provision of the order was that it compels DelDOT to ensure that the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians are taken into account whenever the state builds or does significant maintenance work to existing state-maintained roadways. Effectively, the order strengthened the standard concerning the presence of bike and pedestrian amenities to the level where their exclusion must be demonstrated to be wholly infeasible or impracticable.

In 2011, the State established dedicated funding with the passage of Senate Concurrent Resolution #13, to explore and plan how “to create contiguous systems or networks of walkways and bikeways within and between cities and towns in Delaware in order to provide travelers with the opportunity for safe, convenient, cost-effective and healthy transportation via walking and bicycling.” Later that year, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between DNREC and DelDOT was initiated to implement the resolution. A number of projects have been completed, are underway, or are being planned. Over 75 miles of trails and pathways have reportedly been installed since 2011 alone. For more information, please visit http://trails.delaware.gov/

Operationally, DelDOT has been making a concerted effort to connect directly with its customers electronically. In addition to traditional tools like variable message signs, traffic hotlines, and traffic radio, the State has deployed an interactive website and, more recently, a smartphone traffic application, the DelDOT App.

One feature in particular, the “Where’s My Bus” tool, allows subscribed transit users to see when their bus will arrive and also to track their bus in real time. DelDOT also shares this data with Google, so transit riders using that service’s navigation services will also see actual bus arrivals and departures, not scheduled times. This feature came online late in 2016 and its full impact has yet to be determined. However, it has the potential to make transit a much more attractive and viable option.
Most recently, in May 2016, Senate Bill 130 was signed into law, creating the framework for Complete Community Enterprise Districts. These districts would encourage master planning, development supportive of transit, and an interior transportation network conducive to the first and last mile pedestrian and cycling trips that are so often the weakest link in fixed-route transit. Creation of said districts would require one or several jurisdictions to enter into an MOU with DelDOT. No initiatives were yet underway at the time of this plan’s completion.

6-2. Roads and Traffic
The transportation system in the Town of Houston consists of roadways, rail, sidewalks, and rideable shoulder. This section of the transportation chapter provides a brief overview of the major modes of transportation currently found in Houston.

6-2a. Roadways
According to the Atlas of Delaware, Broad Street, School Street, and Front Street are the only state-maintained roadways within Houston. All of the other roadways in town are municipally maintained.

Houston sits roughly equidistant between Harrington, to its west, and Milford, to its east. It is somewhat unique, in that it has no major (or minor) state highway that bisects the town. Route 13, and S.R. 1 and 113 provide the regional north/south traffic movements, roughly two miles due west, and east, respectively. S.R. 14 and Williamsville Road serve as the municipality’s chief east/west connectors.

Like most historic, railroad-era towns, Houston’s street network is laid out in a grid pattern. It has been fortunate to avoid disconnected, dead-end, “spaghetti” streets, commonly associated with suburban development. The town’s blocks are somewhat larger, and very few have sidewalks. Many have shoulders. The relatively low volume and speed of automotive traffic in town generally makes for safe and comfortable walking and bicycling, though both must share the street.

Kent County has yet to meet the population thresholds for a Congestion Management Plan (CMP), typically overseen by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The Delaware Population Consortium estimates this may happen by 2035. According to the Dover/Kent MPO, CMP has not yet been a major factor in its project prioritization process.

6-3. Non-Automotive Travel
Houston is an agricultural community and is not centrally located. Unsurprisingly, its transportation network is geared largely towards automotive use. However, the low volume of vehicular traffic, and that traffic’s relatively slower speeds do tend to make Houston a relatively safe place to walk and bicycle. Its gridded streets and overall compactness also favor multi-modal mobility. The town’s one drawback in this regard is a lack of destinations to walk or cycle to. Houston is largely residential. The businesses it does host are not of the storefront variety.

At the time of this document’s preparation, there were no bus stops serving Houston.
6-3a. Bicycle Traffic
According to DelDOT’s cycling portal, available at http://www.bikemap.com/de, Houston does not host any state bikeways, trails, or regional bike paths. However, residents looking for a nearby cycling venue are very close to SR 14, which is designated as a regional cycling route. Broad Street has shoulders on both sides and directly connects. Just west of the municipal boundary, the entirety of Killens Pond Road/Deep Grass Lane, is a state designated bicycle route.

6-3b. Pedestrian Ways
The roads and boundaries map, in the appendix, details Houston’s sidewalk network. Most of the municipality’s streets lack sidewalks. Where they do exist, the sidewalk network is fragmented. The town’s streets are lightly trafficked and low speed. Walking is certainly an option for adults, or children old enough to interact with traffic.

6-3c. Railroads
The major north-south railroad line on the Delmarva Peninsula runs roughly parallel with S.R. 14, as it bisects the town, eventually turning due south, roughly following U.S. Rt. 13. The line is owned and operated by Norfolk Southern and presently only hauls freight. It connects Houston with the northeast corridor, providing important linkages to statewide and regional destinations.

6-3d. Public Transportation
The Delaware Transit Corporation had no stops or routes listed for Houston. As with all of Kent County, paratransit services are available to eligible residents.

6-3e. Aviation
The Delaware Coastal Airport in Georgetown Delaware is the closest private airport to Houston. It provides small plane services, a tower, operates on visual flight rules, and has a 5,500’ runway. The closest larger facility is the Dover Air Force Base’s Civil Air Terminal, offering a 13,000-foot-long paved runway. The nearest regular passenger air services are provided at the Philadelphia International Airport and Baltimore-Washington International, each roughly 100 miles away. The Delaware Airpark in Cheswold, Del., 30 miles due North, is home to 45 aircraft and Delaware State University’s flight-training program, serving corporate and recreational flyers year-round. The Wicomico Regional Airport located in Salisbury, Maryland, 50 miles due South, is the only commercial airport on the Delmarva Peninsula.

6-4. Planned Transportation Improvements and Studies
At the time of this document’s printing, there were no planned improvements within, or in the immediate vicinity of, Houston listed on DelDOT’s CTP or the Dover/Kent MPO’s Long Range Plan.

U.S. 113 Realignment - Regionally, the proposed re-alignment of U.S. Rt. 113 has been tabled for east of Houston in the Milford and Lincoln areas. The 2008 Bond Bill specifically said, “DelDOT shall be prohibited from proceeding with the US 113 South/North Improvements Project in the Lincoln and Milford area as proposed in the Department’s Capital Transportation Program,” until a local consensus could be reached. Early in 2008, the State’s Transportation Secretary reported to the General Assembly that no consensus could be reached and that DelDOT was suspending work on the proposed realignment in the Milford/Lincoln area.
Corridor Capacity Preservation Program (CCPP) – This program impacts design considerations and future development patterns on both major highways (S.R. 1 and U.S. 13) near Houston. The CCPP approach began as a pilot project in the early 1990’s. The aim was, and is, to avoid the cycle of building a highway, attracting economic development (driveways, intersections, traffic lights), experiencing congestion, building a bypass, and repeating the cycle on the bypass. The stretch of S.R. 1 from Dover Del., to Nassau passes near Houston. The other preservation corridor follows U.S. 113 from Milford, south to the Maryland State line.

The program’s main goals are to:

• Maintain a road's ability to handle traffic safely and efficiently
• Minimize the impacts of increased economic growth
• Preserve the ability to make future improvements
• Prevent the need to build an entirely new road
• Sort local and through traffic

The program is well coordinated and delineates areas, and potential remedies, based on the desirability of investment of State funds, very much in line with the 2015 State Strategies for Policies and Spending. Dover/Kent County MPO Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) 2040 update, 2013 – The MTP is a long-range, big picture, regional planning and guidance document compiled by the Dover/Kent MPO, in close coordination with Kent County, DelDOT, the Office of State Planning Coordination (OSPC), and municipalities.

The most recent iteration was adopted in January 2013. The public engagement process for the next update is already underway. Update details, as well as the most recent document, can be viewed at http://doverkentmpo.delaware.gov/metropolitan-transportation-plan/.

The MTP’s primary focus is to:

• Preserve the existing system to meet adopted standards of “good repair”
• Manage the system to meet adopted performance measures
• Expand travel options beyond the private automobile
• Increase the highway system capacity where needed
• Focus transportation investments so they match county and state growth and development goals

6-5. Additional Transportation Issues
Houston is fortunate to have very few transportation grievances. The town does experience intermittent stormwater issues along Pine Street. There were also minor concerns raised about the capacity and surface of Minner Street, given some recent residential development. Portions of the street outside of the municipal boundary are gravel. Typical issues regarding parking, traffic, speed, and trucks are, largely, not a concern.
The town would welcome sidewalks and stenciled bicycle lanes along the state maintained roadways in town, but understands it is not located in a priority investment area.

One issue that may be addressable in the shorter term is access to fixed-route bus service. The town currently has no stop, or service, though it may be possible to walk to SR 14 and flag down a bus. Access to DART route, the 303, which serves Milford, would provide weekday, commuter-style connections to and from Dover and Georgetown, roughly between the hours of 5:30a.m. and 7p.m

Goal

Enable the safe and efficient mobility of residents utilizing all modes of travel, be they pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, or transit riders, via a safe and interconnected transportation system.

Objectives

- Explore more convenient and accessible bus service with DTC, preferably with a stop in town.
- Coordinate with DelDOT and other transportation agencies to improve signage, speed controls, street surfacing, and traffic safety measures on arterial streets.
- Work with Kent County and the City of Milford towards the eventual development of the Beaver Dam Branch Extension of the Mispillion River Greenway
- Assess and itemize priority improvements to the town’s bicycle and pedestrian network and engage with DelDOT to discuss implementation.
- Ensure any new development has multiple connections to the existing town and provides connections to neighboring, or potential future, development.
- Work with DelDOT to bring new sidewalk, street, and streetscape improvements to Houston
- Work with DelDOT on measures to ensure traffic safety on School Street, Front Street, Deep Grass Lane, and Blairs Pond Road.
CHAPTER 7. Economic Development and Redevelopment

7-1. Major Employers

Though Houston boasts a number of entrepreneurs and small businesses, it does not host any major employers, in the traditional sense of the word. Anecdotally, most of the town’s working-aged residents commute to the Dover Metropolitan area, Milford, or Georgetown.

Table 16. Houston Major Employers, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer Name</th>
<th>Type of Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Callaway Transportation</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional Builders</td>
<td>Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Cophenaver Bus Service</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trap Packing</td>
<td>Food Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Tague Stables</td>
<td>Animal Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twim Creek Farms</td>
<td>Agricultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaire View Farms</td>
<td>Agricultural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Houston Town Council, 2017

7-2. Employment and Unemployment

Information provided by the Delaware Department of Labor and the 2015 American Communities Survey showed Houston with an estimated labor force of 221 persons, and an unemployment rate of 9.9 Percent. Table 20 represents the employment status for persons in the labor force in Houston, Kent County, Delaware, and the United States.

Table 17. Employment Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>Houston</th>
<th>Kent County</th>
<th>Delaware</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>74,707</td>
<td>95.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>3,131</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Force</td>
<td>221</td>
<td></td>
<td>77,983</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


7-3. Commuting to Work

Currently, there is no commuting to work data available for Houston. However, there is data available for the two larger neighboring cities of Harrington and Milford. According to 2015 ACS 5-year Estimates, half of Milford and Harrington residents spend less than 24 minutes commuting to work. 20% of Harrington residents and 11% of Milford residents spend more than 45 minutes commuting to work.
Inferences can be made about the commuting time of Houston residents, considering Houston’s close approximation to these two cities.

7-4. Occupations
30.2% of Houston Residents are employed in the “management, professional, and related (business, science, arts)” category. This sector has seen the most employment growth in Houston, which increased by nearly 9% since 2000. These numbers are comparable to the Kent County at 32.7%. The “sales and office” category used to be the largest employment sector in Houston, but employment in this area has decreased by 12.7% in 2000. Decline in this sector occurred to a less degree in Kent County, Delaware, and the United States as well. The “service” occupational category also showed promising growth from 7.7% in 2000 to 15.6% in 2015. This sector also grew, but to a lesser degree, in Kent County, Delaware, and the United States.

Table 18. Occupations in Houston, Kent County, Delaware and the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Houston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management, Professional, and Related (Business, Science, Arts)</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales &amp; Office</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming, Fishing and Forestry**</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction, Extraction &amp; Maintenance**</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resource, Construction &amp; Maintenance Operations**</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production, Transportation &amp; Material Moving</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = No Data
*2015 data from the American Community Survey 5-year estimates program was collected from 2010-2015 and represents the average value over that time.
**In the latest datasets the categories “Farming, Fishing, and Forestry” and “Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance Occupations” were not included, but a new category entitled “Natural Resource, Construction, and Maintenance Operations” was created.
7-5. Economic-Development and Redevelopment Plan

Houston is content as a small, agricultural, bedroom community. Even so, a handful of economic development and redevelopment opportunities exist in, and around, the municipality. The two most obvious concerns are the underutilized, semi-vacant industrial parcels within, and just beyond, the municipal boundary in the town’s southwest corner and a number of homes in various states of disrepair within the municipality, particularly along the railroad.

The Town would like to see the cannery property returned to productive use and is not averse to retaining the “industrial” zoning classification. However, the town would not favor “smokestack” industrial. The redevelopment potential of the site is somewhat limited, given the lack of municipal water or sewer. This plan recommends that Town officials engage with the property owners and work with the State’s Department of Economic Development. The Town’s vision for preferred future uses is outlined in the land use chapter of this document.

The Town has already taken steps to begin to address deteriorating residential structures. The Town recently gained the ability to place liens on nuisance properties, and has had some success in gaining property-owner compliance. As of late 2017, the Town was also exploring hiring a part-time code enforcement officer. The Town’s preference is to see its housing stock “turned over” and renovated. This has been happening, to some extent; however, the homes are often bought at auction and “flipped” as rentals. This plan recommends the town consider working with DSHA to attract first-time home-buyers, as well as continuing to pursue CDGB funds for property stabilization.

There may also be some growth potential in agri-tourism, or, direct to the consumer farm sales. This plan recommends allowing produce stands, considering the allowance of limited retail on agriculturally zoned parcels, and promotion of agriculturally themed festivals.

Goal

Explore new, or expanded, municipal services and community facilities, including infrastructure and utility improvements that will improve Houston

Objectives

- Conduct a study, poll, or referendum to determine community interest in public sewer.

- Conduct a planning study for a new town office, community center, parking lot, access road, and small park on the town-owned land east of Broad Street.

- Explore any alternatives to single-provider internet service

Goal

Encourage and work toward the redevelopment of blighted, deteriorated, or under-utilized properties and work proactively with land-owners to encourage redevelopment consistent with the town’s favored uses and intensities.
Objectives

- Consider the development of design guidelines as part of the ordinance update that reflect Houston’s unique character.
- Engage with the state’s restructured economic development office and the property owner to find productive use for the town’s sole industrially zoned property.
- Work to obtain CDBG funds to assist homeowners with serious property maintenance and repair needs.

Goal

Grow and promote agri-tourism

Objectives

- Coordinate town festivals and special events with local farmers and farm families
- Promote existing farmers markets and consider opportunities for an improved venue
- Consider amending the town’s ordinances to allow for on-site retail sales, tastings, and dining to ensure the continued viability of the area’s farms.
CHAPTER 8. Natural Resources

Houston owes its identity to the rich farmland and pastoral views in and around the municipality. It is committed to playing its part in protecting and preserving these invaluable resources for the next generation of residents.

The town prefers, and is committed to, preserving its small town atmosphere. It is generally disinclined to pursue high impact patterns of development. Houston is supportive of regional agricultural preservation and has a strong interest in helping to preserve the quality and available supply of the Columbia Aquifer. This chapter presents a summary of these natural resources and environmental policies, identifies issues of concern and provides recommended actions for implementing natural resource management policies.

8-1. Physical Characteristics
The area’s topography peaks at an elevation of 52 feet above sea level at the intersection of Broad Street and Railroad Avenue, along the slight Broad Street ridge line. The lower-lying Pine Street area is at Elevation 48 feet. Most of the Town is at elevation 50 feet. Prime agricultural soils with moderate to good drainage on gentle slopes predominate in the rural sections of the town and its surroundings. The major soil classifications present include: (1) Hambrook sandy loam (HbA); (2) Evesboro sandy loam (EvB); (3) Cedartown sandy loam (CdB) and (4) Rosedale loamy sand (RoA). These are well-drained soils on gentle slopes. Soils present in the Town include (1) Henlopen-Rosedale-Urban land complex (HsA), and (2) the Klej-Galloway complex (KgB). The heart of the Town, east of Maple Street, is located on HsA soil, which is somewhat excessively drained. Generally, with the exception of the somewhat poorly drained KgB soil classification, these soil types are equally good for either agricultural crop production or urban development. Areas of hydric soils, which are very poorly drained, lie along the northern Town boundary.

Houston is largely within the Mispillion River/Delaware Bay watershed. The northern part of the Town sits within the Murderkill/Delaware Bay watershed. The Beaver Dam Branch marshes and pools are vital parts of the community’s hydrological functioning.

8-2. Water Resources
The quality and quantity of water available in the Town of Houston is key to the health and well-being of its residents and to ensuring the long-term viability of the Town. This section discusses water-quality issues and actions the Town can take to minimize negative impacts on water quality within Houston and the surrounding watershed, as well as the Town’s commitment to thoughtful stewardship of the Columbia Aquifer.

Watersheds
A watershed is all of the land that water moves across or under while flowing to a specific body of water and includes the plants, animals, and humans who live within it. Houston straddles the Mispillion River and Murderkill watersheds. The Mispillion River watershed has been assigned a range of nutrient (nitrogen and phosphorus) and bacterial Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) reduction requirements by the State of Delaware. The Murderkill has similarly been assigned a range of nutrient (nitrogen and phosphorus) and bacterial TMDLs. Moreover, it also has point-source limits on nitrogen, phosphorus, and bacteria. These reductions must be met in order to comply with the State’s Water Quality Standards. Under Section 303(d) of the 1972 Federal Clean Water Act (CWA), States are required to
identify all impaired waters and establish TMDLs to restore their beneficial uses (e.g. swimming, fishing, and drinking water). A TMDL defines the amount of a given pollutant that may be discharged to a water body from point, nonpoint, and natural background sources and still allows attainment of maintenance of the applicable narrative and numerical water quality standards. A TMDL is the sum of the individual Waste Load Allocations (WLAs) for point sources and Load Allocations (LAs) for nonpoint sources and natural background sources of pollution. A TMDL may include a reasonable margin of safety (MOS) to account for uncertainties regarding the relationship between mass loading and resulting water quality. In simplistic terms, a TMDL matches the strength, location and timing of pollution sources within a watershed with the inherent ability of the receiving water to assimilate the pollutant without adverse impact. A Pollution Control Strategy (PCS) specifies actions necessary to systematically achieve pollutant load reductions specified by a Total Maximum Daily Load for a given water body, and must reduce pollutants to levels specified by State Water Quality Standards.

**Excellent Recharge Areas**

The Environmental Features map shows that the entire eastern half of Houston and almost all of the lands immediately surrounding the municipality are categorized as excellent recharge areas. Excellent recharge areas are places where soil composition and slope allow precipitation to readily infiltrate to such a depth that unconfined underground aquifers may be recharged and replenished. Excessive soil compaction, paving, or otherwise developing these areas with impervious cover, such as rooftops, driveways, and parking lots can diminish their function. This can lead to increased issues with storm water and runoff, and, potentially, deplete the aquifer. The State of Delaware requires municipalities with populations above 2,000 persons to develop and enforce source water protection regulations, protecting excellent recharge areas and wellhead protection areas. This is typically accomplished by setting upper limits on impervious lot coverage and, in the case of wellheads, prohibiting the storage of toxic pollutants. Houston has no wellhead protection areas in, or near, town.

Though not required to do so, given the Town’s reliance on private wells and the unconfined Columbia Aquifer, and its stated preference to not pursue public water, it may consider a source water protection ordinance.

**Wetlands**

The Environmental Features map depicts wetlands in and around the Town of Houston. There are no regulated, tidal wetlands in, or in proximity to, Houston. Likewise, there are no non-tidal wetlands within the municipal boundary. However, there are significant non-tidal wetlands surrounding the town. South of town, the Beaverdam Branch defines a wetland area. West of Houston, wetlands sit astride Deep Grass Lane. Further afield, wetlands are present North of Milford-Harrington Highway and East of Blair’s Pond Road.

In addition to providing wildlife habitat, wetlands provide protection from flooding and protect water quality by naturally filtering runoff on its way to water bodies. Protection of wetlands falls under the regulatory jurisdiction of Section 404 provisions of the Federal Clean Water Act. In Delaware, tidal and non-tidal wetlands are regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) under this act; however, tidal wetlands are subject to additional and more stringent regulatory protection under Title 7, Chapter 66 provisions of the Delaware State Code. The Town has not been in the position of having to administer wetland ordinances, since none are present within the municipality. As described above, there are some non-tidal wetlands within the town’s potential annexation area. Houston’s zoning and
subdivision ordinance requires sign off from the Kent County Conservation District for building permits and site plans, as part of a major subdivision.

**Floodplains**
The Natural Features Map details floodplains in proximity to Houston. There are no areas within identified floodplains within the town’s municipal boundaries. Due south of the town, there is an area of the Beaverdam Branch shown as within the 100-year floodplain. The Branch is surrounded largely by agricultural uses, along with some very low-density residential uses in unincorporated Kent County. Natural vegetation continues to surround and buffer the Beaverdam Branch.

**8-3. Relevant Programs, Policies, and Regulations**

**8-3a. Surface-Water Protection—Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)**
The Clean Water Act and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Water Quality Planning and Management Regulations were developed to maintain the health of our nation’s waters. They provide for the regulation of impaired waters (those polluted to the extent that they no longer meet their designated uses). Designated uses are identified in state water-quality standards. The Mispillion watershed’s uses are primarily recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, and agricultural/industrial water supply. The Murderkill watershed’s uses are primary recreation, secondary recreation, fish, aquatic life and wildlife, industrial and agricultural water supply.

When waters do not meet these designated uses, TMDLs are required. They serve to specify the maximum amount of pollution that may be allowed to enter a water body and allow it to still meet water-quality standards. The Mispillion Watershed’s TMDL was most recently updated in 2006 (http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/swc/wa/Documents/TMDL_TechnicalAnalysisDocuments/12_MispillonTreeCedarTMDLAnalyses.pdf). The Murderkill TMDL was last updated in 2014 (www.dnrec.delaware.gov/swc/wa/Documents/WAS/Murderkill%20River%20Reports/New%20Murderkill%20Page/9_Revised%20TMDL%20for%20the%20Murderkill%20River%20Watershed.pdf)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delaware River and Bay Drainage</th>
<th>N-reduction requirements</th>
<th>P-reduction requirements</th>
<th>Bacteria-reduction requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mispillion</td>
<td>57%,</td>
<td>57%,</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murderkill</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>32% freshwater, 67% marine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With participation from local stakeholders, DNREC developed Pollution Control Strategies (PCS) to meet the TMDL designated reductions. A PCS is a document that specifies where pollution reductions can be made to meet TMDL targets. Both PCS were completed in December 2012 (http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/swc/wa/Documents/WatershedPlans/Mispillion%20Pollution%20Control%20Strategy%202012%20final.pdf) and (www.dnrec.delaware.gov/swc/wa/Documents/WatershedPlans/Murderkill%202012%20PCS%20final.pdf.) The strategies were designed to reduce nutrient loadings from existing and future land-use
practices. If implemented as designed, the combination of actions delineated in the strategy should lead to the achievement of the TMDL. DNREC reviews the strategies every ten years to assess if adequate progress is being made.

8-3b. Air Quality
Though there have been marginal improvements in the past several years, according to the American Lung Association’s “State of the Air” report (February 2017), air quality remains a regional concern. Kent County was graded a “B.” The Town is committed to playing its part in regional air quality. Though land-use regulations in Delaware for moderately sized municipalities don’t typically regulate air quality, Houston’s preference for remaining a small town and not actively seeking growth may aid in incrementally improving the region’s air quality.

8-3c. Subdivision Regulations

Houston’s Zoning and Subdivision ordinances do not lay out dimensional protections for wetlands, floodplains, recharge areas, or wellheads. Article V, Section 4.3 of the Town code requires a permit from the Kent County Conservation District for buildings larger than 2,500sf. Likewise, the subdivision regulations, Article VI, Section 1.2, describes the council’s obligation to review the proposed development (major subdivisions) with respect to drainage, the preservation of trees, protection of the natural environment and processes, and provision of open space, among a number of other variables. Major subdivisions are also required to participate in the PLUS process and receive the appropriate approvals from the Kent County Conservation District. The KCD, generally speaking, will require wetland delineations and 50’ buffers from floodplains and wetlands. The town itself would have to formulate and adopt regulations protecting wellheads and excellent recharge areas.

Given the fact that, within town, there are no wetlands, floodplains, or wellheads, but that these features are present in the town’s potential annexation area, the Town could potentially address providing protections for these features if, and when, the lands in question are proposed for annexation. Annexation agreements could stipulate that the town would accept, or approve, annexation only if appropriate buffers were granted, or impervious cover held below a certain threshold.

Goal

Coordinate with relevant agencies and committees to improve water quality in the Mispillion and Murderkill watersheds.

Objectives

Participate in the Mispillion River and Murderkill Tributary Action Teams to assist in the development of pollution control strategies for the municipality’s watersheds.

Goal

Preserve the water quality and water supply for Houston’s citizens.
Objectives

Consider developing and adopting a source water protection ordinance to address wellheads and excellent recharge areas in and around the municipality.

Consider adding specific language to the town’s ordinances requiring wetland delineations for larger buildings and subdivisions.

Consider adding specific language to the town’s development and subdivision ordinances for the buffering of wetlands, floodplains, and wellheads with dimensional standards at least equal to those required by the Kent County Conservation District.

Consider adding specific language to the town’s development and subdivision ordinances for the preservation of areas of contiguous forest.

Continue to explore the possibility of public sewer service, thereby reducing the need for septic systems.

Consider formalizing an annexation policy, or adopting one, whereby any new annexations would be subject to annexation agreements where all relevant natural features are protected in a manner than meets, or exceeds, existing standards.

Identify the town’s proposed annexation area also as an “area of concern” and request that the town receive notice from the controlling municipality or county when development is proposed, particularly in regard to new wells, pumping allocations, and community septic infrastructure.

Goal

Pursue agricultural preservation of high-value agricultural parcels, in keeping with the town’s small-town, agricultural heritage.

Objectives

Promote DDA agricultural preservation programs via brochures and the town’s website.

Work with the Delaware Department of Agriculture to preserve agricultural and natural resource lands in and around the Town of Houston.

Work with Kent County’s Department of Planning services to best make use of the county’s TDR program, particularly as it relates to adjoining agricultural parcels.

Goal

Limit the growth of harmful atmospheric emissions attributable to Houston.

Objective

Work with DTC to explore siting a bus stop central to the town.
CHAPTER 9.  Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

The town is committed to providing high quality public open space facilities and services. The town recognizes that public open space and recreational activities are an integral part in the development of the Houston.

9-1.  Open Space
Roughly 1.07 acres have been set aside in Houston as public open space. This is the only designated open space parcel in Houston. It is located adjacent to the railroad in the center of town. This parcel is zoned as public protected lanes under the outdoor recreation, park, and trails program. In GIS the parcel is named Armour Park. However, the land has not been developed to serve as a recreational site. The right of way surrounding the rail road tracks takes up approximately 8.72 acres of land.

9-3.  Parks and Recreation
Houston has no community parks or recreational sites. However, there are a handful of county and state parks and recreation areas within a reasonable drive of Houston. Park and recreational facilities closest to Houston reside in Milford.

9-3a.  Local Park and Recreation Facilities

Table 20. Park and Recreation Facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banneker Park</td>
<td>NW Fourth Street</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Basketball Court, Gas Grills Permitted, Grassy Area, Limited Parking, No Shade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicentennial Park</td>
<td>NE Front Street</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Benches, Electric, Grassy Area, Ample Parking, Pavilion, Pedestrian/Fishing Bridge, Picnic Tables, Ample Shade, Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverwalk/Dog Park</td>
<td>Marshall Street</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Benches, Drinking Fountain, Grassy Area, Limited Parking, Limited Shade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goat Island</td>
<td>Marshall Street</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ample Shade, Walking Trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshall’s Pond Park</td>
<td>Lovers Lane</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Amphitheatre, Gas Grills Permitted, Grassy Area, Open Space for Activities, Limited Parking, Picnic Tables, Pond, Ample Shade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marvel Square</td>
<td>SE Second Street</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>Bocce Ball Court, Electric, Gas Grills Permitted, Grassy Area, Open Space for Activities, Ample Parking, Playground, Limited Shade, Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorial Park/Riverwalk</td>
<td>Downtown</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>ADA Accessible, Amphitheatre, Basketball Court, Bocce Ball Court, Benches, Electric, Fishing, Gas Grills Permitted, Ample Parking, Picnic Areas, Ample Shade, Walking Track</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks &amp; Recreation Building</td>
<td>207 Franklin Street</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>Electric, Kitchen, Meeting Rooms, Ample Parking, Restrooms, Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Silicato Memorial Park</td>
<td>101 Patriots Way</td>
<td>17.83</td>
<td>Can-Do Playground (boundless park), Disk Golf Course, Grassy Area, Parking, Limited Shade, Soccer Fields, Walking Track, bathroom, water fountain.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9-3b. **County, State, and Federal Park and Recreation Facilities**

Houston residents have a number of regional parks and recreational facilities to choose from, though most are beyond typical walking and biking distance.

*Killen’s Pond State Park* – is the nearest State Park. The 66-acre Mill Pond is the park’s centerpiece, supporting public boating and fishing activities. There is also a campground, playgrounds, exercise trail and waterpark.

*Brown’s Branch County Park* – is the nearest county park. Opened in 2004 by Kent County, the park protects nearly 40 acres of forested wetland. The upland, formerly agricultural, portions of the park converted to active recreation (baseball, soccer, volleyball, horseshoes). Significant forested buffers and natural areas remain and support more passive activities like hiking and bird-watching.

*Milford Neck Wildlife Area* – Operated by the state, the wildlife area acts as a nature preserve and accommodates hunting, photography, and wildlife observation. It also boasts a 350 acre open area for the training of hunting dogs.

*DuPont Nature Center* – As much a cultural resource as a park, the DuPont Nature Center is one of the state’s premier birding observatories, boasting well over 200 species. The surrounding wetlands team with undisturbed wildlife. The facility has a visitor’s center, observation deck, and runs year-round educational programs.

*Abbott’s Mill Nature Center* – Operated by the Delaware Nature Society, Abbott’s Mill sports a working grist-mil, extensive nature preserve, visitor’s center, miles of trails, and seasonal educational programming.

*Redden State Forest* – Operated by the Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA), at 12,400 acres, Redden is the largest state forest in Delaware. Its 44 miles of trails support hiking, horseback riding, cycling, and birdwatching.

*Cape Henelopen State Park* – is somewhat distant, but provides sun and fun within a reasonable drive of Houston. Surf fishing, picnic areas, and a variety of recreational activities accompany its sandy shoreline offerings.

*Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge* – the 10,144 acre refuge located along the Delaware Bay serves as a sanctuary for migratory birds. Activities such as lecture programs, bird walks and educational activities are provided throughout the year.

*Cedar Creek Boat Ramp* – Located in Slaughter Beach, the facility provides eight 16-foot wide concrete launch lanes, five floating boarding docks and a lighted parking area to accommodate 141 vehicle/trailer combinations.
9-4. **Recreation Needs—State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)**

The State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is a statewide plan prepared by DNREC every five years. The most recent SCORP plan was published in 2013. It assesses public outdoor recreation use, analyzing the estimated supply and demand for various activities. Data is gathered via an extensive phone survey and the results assist the state in future planning and investment for recreation facilities.

The outdoor recreation participation and trends survey was conducted in August 2011 by Responsive Management. A total of 2,064 Delawareans participated in the telephone survey. Survey respondents were queried about their personal recreational activities and those of their household. The results were weighted so that all regions and municipal areas would be in their proper proportion in statewide totals. Additionally, the results were weighted by demographic and geographic characteristics so that the sample was representative of Delaware residents as a whole.

Houston is located in Region 3 of the study. The following priorities were highlighted by residents in Region 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 21. Region 3 SCORP Priorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Priorities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking/Jogging Paths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming Pools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bike Paths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playgrounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off Leash Dog Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DNREC SCORP 2013 Report

9-5. **Agricultural Open Space**

The area surrounding Houston hosts a great deal of agriculture, working farms, and agri-industry. The town is ringed by agricultural uses. Within the town there are six parcels marked as “agricultural” on the existing land use map. One of those parcels is the Fry District agricultural preservation site. This site has 32.98 acres within the town limits, and 99.19 acres outside. Many of these larger parcels are under some form of preservation, be they agricultural easements or through designation as a State Agricultural Preservation District.

The Fry District parcel is designated as a State Agricultural Preservation district. Participants in the State Agricultural Preservation district designate a minimum of 200 contiguous acres that must be used for agriculture or forest land for ten years. After this period, the owner may withdraw, continue in the program, or apply for an agricultural easement and potentially be compensated via the sale of development rights.

*Blue parcels are part of the agricultural easement program and orange parcels are part of the agricultural preservation program.*
9-6. Acquiring and Preserving Open Space

The Town is interested in developing a community park across the street from the current fire hall/town offices. The Town is also, generally, pleased to be surrounded by agricultural uses. This plan recommends the town promote DDA’s agricultural preservation programs to nearby agricultural land owners and that the Town continues to work with Kent County, as it works to implement a transfer of development rights program. Though there aren’t any areas of land within the current town boundary that would ever be likely to undergo the “major subdivision” process, potential exists within the Town’s identified annexation areas. The Town could pursue open-space set asides on a case-by-case basis via annexation agreements. Likewise, it could add open space set-aside requirements to its subdivision ordinance.

Goal

Ensure Houston’s residents have adequate access to active and passive recreational activities

Objectives

- Coordinate with the City of Milford regarding the long-term possibility of a greenway connecting the municipalities
• Explore the acquisition and development of a playground across from the fire hall
• Consider open space and recreational set asides in any future annexation requests
• Consider revising the municipality’s major subdivision requirements to specify a desired percentage or amount of dedicated open space.
• Engage with DDA’s Forestry Section to explore urban forestry programs
• Work with the Delaware Department of Agriculture to preserve agricultural and natural resource lands in and around the Town of Houston
CHAPTER 10. Land Use and Growth Management

This chapter begins with a discussion of Houston’s existing land use. It then focuses on the discussion of planning efforts that have been considered during the development of Houston’s future land uses. The future land uses are designated for the area within the municipal boundary, and the link between land use and zoning is provided. The chapter discusses recommendations concerning land use and zoning, concluding with a discussion on growth and annexation.

10-1. Existing Land Use

Existing land use is a snapshot of the Town’s current development pattern. This development pattern is depicted on the Existing Landuse map. The map identifies the land use for each parcel as of November, 2017.

10-1a. Existing Land Use Designations

Table 22 explains how land was classified into the uses shown on the Existing Land Use map.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Land actively being farmed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Space</td>
<td>Public and private open space primarily dedicated in connection with land development; stormwater facilities; parks; recreation facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>Areas developed with any type of dwelling unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Areas developed with retail, office, service and similar uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>Federal, state, and local facilities, public safety facilities, private schools; places of worship; public works buildings; water and wastewater facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>Areas developed with manufacturing, processing and similar uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Land</td>
<td>Undeveloped lots in recorded subdivisions, other undeveloped lots not being farmed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23 summarizes the distribution of land uses within the town. As shown below, Houston is largely a small farm town. Nearly half (47 percent) of the town is in residential use and well over a third (37 percent) is agriculture. The town does have scattered commercial uses, comprising nearly seven percent, but does not have a defined commercial core or much in the way of a service economy. These uses are primarily parcels owned by small business owners.

The freezer facility on the town’s western edge, astride the rail line, is the sole industrial parcel. Churches, the fire hall, and town offices account for the industrial uses. Just under three percent of parcels were observed to be vacant.
### Table 23. Existing Land Use Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>104.1</td>
<td>46.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>82.99</td>
<td>37.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>15.07</td>
<td>6.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>9.31</td>
<td>4.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>7.67</td>
<td>3.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Space</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>1.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>223</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 10-2 Planning Environment

The Comprehensive Plan effort has reviewed other applicable plans that influence the Houston Study Area.

#### 10-2a. Strategies for State Policy and Spending

The State of Delaware’s State Strategies for Policies and Spending, prepared by the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination and adopted by Executive Order 59 by Governor Markell on April 14, 2016, identifies “Level of Investment” areas that are guidelines for land use as well as state investment. Figure X, below, and the 2015 State Strategies map in the appendix, show Level of Investment Areas within the Town. The Town of Houston is shown as a mixture of Level of Investment Areas 2 and 3 on the 2015 Strategies Map. The Greater Houston Area around the Town is shown on the Strategies Map as within Level of Investment Area 4. Within a Level of Investment Area 4, the State’s goal is to preserve the area’s agricultural economy and rural environment and to minimize new development. In Level of Investment Areas 2 and 3, moderate and modest levels of development are sought.
10-2b. Kent County

As of this plan’s writing, Kent County was in the process of publishing its ten-year update to its 2007 Comprehensive Plan.

A longstanding principle of the county, that appears largely unchanged from a review of 2018 update materials, is its growth overlay feature. Kent has long sought to direct and encourage residential growth to areas and municipalities within the identified zone. It aims to discourage unnecessary sprawl, preserve high-value agricultural lands, promote growth near existing infrastructure and services, and increase efficiencies in the provision of public services.

A key feature of this approach is the county’s recognition of municipalities as central to this approach. Both the county’s 2008 Plan and publically available draft materials from its 2018 plan update show Houston as outside this favored zone.
In February, 2018, Houston hosted Kristopher S. Connelly, AICP, at its public, monthly comprehensive plan development meeting, specifically to coordinate Houston’s planning efforts with those of the county. Mr. Connelly is the assistant director of planning services for Kent County.

Houston’s meeting minutes confirm that Kent County representatives took no position on Houston’s proposed annexation areas, nor were there any concerns regarding proposed future land use within the municipal boundary. Houston understands that the county continues not to favor growth outside of the growth zone. In fact, during the Feb. 2018 meeting, town representatives were briefed that the county has taken regulatory steps likely to further limit subdivision-style residential development in proximity to Houston. Most notably, on-site septic is no longer permitted. The county has also introduced a tiered system, setting limits on allowable residential densities. For parcels 200 acres or larger, only one unit per four acres is allowed. Marginally higher densities are allowed for smaller parcels. Kent County also affirmed that virtually all of the agricultural lands adjacent to Houston are “sending areas,” as it concerns the county’s transfer of development rights (TDR) program.

10-3. Future Land use Within Town
The Future Land Use Map, in the appendix, illustrates Houston’s desired configuration for, at least, the next five to ten years. The Town has no significant changes to future land use from either its existing land use (map also in appendix) or from the prior version of this planning document. The only changes were a handful of housekeeping edits. Agricultural and residential uses continue to account for over 80 percent of the total land area. Parcels observed to have been vacant continue are anticipated to come back online according to their former use. Aside from the “vacant” designation, Houston’s Future Land Use Map utilizes the same designations as those laid out for existing land use, with the same characterizations found in Table 25, section 10-1a of this document.

10-4. Land Use and Zoning

The link between land use and zoning is important because Title 22, Section 702(c) of the Delaware Code requires that municipalities:

“...within 18 months of the adoption of a comprehensive development plan or revision thereof, amend its official zoning map to rezone all lands within the municipality in accordance with the uses of land provided for in the comprehensive development plan.”

Zoning is the chief means for implementing the comprehensive plan, consisting of a written document and a series of maps. The maps show a number of districts or zones into which the municipality is divided in order to regulate the use of land. The document specifies the types of activities (uses) that can occur in each district either as a matter of right (in all circumstances) or under certain conditions (conditional uses). It also regulates building height, lot sizes, setbacks, yards and green space, the number and sizes of signs, and space for off-street parking. Some municipalities incorporate environmental-protection standards in zoning ordinances, while others have stand-alone ordinances with cross-references to zoning standards.

Zoning works with subdivision regulations. Subdivision refers to the process of splitting up or assembling land for development. The regulations governing this process designate utility locations, street rights-of-
way, open space, and common areas. They also outline the services, such as water, sewer, gas, and electricity, and amenities that a developer must supply prior to sale of subdivided (or assembled) land. Increasingly, the distinction between zoning and subdivision regulations is becoming blurred.

Development plan approvals cannot take place without making sure that plans are in compliance with zoning and subdivision codes. Over the past several years, a number of Delaware municipalities have consolidated subdivision and zoning regulations into a single land use code.

10-4a. Houston’s Existing Zoning Classifications
The “Houston Area Zoning” Map, in the appendix, illustrates Houston’s existing zoning, and Kent County’s. Houston’s was last amended in the summer of 2016. It’s important to clearly state two points. One, the map that appears in the appendix of this document is not Houston’s official zoning map, nor that of Kent County. It was recreated for inclusion into this document for discussion. Interested parties can view the official zoning map and code at the municipal offices or on the town’s official website.

Second, this map depicts Houston’s zoning as it was before the adoption, certification, and implementation of this comprehensive plan. As is discussed in the section above, municipalities have an 18 month window to update their zoning and subdivision ordinances following the adoption and certification of a new comprehensive plan.

Houston’s zoning is very straightforward. It has only five classifications, four of which were in use as of the writing of this document. Each is outlined briefly below

Residential – The residential classification allows, by right, single-family detached homes (not mobile homes), gardens, orchards, some public utilities, and parkland. Multi-family homes, public and private lodges, child care facilities, places of worship, medical service providers, and certain “neighborhood” scale businesses may be allowed as conditional uses at the discretion of the town council.

Residential Modular – This district is nearly identical to the “Residential” classification, except it was designed to accommodate modular (not mobile) homes. Though not stated explicitly, this classification was intended to regulate pre-fabricated homes without a full foundation. It allows for the same conditional uses, at the discretion of council, as the residential classification. The one difference is that “cluster subdivision” is listed as a potential conditional use, whereas residential only allowed multi-family homes. The Town no longer permits any type of home, pre-fabricated or stick-built, without a full foundation. Though some still are present in the municipality, they exist as non-conforming uses, even within the RM classification. The Town will consider striking the RM classification all-together when it updates its ordinances following adoption and certification of this plan.

Commercial – Houston’s commercial district enumerates nearly a dozen, fairly typical, allowable commercial uses. Moreover, all by-right and conditional uses of the residential district are allowed as permitted uses, with the exception of stand-alone residences. Homes may be allowed if a business operates out of it, or out of a commercial structure also on the property. The commercial district also allows for residential use on the upper stories of a structure if the ground floor’s use is entirely
commercial. Big box commercial or warehouses may be permitted only as conditional uses, with consent from council.

**Industrial** – The list of permitted and prohibited uses for this classification is too lengthy to easily summarize. The district is designed to allow “industrial park” style uses, including low-impact manufacturing, research and design, printing, and larger scale commercial or office. Agriculture is also a permitted use. Residential use is not allowed, nor are a host of potential industrial or agri-industry uses that would involve a number of enumerated chemical processes, junk yards, dumps, quarries, slaughter houses, and other objectionable uses.

**Preservation** – No parcels were regulated or zoned preservation as of this plan’s adoption. It appears never to have been used. Preservation allows for agriculture and passive recreation. Active recreational uses, certain agricultural accessory uses, and homes, only if used “as a residence in conjunction with a farm or the cultivation of crops,” are listed as conditional uses.

As of the date of the plan adoption, the existing zoning map and the descriptions of the existing zoning categories (above) represent a fixed period in time and the Town reserves the right to create new zoning categories and change property zonings as long as the intent of the Comprehensive Plan is upheld. These items are for informational purposes only.

### 10-5 Growth and Annexation

The Potential Annexation Area Map, in the appendix of this document, illustrates the areas Houston may be prepared to annex within the coming five to ten year planning period. It is unchanged from the town’s previous plan. Houston has not annexed since its incorporation and remains a perfect rectangle. The identified area is bound to the north by S.R. 14, Milford-Harrington Highway. To the east, it terminates at Blairs Pond Road. To the south, it is bound by the Beaver Dam Branch, and to the west, the annexation area terminates at Deep Grass Lane.

Annexation to the north would, potentially, involve the incorporation of parts of a residential subdivision built during the past ten years. In every other direction, the lands in question are either environmentally constrained and generally unsuitable for significant development, or are in use agriculturally.

Houston has a very deliberative annexation procedure enumerated in its charter. Not only must property owners petition the town and, themselves, be favorably disposed to being annexed, any annexation requires a supermajority of town council, favorable findings from a specially appointed committee, and is subject to a municipality wide referendum.

Given the town’s concern regarding the cost of providing municipal services as compared to tax revenues it receives, this plan further recommends that such an analysis be performed prior to accepting, or moving substantively forward on, any annexation requests.
Houston is, generally, quite content just as it is: a one-horse farm town in rural Kent County. It largely wishes to remain as it is and incrementally work towards the redevelopment of vacant, underutilized, and blighted properties. Given that the town no longer allows for modular homes without full foundations, and that all such existing structures are presently allowed non-conforming uses in the town’s residential modular zoning classification, it may wish to simply do away with the RM classification and allow the existing structures to legally non-conform is the standard residential zone.

It is difficult to articulate the town’s precise position on geographic expansion via annexation. Each potential request triggers an intensive, deliberative, community-wide, political process, at which time the collective will of the municipality is determined through numerous public hearings, analysis, special committees, votes by council, and potentially a town-wide referendum, which even the considerable public outreach involved with this planning process could not hope to equal.

In the near-term, the town views any, certainly significant, annexation as unlikely. The town is comfortable with its current potential annexation areas, which are logically bounded by man-made and natural features, and considers the same areas as its “area of concern,” in the context of intergovernmental advisement and coordination. Accordingly, it has adopted a fairly straightforward outlook towards future housing and population growth.

10-6a. Position on Housing and Population Growth

Houston welcomes modest gains in population and housing units consistent with the development of vacant lots and the redevelopment of underutilized properties at densities consistent with its desired future land uses.

10-6b. Goals and Objectives

Goal

To accommodate a mix of uses within the predominantly single-family residential character of the Town and the predominantly agricultural and natural character of the surrounding area.

Objectives

- Update Houston’s existing zoning and subdivision ordinance to regulate permitted uses and densities, reflect the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, and replace the town’s existing Zoning Ordinance.
- Consider the development of design guidelines as part of the ordinance update that reflect Houston’s unique character.
- Work with the Delaware Department of Agriculture to preserve agricultural and natural resource lands in and around the Town of Houston
• Work with Kent County’s Department of Planning services to best make use of the county’s TDR program, particularly as it relates to adjoining agricultural parcels.
• Continue to coordinate with Kent County Planning for municipal building code review and explore developing in-house capabilities.
• Require an analysis of cost of services as compared to expected, recurring, tax receipts when considering any annexation.
• Consider comprehensively updating this plan document at such a time that significant annexation of population or land likely to be developed appears eminent.
• Develop a new set of new planning, zoning, subdivision and annexation application and review fees.

Goal

Preserve appropriately zoned lands for employment and economic development.

Objectives

• Maintain an industrial (or similar) land use and zoning classification for the old Paris Foods parcel.
• Engage with the state’s restructured economic development office and the property owner to find productive use for the town’s sole industrially zoned property.
CHAPTER 11. IMPLEMENTATION AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

11-1. Post-Plan Requirements

This section summarizes the provisions of the *Delaware Code* that must be complied with following adoption of this plan.

- Section 702(c) – Adopt comprehensive rezoning within 18 months after adopting this plan.
- Section 702(e) - Within five years following adoption, review this plan to determine if its provisions are still relevant.
- Section 702(f) – Submit annual reports to OSPC each July 1.

11-2. Intergovernmental Coordination

Houston is a small town with limited staff and financial resources. To accomplish and implement many of its goals, the town relies on productive cooperation between itself, neighboring municipalities, the county, and various state agencies.

Notable objectives include:

- Work with Kent County’s Department of Planning services to best make use of the county’s TDR program, particularly as it relates to adjoining agricultural parcels.
- Work with Kent County as both jurisdiction undertake planning efforts and periodically update their comprehensive plans
- Work with DelDOT to bring new sidewalk, street, and streetscape improvements to Houston
- Work with DelDOT on measures to ensure traffic safety on School Street, Front Street, Deep Grass Lane, and Blairs Pond Road.
- Work with Kent County and the City of Milford towards the eventual development of the Beaver Dam Branch Extension of the Mispillion River Greenway
- Engage with the state’s restructured economic development office and the property owner to find productive use for the town’s sole industrially zoned property.
- Work with the Delaware Department of Agriculture to preserve agricultural and natural resource lands in and around the Town of Houston
- Apprise neighboring jurisdictions of, and invite comment on, significant development or annexation planned by the Town of Houston
- Request that Kent County apprise Houston of significant development or proposed regulatory changes potentially impacting the town’s identified area of annexation and concern.
- Explore more convenient and accessible bus service with DTC, preferably with a stop in town.
11-3. Implementation

Below, the town’s goals and objectives are recounted. The objectives are classified and color coded either as short term items expected to be addressed within 12 to 18 months (blue), medium term items hoped to be undertaken within three to five years (green), and longer term items that may be accomplished if the opportunity presents itself within the next five years or beyond (orange). Items that are predominantly ongoing processes remain in the standard font color.

Community Character and Design Goals and Recommendations

Goal

Preserve Houston’s agricultural character and neighboring farms

Objectives

- Periodically communicate with farm operators and neighboring agricultural land-owners
- Work with the Delaware Department of Agriculture to preserve agricultural and natural resource lands in and around the Town of Houston
- Work with Kent County’s Department of Planning services to best make use of the county’s TDR program, particularly as it relates to adjoining agricultural parcels.

Goal

Protect the Town’s most valued historic resources

Objective

- Consider the development of design guidelines as part of the ordinance update that reflect Houston’s unique character.
- Consider allowing interested property owners to opt-in to a Houston Historic Preservation District

Goal

Encourage home-ownership and citizen investment in the community

Objectives

- Explore hiring a part-time Code Enforcement Officer
- Work to obtain CDGG funds to assist homeowners with serious property maintenance and repair needs
Goal

Favor less-dense, neighborhood-scale, residential and community commercial uses.

Objective

- Update Houston’s existing zoning and subdivision ordinance to regulate permitted uses and densities, reflect the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, and replace the town’s existing Zoning Ordinance.

Goal

Preserve and enhance the town’s quiet, peaceful lifestyle.

Objectives

- Consider code changes consistent with the Dark Skies policy
- Review model ordinances and policy suggestions of the IDA (International Dark Sky Association) to determine their applicability in Houston.
- Pursue any opportunities to have roadside utilities buried

Government, Community Services, and Infrastructure Goals and Recommendations

Goal

Explore new, or expanded, municipal services and community facilities, including infrastructure and utility improvements that will improve Houston

Objectives

- Conduct a study, poll, or referendum to determine community interest in public sewer.
- Conduct a planning study for a new town office, community center, parking lot, access road, and small park on the town-owned land east of Broad Street.
- Explore any alternatives to single-provider internet service
- Pursue any opportunities to expand recreational lands and activities within Houston
- Pursue any opportunities to have roadside utilities buried
- Encourage the appropriate use of low-impact development and resilient stormwater management practices contained in the Delaware Green Infrastructure Primer.
• Review mutual aid agreements with surrounding jurisdictions and confirm their adequacy.

• Request notification of significant development in proximity to Houston that would draw from the Columbia Aquifer.

Goal

To improve the Town’s capacity to directly serve its citizens, including a greater role in planning, community development, and code enforcement.

Objectives

• Establish a Town of Houston Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment

• Attend relevant workshops and training seminars, often hosted by the DLLG, the American Planning Association, and some of the State’s universities and colleges.

• Explore hiring a part-time Code Enforcement Officer

• Develop a new set of planning, zoning, subdivision, and annexation application review fees.

Housing Goals and Recommendations

Goal

Encourage home-ownership and citizen investment in the community

Objectives

• Work to obtain CDBG funds to assist homeowners with serious property maintenance and repair needs

• Promote DSHA home-ownership initiatives to current and prospective residents

• Explore hiring a part-time Code Enforcement Officer

Goal

Encourage family living and small scale residential development in good neighborhoods, in keeping with the life and feeling of a quiet residential town.

Objectives

• Update Houston’s existing zoning and subdivision ordinance to regulate permitted uses and densities, reflect the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, and replace the town’s existing Zoning Ordinance.

• Consider the development of design guidelines as part of the ordinance update that reflect Houston’s unique character.
• Encourage the redevelopment or rehabilitation of blighted or deteriorated properties

Goal

Provide affordable opportunities for existing and prospective residents to rent or own homes

Objectives

• Ensure all town regulations adhere fully with the Fair Housing Act
• Pursuing available funding and available tax credits from DSHA and the State Historic Preservation Office
• Permit some development of duplex housing.
• Consider allowing accessory dwelling units within existing structures (Granny Flats).

Transportation Goals and Recommendations

Goal

Enable the safe and efficient mobility of residents utilizing all modes of travel, be they pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, or transit riders, via a safe and interconnected transportation system.

Objectives

• Explore more convenient and accessible bus service with DTC, preferably with a stop in town.
• Coordinate with DelDOT and other transportation agencies to improve signage, speed controls, street surfacing, and traffic safety measures on arterial streets.
• Work with Kent County and the City of Milford towards the eventual development of the Beaver Dam Branch Extension of the Mispillion River Greenway
• Assess and itemize priority improvements to the town’s bicycle and pedestrian network and engage with DelDOT to discuss implementation.
• Ensure any new development has multiple connections to the existing town and provides connections to neighboring, or potential future, development.
• Work with DelDOT to bring new sidewalk, street, and streetscape improvements to Houston
• Work with DelDOT on measures to ensure traffic safety on School Street, Front Street, Deep Grass Lane, and Blairs Pond Road.

Economic Development and Redevelopment Goals and Recommendations

Goal
Explore new, or expanded, municipal services and community facilities, including infrastructure and utility improvements that will improve Houston

Objectives

- Conduct a study, poll, or referendum to determine community interest in public sewer.
- Conduct a planning study for a new town office, community center, parking lot, access road, and small park on the town-owned land east of Broad Street.
- Explore any alternatives to single-provider internet service

Goal

Encourage and work toward the redevelopment of blighted, deteriorated, or under-utilized properties and work proactively with land-owners to encourage redevelopment consistent with the town’s favored uses and intensities.

Objectives

- Consider the development of design guidelines as part of the ordinance update that reflect Houston’s unique character.
- Engage with the state’s restructured economic development office and the property owner to find productive use for the town’s sole industrially zoned property.
- Work to obtain CDBG funds to assist homeowners with serious property maintenance and repair needs.

Goal

Grow and promote agri-tourism

Objectives

- Coordinate town festivals and special events with local farmers and farm families
- Promote existing farmers markets and consider opportunities for an improved venue
- Consider amending the town’s ordinances to allow for on-site retail sales, tastings, and dining to ensure the continued viability of the area’s farms.

Natural Resources Goals and Recommendations

Goal
Coordinate with relevant agencies and committees to improve water quality in the Mispillion and Murderkill watersheds.

Objectives

- Participate in the Mispillion River and Murderkill Tributary Action Teams to assist in the development of pollution control strategies for the municipality’s watersheds.

Goal

Preserve the water quality and water supply for Houston’s citizens.

Objectives

- Consider developing and adopting a source water protection ordinance to address wellheads and excellent recharge areas in and around the municipality.
- Consider adding specific language to the town’s ordinances requiring wetland delineations for larger buildings and subdivisions.
- Consider adding specific language to the town’s development and subdivision ordinances for the buffering of wetlands, floodplains, and wellheads with dimensional standards at least equal to those required by the Kent County Conservation District.
- Consider adding specific language to the town’s development and subdivision ordinances for the preservation of areas of contiguous forest.
- Continue to explore the possibility of public sewer service, thereby reducing the need for septic systems.
- Consider formalizing an annexation policy, or adopting one, whereby any new annexations would be subject to annexation agreements where all relevant natural features are protected in a manner than meets, or exceeds, existing standards.
- Identify the town’s proposed annexation area also as an “area of concern” and request that the town receive notice from the controlling municipality or county when development is proposed, particularly in regard to new wells, pumping allocations, and community septic infrastructure.
- Request notification of significant development in proximity to Houston that would draw from the Columbia Aquifer.

Goal

Pursue agricultural preservation of high-value agricultural parcels, in keeping with the town’s small-town, agricultural heritage.

Objectives

- Promote DDA agricultural preservation programs via brochures and the town’s website.
- Work with the Delaware Department of Agriculture to preserve agricultural and natural resource lands in and around the Town of Houston
- Work with Kent County’s Department of Planning services to best make use of the county’s TDR program, particularly as it relates to adjoining agricultural parcels.

Goal
Limit the growth of harmful atmospheric emissions attributable to Houston.

Objective
- Work with DTC to explore siting a bus stop central to the town.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Goals and Recommendations

Goal
Ensure Houston’s residents have adequate access to active and passive recreational activities

Objectives
- Coordinate with the City of Milford regarding the long-term possibility of a greenway connecting the municipalities
- Explore the acquisition and development of a playground across from the fire hall
- Consider open space and recreational set asides in any future annexation requests
- Consider revising the municipality’s major subdivision requirements to specify a desired percentage or amount of dedicated open space.
- Engage with DDA’s Forestry Section to explore urban forestry programs
- Work with the Delaware Department of Agriculture to preserve agricultural and natural resource lands in and around the Town of Houston

Future Land Use and Annexation Goals and Recommendations

Goal
To accommodate a mix of uses within the predominantly single-family residential character of the Town and the predominantly agricultural and natural character of the surrounding area.

Objectives
- Update Houston’s existing zoning and subdivision ordinance to regulate permitted uses and densities, reflect the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, and replace the town’s existing Zoning Ordinance.
- Consider the development of design guidelines as part of the ordinance update that reflect Houston’s unique character.
- Work with the Delaware Department of Agriculture to preserve agricultural and natural resource lands in and around the Town of Houston
• Work with Kent County’s Department of Planning services to best make use of the county’s TDR program, particularly as it relates to adjoining agricultural parcels.
• Continue to coordinate with Kent County Planning for municipal building code review and explore developing in-house capabilities.
• Require an analysis of cost of services as compared to expected, recurring, tax receipts when considering any annexation.
• Consider comprehensively updating this plan document at such a time that significant annexation of population or land likely to be developed appears eminent.
• Develop a new set of new planning, zoning, subdivision and annexation application and review fees.

Goal

Preserve appropriately zoned lands for employment and economic development.

Objectives

• Maintain an industrial (or similar) land use and zoning classification for the old Paris Foods parcel.
• Engage with the state’s restructured economic development office and the property owner to find productive use for the town’s sole industrially zoned property.

Intergovernmental Coordination Objectives

• Work with Kent County’s Department of Planning services to best make use of the county’s TDR program, particularly as it relates to adjoining agricultural parcels.
• Work with Kent County as both jurisdiction undertake planning efforts and periodically update their comprehensive plans
• Work with DelDOT to bring new sidewalk, street, and streetscape improvements to Houston
• Work with DelDOT on measures to ensure traffic safety on School Street, Front Street, Deep Grass Lane, and Blairs Pond Road.
• Work with Kent County and the City of Milford towards the eventual development of the Beaver Dam Branch Extension of the Mispillion River Greenway
• Engage with the state’s restructured economic development office and the property owner to find productive use for the town’s sole industrially zoned property.
• Work with the Delaware Department of Agriculture to preserve agricultural and natural resource lands in and around the Town of Houston
• Apprise neighboring jurisdictions of, and invite comment on, significant development or annexation planned by the Town of Houston
• Request that Kent County apprise Houston of significant development or proposed regulatory changes potentially impacting the town’s identified area of annexation and concern.
• Explore more convenient and accessible bus service with DTC, preferably with a stop in town.
FEMA Flood Maps - FEMA/FIRM, FirstMap, 03/18.
Groundwater Recharge Areas - Delaware Geological Survey, FirstMap 03/18.
Wetlands - DNREC, Division of Wetlands, FirstMap 03/18.
Municipal Boundaries - Town of Houston, Delaware, 03/18.
Road and Rail Network - Delaware Department of Transportation, FirstMap 03/18.
Hydrology - USGS and EPA, FirstMap 03/18.

Note:
This map is provided by the University of Delaware, Institute for Public Administration, 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 the data included herein are made by IPA, nor will IPA be held responsible for any use of this document for purposes other than which it was intended.
Sources:
Kent County Delaware Zoning - 03/28/18.
DRAFT Zoning - Derived from Code of the Town of Houston, Chapter 550 Appendices, coded by the Institute for Public Administration, University of Delaware, 02/08/18.
Municipal Boundaries - Town of Houston, Delaware, 03/18.
Road and Rail Network - Delaware Department of Transportation, FirstMap 03/18.
Hydrology - USGS and EPA, FirstMap 03/18.

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Appendix X: Survey Responses

**Do you live within the corporate limits of the town of Houston?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20+</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How long have you lived in Houston?**

- 0-4 years: 9, 26%
- 5-9 years: 4, 11%
- 10-19 years: 6, 17%
- 20+ years: 16, 46%
Do you own or rent your residence?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How would you describe your residence?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Family Home</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condominium</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duplex</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townhouse</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Home</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Where do you work?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Castle County</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent County</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sussex County</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What do you like most about Houston?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Businesses</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hometown</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Opportunity</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth and Potential</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Living</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Town Atmosphere</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Community</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What do you like least about Houston?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Code Enforcement</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Station Alarm</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Entertainment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime/Safety</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road/Infrastructure</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Business</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Shopping</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Public Water/Sewer</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How would you feel if Houston grew by annexing outside land into the town limits?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Approve</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Approve nor Disapprove</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapprove</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disapprove</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If there is residential growth in Houston, what types of homes would you like to see?

Rank in order of importance to you availability of the following amenities/utilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townhouses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condominiums</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duplex</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Home</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REWRITE WORKSHOP
6:00 PM MEETING
February 08, 2018 Rescheduled from 01/11/2018

Call to Order
Guest Speaker: Kristopher S. Connelly, AICP, Assistant Director of Planning Services, Kent County Levy Court
Kent County Comp Plan, County Future Land Use for our area

Adjourn

7:30 PM REGULAR MEETING
February 08, 2018 Rescheduled from 01/11/2018

Call to Order
Pledge of Allegiance
Approval of Previous Minutes
Monthly Reports
- Treasurer
  - Monthly Bills
- Tax Collector: Past Due Letters sent, Due Date 12/31/17
- Planning & Zoning: Land Use No Applications for December or January
- Code Enforcement Violations: Maple Street properties Kent County progress
- Correspondence –

Public Comment Section

Unfinished Business
- Comprehensive Plan Rewrite, Online Survey postcards mailed, online survey requested by February 14, 2018.
- Residential Rental Operating License Renewals – Due by 12/31/17
- Sewer Committee progress
- Other Unfinished Business as may be necessary for discussion and/or action

New Business
- East Front Street Solar Speed Sign Replacement
- Filing for Council, Mayor & (2) Councilmember seats, Saturday, February 24, 2018, from 6:00 – 8:00PM, in Radio Room Houston Vol. Fire Co.
- Other new business as may be necessary for discussion and/or action

Council Member Comment and Update Session
Adjourn

In accordance with 29 Del. C. 10004(e)(2), this Agenda was posted on February 01, 2018, at 5:00 p.m., at least seven (7) days in advance of the meeting.

This agenda shall be subject to change to include additional items including executive sessions or the deletion of items including executive sessions which arise at the time of the public body’s meeting.

Agenda items may be considered out of sequence.
Yes, I agree and will you be sending comments with regard to our plan on behalf of the town? Having something official from the town would be our preference.

Kris

From: William DeCoursey [mailto:decourse@udel.edu]
Sent: Thursday, March 29, 2018 10:26 AM
To: Kris Connelly
Cc: Edgell David (OMB)
Subject: Houston Plan, Kent Coordination

Good Afternoon Kris,

Thank you for attending the Town of Houston's Feb. 8 Comprehensive Plan development meeting. Your presentation to Council was extremely helpful.

As you know, the PLUS process requires the town to demonstrate coordination efforts with the county. We have the meeting minutes and agenda, but I'd also like to be able to document correspondence from you. Would you please be so kind as to respond to this email in your capacity as Assistant Director and affirm your comments at the meeting, that the County

1) has no objection to Houston's proposed area of potential annexation
2) had no other significant concerns that arose from the Feb. 8 meeting.

Thank You,
William J. DeCoursey
UD/IPA Assistant Policy Scientist
(302) 831-4925
decourse@udel.edu