

# Foundations of Wellness Report

The Southbridge Neighborhood Plan

Draft as of February 23, 2021



**Healthy Communities Delaware**  
*alignment. investment. impact.*



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# **Southbridge in Context**





# Introduction

Southbridge is a neighborhood that takes pride in its rich history of civic engagement, community unity, and unique culture. It is a community anchored by institutions including Neighborhood House, a multi-purpose community center; Henrietta Johnson Medical Center, a community health center incepted at the heart of the Civil Rights Movement; its houses of worship; and most crucially, its people.

In 2006, the South Wilmington Neighborhood Plan was created to “Reconcile and unite the existing neighborhood with proposed development, so as to create a South Wilmington that is richer socially as well as physically.”

15 years later in 2021, much has happened to alter the social and physical wellbeing of South Wilmington and the neighborhood of Southbridge. The City is in the process of constructing the very wetland park that was envisioned by the 2006 Neighborhood Plan, and better pedestrian connections are being funded between Southbridge and the Riverfront, another recommendation of the 2006 Plan.

**“Create a Central Park located to the immediate west of Southbridge. Use this park as the lungs of the neighborhood. Its wetlands should be cleaned up and improved for flood retention. Traverse the park with trails, linking active recreation facilities.”**

**Recommendation from the 2006 South Wilmington Neighborhood Plan**

A photograph of a park scene with children playing on a swing set and hula hoops. The image is covered with a semi-transparent green filter. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**Southbridge is  
a neighborhood  
that takes pride in  
its rich history of  
civic engagement,  
community unity,  
and unique culture.**



GREENVILLE

# REGIONAL CONTEXT

BELLEFONTE

EDGEMOOR

ELSMERE

NEWPORT

WILMINGTON  
MANOR



Sources: US Census Bureau shapefiles; South Wilmington Planning Network; New Castle County GIS Open Data; Delaware FirstMap Data

The implementation of these components of the 2006 Plan have occurred in tandem with development along the Riverfront. Christina Landing townhomes and high-rise apartments have brought new residents to South Wilmington, and the Christina Crossing retail center brought with it a 70,000 square foot ShopRite grocery store. These developments, along with the recent construction of the Christina River Bridge are bringing with it a renewed interest in development in South Wilmington.

**“With the construction of the Christina River Bridge which will open hopefully in early 2020, we see now this side of the river — the east bank— [as] sort of the next frontier of riverfront development.”**

**Megan McGlinchey, Executive Director of the Riverfront Development Corporation<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Sophia Schmidt, Delaware Public Media, “South Wilmington residents wonder what 'next frontier' of riverfront development will bring,” Feb 14, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3qDkBLi>

# Southbridge History

Southbridge is a historic African-American neighborhood with roots that extend from the abolitionist movement to civic involvement, religious participation, and Black political leadership. Southbridge has a rich history and represents an important part of Wilmington's identity and history.<sup>4</sup> In 1880, Southbridge was home to 1,883 people in 374 households. African-Americans made up about 20% of the population and whites made up about 66% of the population. Most of the African-Americans lived on the west side of Southbridge, while whites settled in the center of the neighborhood.<sup>5</sup> By 1900, the population of Southbridge had grown to 2,887 people and the African-American population had grown to 671, but only made up 23% of the population.<sup>6</sup> The African-American population continued to grow in the neighborhood and swelled in the 1920s and after WWII.



Source: Delaware Public Media, 2015

<sup>4</sup> University of Delaware Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, "Southbridge: An Historic Context for a Neighborhood in Wilmington, Delaware, 1870-1996". October 1996, <https://swpndotorg.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/southbridge-historical-context-ud-1996.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Historical patterns of development include agriculture, industrial, and residential uses. Industry, including iron mills, coal yards, and tanneries, was located primarily on the south side near the Market Street and Third Street bridges. Initial residential development was situated along Heald Street and clustered along A, B, and C streets.<sup>7</sup> In the marshy center of the neighborhood, there were about 10 flower farms.<sup>8</sup> The neighborhood street plan, laid out in a grid pattern for future development, was never realized due to the marshy terrain.<sup>9</sup> The lowerlying south side of the neighborhood has experienced periodic inundation—90% of it is within the 100-year floodplain.<sup>10</sup>



## HARRIET TUBMAN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD BYWAY

Source: Delaware Department of Transportation, 2021

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Lerner, Landscape Architecture Magazine, August 2017, [http://www.penpowerpublishing.com/uploads/1/0/5/0/10500378/lam\\_08aug2017\\_f1-delaware\\_restoration.pdf](http://www.penpowerpublishing.com/uploads/1/0/5/0/10500378/lam_08aug2017_f1-delaware_restoration.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> University of Delaware Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, "Southbridge: An Historic Context for a Neighborhood in Wilmington, Delaware, 1870-1996". October 1996, <https://swpndotorg.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/southbridge-historical-context-ud-1996.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Lerner, Landscape Architecture Magazine, August 2017, [http://www.penpowerpublishing.com/uploads/1/0/5/0/10500378/lam\\_08aug2017\\_f1-delaware\\_restoration.pdf](http://www.penpowerpublishing.com/uploads/1/0/5/0/10500378/lam_08aug2017_f1-delaware_restoration.pdf).



# Historic Neighborhood Institutions

## Henrietta Johnson Medical Center

Henrietta Johnson Medical Center (HJMC) is part of a national network of federally funded Community Health Centers (CHCs) delivering quality, comprehensive health services to America's medically underserved communities. In an era of escalating health care costs, CHCs like HJMC have been recognized as cost effective and a necessary alternative to emergency room primary healthcare services.



*Source: Delaware Online: The News Journal, n.d*

## Neighborhood House

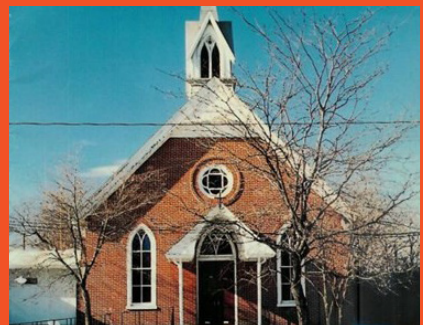
Neighborhood House, Inc. is a multi-purpose non-profit community center located in South Wilmington and Middletown. Founded in 1927 on a foundation of Christian principles, Neighborhood House provides transformational programs that positively impacts low to moderate-income individuals, families, and communities.



*Source: Delaware Public Media, 2019*

## Mt. Joy United Methodist Church

Mt. Joy United Methodist Church has been serving the Southbridge community for over 100 years. The Church is a central organizing hub for community fellowship, outreach initiatives, and service.



*Source: Mt. Joy United Methodist Church (Facebook Page), 2021*

# A shifting community

Looking at data between 2010 and 2019, a shift is beginning to occur in South Wilmington, as the population of residents identifying as white has increased by 42% (from 317 in 2010 to 451 in 2019) and residents identifying as Black decreased by 4% (from 1,557 in 2010 to 1,497 in 2019).<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, income levels appear to have also shifted in South Wilmington between 2010 and 2019. While 50% of households in South Wilmington were in the “Extremely Low Income” category (defined as making between 0% and 30% of the Median Family Income for the area), by 2019 that proportion had fallen to 31%.<sup>3</sup>

## Race in South Wilmington

	2010	2019	Count Change	Percent Change
Black	1,557	1,497	-59	-4%
White	317	451	+134	+42%



of South  
Wilmington  
Residents are  
People of Color

Compared to  
43% for all of  
New Castle  
County

*Image Source: Ketut Subiyanto, Pexels*

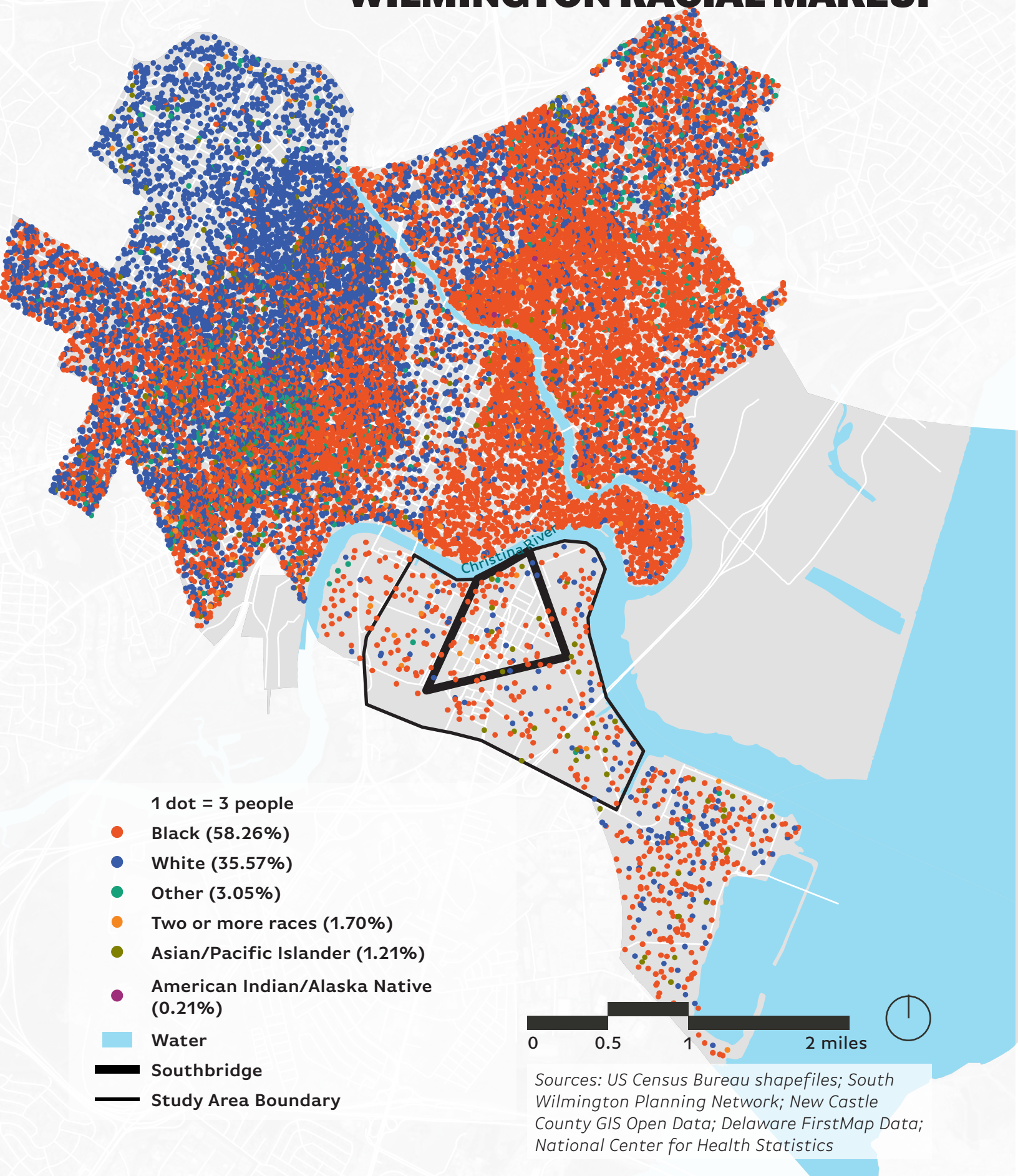
*Source: US Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 5-year data for Census Tract 19.02 in New Castle County, DE*

<sup>2</sup> US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, “B02001: Race,” 2010 and 2019 5-year estimates.

<sup>3</sup> US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, “S1901: Income in the Past 12 Months,” 2010 and 2019 5-year estimates.



# WILMINGTON RACIAL MAKEUP



In fact, the number of households with Extremely Low Income and Very Low Income fell by 42% and 45%, respectively. Conversely, the number of households with Middle Income and Mid- to High-Income increased by over 100% and 67%, respectively.

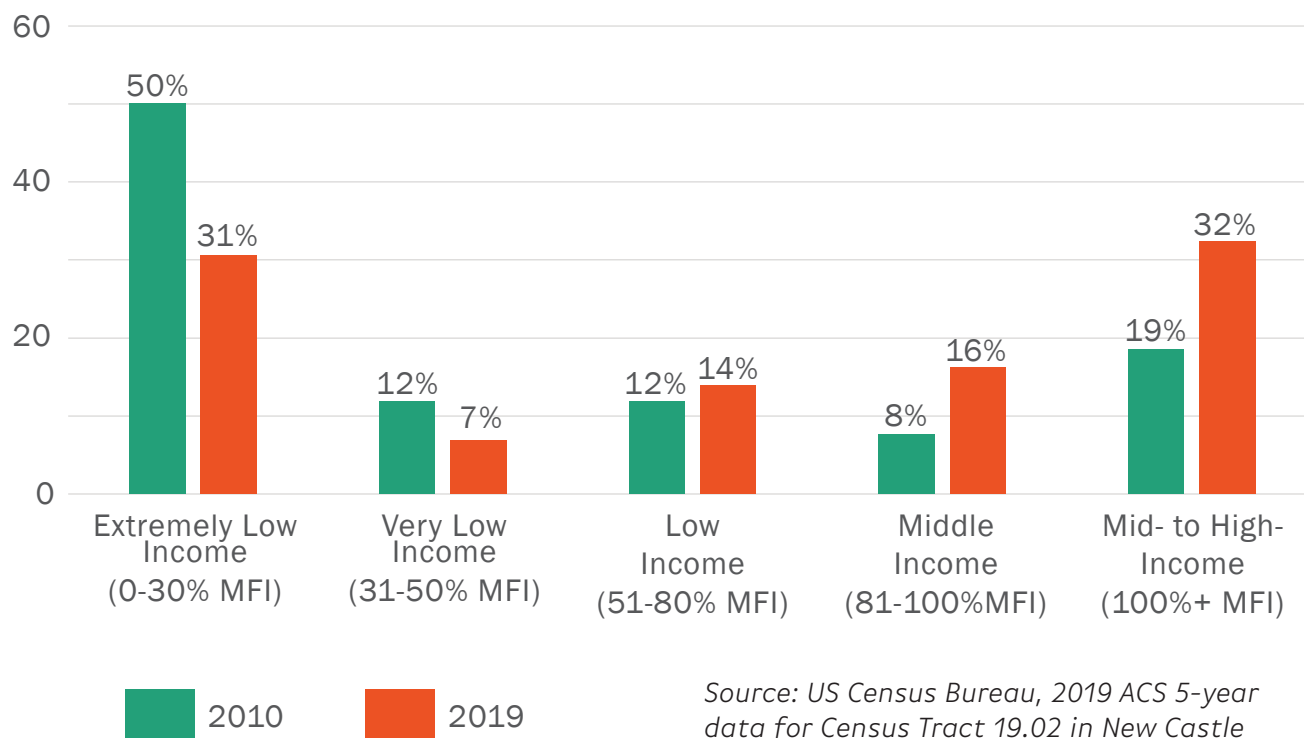
The change in income levels may be due to several potential causes: the residents of South Wilmington may have experienced an increase in income over the 9-year period, or higher-income residents may be moving to the area while lower-income residents are leaving South Wilmington.

## **FY 2019 Income Levels for 2-person families in the Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington area**

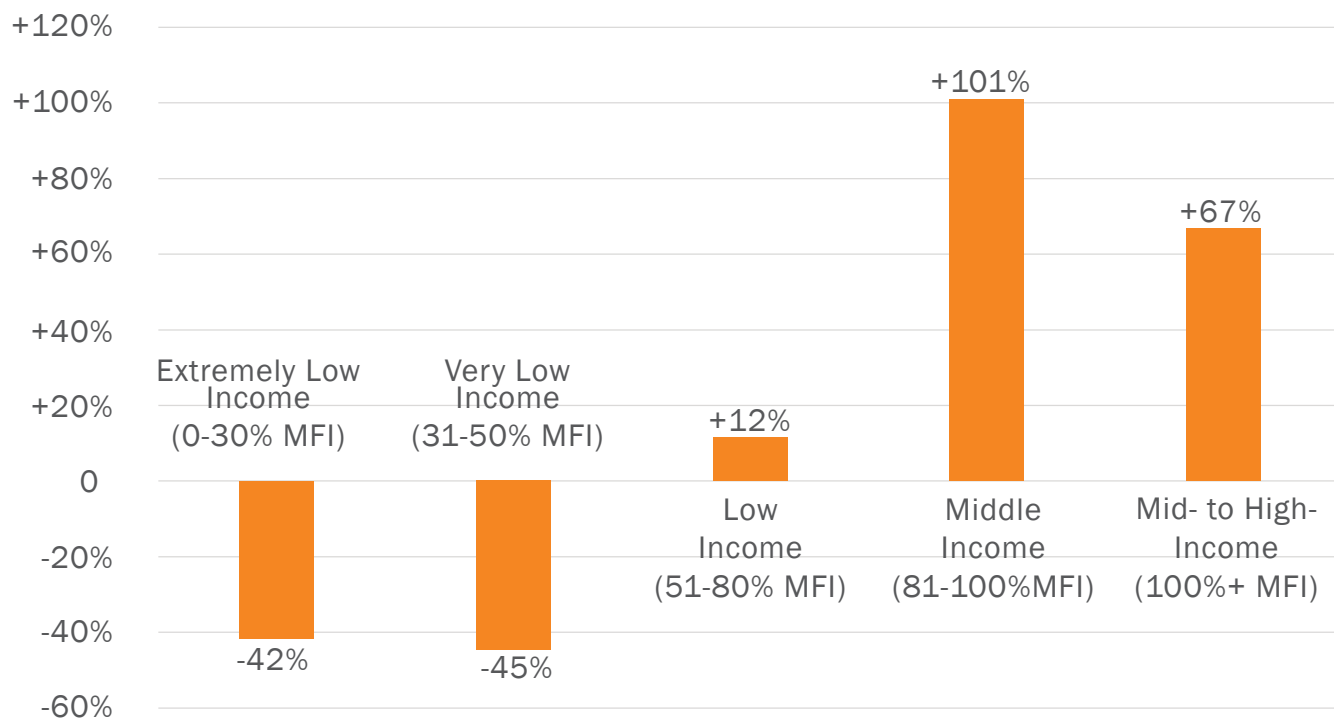
<b>Income Level</b>	<b>South Wilmington</b>
Extremely Low	\$0 - \$21,650
Very Low	\$21,651 - \$36,050
Low	\$36,051 - \$57,700
Middle	\$57,701 - \$72,167
Upper-Middle to High	\$72,168+

*Source: US Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 5-year data for Census Tract 19.02 in New Castle County, DE*

## South Wilmington income levels, 2010-2019



## Percent change in income levels, 2010-2019



# Moving forward in 2021

The 2021 Southbridge Neighborhood Plan is an update to the 2006 South Wilmington Neighborhood Plan. The Plan's orientation towards Southbridge is intentional, as we will center our recommendations and priorities on the historic neighborhood. As South Wilmington is transformed by riverfront and commercial developments to its west, the neighborhood of Southbridge may face pressures of gentrification and displacement that will compound the communities' challenges, including flooding and environmental contamination.

This "Foundations of Wellness Report" is a summation of where Southbridge is now, and it will serve as a map that identifies and paves the pathways towards our goals and desired outcomes for Southbridge.

## What is a neighborhood plan?

A neighborhood plan is a document that outlines key priorities for the future of the neighborhood. Each priority will be linked to coordinated actions by different stakeholders with the aim of achieving specific and measurable objectives to be accomplished.

In order to have a successful neighborhood plan, the planning process must get buy-in from the community, especially the residents of the neighborhood. The residents' input and buy-in are crucial because they are often the ones who will advocate and lobby for the plan to be implemented and hold stakeholders accountable. The plan must also engage and collaborate with stakeholders whose actions and support are necessary to implement the plan's suggested actions.



# SOUTHBRIDGE



- Water
- Park or Greenspace
- Southbridge
- Study Area Boundary
- Highway
- Road
- Railroad

0 0.25 0.5 miles

Sources: US Census Bureau shapefiles; South Wilmington Planning Network; New Castle County GIS Open Data; Delaware FirstMap Data

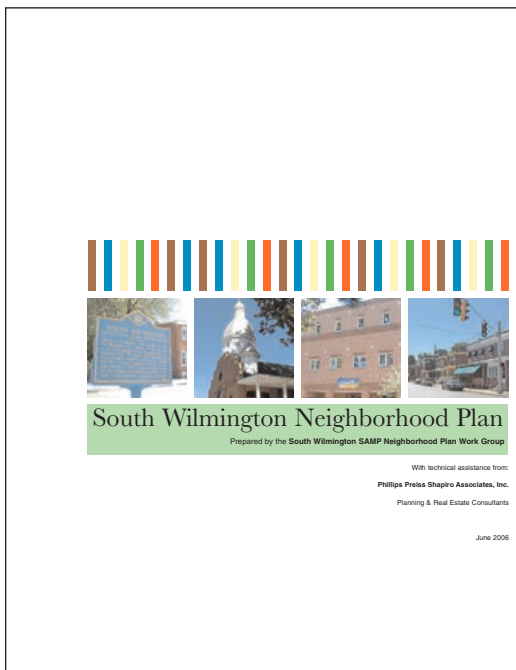
# **Prior Planning**



# Prior Planning

In the past 15 years, there have been several planning efforts to bring forth a unified vision for South Wilmington, and citywide plans have specifically addressed Southbridge and South Wilmington. The following section summarizes the Key Takeaways and Key Recommendations for each plan as they apply to the Southbridge Neighborhood Plan.

## South Wilmington Neighborhood Plan (2006)



South Wilmington SAMP Neighborhood Plan Work Group and Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, Inc., "South Wilmington Neighborhood Plan," June 2006, [bit.ly/3twXeWb](http://bit.ly/3twXeWb)

### Key Takeaways

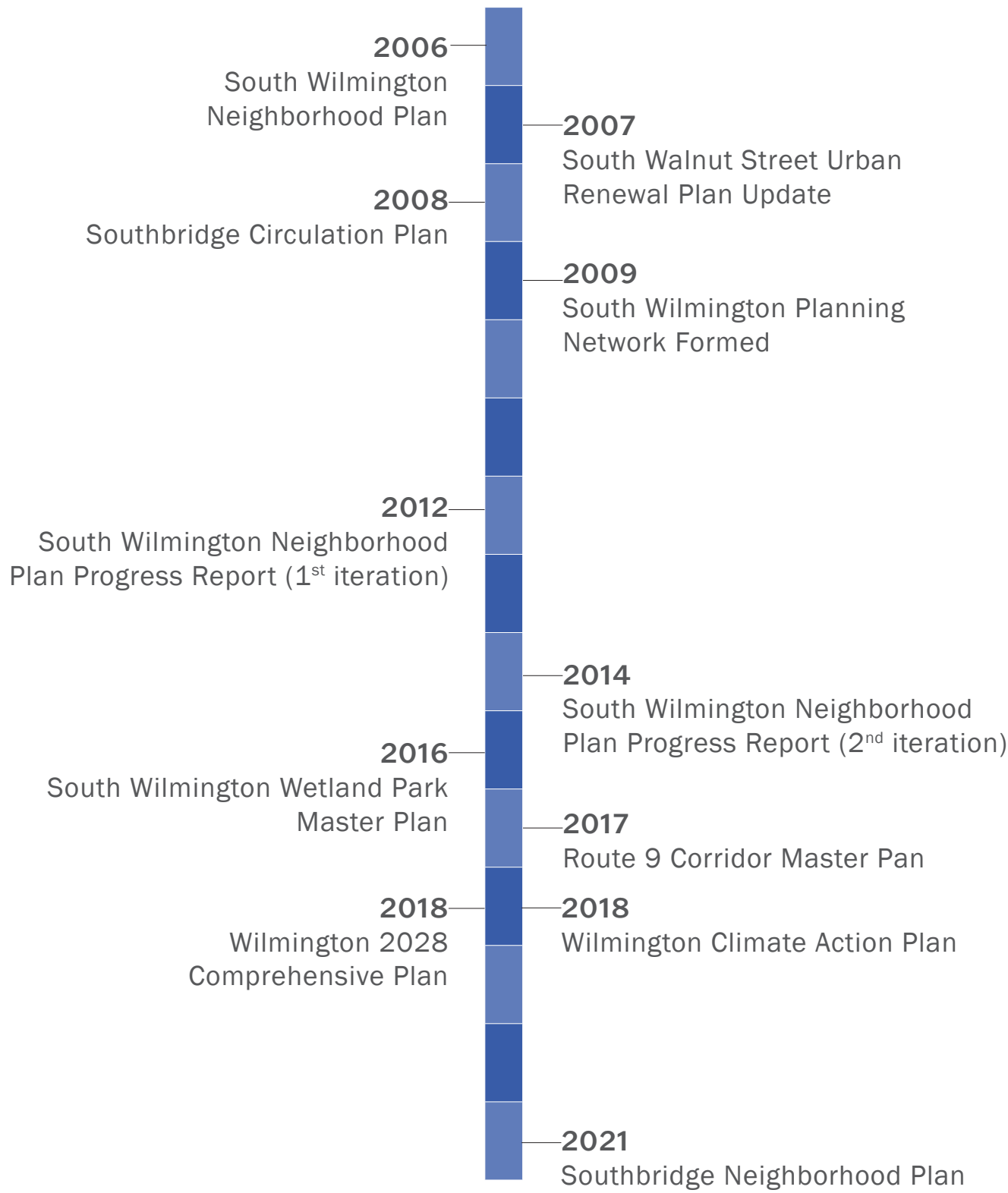
- Acknowledges a fear that Southbridge will be overwhelmed by new development happening in South Wilmington and its character threatened by the displacement of residents and other effects of increased investment in the area.
- Highlights concepts that build on the existing strengths and assets in Southbridge, including creating a central park, creating a small "Main Street", and establishing anti-displacement and inclusionary zoning legislation.
- Southbridge is facing challenges and environmental justice issues around brownfields, flooding, preservation, and gentrification.

### Key Recommendations

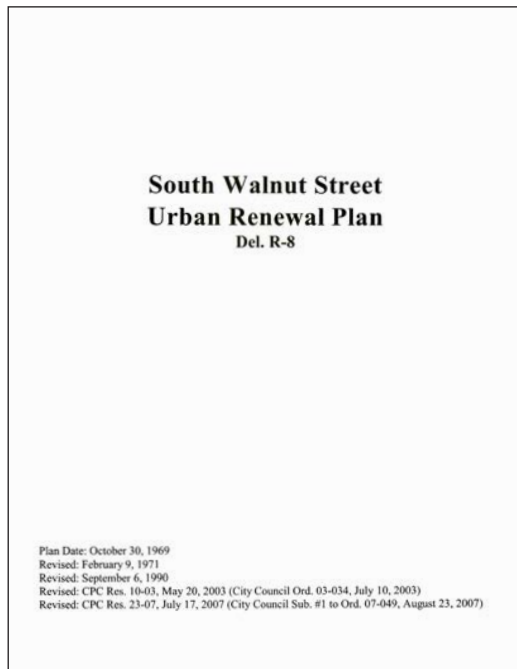
- Create a community-controlled revolving fund.
- Enact inclusionary zoning for Southbridge.
- Create South Wilmington destinations in and adjoining the Southbridge core.
- Negotiate a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) with new developers.
- Create a Central Park located to the immediate west of Southbridge.
- Explore a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district to help pay for the park and a Park Improvement District (PID) for its continued upkeep/programming.
- Focus transit transfers at the A Street/Heald Street business district.
- Create gateway features that enhance approaches to the neighborhood



# Prior planning in the past 15 years



# South Walnut Street Urban Renewal Plan (2007)



City of Wilmington, Riverfront Development Corporation of Delaware, "South Walnut Street Urban Renewal Plan," July 2007, [bit.ly/2LhvrHV](https://bit.ly/2LhvrHV)

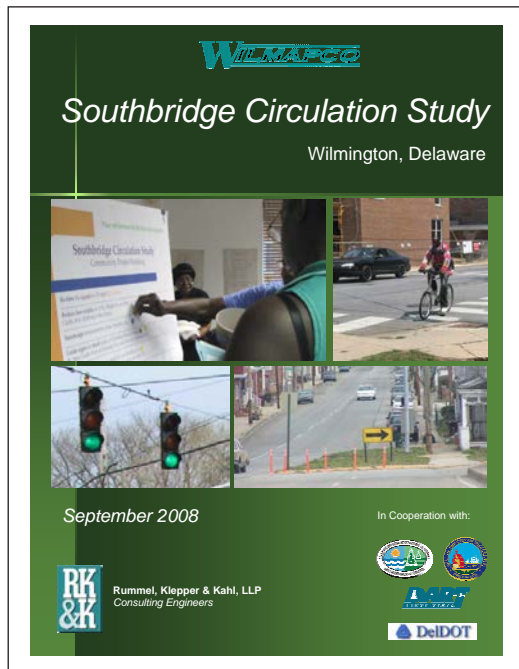
## Key Takeaways

- Renewal actions include rehabilitation, conservation, clearance and redevelopment for commercial, residential and mixed uses, including light industrial.
- Predominant land use in the redevelopment area is commercial, including auto-related uses. Industrial uses are scattered, primarily along the riverfront and rail tracks. The other major land use is undeveloped land and wetlands.

## Key Recommendations

- Rezone M-1 Zoning (light manufacturing) to W-4 (Waterfront Residential and Commercial District).
- Provide a continuous riverfront park and trail along the entire length of the Christina River within the URP area.
- Rezone areas between and along Market and Walnut Streets as predominantly mixed-use development.
- A proposed traffic circle or other new intersection on Market and Walnut Streets, and DuPont Highway and Garasches Lane.
- Encourage design, construction, and operation of development sites that meet the criteria for a LEED certified rating.

# Southbridge Circulation Plan (2008)



WILMAPCO, Rummel, Klepper & Kahl, LLP,  
"Southbridge Circulation Study," September 2008,  
[bit.ly/3atpBM9](https://bit.ly/3atpBM9)

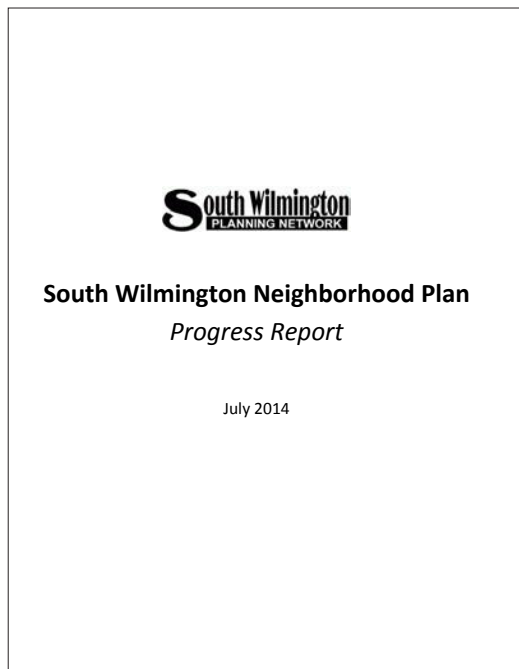
## Key Takeaways

- Southbridge residents identified major transportation concerns, including (1) heavy truck traffic; (2) speeding cars; (3) accessibility and connectivity to public transit; (4) unsatisfactory infrastructure (like sidewalks, etc.).

## Key Recommendations

- Streetscape enhancements and traffic-calming measures should be pursued on New Castle Avenue, South Heald Street (U.S. 13), and A Street.
- Construction of a bypass to divert trucks around the Southbridge core.
- Retiming traffic signals to a 25 mph progression.
- Reroute Bus Route 17 to the new ShopRite and the Salvation Army sites; Reroute Bus Route 8 to pass through the Southbridge core; and add additional bus shelters.
- Secure funding to improve sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle lanes and paths, etc.

## Progress Report on the 2006 Neighborhood Plan (2014)



South Wilmington Planning Network, "South Wilmington Neighborhood Plan Progress Report," July 2014, [bit.ly/2MzhVzZ](http://bit.ly/2MzhVzZ)

### Key Takeaways

- The South Wilmington Neighborhood Plan had a total of 48 recommendations.
- 64% of the recommendations from the 2006 Neighborhood Plan have seen either full or partial progress, while the other 35% saw no progress.
- The Housing Affordability, Maintenance and Development area has the most recommendations with no progress. Parks, Open Space and Environmental Quality and Transportation Improvement has made considerable progress.

### Key Recommendations

- Neighborhood Plan recommendations that have not progressed, but should still be pursued, should be taken up as projects by the South Wilmington Planning Network (SWPN).

Category	# of Recommendations	No Progress	Some Progress	Recommendations Fulfilled
Housing Affordability, Maintenance, and Development	14	10 (72%)	2 (14%)	2 (14%)
Parks, Open Space, and Environmental Quality	11	1 (9%)	2 (18%)	8 (72%)
Retail Development, Employment and Community Service	16	5 (31%)	5 (31%)	6 (38%)
Transportation Improvement	7	1 (15%)	0 (0%)	6 (85%)
Total	48	17 (35%)	9 (18%)	22 (46%)

## South Wilmington Wetlands Park Master Plan (2016)



City of Wilmington, Delaware, "Wetlands Project Update," December 20, 2016, [bit.ly/3pHYeUS](https://bit.ly/3pHYeUS)

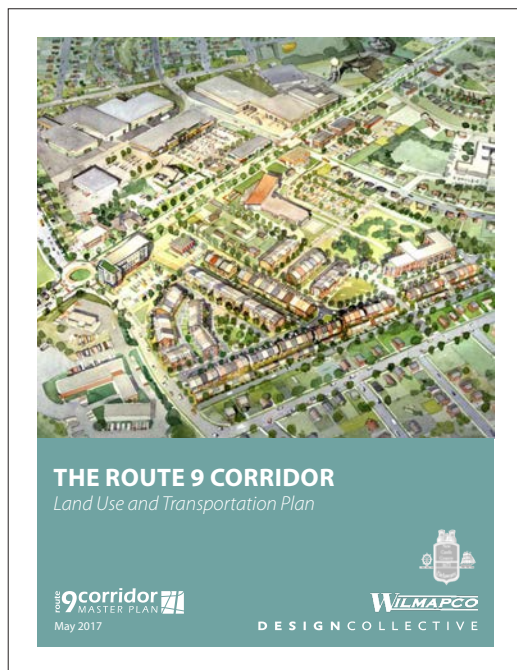
### Key Takeaways

- The Wetlands Park can serve as an opportunity to enhance economic development, provide jobs to residents, eliminate one of the largest brownfields in the city, and increase the property tax base.
- The project is expected to reach final completion in summer of 2021.

### Key Recommendations

- Mitigate flooding.
- Improve water quality.
- Restore a low functioning tidal wetland.
- Clean up a brownfield.
- Create a safe and attractive wetlands park.
- Reduce mosquito breeding grounds.

## Route 9 Corridor Master Plan (2017)



WILMAPCO, Design Collective, RCLCO, Toole Design Group, "Route 9 Corridor Master Plan," May 2017, [bit.ly/3toqqhR](https://bit.ly/3toqqhR)

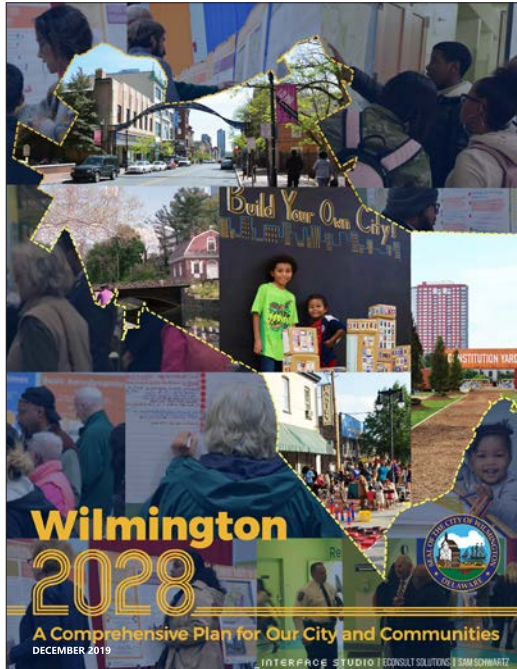
### Key Takeaways

- The community identified priority needs, including enhancing existing community amenities, maintaining affordable housing, reducing environmental and health burdens of industry, and showcasing the area's rich history.

### Key Recommendations

- Improve connectivity.
- Establish potential Innovation District near New Castle and Hillview Ave. – District includes for-sale and rental townhomes, senior housing, and office, retail, and hotel spaces.
- Update, expand, and improve transportation network – including sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, bus shelters, lighting, and streetscape.
- Intersection redesign at Terminal and New Castle Ave.; Rogers Rd. and New Castle Ave., and a Memorial Drive road diet.

# Wilmington 2028 Comprehensive Plan (2018)



City of Wilmington, Delaware, "Wilmington 2028: A Comprehensive Plan for Our City and Communities," December 2019, [bit.ly/3roTlk9](https://bit.ly/3roTlk9)

## Key Takeaways

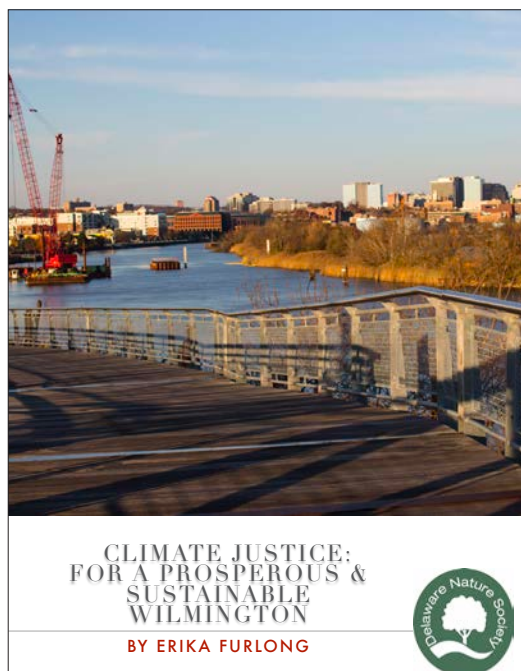
- South Wilmington residents surveyed said they most valued community safety, local business, and sense of community.
- Residents asked to choose their top 3 priorities said they saw as most important improved public safety (47%), followed by improved job opportunities (33%), downtown revitalization (31%), better sidewalks and safer streets (29%), and new and expanded youth programs (23%).

## Key Recommendations

- Encourage mixed use, infill, redevelopment in key areas.
- Stabilize vacant properties.
- Evaluate former school buildings for redevelopment.
- Position and promote the Commerce Street/ South Waterfront and Garasches Lane as economic opportunities with blue collar jobs.
- Emphasize A Street as a neighborhood connector.
- Limit truck traffic.
- Emphasize wetland park trails as alternative bike and walking routes.
- Make the community more resilient to sea level rise and flooding.



# Climate Justice: For a Prosperous & Sustainable Wilmington (2018 Climate Action Plan)



Erika Furlong & Delaware Nature Society, "Climate Justice: For a Prosperous & Sustainable Wilmington," 2018, [bit.ly/363TmBR](https://bit.ly/363TmBR)

## Key Takeaways

- The majority of Southbridge will be permanently submerged for at least a portion of each day if worldwide greenhouse gas emission rates continue on their current track.
- Southbridge has one of the highest concentrations of businesses in the state that are at risk of being flooded due to sea level rise.
- High rates of soil contamination and overflowing sewage is leading to toxic runoff that are detrimental to residents' health.
- The recent investment in tide gates and the development of the wetland park will not be enough to protect Southbridge from being flooded in the next few decades.

## Key Recommendations

- Address flooding in Southbridge by engineering a solution or developing a relocation plan for residents.
- City and South Wilmington Planning Network work together to reach out to the community to get buy in and feedback on potential solutions.
- Establish building codes and incentives to develop outside of floodplains.
- Coordinate with state and federal partners to protect investments and transportation infrastructure.



# **Health and COVID-19**





# Social Determinants of Health

As mentioned earlier, a neighborhood plan is a document that outlines key priorities for the future of the neighborhood. One of the main goals of this planning process is to improve health and wellness for residents of the Southbridge neighborhood.

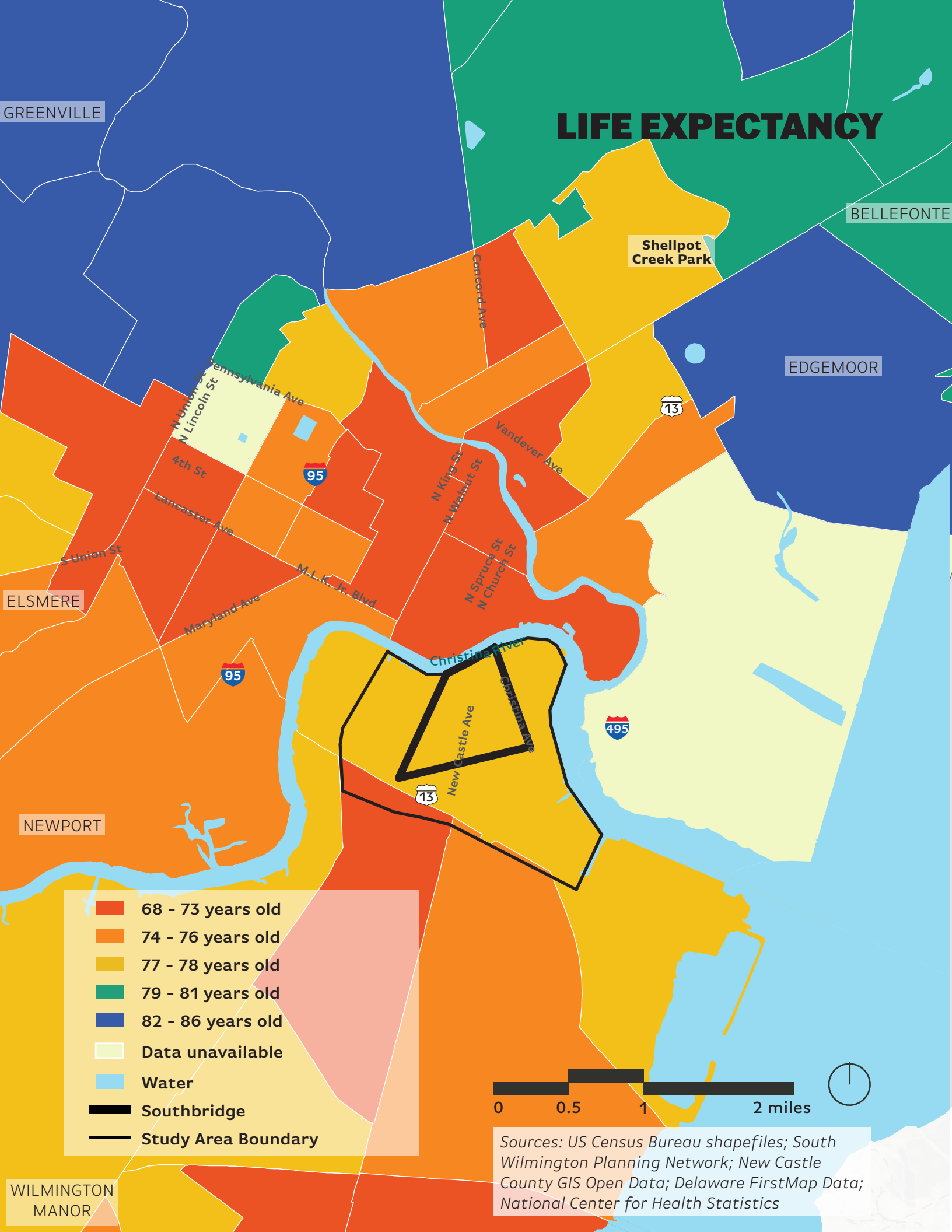
When thinking about health and wellness, it's helpful to think about it as a building that depends on a strong and stable foundation. At the foundation are things like quality education, safe and affordable housing, access to healthcare, and employment opportunities, all of which determine wellness outcomes in important ways.<sup>11</sup>

## Foundations of health and wellbeing



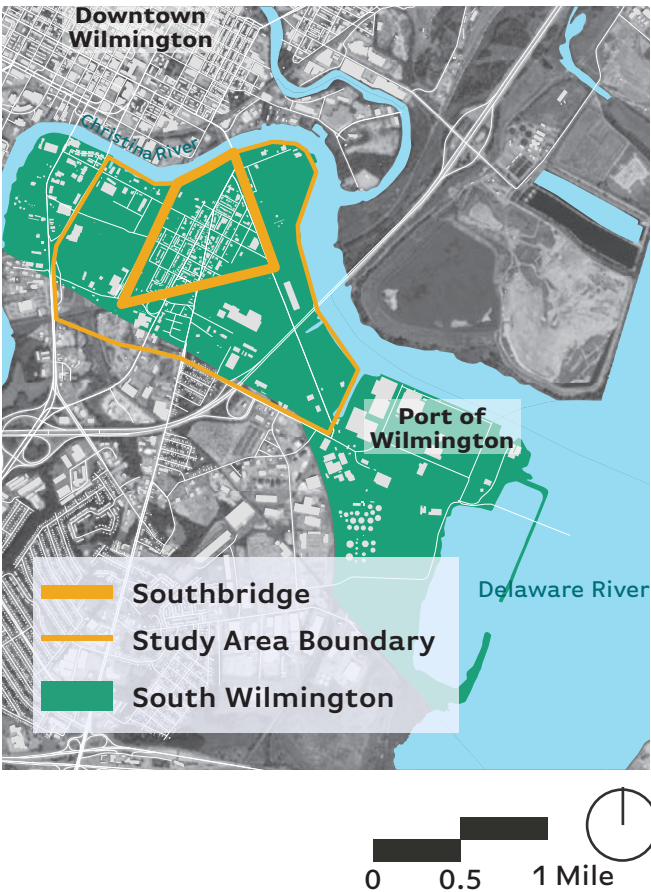
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<sup>11</sup> Paraphrased from FrameWorks Institute's "Foundation of Community Health" Toolkit, Aug 6, 2019, <http://bit.ly/3979nJb>

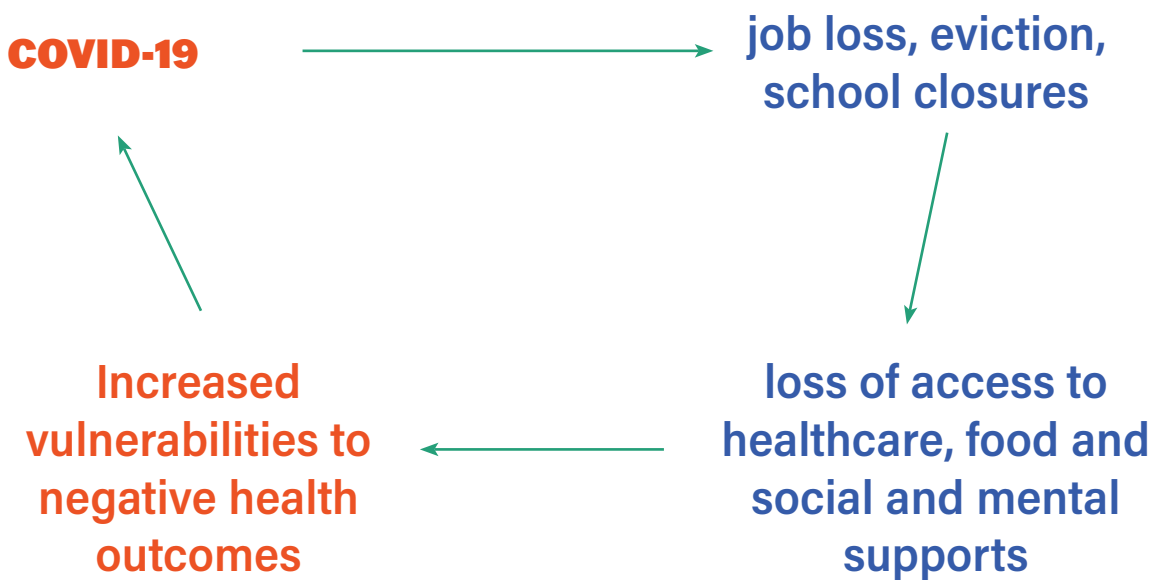


## South Wilmington vs. Southbridge

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed social and economic inequalities that are impacting health outcomes. In the past year we have seen a negative cycle of COVID-19 negatively impacting foundations of health like job and education access, and those crumbling foundations leading to negative health outcomes, including outcomes related to COVID-19. When thinking about ways to improve wellbeing and health through the Southbridge Neighborhood Plan, we will need to take into account these codependencies.



### COVID-19's impact on health outcomes



## Using data to guide the way

Just as a GPS guides people by visualizing and navigating complex terrain, data can guide us to show us where we are and the pathways towards where we want to be.<sup>12</sup>

In the following sections, we will use data to illustrate where Southbridge is, and what this means for the future of where we want to be.

In the process, we will identify any cracks in our “foundation” of Health and Wellness, and identify how the Neighborhood Plan could work to strengthen and repair those components.

### **A note about data for South Wilmington vs. Southbridge**

Some of the data that we used in this report came from the U.S. Census Bureau. The Census Bureau publishes data on things like income levels, how much rent people pay, and many other community characteristics.

Unfortunately, the data published by the Census Bureau lumps together Southbridge with the rest of South Wilmington, including Christina Landing and other areas that have a very different physical and demographic characteristic from Southbridge.

Because the data is lumped together, we are unable to separate out Southbridge from the rest of South Wilmington. Therefore, some of the data we present in this report may strike you as surprising, or even inaccurate for Southbridge.

We’ll try to make things as clear as possible by labeling our findings as being for “South Wilmington” (includes Southbridge and Christina Landing) when we use Census data. We’ll also let you know when our data is specific to Southbridge.

Additionally, for data that is truly important for understanding Southbridge, the planning team may work to create our own dataset for the neighborhood through a community survey, which will be distributed later in the planning process.

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<sup>12</sup> Paraphrased from FrameWorks Institute’s “GPS Navigation” Toolkit, Aug 6, 2019, <http://bit.ly/3o6jx0A>

# Resident Economic Conditions

Economic conditions, specifically, poverty and unemployment, are the base foundation for wellbeing. If a person is in poverty or doesn't have a job, that can make it very difficult to access high-quality healthcare, food, housing, and other elements of life that lead to good health and wellbeing.

South Wilmington has higher rates of poverty, with 31% of households being in poverty, compared to 22% in Wilmington and 7% in New Castle County.<sup>13</sup>

The 31% for is for all of South Wilmington, so if we were able to isolate the data for just Southbridge, this figure may be even higher.

In 2019, an estimated 17%, or 1 in 6 residents, of South Wilmington did not have health insurance.<sup>14</sup> Since then, with the COVID-19 pandemic and massive spike in unemployment that occurred with it in 2020, many more people may have lost health insurance tied to their jobs, and access to affordable and quality care may have been placed further out of reach for many residents in Southbridge.

## Poverty and lack of insurance

	South Wilmington	Wilmington	County
Poverty	31%	22%	7%
Uninsured	17%	20%	13%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 5-year data for Census Tract 19.02 in New Castle County, DE, Wilmington, DE and New Castle County, DE

## Unemployment as of November 2020

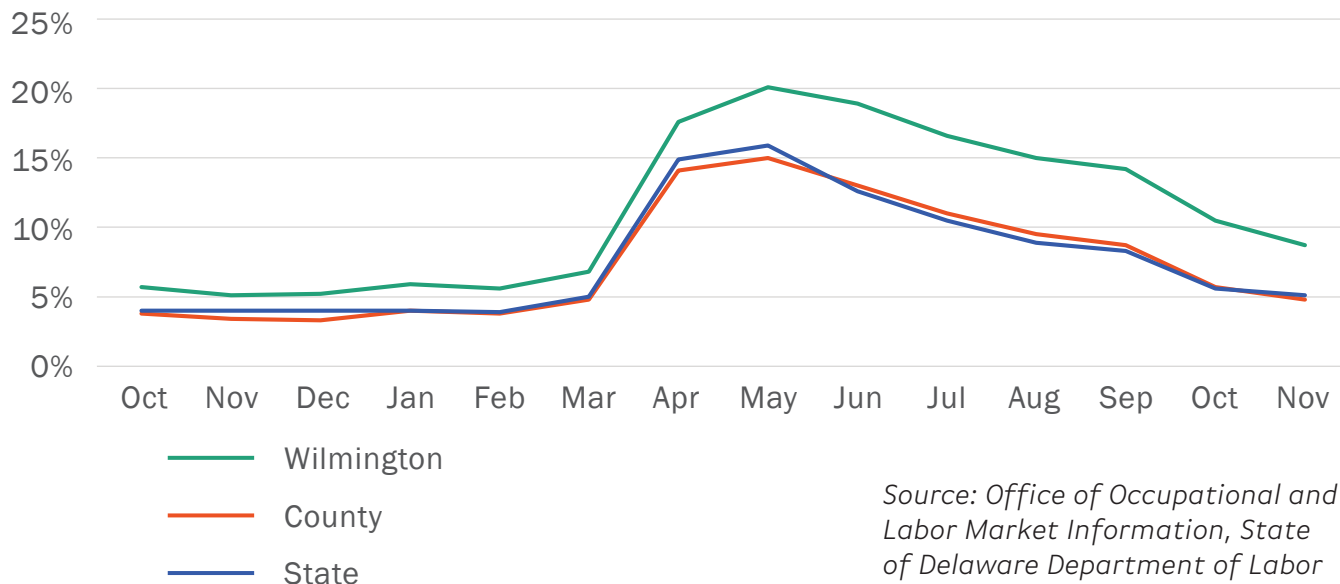
	Wilmington	County	Delaware
Unemployment rate	8.7%	4.8%	5.1%

Source: Office of Occupational and Labor Market Information, State of Delaware Department of Labor

<sup>13</sup> US Census Bureau, American Communities Survey, 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates, "S1702: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months of Families," <https://bit.ly/3nrxOWj>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

## Unemployment rate, Oct 2019 - Nov 2020



### Where we are:

South Wilmington has high rates of poverty compared to Wilmington and New Castle County, as well as high rates of people without access to insurance. With the spike in unemployment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of people in poverty and without insurance may have increased. These factors can significantly impact health and wellness by reducing access to other things like high-quality healthcare, time for leisure and exercise, fresh and healthy foods, and stable housing.

### Things to consider for the Southbridge Neighborhood Plan:

- In the long term, how can we improve income levels of residents who are living in Southbridge now?
- In the short term, how can current residents who are low-income and uninsured access the care and opportunities they need now?



# Housing

Homes that are safe, quality, and affordable are vital to an individual's wellbeing. Deficiencies in safe, quality, and affordable homes can correlate to deficiencies in community health, wellness, and education and economic structure. To meet the diverse needs of residents, communities should have a mix of housing options available, including costs, types (apartments, single family, multifamily) of homes, and housing tenure (renter or owner-occupied units).

A majority of residents (63.7%) in South Wilmington are renters, compared to the city where about 56.6% of residents are renters. South Wilmington has also seen an increase in homeownership between 2010 and 2019, where about 36.3% of residents are now homeowners.

The median home value in South Wilmington is \$184,100. In Southbridge home values range between \$20,000 - \$86,000 and at Christina Landing, home values range between \$100,000 - \$300,000. Although the total number of housing units in South Wilmington has increased by about 48 units between 2010 and 2019, the area has experienced some decline in the total number of occupied units and an increase in the total number of vacant units (see Table "Housing Gaps in South Wilmington"). This could mean that some households may have been displaced between 2010 and 2019. Nonetheless, the homeowner vacancy rate declined between 2010 and 2019, while the rental vacancy rate has remained consistent. This could raise questions on affordability and availability of the type of rental

## Housing Gaps in South Wilmington

	2010	2019	2010-2019 Difference
Total housing units	1,134	1,182	48
Occupied housing units	911	870	- 41
Vacant housing units	223	312	+ 89
Homeowner vacancy rate	15.8	7.6	- 8.2
Rental vacancy rate	15.3	15.5	- 0.2

Source US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, "Table DB04 Selected Housing Characteristics", 2010 and 2019 5-year estimates data



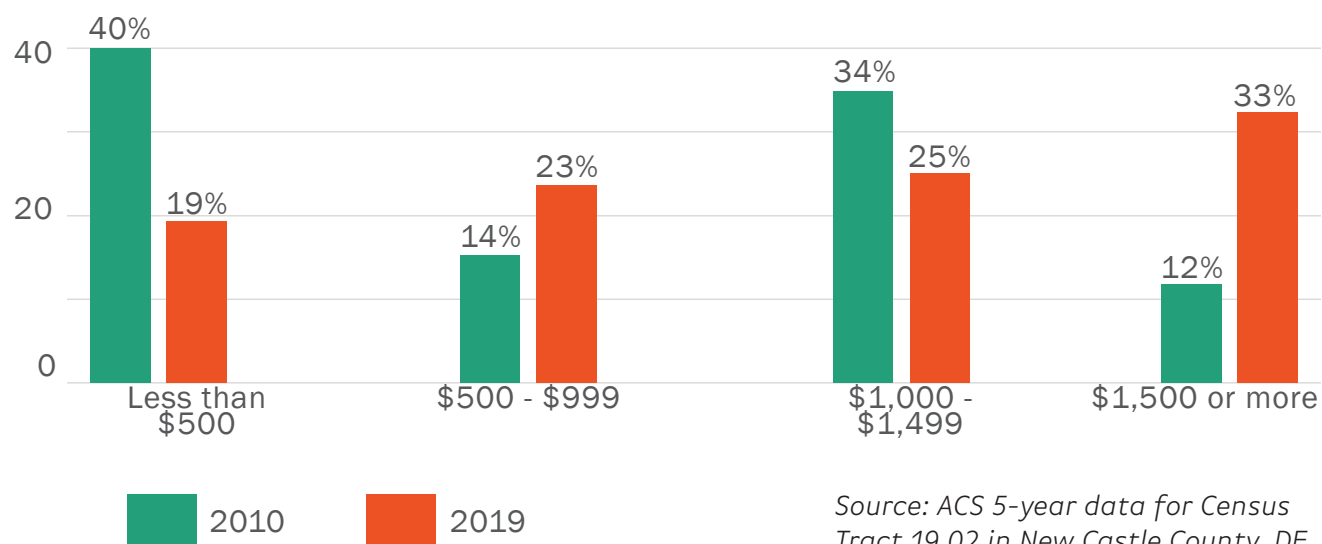
B St and Heald St. Source: South Wilmington Planning Network



Heald St and A St. Source: South Wilmington Planning Network



## South Wilmington Rents Over Time



## Housing Affordability Across the Wilmington Region

	2010		2019	
	South Wilmington	City of Wilmington	South Wilmington	City of Wilmington
Residents paying more than 30% of income on rent	53.00%	55.90%	49.80%	52.20%

Source US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, "Table DB04 Selected Housing Characteristics", 2010 and 2019 5-year estimates data

housing needed by residents. Further research and feedback will need to be collected to determine if residents feel they have all the resources they need to afford to live in their homes, and if they feel that Southbridge has a diverse housing stock available.

Rental rates have been increasing in South Wilmington, and today we see a spike in the percentage of residents paying \$1,500 or more in rent. In terms of affordability, about 49.8% of residents are cost-burdened, or using more than 30% of their income to pay for rent (see Table "Housing Affordability Across the Wilmington Region").

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed lives in 2020 and has presented a myriad of challenges for homeowners, renters, and landlords. States and the federal government have responded to widespread unemployment and increased eviction risks with measures to keep people in their homes.<sup>15</sup> As pandemic shutdowns spread in March of 2020, courts began issuing emergency orders that halted eviction filings, delayed eviction hearings, and barred enforcement of post-judgment orders that would compel people to leave their homes, all to prevent massive housing destabilization and increased homelessness amid a public health emergency.<sup>16</sup> Although the nation is still in the midst of the COVID-19 at the time of writing, it has undoubtedly impacted housing for residents for Southbridge and the topic of housing will require targeted recommendations.

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15 Erika Rickard & Qudsiya Naqui, PEW Charitable Trust, "Pandemic-Driven Economic Slowdown Puts Renters at Risk of Housing Loss", December 2020, [https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2020/12/07/pandemic-driven-economic-slowdown-puts-renters-at-risk-of-housing-loss?utm\\_campaign=2020-12-16+Rundown+-+opt-in+promo&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=Pew](https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2020/12/07/pandemic-driven-economic-slowdown-puts-renters-at-risk-of-housing-loss?utm_campaign=2020-12-16+Rundown+-+opt-in+promo&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Pew).  
16 Ibid.



*Multifamily housing and lot. Source: Google*



*Small multifamily housing. Source: Zillow*



*Multifamily housing. Source: South Wilmington Planning Network*



*Row houses. Source: Zillow*



*Lobdell St. Source: South Wilmington Planning Network*

## **Where we are:**

- There has been an increase in homeowners in South Wilmington; however most residents are renters.
- About 74% of housing units are occupied, while rental vacancy rates have remained consistent (15.3% - 15.5%) between 2010 and 2019.
- Although President Biden has extended the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s nationwide eviction moratorium through March 2021, many renters have already lost their homes or remain at risk of losing their homes due to their inability to pay. Housing affordability continues to be a growing concern for renters and owners because of the pandemic and its effect on the economy and employment.

## **Things to consider for the Southbridge Neighborhood Plan:**

- What impacts have COVID-19 had on income levels and housing availability, affordability, values, and occupancy/vacancy rates?
- How can homes be better protected from flooding? What impact could it have on flood insurance?
- Does the existing housing typology meet the needs of Southbridge residents (renters and owners)?
- What levels of affordability do we want for homes in Southbridge?
- How can we work around high up-front costs for home rehabilitation and construction?

# Internet and Computer Access

At-home internet access has become vital for work from home, virtual schooling, and telehealth access – all vital components to the foundation of health and wellness. South Wilmington residents’ rate of internet and computer access is relatively higher than Wilmington overall. South Wilmington households’ access to a computer, including a smartphone, is 90%, compared to 85% of Wilmington overall. South Wilmington exhibits 19% of households with no internet access compared to 27% of Wilmington’s overall households without internet access. This figure may be even higher if households for Southbridge were isolated from the dataset.

The state and city governments prioritized internet access as an especially critical need during the COVID pandemic. Governor Carney announced \$20 million in the Cares Act Funds to increase broadband infrastructure in Delaware (Delaware News 2020).<sup>17</sup> Hotspots were installed throughout Delaware and Wilmington, but few of these hotspots were implemented in Southbridge (Delaware News Journal 2020).<sup>18</sup>

Delaware school districts initially operated hybrid in-person and virtual learning, but spikes in COVID-19 cases led to temporary virtual-only learning. This shift further increased the dependence on household internet and computer access (Delaware News Journal 2020).<sup>19</sup> The pandemic also produced health implications from limited in-person appointment capabilities or telehealth access. The Delaware Health & Social Services’s (DHSS) Division of Medical Assistance (DMMA) addressed potential coverage issues by expanding telehealth eligibility to increase Medicaid telehealth coverage in March 2020, although internet and computer access remain an issue (Delaware Health and Social Services 2020).<sup>20</sup>

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17 “Governor Carney Announces \$20 Million for Broadband Infrastructure.” State of Delaware News, 24 Aug. 2020, news.delaware.gov/2020/08/24/governor-carney-announces-20-million-for-broadband-infrastructure/.

18 Kuang, Jeanne. “To Help Students Learning Remotely, Wilmington Sets up Internet Hot Spots during Pandemic.” The News Journal, Delaware News Journal, 22 Apr. 2020, www.delawareonline.com/story/news/2020/04/22/wilmington-sets-up-internet-hotspots-students/3003044001/

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19 Alamdari, Natalia, and Jeff Neiburg . “More School Districts to Go Fully Virtual after Delaware’s Latest COVID-19 Advisory.” The News Journal, Delaware News Journal, 4 Dec. 2020, www.delawareonline.com/story/news/education/2020/12/03/apoquinimink-red-clay-brandywine-school-district-go-virtual-after-delaware-covid-19-school-remote/3819246001/.

20 The State of Delaware. “Division of Medicaid & Medical Assistance COVID-19 Information Page.” COVID-19 Information - Delaware Health and Social Services - State of Delaware, 2020, dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dmma/covid19.html.

## Low cost or free internet services

Service	Description	Cost
Comcast Service Areas	Comcast Internet Essentials available for qualifying families	\$9.95/month
Delaware WiFi Map	Connect with the best WiFi hotspots in Delaware	Free
Public Libraries	Access wireless in Delaware public library parking lots	Free

*Source: Delaware Department of Education*

## Internet access for households

	South Wilmington	Wilmington
Has computer, including smartphone	90.2%	84.8%
Has smartphone only	17.1%	18.8%
Has no computer, including smartphone	9.8%	15.2%
Has broadband	80.7%	72.8%
Has no internet	19.3%	26.9%

Source: ACS 5-year data for  
Wilmington in New Castle County, DE

## Access for households making less than \$20,000 per year

	South Wilmington	Wilmington
Households making less than \$20,000	28.9%	25.4%
Of households making less than \$20,000: Has broadband	66.5%	54.7%
Of households making less than \$20,000: Has no Internet	44.7%	33.5%

Source: ACS 5-year data for  
Wilmington in New Castle County, DE

## **Where we are:**

- South Wilmington internet and computer access is higher than Wilmington, but Southbridge's internet access compared to Wilmington is unknown.
- Limited internet access may hinder access to telehealth appointments and social connections to friends and family; inability to work from home or attend school virtually may heighten stress and anxiety.
- The state and City of Wilmington responded to internet access needs by installing wifi hotspots, but few of these hotspots are in Southbridge.
- Telehealth eligibility has increased to allow residents to continue accessing healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Things to consider for the Southbridge Neighborhood Plan:**

- Where can we install wifi hotspots in Southbridge to improve internet access to households?
- In the long term, how can we increase computer access for student learning?
- How can we improve telehealth access for children and adults who endure additional challenges from quarantine conditions?



# Education Access

Southbridge's only elementary school, Elbert-Palmer Elementary School, closed in April 2019 prior to the pandemic (WDEL 101.7 FM 2019).<sup>21</sup> Students were transferred to The Bancroft School, located one mile north of Elbert-Palmer Elementary School over the Christina River. Research has shown that pre-COVID school closures can significantly hinder student attendance and increase suspension days; the further the travel distance to the school, the more absence and suspension days.<sup>22</sup> A study of Chicago Public School District school closures found that children lost a major source of stability and disrupted relationships among parents, guardians, and school staff. Students already attending the incoming schools were also found to have lower test scores.<sup>23</sup> This does not account for the health implications of school closures and disruptions associated with the pandemic.

Schools' inability to fully operate in-person heightened physical and mental health consequences for youth. Children's food insecurity grew exponentially at the beginning of the pandemic due to losing access to meals in school settings. Schools and local nonprofits have responded by offering packaged meals at drop-off locations throughout Southbridge. Over 50 schools in the 19801 zip code area continue to operate these Student Nutrition Sites, and families can pick up meals at any of the meal sites throughout the state (Delaware Department of Education 2021).<sup>24</sup>

The pandemic brought new and exacerbated mental health concerns for students, teachers, and staff: isolation, loss of loved ones, income loss, eviction, and abusive/toxic home environments. Kristin Dwyer, Director of Legislation at Delaware State Education Association, implored education stakeholders to understand how student mental health could hinder their capacity to learn: "There's a concern amongst specialists that districts will not give them the time to really focus on the mental health of the children, rather there will be such pressure on curriculum, getting students learning again, that our specialists feel like they may not be in a place to learn mentally" (Delaware State News 2020).<sup>25</sup> Students with existing mental health challenges prior to the pandemic, such as depression or substance use, lost routine associated with school and potential support systems housed within school systems.<sup>26</sup> Children with special needs, including those on the autism spectrum for instance, would be greatly impacted by the loss of routine as well. Teacher and school staff is also a major concern given The pandemic increased teacher and staff responsibilities, causing potential consequences to their health; a new expectation evolved to manage many new pandemic-related conditions with little attention to how teachers and staff could maintain their own self-care and mental health.

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21 Irizarry, Joe. "VIDEO: School's out for Longer than Summer for 2 Wilmington Schools in Christina School District." WDEL 101.7 FM, 12 June 2019, [www.wdel.com/news/video-schools-out-for-longer-than-summer-for-2-wilmington-schools-in-christina-school-district/article\\_c2433364-8c90-11e9-9668-4f83c5cfb5b6.html](http://www.wdel.com/news/video-schools-out-for-longer-than-summer-for-2-wilmington-schools-in-christina-school-district/article_c2433364-8c90-11e9-9668-4f83c5cfb5b6.html).

22 Steinberg, Matthew P., and John M. MacDonald. "The effects of closing urban schools on students' academic and behavioral outcomes: Evidence from Philadelphia." *Economics of Education Review* 69 (2019): 25-60

23 Olson, Annika. "Psychological Impact of School Closings Will Be Large." *UT News*, 4 Nov. 2019, [news.utexas.edu/2019/11/04/psychological-impact-of-school-closings-will-be-large/](http://news.utexas.edu/2019/11/04/psychological-impact-of-school-closings-will-be-large/).

24 Student Meal Sites / Meal Location List, Delaware Department of Education, 2021, [www.doe.k12.de.us/domain/611](http://www.doe.k12.de.us/domain/611).

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25 Schultz, Brooke. "Group Examines Mental Health Issues upon Schools Reopening." *Delaware State News*, 3 June 2020, [delawarestatenews.net/coronavirus/group-examines-mental-health-issues-upon-schools-reopening/](http://delawarestatenews.net/coronavirus/group-examines-mental-health-issues-upon-schools-reopening/).

26 Lee, Joyce. "Mental health effects of school closures during COVID-19." *The Lancet. Child & adolescent health* vol. 4,6 (2020): 421. doi:10.1016/S2352-4642(20)30109-7



To address some of the above mentioned concerns, a Health and Wellness working group of state education, psychology, and other medical professionals was established in May 2020. The group were tasked with crafting a framework to allow schools to (Delaware State News 2020):

1. Function remotely or in-person
2. Protect the physical and mental health of students, staff, and faculty.

Some of the group's recommendations included a crisis support team, staff mental health readiness intakes, availability of self-care resources, a mental health liaison, and more.

## **Where we are:**

- Food insecurity grew during the pandemic, particularly for children who lost meals in school settings. Schools and local nonprofits offered support by offering packaging meals at drop-off locations throughout Southbridge.
- Student mental health and safety is a growing concern as the pandemic has brought new conditions (i.e., losing family members and other loved ones, income loss, abusive/toxic home environments) that hinder mental wellbeing and socioemotional development.
- The health of teachers and staff is also a concern in managing these new conditions while maintaining self-care.

## **Things to consider for the Southbridge Neighborhood Plan:**

- How can Southbridge maintain food security to address student and household hunger?
- How can children who are enduring heightened abuse and violence at home receive support and safety?
- What DE Health and Wellness working group recommendations were implemented at Southbridge residents' schools? How can they be implemented to improve health and wellness for students, teachers, and staff.

# Transportation Access

Active transportation and public transit access have many health benefits for communities by connecting people to resources such as jobs, food, health care, and other daily needs. Biking and walking are both forms of active transportation that promote healthy physical movement and active lifestyles, and every trip begins and ends with either walking or rolling using a mobility device whether it's traveling from one's doorstep to the bus stop or from a garage to a private vehicle. Without active transportation and public transit opportunities, individuals and families who do not have access to private vehicles may not be able to access resources to fulfill their everyday needs, and without access to parks and gym facilities, opportunities for physical activity may be limited.

Southbridge shows a critical need of physical activity opportunities to improve health outcomes. Poor physical health was found for 26% of South Wilmington residents before COVID-19, in comparison to 21% of New Castle County's total residents.<sup>27</sup> South Wilmington also showed that 36% of residents reported physical inactivity for the past 30 days prior to COVID-19, with 71% of residents identified as obese.<sup>28</sup> Both of these conditions were higher for Southbridge residents than New Castle County overall, and the pandemic has likely increased poor opportunities and health outcomes.

Southbridge is served by tight-knit street grid with major thoroughfares connecting the study area to the rest of Wilmington via four water crossing connections, including the Senator John E. Reilly Bridge (Market Street), Leo J. Dugan, Sr Bridge (Walnut Street), William J. Winchester Bridge (E 4th Street), and the Christina River (I-495) Bridge with a fifth connection just outside the study area to the west via the newly constructed New Sweden Street Bridge. All of these bridges, with the exception of the interstate, are accessible by bicycle and walking. New Sweden Street Bridge provides the most

<sup>27</sup> PolicyMap, "Community Health Report, 10003001902 (Census Tract)," Accessed Feb 11, 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

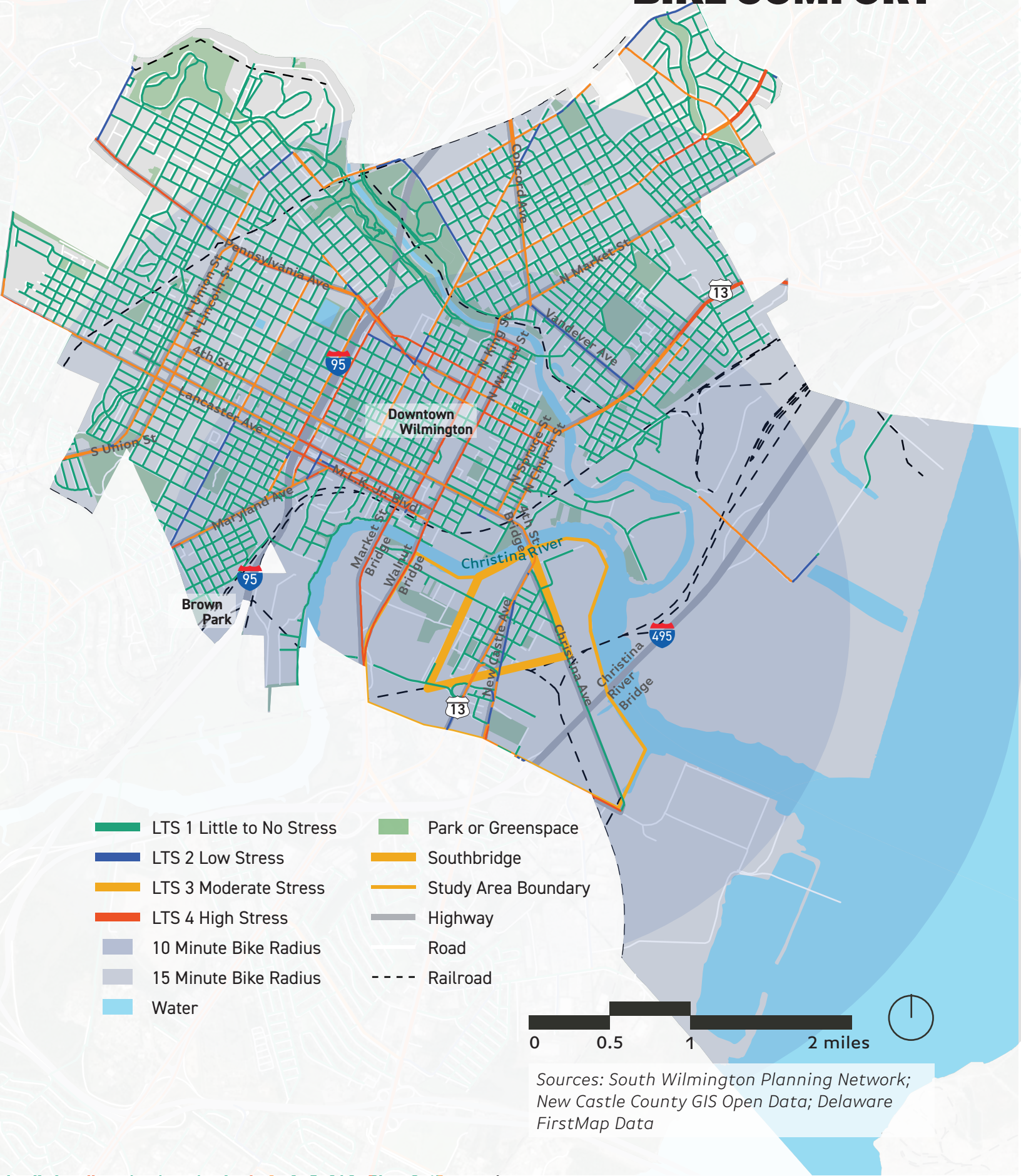
comfortable facility with a completely separated shared bike and walkway. The Market and Walnut Street bridges provide the lowest possible bike comfort score (4 out of 4 for stress level for bike riders) while E 4th Street provides more comfort relative to the former with a score of 3 out of 4. Through the Delaware Department of Transportation's (DelDOT) Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), the first phase of the Southbridge Streetscape Improvements project was completed ten years ago, with the second phase of improvements scheduled to be completed in Fall 2021. The third and final phase

Level of Traffic Stress	Description	Example
1	Safe for children to use; Usually completely separated from auto traffic	 Photo by Bob Patten
2	Tolerated by most mainstream adult populations of cyclists; Roads with low volume and low speed auto traffic	
3	Tolerated by riders who are enthused and confident; Heavy traffic with separated bike facility	
4	Only tolerated by strong and fearless riders; cyclists must interact with high volumes or speeds of auto traffic.	

Source: *Blueprint for a Bicycle-Friendly Delaware: A Statewide Policy Plan*, DelDOT (2018).



# BIKE COMFORT



Sources: South Wilmington Planning Network;  
New Castle County GIS Open Data; Delaware  
FirstMap Data



# ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION



of streetscape improvements will be explored in 2021, extending Phase II traffic calming and streetscape enhancements recommended in the Southbridge Circulation Study. These Phase II and Phase III improvements include traffic calming and streetscape enhancements such as decorative lighting, curb bumpouts, and replacement of sidewalk along streets including A Street, New Castle Avenue, and Heald Street. Construction will begin on the A Street Sidepath project in early 2021, which will improve connections to the western bridges.

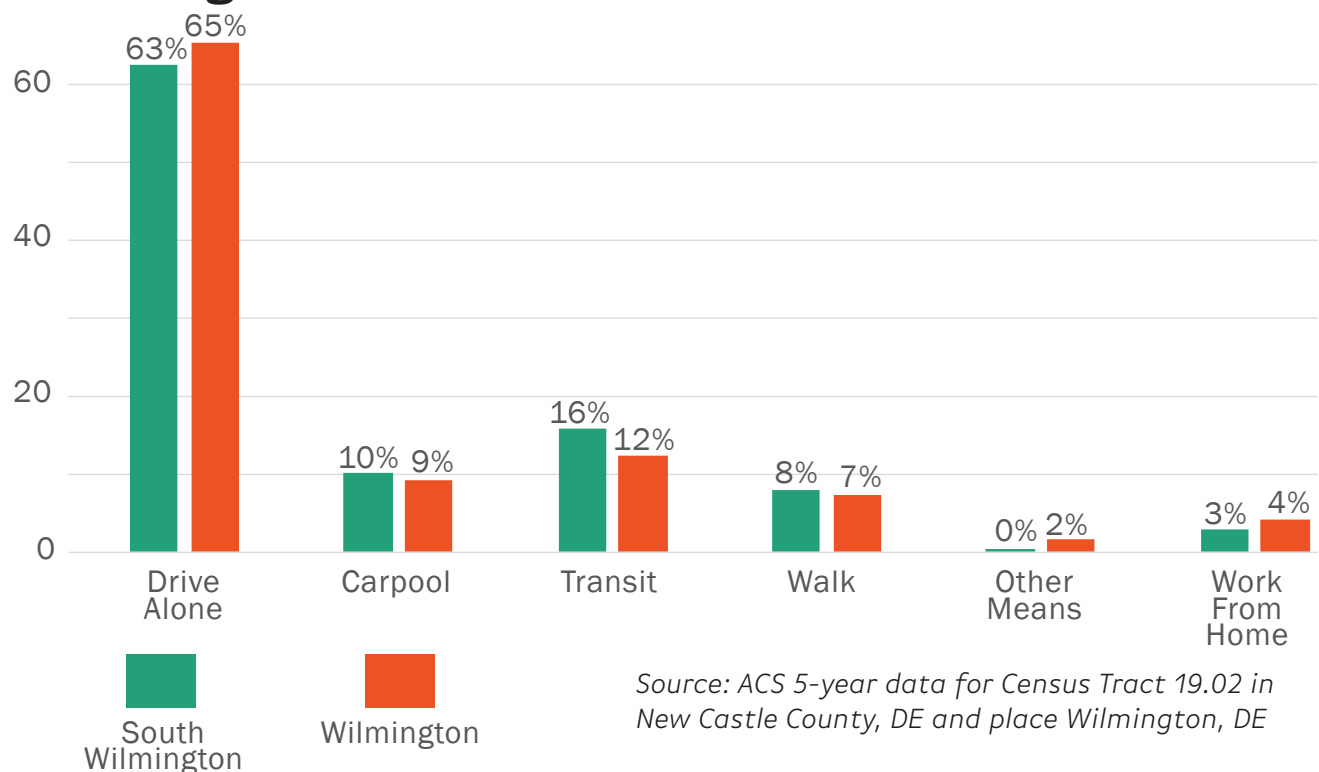
Especially as many segments of the City's planned and proposed on- and off-street cycling infrastructure network will be constructed after the summer of 2021, Level of Traffic Street (LTS) scores are helpful for delineating specific street characteristics that contribute to or detract from the comfort of people biking along a particular segment.

LTS scores of 1 are the most comfortable segments usually separated from traffic and are suitable for all ages and abilities while an LTS score of 4 indicates a busy, stressful segment not suitable for the vast majority of people on bikes except for the most "strong and fearless" cyclists, according to the methodology developed by the City of Portland's Bureau of Transportation.<sup>29</sup>

Most of the street grid in Wilmington has an LTS score of 1, indicating that much of the city's existing street network is presently bike-friendly to a wide range of people on bikes across age and ability. The same is true of the Southbridge area and core study area with the exception of S Heald Street (LTS 4) and New Castle Avenue (LTS 2-4). All of Wilmington is bikeable within 30 minutes, or six miles, from the approximate centroid of the core study area, while the entire Southbridge study area is bikeable from the core area in under 10 minutes or less.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/article/158497>

## Commuting Characteristics



In general, there are existing sidewalks on at least one side of most of the streets within the core study area. The entire core study area is walkable within a time period of 5 minutes (¼ mile) or less and the larger study area is walkable within 10 minutes (½ mile) from the centroid of the core study area.

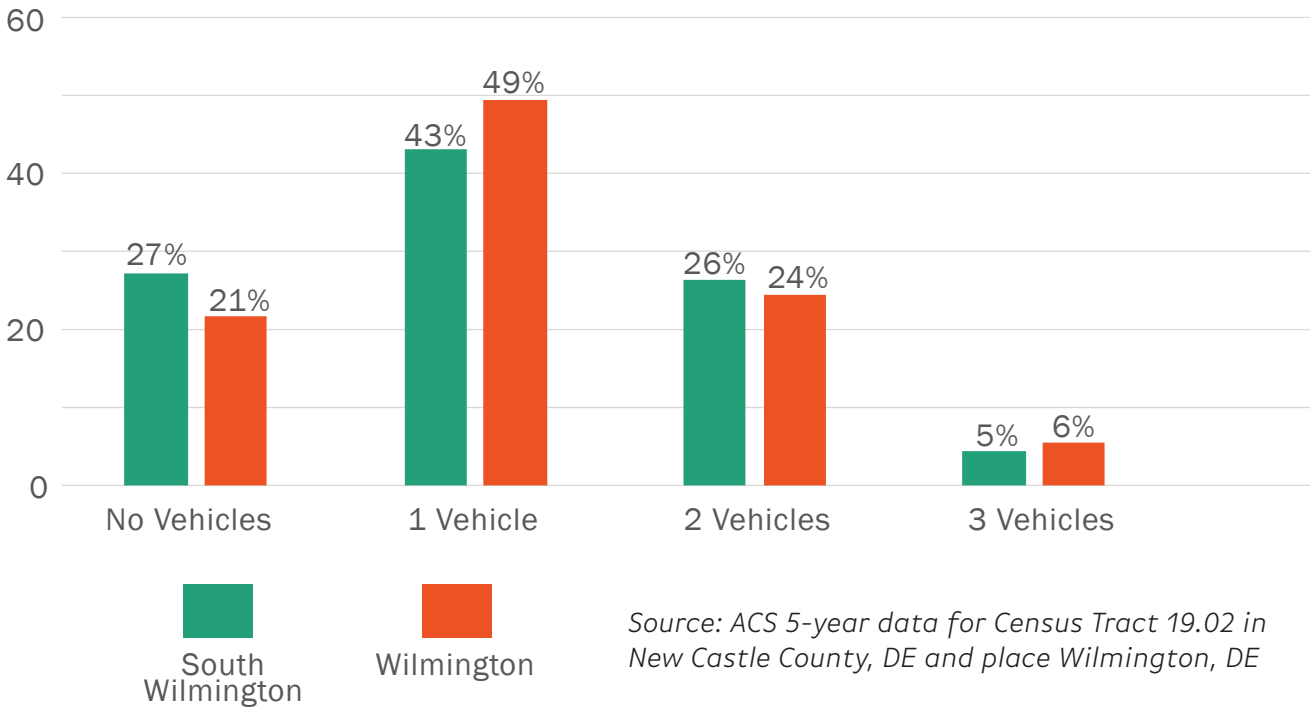
However, the presence of sidewalks does not mean that walking radii based on time or distance are reliable measures of walksheds alone: quality of sidewalk pavement, ADA accessibility, and sidewalks free from obstructions are important for people walking and/or using mobility devices, particularly wheelchairs.

Due to the historical development of many older towns and cities in dense areas along the eastern coastline, many streets are too narrow to accommodate all modern preferences for space utilization, motivating users to repurpose limited space for unintended uses. Specifically, many people park their private vehicles directly on or straddling sidewalks, especially near businesses. Commuting and vehicle access characteristics

of residents of the Southbridge Census Tract are similar to those of the City of Wilmington as a whole. According to the 2019 5-Year American Community Survey Selected Economic Characteristics, a majority of employed South Wilmington residents drive to work alone (63%) compared to 65% of employed Wilmington residents who commute to work via driving alone. South Wilmington residents do carpool and walk at slightly higher percentages than Wilmington residents as a whole and have a greater share of transit users (16%) compared to the city (12%).

Higher transit use among South Wilmington residents may also be due to vehicle access characteristics. Half of Wilmington households (49%) have access to at least one vehicle while nearly one-third (31%) have access to two or more vehicles; 80% of Wilmington households have access to at least one vehicle compared to 73% of South Wilmington households.

Vehicle Access by Household





# TRANSIT+RIDERSHIP



# REGIONAL TRANSIT



Sources: South Wilmington Planning Network;  
New Castle County GIS Open Data; Delaware  
FirstMap Data



Transit is an important mode for Southbridge residents who do not have access to a vehicle to travel longer distances than are typical or appropriate for biking and walking trips, yet weekday ridership at bus stops within the Southbridge study area show lower ridership compared to the system network as a whole.

While all of the existing bus stops in the study area are accessible by the sidewalk network, the frequency of weekday routes may not serve job centers and/or operating during expanded working hours for workers with less traditional schedules, such as those employed in the service industry or the Port.

## **Where we are:**

- The Southbridge study area features a walkable, bikeable street grid although major destinations within the study area along S Heald Street and New Castle Avenue are less comfortable for people biking along these busier corridors and present challenges for pedestrians where sidewalks are obstructed by parked vehicles.
- Active transportation to outside of the study area may be discouraged by low comfort streets.
- Transit access is important for Southbridge residents who have both less access to vehicles and higher transit ridership compared to the city as a whole.

## **Things to consider for the Southbridge Neighborhood Plan:**

- How can we reallocate street space for physically distant physical activity, such as walking and biking, and connect places?
- What do we need to know to better understand on-street parking demand and off-street parking availability to discourage parking on sidewalks?
- How do we prioritize walking and biking along existing bridges to the rest of Wilmington?
- What is the state of truck traffic in Southbridge?

# Health Conditions

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), adults of any age are at increased risk of becoming severely ill with COVID-19 if they have other pre-existing health conditions, including but not limited to cancer, COPD, heart conditions, obesity, and type 2 diabetes.<sup>30</sup> Increasingly, evidence is emerging that people with asthma, high blood pressure, or type 1 diabetes and people who are overweight might be at increased risk of becoming severely ill from COVID-19 as well.<sup>31</sup> This means that areas with higher rates of the above conditions are at higher risk of being severely impacted by COVID-19 and also have lower levels of health and wellness.

Looking at the rates of these health conditions in the communities can point us towards changes we can make through the master plan. For example, COPD and asthma are connected to a community's air quality, while high rates of obesity, high blood pressure, heart conditions, diabetes, and cholesterol may indicate the need for a community environment that has active and safe ways for people to walk, bike, and play.

A 2019 WILMAPCO study on the region's social determinants of health found that the Southbridge area scored within a range of 10-12 for potential public health concern, emphasizing the east of South Heald Street as having the highest levels of concern.<sup>32</sup> The scores were determined from eight factors: poverty rate, high school graduation rate, minority segregation<sup>33</sup>, employment rate, homeownership rate, household tenure, single parent households, USDA food desert status.

South Wilmington was deemed a Medically Underserved Area by the Health Resources and

Services Administration.<sup>34</sup> The designation identified South Wilmington as an area with too few primary care providers, high infant mortality, high poverty, and/or a high elderly population; it acknowledges that a specific group is underserved, such as due to economic, cultural, or linguistic barriers to primary medical care.

Southbridge is overburdened by environmental harms and risks due to industrial uses in the area. Christina Energy Center, a power plant located along Christina Avenue on the eastern edge of Southbridge, is designated as a "major discharger" of air pollutants by the EPA.<sup>35</sup> <sup>36</sup> Residents have pointed to the presence of coarse airborne dust, which is most likely the result of residential areas being located next to industrial uses.<sup>37</sup>

Within the Southbridge study area, there are four identified Superfund sites, which are abandoned sites where hazardous waste is located, possibly affecting local ecosystems or people.<sup>38</sup> There are at least 10 brownfields that have been identified by the EPA, which are sites with potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant or contaminant, as well as other hazardous sites which dot the neighborhood.

According to a 2017 report by the Union of Concerned Scientists, within a one mile radius of Southbridge is 48 brownfield sites, "more than half of all brownfields in Delaware."<sup>39</sup>

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34 PolicyMap, "Community Health Report for 10003001902 (Census Tract)," Accessed Feb 11, 2021.

35 EPA, "EPA FRS Facilities State Single File CSV Download, Geospatial Data," updated Jan 6, 2021, <http://bit.ly/3sJf15n>

36 EPA, "FRS Environmental Interest Types," Jun 7, 2013, <http://bit.ly/2Y1fGrc>

37 Delaware Public Media, "State collects more data on dust problem in Eden Park," Nov 1, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2NIHoNw>.

38 Ibid.

39 Center for Science and Democracy at the Union of Concerned Scientists, "Environmental Justice for Delaware Mitigating Toxic Pollution in New Castle County Communities," October 2017, <https://bit.ly/2NttR6u>

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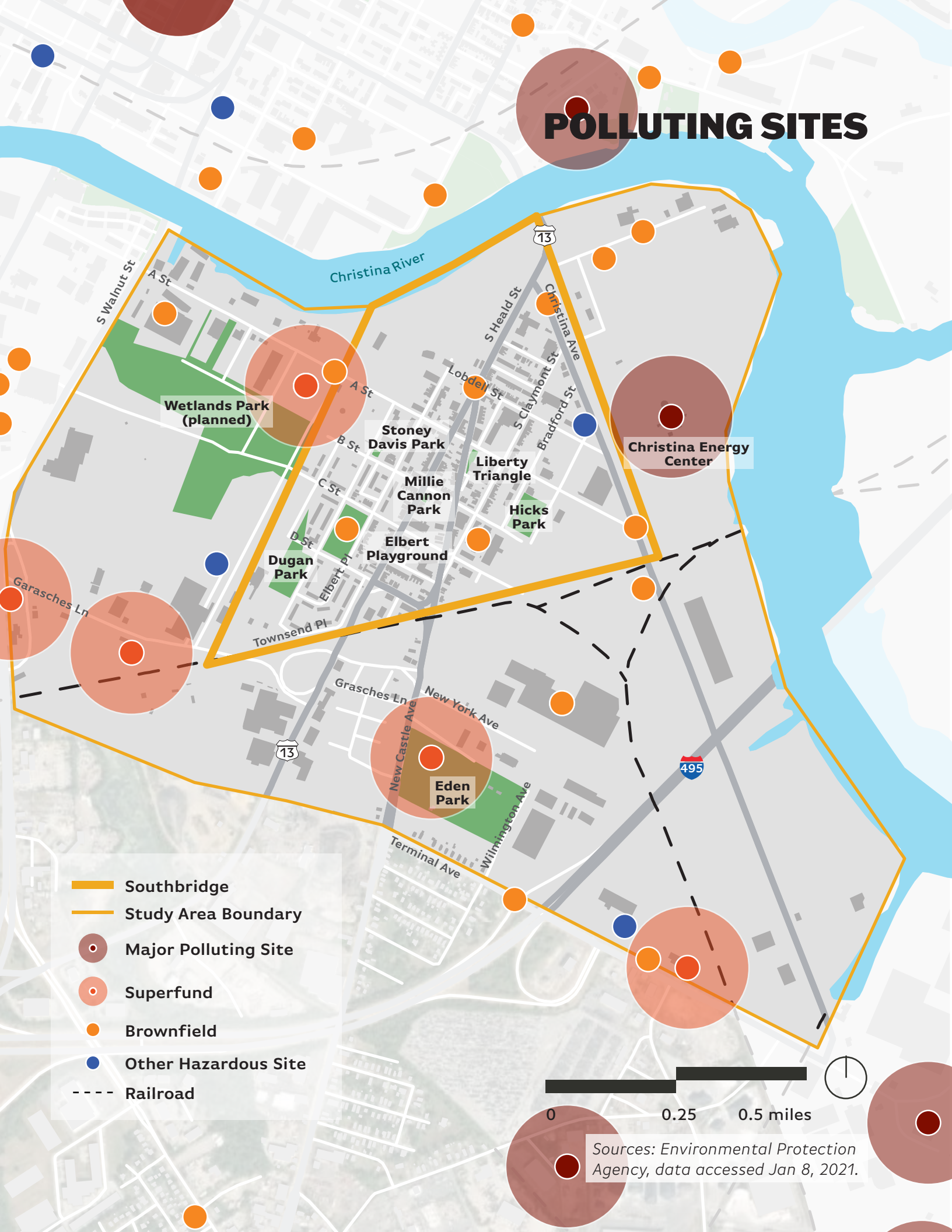
30 CDC, "People with Certain Medical Conditions," Updated Dec 29, 2020, <http://bit.ly/3agxztX>

31 Ibid.

32 WILMAPCO, "WILMAPCO Data Report: Social Determinants of Health," Apr 2019, <https://bit.ly/2NEAeDS>

33 Residents that do not identify as non-Hispanic, White

# POLLUTING SITES



Sources: Environmental Protection Agency, data accessed Jan 8, 2021.

These factors would indicate that Southbridge would have high rates of negative health conditions like cancer, COPD, asthma, and other conditions mentioned above. However, here again, our analysis is limited by the fact that the available data is for South Wilmington rather than Southbridge.

Poor mental health similarly illustrated a higher rate for South Wilmington than New Castle County. Nearly 23% of South Wilmington adults report poor mental health due to stress, depression, and problems with emotions. New Castle County, in comparison, reported 19% of adults with poor mental health.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> PolicyMap, "Community Health Report, 10003001902 (Census Tract)," Accessed Feb 11, 2021.

Based on available data, South Wilmington and Wilmington as a whole have higher rates of negative health conditions compared to New Castle County.<sup>41 42</sup> If we were able to zoom into data for Southbridge alone, these rates may reflect the environmental conditions of the neighborhood. However, the comparatively high rates of negative health conditions in South Wilmington and Wilmington points to vulnerability to COVID-19 and a shaky foundation for health and wellbeing in the communities within Wilmington.

<sup>41</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 500 Cities: Census Tract-level Data (GIS Friendly Format), 2019 release, <https://bit.ly/3nAXypT>

<sup>42</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Places: Local Data for Better Health, County Data 2020 release, <https://bit.ly/3nrXPoC>

## Comorbidities

	South Wilmington	Wilmington	County
Asthma	12.0%	12.1%	9.4%
COPD	6.6%	8.2%	5.9%
Smoking	21.6%	22.9%	18.4%
Cancer excluding skin cancer	4.4%	5.7%	6.2%
Obesity	39.0%	39.8%	33.2%
High blood pressure	36.5%	40.2%	32.5%
Coronary heart disease	4.8%	6.4%	5.2%
Diabetes	11.9%	14.2%	10.1%
High cholesterol	32.2%	28.9%	28.8%

Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 500 Cities. 2019 release.



## **Where we are:**

Southbridge is overburdened by environmental harms and risk present in the community. Based on available data, South Wilmington and Wilmington higher prevalence for negative health conditions compared to New Castle County as a whole. High rates of disease and illness implies that foundations of health and wellness are built on shaky ground.

## **Things to consider for the Southbridge Neighborhood Plan:**

- What things in the neighborhood and built environment of Southbridge are exposing residents to risk factors?
- How can we improve things like air and water quality?
- How can we create a built environment that promotes health and wellness?

# Employment Opportunities

Jobs in 2020 had an especially large impact on wellness. They impacted our ability to socially distance ourselves from others while earning an income; they impacted our ability to access health insurance; they determined whether we could pay our rents or mortgages on time, buy healthy food, afford childcare, and many of the essential goods and services we need to survive.

It is difficult to figure out whether those who are currently employed have jobs that would allow them to socially distance. The largest employer in Wilmington is the Port, followed by correctional facilities and retail and wholesale suppliers.<sup>43</sup> Comparatively, the largest employer in South Wilmington is retail and wholesale suppliers, public administration, and medical facilities.<sup>44</sup>

As of November 2020, 8.7% of Wilmington residents were unemployed.<sup>45</sup> The need for job opportunities for Southbridge residents has been a consistent part of conversations around equitable development in South Wilmington, and the lack of job opportunities has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, residents advocated for local hiring during the construction of a riverfront apartment building on A Street, and in 2018, residents pushed for a similar deal during the permitting process of a slag grinding facility.<sup>46,47</sup> Both times, the companies behind the developments did not sign a community benefits agreement.

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<sup>43</sup> Infogroup and Esri. Esri Total Residential Population forecasts for 2020. Infogroup Business Locations (October 2020).

<sup>44</sup> Infogroup and Esri. Esri Total Residential Population forecasts for 2020. Infogroup Business Locations (October 2020).

<sup>45</sup> Office of Occupational and Labor Market Information, State of Delaware Department of Labor, <http://bit.ly/2KuPba0>

<sup>46</sup> Delaware Public Media, "South Wilmington residents wonder what 'next frontier' of riverfront development will bring," Feb 14, 2020, <http://bit.ly/3qDkBLi>

<sup>47</sup> The News Journal, Jeanne Kuang "In Wilmington's Southbridge, talk of new industry turns to jobs, community benefits," Dec 17, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2Y1NEMp>

Currently in Southbridge, there are several businesses catering to local residents, including Carry My Own Weight, a clothing company with a large social media presence, Boney's Barbershop, KNF Market Store and 3 C's Food Market, both corner stores, Dugan's Liquor Store, and several day care facilities.

Other businesses that are not necessarily geared towards Southbridge residents but nevertheless may provide job opportunities include Dr. Mini Bike & Mr. Go Kart, a small engine repair shop for go karts and mini bikes, Fibre Processing Corporation, a futon and mattress manufacturer, Consolidated LLC, a fabrication and construction company, Diamond Chemical & Supply Company, which produces cleaning products, the Delaware Humane Association, and others, many of them in wholesale and manufacturing.

Data for Wilmington indicates that very few people who live in Wilmington are actually employed within the city boundaries. In order to get a clearer picture of job opportunities and job characteristics for Southbridge residents, a more detailed survey may be necessary.

## Largest Employers in Wilmington

Category	Employees
Public Administration: Port	1,500
Public Administration: Correctional	339
Retail and Wholesale	322
Other Public Administration	311
Manufacturing	192

## Largest Employers in South Wilmington

Category	Employees
Public Administration	335
Retail and Wholesale	251
Medical	141
Manufacturing	136
Day Care	81

Source: Esri Business Analyst, Business Locator, Wilmington, 2020 forecasts.

## Non-Governmental Employers in South Wilmington

	Employees
Henrietta Johnson Medical	45
Neighborhood House	41
Fibre Processing Corp	40
Consolidated LLC	30
Dimaond Chemical & Supply	26
Fresenius Medical Care	25
Delaware Humane Association	25
Flooring Solutions Inc	20
Atlantic Landscape Co	20
Chop Tank Excavation	16



Carry My Own Weight located at 411 New Castle Ave (image source Google Maps)



Consolidated LLC at 1216 D St (image source Google Maps)

Source: Esri Business Analyst, Business Locator, Wilmington, 2020 forecasts.

## **Where we are:**

COVID-19 has created an unstable employment environment, while new developments have brought little in terms job benefits for local residents. A localized survey will be required to disaggregate South Wilmington data to get a clearer picture of Southbridge to determine the current state of employment opportunities for residents.

## **Things to consider for the Southbridge Neighborhood Plan:**

- How can we make sure employers in Southbridge are bringing jobs and other benefits for residents?
- What job opportunities are missing in the neighborhood?

# Impacts of Social Distancing

Studies from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada point to the negative impacts of COVID-19, specifically social distancing policies, on mental health, wellbeing, and social cohesion. While economic and physical health concerns due to COVID-19 could play a larger role in exacerbating mental health conditions, social distancing is also a factor.<sup>48</sup> Social distancing and isolation have been found to worsen mental wellbeing by exacerbating conditions such as depression and anxiety,<sup>49</sup> and feelings of confusion, anger, isolation and loneliness.<sup>50</sup> The negative effects on mental wellbeing can be felt after a short time.<sup>51</sup>

Certain populations are at a higher risk for negative mental health impacts, including women, particularly women with children; people with low incomes; healthcare and other frontline workers; people with pre-existing mental health conditions; and older people. People with low incomes are more likely to live in crowded or poor-quality housing, and being confined to these conditions can negatively impact mental well-being. Women and children are more likely to have experienced violence including domestic violence and sexual abuse during social distancing and shutdowns, which can have adverse mental health effects.<sup>52</sup>

School and childcare closures as well as other disruptions due to social distancing can lead to adverse mental health impacts in babies, children, and young adults. School provides children and young adults not only with education but with a source of structure and routine, a venue for social interaction, and a place of safety. The loss of these spaces and resources can negatively impact mental wellbeing, and can put some children at increased risk for adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) depending on their family situation. Children from low-income families are more likely to experience adverse mental health effects from social distancing and shutdown measures.<sup>53</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing a decline in perceptions of social cohesion at the neighborhood level, according to a study from the UK. People of color, people living in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and people with lower levels of formal education experienced greater perceived declines in social cohesion.<sup>54</sup> Given that social cohesion is positively associated with physical and mental health and health behaviors,<sup>55</sup> it is important to find ways to support social cohesion while maintaining social distancing as necessary.

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48 Predictors of mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic in the US: Role of economic concerns, health worries and social distancing (2020) <http://bit.ly/3c9DukS>

49 Mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic: Effects of stay-at-home policies, social distancing behavior, and social resources (2020) <http://bit.ly/3oj11IK>.

50 A Health Impact Assessment of the 'Staying at Home and Social Distancing Policy' in Wales in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (2020) <https://bit.ly/3iJfMm>

51 The Psychological Impact of COVID-19 in Canada: Effects of Social Isolation During the Initial Response (2020) <https://bit.ly/39iiNle>

52 A Health Impact Assessment of the 'Staying at Home and Social Distancing Policy' in Wales in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (2020) <https://bit.ly/3iJfMm>

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53 Ibid.

54 Coming together or coming apart? Changes in social cohesion during the Covid-19 pandemic in England <https://bit.ly/3c9Y5Wk>

55 The Psychological Impact of COVID-19 in Canada: Effects of Social Isolation During the Initial Response (2020) <https://bit.ly/39iiNle>



## **Where we are:**

Southbridge has a higher percentage of low income households than the surrounding city of Wilmington, and a significant portion of residents work in industries that may not allow for social distancing (see “Largest Employers in Wilmington” and “Largest Employers in South Wilmington” tables on page 52). Low-income residents and frontline workers are both at higher risk for negative mental health impacts due to COVID-19.

## **Things to consider for the Southbridge Neighborhood Plan:**

- How can institutions such as churches and civic organizations be supported to continue offering means of safe social connection for the duration of the pandemic?
- How can these organizations that contribute to social connection be supported to survive through the pandemic and resume normal activities once it is safe to do so?
- How can public spaces be designed to facilitate socially distant social interaction for all ages?

# Social Cohesion

Socially cohesive environments and conditions can improve the mental health and wellbeing outcomes for Southbridge residents. Research shows that social cohesion, the sense of belonging and connectedness in a community is shown to have a positive impact on mental health (Kingsbury et al. 2018).<sup>56</sup> Southbridge has 17 churches within its boundary. Churches remain active in Delaware during the pandemic. A local minister sued the state on the grounds that churches, particularly Black churches, were limited in financial resources to facilitate online worship (WSJ 2020).<sup>57</sup> Governor Carney agreed to consider churches and religious institutions neutrally with regard to emergency state orders on the grounds of dropping the lawsuit. In-person limitations exist, however, on how they may operate for safety.

Parks also act as socially cohesive spaces where residents can mingle and promote safe, socially-distanced interactions.<sup>58</sup> Southbridge has at least 7 parks in its boundary, with the 20-acre South Wilmington Wetlands Park expected to open in the Summer 2021. Five civic organizations based in Southbridge work to promote community development endeavors that would also nurture social cohesion: youth development, early childhood education, crisis services, housing, and poverty.

56 Kingsbury M, Clayborne Z, Colman I, Kirkbride JB. The protective effect of neighbourhood social cohesion on adolescent mental health following stressful life events. *Psychol Med.* 2020;50(8):1292-1299. doi:10.1017/S0033291719001235

57 The Editorial Board. "Opinion | Covid and the Church in Delaware." *The Wall Street Journal*, Dow Jones & Company, 12 Nov. 2020, [www.wsj.com/articles/covid-and-the-church-in-delaware-11605223486](http://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-and-the-church-in-delaware-11605223486).

58 Jennings V, Bamkole O. The Relationship between Social Cohesion and Urban Green Space: An Avenue for Health Promotion. *Int J Environ Res Public Health.* 2019;16(3):452. Published 2019 Feb 4. doi:10.3390/ijerph16030452

Place Name	Type
Ark Learning Center	Childcare
Creative Learning Child Care	Childcare
Yolanda's LiL Helper's	Childcare
Church of the Living Word	Church
D'Ashley's church	Church
Ezion Fair Church	Church
The First State Church of Christ	Church
Gospel Time Church of God in Christ	Church
Greater Deliverance Temple	Church
Harrison Memorial Baptist Church	Church
House of God Church	Church
Iglesia de Dios Linaje Escogido	Church
Love Fellowship	Church
Ministerio Tabernaculo De Transformacion	Church
Mt Joy United Methodist Church	Church
New Calvary Baptist Church	Church
New Covenant Christian Church	Church
New Life Baptist Church	Church
PDH Ministries	Church
River of Life Church	Church
Shiloh Apostolic Church	Church
A Copeland Foundation Inc	Civic organization
Communities in Schools - Wilmington	Civic organization
Junior Achievement of Delaware	Civic organization
Neighborhood House	Civic organization
76ers Fieldhouse Powered by BPG   Sports	Event venue
The Catch	Event venue
Dugan Park	Park
Eden Park	Park
Elbert Playground	Park
Hicks Park	Park
Liberty Triangle	Park
Millie Cannon Park	Park
Stoney Davis Park	Park

# COMMUNITY ASSETS



## **Where we are:**

Southbridge socially-cohesive spaces include:

- Nearly 20 churches that illustrate religious institutions as a significant socially cohesive mechanism in Southbridge. A shared faith is found to produce positive mental health outcomes from its structure, exposure to similar-minded people, mindfulness practices, and more.
- Parks have the potential to strengthen social cohesion, and subsequently health, of Southbridge residents with an incoming 20-acre Wetland Park that will open this year; this will join Southbridge's current seven parks.

## **Things to consider for the Southbridge Neighborhood Plan:**

- Given COVID limitations, have churches' been able to continue services (i.e., maintain socially cohesive and mental health benefits)?
- Where are opportunities to improve social cohesion through additional amenities in Southbridge?
- Does the main business district area offer safe, gathering spaces to implement socially cohesive spaces and programming (e.g., creative placemaking, play streets, streetscape, parklets, etc. for their health benefits)?

# Land Use and Zoning

A majority of the study area is zoned for manufacturing (light manufacturing and waterfront manufacturing) and industrial (general industrial), much of it surrounding residentially zoned areas of Southbridge. The Southbridge 2028 Comprehensive Plan updated the Future Land Use map to change the area northeast of Southbridge along the Christina River from "Manufacturing" to "Mixed Commercial/Light Manufacturing." The zoning map, however, has yet to update to reflect these changes (i.e., W-1 to W-2 or W-3), as shown on the next page.

The change seeks to mitigate health hazards associated with the heavy manufacturing currently in the area. The health implications of manufacturing, combined with the flooding that washes debris into the community, are potentially highly negative. According to research by Victor Perez (a member of this Neighborhood Plan's Steering Committee) and Jennifer Egan, the industrial legacy of Southbridge has left contaminants that are associated with neurodevelopmental issues, cancer, reproductive effects, and problems of the nervous system.<sup>59</sup>

Vacant land exists in areas zoned as waterfront residential/commercial, light manufacturing, and low-density residential housing. Vacant and abandoned lots have been associated with negative effects on community well-being, physical health, and mental health, and according to one survey in Philadelphia, they are often "overshadowing positive aspects of the community, contributing to fractures between neighbors, attracting crime, and making residents fearful."<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Victor W. Perez and Jennifer Egan, "Knowledge and Concern for Sea-Level Rise in an Urban Environmental Justice Community," *Sociological Forum*, 2016, DOI: 10.1111/socf.12278.

<sup>60</sup> Eugenia Garvin, Charles Branas, Shimrit Keddem, Jeffrey Sellman, and Carolyn Cannuscio, "More Than Just An Eyesore: Local Insights And Solutions on Vacant Land And Urban Health," *J Urban Health*. 2013 Jun; 90(3): 412–426. Published online 2012 Nov 28. doi: 10.1007/s11524-012-9782-7. <https://bit.ly/3qNOSXQ>

## Land Use by Category

Category	Percentage
Industrial	43%
Vacant	17%
Park/Open Space	10%
Commercial	8%
Infrastructure	8%
Institutional/Public Uses	6%
Low-Medium Density Residential	6%
Parking	2%
Mixed Use	<1%



# ZONING





# VACANT LAND

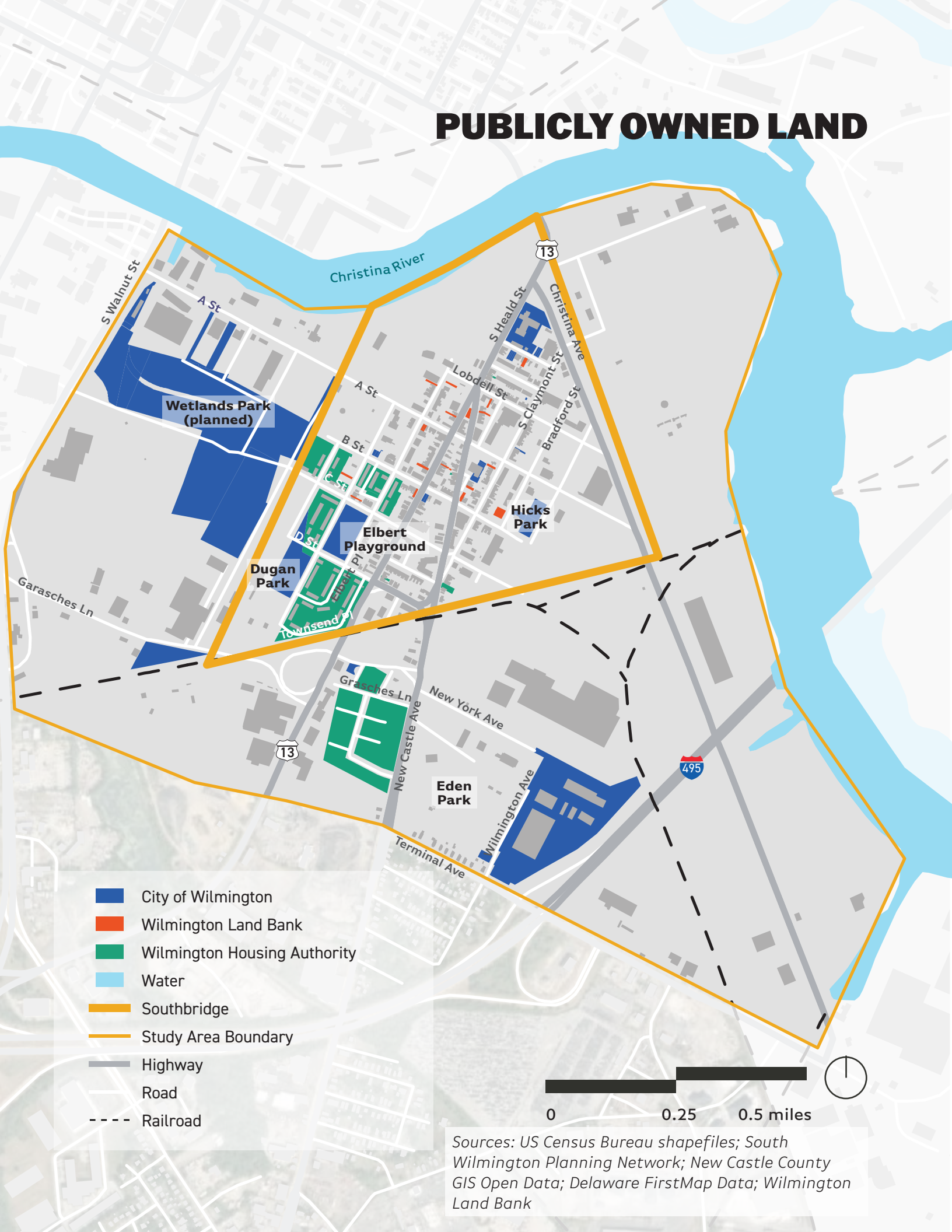


- Vacant Land
- Park or Greenspace
- Water
- Southbridge
- Study Area Boundary
- Highway
- Road
- Railroad

0 0.25 0.5 miles

Sources: US Census Bureau shapefiles; South Wilmington Planning Network; New Castle County GIS Open Data; Delaware FirstMap Data

# PUBLICLY OWNED LAND



Sources: US Census Bureau shapefiles; South Wilmington Planning Network; New Castle County GIS Open Data; Delaware FirstMap Data; Wilmington Land Bank

These areas may be opportunities for future development, particularly if they are publicly-owned sites. Residents have expressed wanting more recreational spaces for the youth, like a dirt bike park. Further research and feedback should be collected to determine the feasibility of using this vacant land and the types of development that will make the most sense for residents.

## **Where we are:**

- A majority of land in the study area is used for industrial uses that surround the residential core of Southbridge. Contamination from industry is associated with a range of negative health conditions.
- About 17% of land is vacant, which presents challenges to wellness but also opportunities for new and beneficial development.

## **Things to consider for the Southbridge Neighborhood Plan:**

- How can we make sure that residents of Southbridge are protected from harmful impacts of industrial uses?
- What are some ways to repurpose or redevelop vacant land into useful and needed development?
- How do zoning changes and recommendations from the South Walnut Street Urban Renewal Plan fit into what residents see in the future for Southbridge?

# Sea Level Rise and Flooding

According to the Climate Justice report by the Delaware Nature Society, Southbridge faces flooding due to “pernicious combination of high tides and stormwater overflows (caused by undersized infrastructure).”<sup>61</sup> 64% of the study area is in a 100-year flood plain, making it one of the most vulnerable communities to flooding in Wilmington.<sup>62</sup>

The same report stated that, while the new Wetland Park will reduce flooding by “eliminating combined sewer overflows and restoring acres of wetland to help absorb stormwater run-off,” neither the park nor the recent investments in tide gates, sewer clean outs and ditch maintenance “will be enough to protect Southbridge from the risk of inundation within the next few decades.”<sup>63</sup>

## Sea Level Rise and Flooding in the Study Area

Sea Level Rise	Percent of Study Area Under Water
2 feet	5%
4 feet	26%
6 feet	38%

61 Erika Furlong and Delaware Nature Society, “Climate Justice: For a Prosperous & Sustainable Wilmington,” 2018, <https://31m5q6px0ll2vdjyqian81tx-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/DelNature-Climate-Justice-for-a-Prosperous-Sustainable-Wilmington-Final-Report.pdf>

62 FEMA Flood Map Service Center, “NFHL Data-County” for the City of Wilmington, <https://msc.fema.gov/portal/resources/contact#>

63 Furlong and Delaware Nature Society, 2018.

The Climate Justice report suggests relocation as an option for Southbridge residents if a solution cannot be engineered.

In addition to accounting for flooding caused by weather events, any planning effort in South Wilmington should take into account the sea level rise that is projected to happen in the area.

According to a report released in 2017 by the Delaware Geological Survey and Delaware Department of Natural Resources, in the 80 years between 2020 and 2100, there is an 87% chance that there will be a 2 foot rise in sea level in Delaware, a 25% of a 4 foot rise, and a 3% chance of a 6 foot rise.<sup>64</sup>

Even with a 2 foot rise in sea level, parts of South Wilmington will be submerged, particularly along the Christina River and along the railroad tracks from the river to New Castle Avenue.

A 4 foot rise will result in the complete inundation of A Street and the future wetland park, areas surrounding Garasches Lane, and much of the area east of Heald Street.

A 6 foot rise in sea level will result in nearly 40% of the study area being under water.

64 Delaware Sea-Level Rise Technical Committee, Delaware Geological Survey, Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, “Recommendation of Sea-Level Rise Planning Scenarios for Delaware: Technical Report,” November 2017, <https://bit.ly/3iBt6DV>



# FLOOD RISK IN SOUTHBRIDGE



Sources: US Census Bureau shapefiles; South Wilmington Planning Network; New Castle County GIS Open Data; Delaware FirstMap Data; FEMA Flood Map Service Center

GREENVILLE

# FLOOD RISK IN WILMINGTON

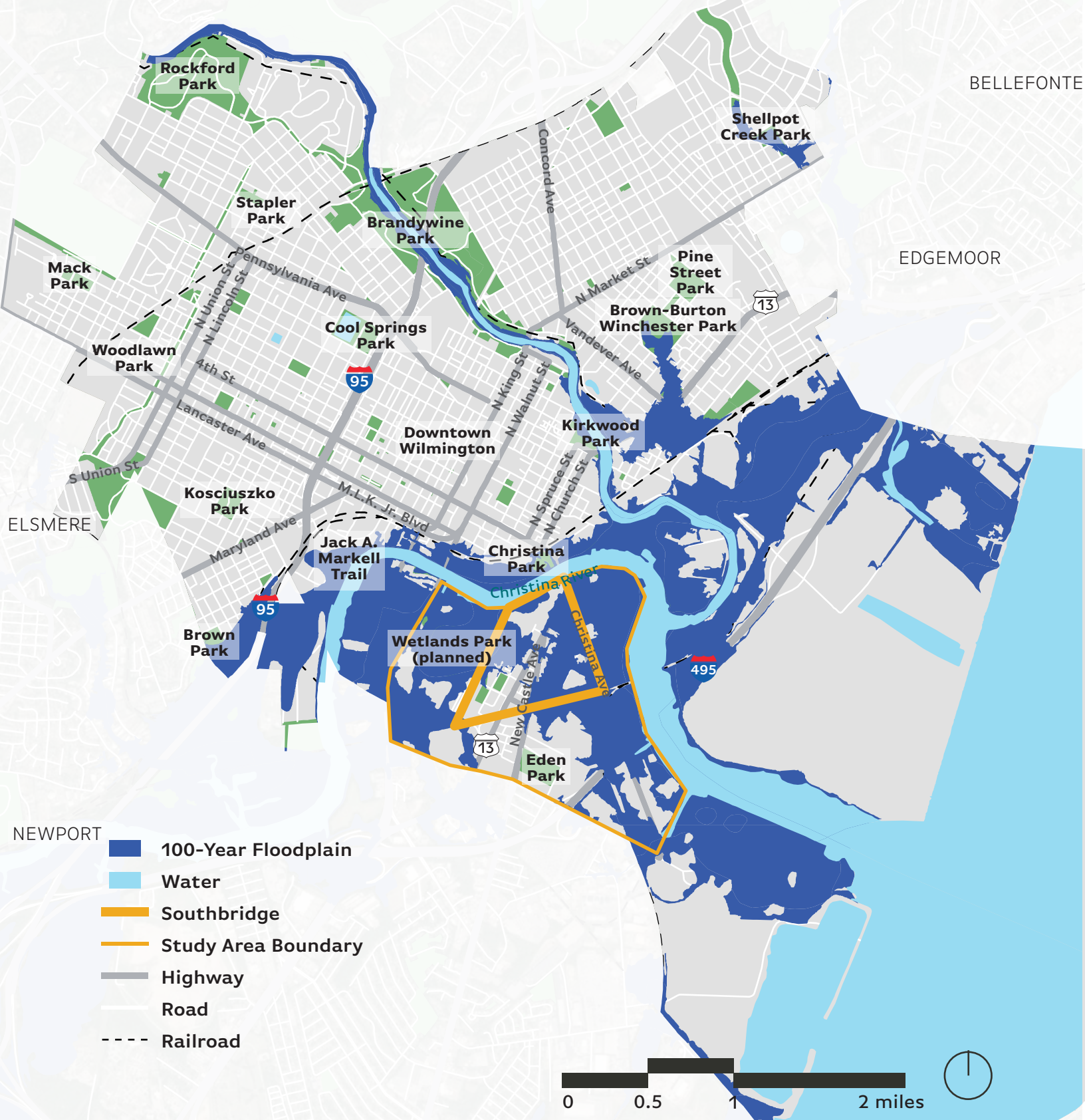
BELLEFONTE

EDGEMOOR

ELSMERE

NEWPORT

WILMINGTON  
MANOR



Sources: US Census Bureau shapefiles; South Wilmington Planning Network; New Castle County GIS Open Data; Delaware FirstMap Data; FEMA Flood Map Service Center



# SEA LEVEL RISE



- 2 ft sea level rise (87% chance by 2100)
- 4 ft sea level rise (25% chance by 2100)
- 6 ft sea level rise (3% chance by 2100)
- Southbridge
- Study Area Boundary
- Highway
- Road
- Railroad

0 0.25 0.5 miles

Sources: US Census Bureau shapefiles; South Wilmington Planning Network; New Castle County GIS Open Data; Delaware FirstMap Data; The Delaware Geological Survey

The negative health implications of climate change has been extensively documented, as was summarized by Wilmington's 2018 Action Plan:<sup>65</sup>

- Climate change will decrease air quality, leading to worsening of respiratory illnesses and cancer.
- Flooding associated with climate change will increase contaminant and pathogen exposure, especially in Southbridge, where the community is already heavily exposed to pollutants.
- Frequent extreme heat will worsen cardiac and respiratory illnesses, vector-borne diseases (e.g., Lyme disease, West Nile virus), and conflict and violence.
- Climate change-related events will lead to post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and other psychological distress.

Flooding, which is already a frequent occurrence in Southbridge, is an urgent problem due to the existing contaminants in the community.<sup>66</sup>

As discussed in the earlier section about Land Use, the industrial legacy of Southbridge has left contaminants that are associated with neurodevelopmental issues, cancer, reproductive effects, and problems of the nervous system.<sup>67</sup> These factors are potentially compounded with flooding, which could wash debris into the surrounding community, and even into the basement of homes.

In the same study by Perez and Egan, a survey of residents showed that over 60% of respondents were greatly concerned about the effects of toxic pollution on air, soil, and water quality; more than half of respondents reported that “a great deal” of the soil and waters are polluted, and nearly half reported the same for the air and drinking water. 75% of respondents said that sea level rise was a “very serious” to “extremely serious” problem for Southbridge.<sup>68</sup>

These results indicate a broad agreement within the community for the need to address the double threat of pollution and sea level rise.

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65 Erika Furlong and Delaware Nature Society, “Climate Justice: For a Prosperous & Sustainable Wilmington (2018 Climate Action Plan),” 2018, <https://bit.ly/363TmBR>

66 Natasja Sheriff, Al Jazeera America, “Rising seas overwhelm Delaware tide gates,” Oct 16, 2015, <http://bit.ly/3qEPkaE>

67 Victor W. Perez and Jennifer Egan, “Knowledge and Concern for Sea-Level Rise in an Urban Environmental Justice Community,” *Sociological Forum*, 2016, DOI: 10.1111/socf.12278.

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68 Ibid.

## **Where we are:**

- Southbridge faces frequent flooding due to undersized infrastructure in the short-term and submersion of up to 40% of the neighborhood by 2100 due to sea level rise.
- The wetland park will be underwater if there will be a 4 foot-rise in sea level (25% chance of occurring by 2100), and the park and other recent infrastructure improvements will not be enough to protect Southbridge from flooding.
- Flooding in Southbridge may compound the issue of environmental contamination and health hazards in the community, while climate change is also expected to negatively impact community health.
- The community perceives the threats of toxic pollution and sea level rise, indicating a need and readiness to advocate for much needed change.

## **Things to consider for the Southbridge Neighborhood Plan:**

- How can we continue to reduce or prevent flooding in Southbridge?
- How do residents feel about a potential relocation plan?
- How can we work with industry and regulators to make sure flooding doesn't lead to toxic substances being spread about the community?
- How can we prepare for the health and social consequences that are expected from climate change and flooding?
- Where can we install rain gardens and other infrastructure to reduce flooding?



# **Equitable Development**



# Equitable Development

How can we leverage the Southbridge Neighborhood Plan to strengthen our foundations of health and wellness? This requires framing our planning process in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and examining the accompanying high rates of unemployment and reduced wellness, and other existing “cracks” in the foundation of health and wellness that we identified in this report.

A thoughtful planning process that seeks to bring equitable health and wellness benefits to Southbridge should avoid development and growth for the sake of development and growth in South Wilmington.

The Neighborhood Plan should guide stakeholders, serving as a map and compass towards greater health and wellness for the communities of Southbridge while doing our best to avoid the pitfalls of growth like gentrification or the creation of places that are not for the people currently living in Southbridge.

A neighborhood plan can make a series of recommendations, but because there are limited available resources and funds to turn those recommendations into reality, we will need to identify the most urgent needs and align them with short- and long-term goals.

The Steering Committee for the Southbridge Neighborhood Plan consists of residents, representatives of local institutions such as the Henrietta Johnson Medical Center, the City of Wilmington, and other stakeholders. You can see the full list of the Steering Committee members at the end of this document, in “Appendix A - Steering Committee.”

## Foundations of health and wellbeing





Based on one-on-one interviews with members of the Steering Committee between December 2020 and January 2021, the following assets, priorities, and challenges were identified:

### **What people love about Southbridge:**

- Strong sense of community and identity
- South Wilmington Wetland Park
- Neighborhood House
- Henrietta Johnson Medical Center
- Mt Joy United Methodist Church
- Low crime rate

### **Top priorities to address through the Neighborhood Plan:**

- Leverage the changes happening in South Wilmington (riverfront developments, wetlands park, development on vacant land) to benefit the Southbridge community.
- Keep homes and cost of living affordable for people who live in Southbridge now.
- Increase locally-owned small business so

the community can take charge of economic development in Southbridge and South Wilmington.

- Improve the ability to access amenities through walking and biking.
- Make Southbridge more resilient to flooding and sea level rise.

### **Biggest Challenges Facing Southbridge**

- Flooding, sea level rise
- Getting everyone to the table and on the same page
- Perceptions of crime

These assets, priorities, and challenges will frame the Southbridge Neighborhood Plan, and the planning team will continue to engage the communities of Southbridge to verify and update them in the coming months.

## **A Neighborhood Plan can make recommendations around:**

- Attracting the kinds of businesses and institutions we want to see more of (grocery stores, clinics, civic centers, etc.)
- Providing a feasible path to affordable homeownership
- Stabilizing rent prices
- Creating jobs for neighborhood residents
- Retaining existing businesses and jobs
- Implementing designs and programs that reflect the people, history, and culture of Southbridge
- Enhancing walkability and active transport



# **Appendix A:**

# **Steering**

# **Committee**



# Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is tasked with the following:

- Provide guidance for the Neighborhood Plan
- Attend as many of the Steering Committee meetings as possible (4 planned)
- Participate in at least 1 interview with the planning team
- Get the word out about public workshops and other public-facing elements of the plan
- Help identify community stakeholders and resources to loop into the process

The makeup of the Steering Committee may shift during the planning process as gaps in representation are identified.

## Southbridge Neighborhood Plan Steering Committee (as of February 10, 2021)

Name	Representing
Bill Swiatek	South Wilmington Planning Network (SWPN), WILMAPCO
Brittany Salen	SWPN
Cornelius Johnson Jr.	Youth Representative
Daymon Bagwell	Southbridge Civic Association
Diana Dixon	Southbridge Civic Association
Ella Edwards	Henrietta Johnson Medical Center
Ellie Ezekiel	Delaware Nature Society

**Continued: Southbridge Neighborhood Plan Steering Committee  
(as of February 10, 2021)**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Haneef Salaam	Southbridge Civic Association
Jennifer Adkins	American Rivers, Christina Conservancy
Kate DuPont Phillips	Healthy Communities Delaware
Keith Selby	Southbridge Civic Association
Marie Reed	Southbridge Civic Association
Matt Harris	City Planning
Michelle Harlee	City Council
Rich King	South Bridge Civic Association
Rysheema Dixon	City Council
Thomas Gash	Southbridge Civic Association
Travis Smith	Business Owner
Victor Perez	University of Delaware, Dept of Sociology



