



**Municipal Comprehensive Land Use Plan
Annual Report**

Name of Municipality: City of Rehoboth Beach

Date of Plan Certification: July 23, 2010 **Date of Report:** June 29, 2020

In accordance with 22 Del. C. §702 (g) Municipalities shall provide to the Office of State Planning Coordination a report describing implementation of their comprehensive plan and identifying development issues, trends* or conditions since the plan was last adopted or amended. The report shall be due annually no later than July 1.

*Please note that the development trends data is collected each year to further supplement this requirement. Please contact the Office of State Planning Coordination with questions regarding development trends or this annual report.

1. Please review the recommendations, goals and implementation items within your comprehensive plan and Please indicate which items are complete, underway, or not yet started. Also please include any other comments you may wish to add.

The Planning Commission is currently engaged in the development of an updated 2020 Comprehensive Development Plan (the “2020 CDP”). The Planning Commission has retained the services of KCI (Debbie Pfeil) to assist in gathering data from available resources, advising the Planning Commission on relevant considerations and significance of data sourced as well as analysis and importance of data to the Planning Commission’s considerations. There was a significant change in the composition of the Planning Commission in October 2019, at which time the current Planning Commission reset its approach to completing the 2020 CDP. This is an ongoing process.

Since the 2015 five-year review (completed on October 21, 2015) of the 2010 Comprehensive Development Plan (the “2010 CDP”), additional “action items” in the 2010 CDP have been completed (e.g., the wastewater ocean outfall project was completed in 2018, wayfinding signage for the oceanfront and Boardwalk installed, a five-year Capital Improvement Plan has been adopted by the Board of Commissioners) and other “action items” remain as ongoing or are under continuing review.

The Planning Commission is actively encouraging input from stakeholder-constituents of the City as it considers relevant issues and develops a “living” 2020 CDP. The Planning Commission has engaged in extensive outreach to gather information and input from relevant parties. Among other efforts, the Planning Commission conducted a three-part survey of the community (i.e., residents and property owners), businesses, and visitors. These surveys provide both quantitative and qualitative/narrative input and serve as an initial basis and ongoing guide for the Planning Commission to identify, understand and assess issues for further consideration and potential inclusion in the 2020 CDP. At a minimum, the results will help the Planning Commission establish implementation items and prioritization of those items. The Planning Commission has made clear that the 2020 CDP must be monitored constantly to ensure implementation and achievement of goals and objectives. To that end, the stated objective of the current Planning Commission is to meet with the Board of Commissioners no less than annually to review the status of implementation items, update prioritization of implementation items, and recommend actions.

2. Please highlight any significant accomplishments development issues, trends or conditions since the plan was last adopted or amended that may either have enhanced or hindered the implementation of your plan. These accomplishments may be used in the annual report to the Governor.

Please see Municipal Comprehensive Land Use Plan Annual Report dated June 30, 2016 and response to Item 1 above. The demographics of the Rehoboth Beach community continue to change. Income and education levels are noticeably higher. The number of residents who spend more time in the City and short-term renters in ever expanding shoulder periods use its resources and infrastructure, and expect more and better services. Thus, Rehoboth Beach is increasingly a year-round community and not just a summer tourist destination. Its reputation for high quality and diverse dining establishments, shops and welcoming and inclusive atmosphere attract people from surrounding areas of Sussex County and beyond on a year-round basis. Rehoboth Beach is “the downtown” for a significant portion of Sussex County to the West of the City where housing and commercial development continues to explode. Likewise, day tourism is increasing placing even greater strain on the City’s infrastructure and resources without any concomitant contribution to the City’s revenues to cover the added costs of providing these services. These collateral factors pose significant issues that need further consideration and development of plans to ameliorate the impact on the City.

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences on the City as a whole and, in particular, on the health, safety and welfare of our citizens and businesses is significant and unprecedented. There is the obvious impact on the City’s revenues (e.g., reduced parking revenue, reduced rental tax income, lost accommodations tax proceeds) and the concomitant increased expense of protecting our citizens, businesses and visitors from the spread of COVID-19, recent social unrest and other issues. In addition, the severe financial impact on the City’s local businesses – especially restaurants, shops and hotels – and rental properties that rely upon summer rental income to pay mortgages, is placing the economic vitality of the City and property owners at serious risk. The COVID-19 pandemic focuses the need to enhance and develop a more robust emergency preparedness plan as well as the need to assess the scope and role of the City to guide and assist any community recovery efforts.

As a consequence, planning for the future and developing a vision for the future of Rehoboth Beach in such uncertain times is all the more challenging.

In addition to the factors noted above, the City is faced with infrastructure maintenance and needed improvements that were deferred by the prior administration. Consequently, the City is now confronted with added unanticipated expenditures at a time when revenues are under pressure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The establishment of a Capital Improvement Plan in 2018 as recommended in the 2010 CDP should help to mitigate this burden in the future. The adverse impact of COVID-19 on City revenues has, however, necessitated delaying certain capital improvement projects. Capital improvement needs will likely be a major consideration covered in the 2020 CDP to ensure that infrastructure maintenance and upgrades are addressed on a continuous basis and that adequate budgeting is provided for these purposes.

In the last two (2) years, a number of significant redevelopment projects have been presented to the Planning Commission, each of which raises issues under the current City Code as well as the 2010 CDP. In particular, several hotel proposals and a theatre complex proposal conflicted with existing Code provisions and highlighted potential issues in the Code that could inhibit future redevelopment. Without resolution, these provisions have the potential to adversely impact the City's economy and, thus, the sustainability of the commercial area of the City. In the course of considering these proposals, the Planning Commission identified a number of inconsistencies within the Code as well as provisions in the Code that may create unnecessary obstacles to both residential and commercial development or may be confusing and/or otherwise overly burdensome. These matters are of significant concern. The Planning Commission intends to identify "transition changes" and longer-term changes that should be addressed by the Board of Commissioners in their overall review of the Code.

Since the adoption of the 2010 CDP, coastal communities, such as Rehoboth Beach, are faced with rapidly changing conditions that are largely out of the City's control. Sea level rise, climate change and other environmental concerns are increasing and pose greater and more imminent risk than previously. These risks include an adverse impact on redevelopment in the commercial district and residential areas, compliance hurdles required by FEMA and DNREC, potential increased risks that, among other things, will strain stormwater systems and threaten the City's unique fresh water lakes, and the risk that communities surrounding Rehoboth Beach could potentially be underwater at some point, leaving Rehoboth Beach cut off from the mainland. The 2020 CDP needs to address these rapidly changing conditions to prepare for the future.

A significant accomplishment is the beginning of construction of the Grove Park Access Dock behind the Rehoboth Beach Museum. This project has been in the works for years. Supported by private contributions to the Lewes-Rehoboth Improvement Association, grants and municipal support, the dock will provide an additional access point to the City without increasing traffic as the potential for a water taxi between Lewes and Rehoboth Beach in the future is a possibility. This project is ongoing.

An issue that has been under consideration and identified as an action item in the 2010 CDP is zoning code modifications to permit the inclusion of expanded mixed-use development within the downtown area. The Planning Commission's surveys referred to at Item 1 encourage further consideration and generally support mixed use as an acceptable land use in the City's commercial district.

We will be providing an update to the previous 2010 Zoning Map that will reflect a variety of lot re-orientations resulting from partitioning applications but no significant zoning changes.

3. Are there any planning issues that the municipality is currently facing Do you anticipate any comprehensive plan changes for which the Office of State Planning Coordination may be able to offer technical assistance? If yes, please describe below.

As of the date of this Annual Report, we do not anticipate that any changes to the 2020 CDP will require the technical assistance of the Office of State Planning Coordination. Our consultant, Debbie Pfeil of KCI, is in regular contact with all relevant state agencies and will make the appropriate contact should circumstances warrant.

4. Please help update our mailing list by supplying the following information:

Mayor: Paul Kuhns e-mail address: pkuhns@cityofreboth.com

City/Town Manager: Sharon Lynn e-mail address: slynn@cityofreboth.com

Planning Director: N/A e-mail address: N/A

Town/City Clerk: Ann Womack e-mail address: awomack@cityofreboth.com

Council/Commission Members:

Paul Kuhns (Mayor), Pat Coluzzi, Lisa Schlosser, Susan Gay, Richard Byrne, Stephen Scheffer, Edward Chrzanowski

Planning Commission Members:

Richard Perry (Chair), Jeffrey Trunzo (Vice Chair), Stephen Lee Weber (Secretary), Rachel Macha, Michael Strange, Joyce Lussier, Barry Covington, Stephen Kaufman, Mark Hunker

On behalf of the City of Rehoboth Beach, I respectfully submit this comprehensive plan annual report to the Office of State Planning Coordination. The information contained in the report is correct and complete.



Signature of Mayor

7-1-20
Date

Paul Kuhns

Printed Name of Mayor.