

Dover Charrette Proceedings

June 13-15, 2016



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Introduction

The Delaware Plan4Health project aims to address obesity in Dover and Kent County by focusing on efforts to improve opportunities for healthy eating and active living. By leveraging the timing of the comprehensive plan updates, Delaware Plan4Health will address healthy behaviors through policy and the built environment by creating a process to understand how health and equity can be assessed and integrated in comprehensive plans. This process includes carrying out a planning charrette by bringing together the public and disciplines in planning, design and public health for an intensive session of exploring opportunities linking health and planning, with a focus on equity. With the preliminary analyses and results from the charrette, the Delaware Plan4Health Team will have a framework and guidance for incorporating health and equity in the comprehensive plan updates for the City of Dover and Kent County. For this project, there will be two 3-day charrettes—one in Dover and the other in surrounding Kent County.

Purpose

Delaware Plan4Health conducted a 3-day planning charrette in Dover June 13-15. A charrette is a public participation and stakeholder engagement exercise that explores creativity and community vision for a design of a project or community plan. For the Dover charrette, community stakeholders, city planners and the public came together to review work that has been done to date, identify priority concerns and review potential strategies. The results from the charrette, combined with the preliminary analyses, will contribute to the guidance document for the City's comprehensive plan update.

Preliminary Work

Prior to the charrette, Delaware Plan4Health conducted a public survey and a mapping analysis of equity composite, healthy food retail, active transportation and active recreation priority areas. Results from these analyses led to identifying priority areas and leading concerns/barriers to healthy eating and active living within Dover, which informed the format of the charrette.

Charrette Selection—Downtown Dover

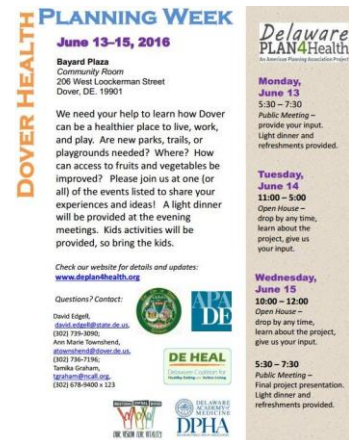
The Plan4Health Team selected the Downtown area for their charrette due to the existing infrastructure and current efforts for improvements. The area is home to the city's most vulnerable population with a high number of low-income and minority households. In addition, the Plan4Health team is leveraging the current effort of Restoring Central Dover, an initiative bringing together community and city representatives aimed "to exchange ideas, to imagine - together - the future of Central Dover". The study area for the charrette is found within the red bubble line in Figure 1. The boundaries include Route 13 to the east, Wyoming Avenue to the south, Saulsbury Road to the west, and Walker Road to the north.



Figure 1 Charrette Study Area in Downtown Dover

Charrette Promotion

A one-page informational flyer was sent to an email distribution list of the Delaware Coalition of Healthy Eating and Active (DE HEAL) Living Environment and Policy Committee members, stakeholders and other interested individuals. In addition, there was an advertisement in the local newspaper and the flyer was shared via social media (e.g. Facebook and Twitter) and disseminated through partners. During the event, Delaware Plan4Health members distributed flyers



Charrette Approach

The charrette included a public engagement activity, walk/windshield tour, stakeholder brainstorming session, and public presentations.

Day 1

The focus of Day 1 was to familiarize stakeholders and Plan4Health team members with the study area and begin to identify priorities for healthy eating and active living opportunities. Team members, consultants and stakeholders reviewed the charrette agenda for the next few days. The team went on a walking and windshield tour in select areas of the community. The tours highlighted the following concerns and needs:

- Converting vacant lands for transitional uses such as parks, playgrounds, and gardens
- Accessible, safe parks in the center of town
- Pedestrian/bicycle-friendly streets
- Healthy food access— Family Dollar as the “go to” grocer for a low-income area
- Connectivity to various uses
- Transforming corner stores
- Use of street trees



Following the tours, team members and stakeholders discussed opportunities, including partnerships to develop and implement efforts, and policy-related recommendations to be incorporated in the comprehensive plan update.



In the evening, the team prepared an open house that included a presentation of the project and goals for the charrette and a public engagement exercise, the “dot” exercise. During the “dot” exercise, participants were asked to place dot stickers on images that appeal to their interest for the community. Next to each image board, residents had an opportunity to provide some written feedback on the reason for their selections. The images were categorized into the following themes—Healthy Food Access, Active Transportation and Active Recreation. These images involved

examples of potential opportunities for the community and included:

- Active parks/recreation space (including adult “playgrounds”)
- Passive recreation/parks space
- Street furnishings
- Lighting
- Transit Stops
- Underground utilities
- Sidewalks and connectivity
- Safe Biking
- Trails
- Street trees
- Traffic calming
- Safe pedestrian crossing
- Community gardens
- Farmers market with EBT
- Trailside healthy food
- Produce carts
- Transit to healthy food
- Wayfinding signage



Day 2

Day 2 of the charrette included an open house. Plan4Health Team members canvassed the neighborhood to invite residents to the open house. Team members remained in the community room to review maps for active transportation and active recreation opportunities. This included reviewing proposed and current projects such as the Capital Gateway Study, Senator Bikeway, and a multi-uses path along the St. Jones’ River.



Throughout the day, residents had an opportunity to participate in the “dot” exercise. In addition, team members discussed strategies and approaches for the comprehensive plan update, including code amendments.

Day 3

Day 3 began with a review of the policy analysis, using the Healthy Living and Active Design Scorecard, with the Plan4Health Team. The analysis was conducted by a consultant with Planning4Health Solutions who was unfamiliar with Dover and Kent County. Following review of the analysis, the Team discussed an approach to develop the guidance. The approach will include language addressing health impact in planning and its influence on chronic disease burden and obesity. In addition, Planning4Health Solutions will provide recommended language for each chapter of the comprehensive plan that addresses health and impact, as well as, strategies to implement health-related efforts. The Team agreed that a stand-alone health chapter will not suffice as that does not support the idea of health having an impact in the different aspects of planning.

Based on the windshield tour, the Team focused on a parks and connectivity opportunity in the Simons Circle neighborhood. The Saulsbury Road park provided a blank slate of potential that demonstrated a need in the community. A conceptual park plan was developed to include active recreation amenities and connectivity from the adjacent neighborhood to the park and shopping center, which includes a grocery store.

Charrette Participants/Roles

Other than the members of community, the table below lists those participating from the Plan4Health Team and other stakeholders.

Participant	Role/Organization
David Edgell	Plan4Health Team/Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination
Mary Ellen Gray	Plan4Health Team/Kent County Planning
Ann Marie Townshend	Plan4Health Team/City of Dover Planning and Parks
Michelle Eichinger	Plan4Health Team Consultant/Planning4Health Solutions
Bill Bruce	Plan4Health Team Consultant/CRJA-IBI Group
Patti Miller	Plan4Health Team/Nemours Health & Prevention Services
Bill Swiatek	Plan4Health Team/WILMAPCO
Rich Vetter	Stakeholder/Dover/Kent MPO
Herb Inden	Stakeholder/ Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination
Dorothy Morris	Stakeholder/ Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination
Bill Brockenbrough	Stakeholder/Delaware Department of Transportation
Connie Holland	Stakeholder/ Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination
Kris Connelly	Stakeholder/Kent County Planning
Tamika Graham	Stakeholder/NCALL (Restoring Central Dover)
Richard Paiste	Stakeholder/EPA Region 3
Susan Moriarity	Stakeholder/Delaware State Housing Authority
Jeremy Gibb	Stakeholder/City of Dover GIS
Mark Nowak	Stakeholder/City of Dover GIS
Dawn Melson-Williams	Stakeholder/City of Dover Planning
Eddie Diaz	Stakeholder/City of Dover Planning
Fred Gatto	Stakeholder/Delaware Division of Public Health
Laura Saperstein	Stakeholder/Delaware Division of Public Health

Statement of Findings: Healthy Eating/Food Access

While the study area is not in a USDA-defined “food desert,”¹ there was evidence from the preliminary analysis suggesting concerns with healthy food access and affordability. In the study area, there was no grocery store, one seasonal farmers’ market, two small corner stores and a Family Dollar. Due to its central location and sidewalks connectivity, the Family Dollar appears to be the “go to” grocer for the area. Food sold in discount stores are often of poor nutritional value—high calorie, high fat, and/or high sodium. While the Family Dollar may be affordable, it is known that food and other items sold at smaller retail stores, as in corner stores, are often more expensive than comparable food sold at full service grocery stores or supermarkets. These stores often do not sell fruits and vegetables. Overall, there is clearly a need to improve access to healthy foods, fruits and vegetables.

Based on the public feedback, residents expressed the need for healthy, fresh, and affordable fruits and vegetables. The following comments were seen:

- Bring Foods to the Community– Gardens and Produce Carts

¹ The United States Department of Agriculture defines a “food desert” in an urban area as being a low-income area (census tracts with at least 20% of household are at poverty level) and low access to a grocery store or supermarket (census tracts with a grocery store/supermarket greater than 1 mile to at least 33% or 500 people).

- Accepting EBT at Farmers' Markets and for Fruits and Vegetables
- Get healthy food at retail- How do we get places like Family Dollar to sell healthy foods?
- Partnerships to Provide Healthy Food
- Need for ethnic-specific produce

Healthy Food Access Recommendations

Healthy Corner Store

There are several approaches to transform corner stores and small retail into healthy corner stores. Recognition programs involving partnerships with health department, store owners, chambers of commerce and city agencies allow interested store owners to meet criteria for participation and then are promoted and recognized for their healthy food offerings. Along with recognition programs, city agencies can provide financial incentives to encourage the sale of healthy foods, such as fee waivers or tax credits. This may include having the City waive the business permit fees if the store meets criteria for offering healthy foods, such as a percentage of healthy foods versus non-healthy foods. There are examples from other communities that have done a healthy food recognition program, such as Chicago's Healthy Hot Spot.

Community Gardens

Through various partnerships, community gardens can provide a source of fresh, affordable produce for residents. A Comprehensive Garden / Urban Agriculture Network is an approach that combines collaborative partnerships with programs to support and sustain community gardens. Produce from gardens can provide fresh fruits and vegetables to local food pantries, contribute to local food procurement in institutions, be sold to the community through mobile markets and produce carts, and be a part of a local food distribution hub. Figure 2 demonstrates the uses and partnerships needed for a sustainable garden network. With many vacant lots in the area, there is opportunity for gardens. Flexible land use models allow for short-term uses of land while vacant. The City may employ temporary use permits on vacant lands or amend commercial or residential zoning to allow for short-term/temporary uses while transitioning to development. These flexible land use models can support the development of gardens in vacant lots as they may be temporarily vacant for future development.

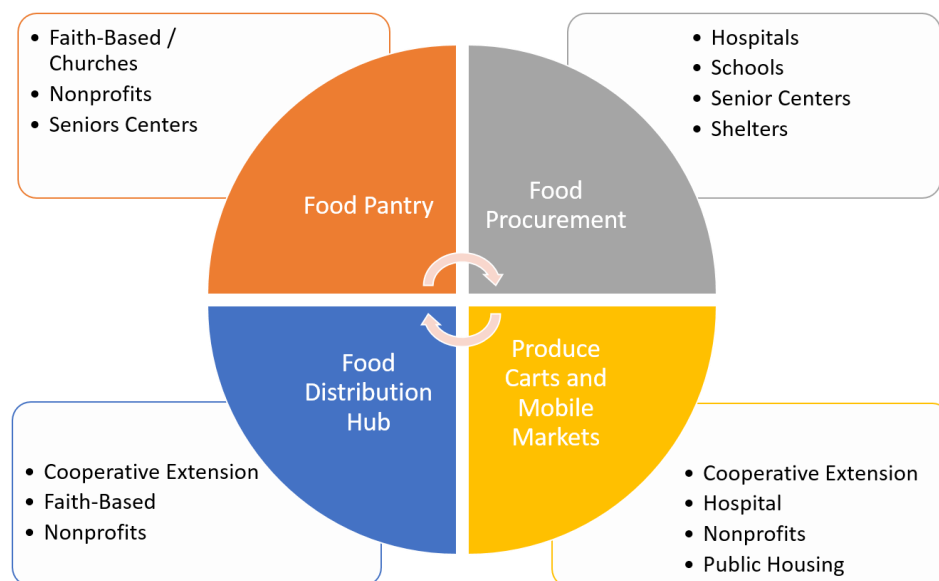


Figure 2 Comprehensive Urban Agriculture/Garden Network

Produce Carts

Many residents expressed interest in having fresh fruits and vegetables available in their neighborhoods. Produce Carts are mobile carts that can locate in priority areas and in partnership with nonprofit and government agencies, can accept EBT vouchers for those receiving WIC or SNAP benefits. Produce carts can provide job opportunities and cities can offer financial incentives for cart operators through fee waivers.

Local Distribution Hub

With gardens and partnerships with local farmers, a local food distribution hub can offer affordable, even free, produce to vulnerable populations. Corner stores can enter in a food distribution cooperative through the food distribution hub to help reduce the cost of distribution and transportation. In addition, a local food distribution hub can source local, fresh produce for institutions such as schools, hospital, senior centers and prisons.

Farmers Markets Accepting EBT

Dover has a Farmers' Market on Loockerman Street. Farmers' markets that accept EBT vouchers allow individuals to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables through their WIC or SNAP benefits. Based on the local public survey, residents who are low-income or receive WIC or SNAP benefits have expressed that they are not likely to shop at Farmers' Markets due to lack of affordability. Markets partnering with those administering these public benefits can help promote affordability and EBT use at these markets.

Statement of Findings: Active Living

The project area is a traditional urban core, and as such, it has an excellent sidewalk network along almost all streets. However, there are not many parks in the neighborhoods, and just two small parks with playgrounds. Similarly, there are no specific bike routes linking the parks and other areas, such as food stores, schools, etc. Dover needs more downtown parks and a more defined bike network.

Part of a healthy lifestyle includes engaging in physical activity. This does not always mean individuals engage in structured exercise, but rather activity as part of a lifestyle. Physical activity through active recreation and active transportation (e.g. walking or biking) are approaches to engage in active living.

Residents are interested in amenities and features that support and promote walking and biking. Since transit use also supports walking, residents provided feedback to support transit use in the community. The following were comments from the public regarding support for active transportation.

Lighting

- Better lighting to walk at night
- Make lighting nice
- Lighting makes people feel safe

Improved Mobility and Connectivity

- Underground utilities allow for more mobility on sidewalks and less dangerous
- Places to sit along sidewalks
- Sidewalks that are ADA friendly, allowing wheelchair access— there are damaged and raised areas that makes it impassable
- Better pedestrian connections

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Transit

- Transit needs to be reliable
- Increase transit stops to make it easy to get to places
- Transit shelters- places to sit and protect from rain
- Make more connections to places for those in assisted living
- Better local bus routes to the capital area from north/south and east/west

In addition to support for walking, biking and using transit, residents shared feedback for opportunities to support parks and recreation. The following are some of those comments.

Park Location

- Parks near people in assisted living
- Parks within walking distance from homes
- Need more parks

Park Uses and Needs

- Parks for kids and adults
- Nature parks
- Better maintenance of existing parks and open space
- Parks provide free exercise
- Parks allow people to meet; fellowship
- Parks with meditation areas
- Open for everyone
- More amenities in existing parks

While there was limited feedback on the use of trails as recreation, some residents suggested that trails should provide paths to get to places. Since this use of trails reflect on a mobility function, the corresponding recommendation and strategy will fall under active transportation.

Active Living Recommendations

Pedestrian and Bicycle Network and Supporting Amenities

Downtown Dover has a good sidewalk network, with sidewalks along almost every street. While there is a multi-use trail along the St. Jones' River and at Silver Lake Park, there is no structured pedestrian and bicycle network within the city. By considering the preliminary health and equity analyses, team members discussed an approach for a pedestrian and bicycle network that incorporates connectivity to uses, including retail, grocery, public spaces, and parks. The network would include an overlay of these healthy eating and active recreation opportunities, with priority paths in equity priority areas.

To facilitate pedestrian and bicycle activity, supporting infrastructure related to safety and appeal is necessary. Street trees allow for shade while walking for more comfort and protection from heat and direct sunlight. In addition, street trees provide drivers perception of narrowed roads, thus reducing speed in residential areas. Dover has street trees and an active program to maintain and plant new trees.

However, trees are not always the right variety or the best tree for the purpose of providing shade. A Street Trees Master Plan would provide a guidance as to where trees are required to be planted along pedestrian and vehicular corridor. A Street Tree Master Plan offers stakeholders and the City the following:

- Guideline as to what species to plant for a consistent streetscape look throughout the City.
- Locations for specific shade trees (i.e. large species indigenous to that area with less aggressive root systems) to be planted adjacent to the roadway and sidewalks to provide shade from harmful ultraviolet rays. Shade also allows people to further utilize the walkways in warmer months more often for increased physical activity.
- Comfortable social gathering areas along these corridors that encourage neighborhood interaction with neighbors and town residences.
- Maintenance recommendations that may include the rental or purchase of Gator Bags or something equivalent. These bags would be filled with water by the City crews and allow for a slow release of water for the trees during the warmer months. The trees should be planted in the fall or winter months for increased survivability.

While there are sidewalks in much of the study area, there was concern about the condition of these sidewalks as well as their capacity to meet the needs for those with disabilities and mobility challenges.

Sidewalks that meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements allow residents and visitors to navigate more safely and with comfort.

Street furnishings such as benches, street lamps, signage, and bike racks allow for safe, comfortable environment to walk or bike in neighborhoods. Street scale lighting, or street lamps, provide safety at night, but also the appeal and aesthetics attracting pedestrian activity. Benches along sidewalks allow for residents and visitors to rest during a walk. This is a safety feature that accommodates the needs of older residents and those with mobility challenges. Signage along pedestrian and bicycle paths help users to locate places. Wayfinding can promote walkability and bikability.

Bike infrastructure such as bike racks outside establishments invite residents to bike to these establishments. This may include bike racks at retail, parks, and other public spaces, such as libraries and open markets. Often one of the challenges to promote biking as a form of transportation is the lack of bike infrastructure. Designated or marked bike lanes also provide a safe path for bicycling.



Figure 3 Proposed Pedestrian and Bicycle Network

Safe Connectivity to Uses

While Dover has good sidewalk connectivity, a trail network would combine existing segments to connect neighborhoods with parks, schools and access to healthy foods. In alignment with the pedestrian and bicycle network and supporting amenities, connectivity to various uses will facilitate a more active lifestyle with residents walking or biking to places and being less dependent on vehicles. There are a few examples where connectivity to uses can support more activity. There are many neighborhoods and residential areas that are adjacent or located within walking and biking distance to places, including parks, schools, retail and other public spaces, such as libraries and open spaces for community gatherings. Silver Lake Park is a great venue for active and passive recreation. However, the park is at the periphery of the neighborhood and is more than ¼ mile away from many residents, which limits the frequency they are likely to walk to the park. In addition, residents in assisted living and senior communities often depend on the vehicle to get to places. Residents expressed interest in having safe pedestrian connectivity for these special housing areas through safe crossings and paths to transit, parks and retail.

Figure 3 details a conceptual Pedestrian and Bicycle Network Plan. This Plan aims to expand the existing Pedestrian Trail System (Biking/walking) for the City of Dover to include recreation areas as well as connecting actual uses. These uses included connecting neighborhoods to parks, historic sites, and schools, commercial and especially to healthy food locations. The City currently has portions of the Pedestrian System in place however this plan added to that effort by ensuring the system connected to healthy food places as well as places people actually needed to go. This plan utilized the health and equity data to make sure each area where a pedestrian system was added addressed areas of equity priority. Through this process, it was determined that there are “park deserts” in the City and added possible new park locations along the new Pedestrian System.

Improved Transit Shelter and Transit Connectivity

Several residents expressed the need for reliable and improved transit amenities. While there is transit available in the city’s busy highway corridor, residents are interested in seeing more transit stops in neighborhood/residential areas and routes to connect to more uses, such as parks, grocery, and healthcare. Transit shelters protect users from weather elements such as rain, wind and direct sunlight, while they wait for the bus. There are a limited number of transit shelters in the city.

Parks and Open Space

During the windshield and walking tours, it became relevant that there was a need for parks and space for active recreation within the study area. there are only two small parks with playgrounds in the neighborhood. There is no larger park centrally located. Silver Lake Park is at the periphery of the area, but more than a ¼ mile walk from many residents. As one resident stated, “kids need things to do...we need more parks for them to play.” While there are tuck-away private playgrounds, safe park and playground visibility was limited. Residents responded favorably to more playgrounds and recreation for adults and children. In addition, residents supported passive recreation amenities or nature parks that allow for calming and relaxation. One example of an opportunity that combines the support for active recreation and connectivity is the city’s Saulsbury Road park adjacent to Simons Circle, a low-income/public housing neighborhood. The park is located between the neighborhood and a shopping center, which includes a grocery store. This park is currently maintained by the City as an open field. During the charrette, this park was conceptually (Figure 4) transformed from an open field to one with connectivity between the neighborhood and the

shopping center, and a recreation space for children and adults with playgrounds, basketball courts, and a trail.

In addition, there are many opportunities for temporary or pocket parks with the current inventory of vacant lots. As previously mentioned, flexible land use models allow for short-term uses of vacant land while transitioning to development. The City can allow an temporary use of vacant lots for public spaces, such as parks and gardens. Vacant lots can be temporarily converted to small parks with playgrounds or for aesthetically pleasing passive recreation space. Partnerships with nonprofit organizations or churches may facilitate this use of space.

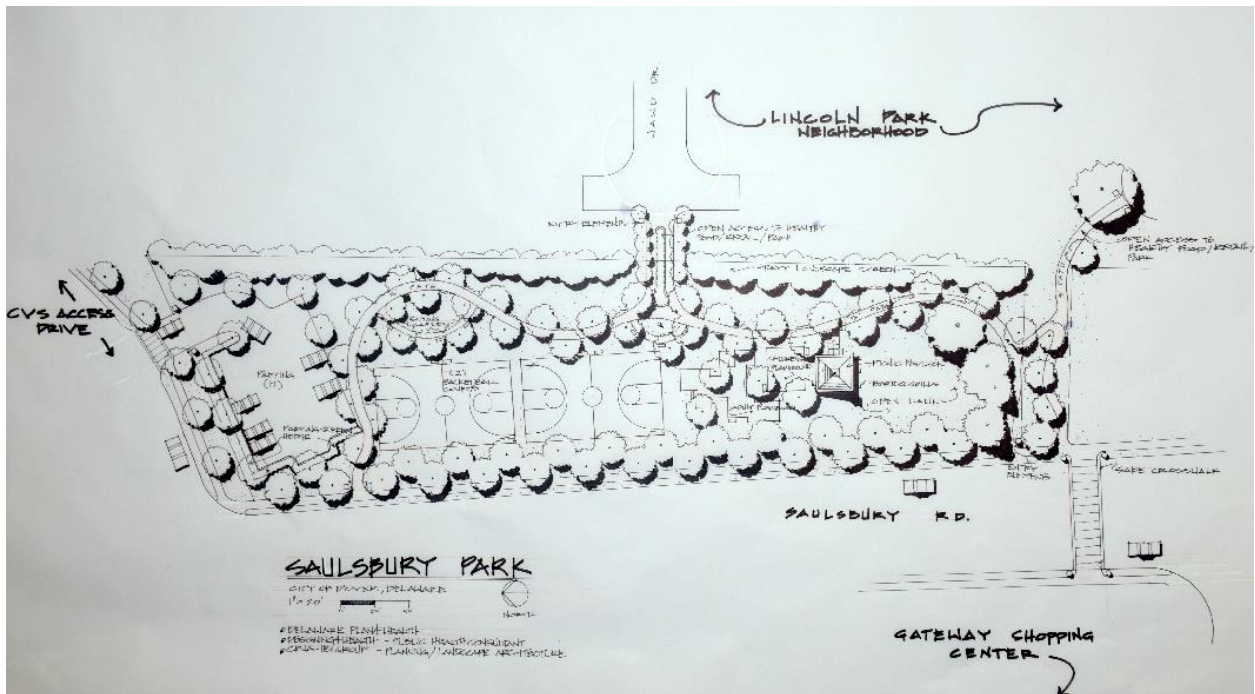


Figure 4 Conceptual Plan of Saulsbury Road Park

Next Steps

Guidance Document

Results from the preliminary analysis and the charrette will be analyzed for recommendations and strategies to be incorporated in the comprehensive plan update for the City of Dover. The guidance document will provide city officials with the recommended language linking health and equity and their impact in planning and policy. In addition, the guidance document will include targeted and specific draft language addressing health and equity for each relevant chapter of the comprehensive plan, including:

- Public Utilities and Infrastructure
- Community Services and Facilities
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Housing & Community Development
- Land Development
- Intergovernmental Coordination

- Implementation

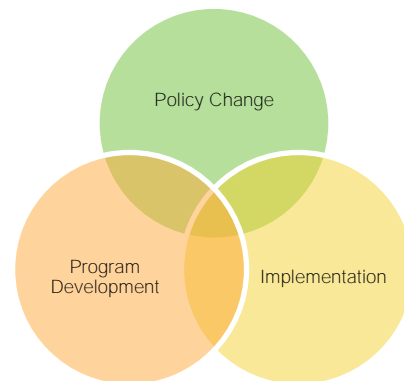
In addition to providing health and equity language, the guidance document will include recommendations and strategies to address healthy eating and active living through partnerships, and will include examples of these strategies from other communities. These examples will address policy changes, partnerships and implementation.

Capacity Building and Program Development

Many strategies and recommendations require partnerships—private and public—to develop and implement. There are many organizations focusing attention on the target populations of the study area or the neighborhood. These efforts align with the recommendations developed from the preliminary analysis and charrette.

Task Force

There are many organizations engaged in the area. A Task Force would bring together partners to develop a coordinated, strategic approach to identify priority, feasible strategies to implement. This would allow partner organizations to review resources and leveraging existing work. In addition, the Task Force can detail roles of organizations to pursue efforts—policy change, program development, and implementation. Figure X can help organize resources and identify organizations that may have overlapping roles. Organizations that can be a part of this effort include, but are not limited to:



- Restoring Central Dover
- Dover Housing Authority
- Kent General Hospital
- City of Dover
- Delaware Division of Public Health
- Nemours Health and Prevention Services
- Dover/Kent MPO
- Delaware State University—Cooperative Extension
- Central Delaware Chamber of Commerce
- Kraft Foods
- Bike Delaware
- DART

Produce Carts/Mobile Markets

Starting a produce cart/mobile market program requires private - public partnerships. This effort will need a lead organization, such as Restoring Central Dover, to develop and implement the program. There are several model programs and toolkits available, including NYC Green Carts and ChangeLab Solutions' Model Produce Cart Ordinance. The following are steps to consider in executing a produce cart/mobile market program:

- Policy Change
 - The Task Force will need to review existing city policies that may inhibit the use of produce carts/mobile markets and identify policy strategies to encourage produce carts/mobile markets. These may include financial strategies, such as business permit

fee waivers for cart operators, and ordinance amendments to allow for sidewalk vendors.

- Program Development
Program development will need to consider securing funds for cart purchase(s), produce procurement, cart operations, Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) application, site locations and agreements, and marketing
- Implementation
An organization will be needed to oversee and implement the program. In addition, organizations can partner with this effort to promote produce carts and provide supplemental programs to encourage the purchase of healthy foods and healthy eating habits (i.e. cooking classes, social marketing, etc.)

Central Dover Parks and Park Connectivity

The preliminary analysis and charrette results found a need for more parks and opportunities for active recreation. The Saulsbury Road Conceptual Master plan is an example of a neighborhood within the study area that has existing open space to develop that is adjacent to residential and commercial areas. A comprehensive park network with connectivity will help promote park usage and active living, which has been drafted as a result of the charrette. The following are steps to consider in exploring a Central Dover Parks and Connectivity plan:

- Policy Change
The Task Force needs to examine current policies to see opportunities to allow for open space/parks within the City. As mentioned earlier, flexible land use models may allow for temporary or short-term use of vacant land for parks. In addition, the Task Force can explore land use opportunities for permanent park space and suggest zoning changes to prioritize land for public spaces. In addition, policies requiring connectivity for parks and other uses and prioritizing public spaces in redevelopment efforts will support more active lifestyles.
- Program Development
While the City has a Parks and Recreation department, there are partners whose missions and activities align with active living efforts. These include opportunities for shared use agreements with schools to allow for public use of playgrounds and gymnasiums. ChangeLab Solutions provide several resources on addressing common concerns related to shared use including liability and garnering school support. In addition, marketing campaigns and recreation programming will support park usage.
- Implementation
In addition to the city's Park and Recreation department, schools and community organizations can leverage each other's resources to provide recreational programming for all ages, including after school programs for vulnerable populations.