

Prioritizing Investments in Delaware's Complete Communities, LWVNCC Hot Topic presentation by James Wilson and Troy Mix, February 2018

James Wilson, Executive Director of Bike Delaware, and Troy Mix, Policy Scientist at the Institute for Public Administration at U.D., combined forces at the February Hot Topic lunch to describe the possibilities for legislation supported by the League during the last legislative session. James introduced the topic by describing areas addressed in the bill: 1) Housing, especially for seniors, would be appealing because of the walkability and bikability of these communities, with plenty of shopping and activity destinations. 2) Economic development would be enhanced because most of the people who choose to live in Economic Development Communities would give up at least one car; that means that each household that gives up a car has \$9,000 per year more that it could spend. Furthermore, the household that gives up a car can spend \$200,000 additional on a home purchase. 3) Health of people in these communities would improve, due to the multitudes of walking and biking opportunities available in these areas dense with dwellings, shops, and destinations. 4) Vehicle miles traveled would be materially reduced, and carbon dioxide emissions spared.

Troy Mix began his discussion by asking: "Why now?" He noted that reality is catching up to the sci-fi driverless Johnny Cab in the 1990 movie, Total Recall. He then related Complete Communities Enterprise Districts to the "Innovation Districts" described by Katz and Wagner in 2014. Such districts are a response to sprawl and environmental degradation of the time. (www.brookings.edu/essay/rise-of-innovation-districts/) The authors describe these districts as "geographic areas where leading-edge anchor institutions and companies cluster and connect with start-ups, business incubators and accelerators...physically compact, transit-accessible, and technically-wired and offer mixed-use housing, office, and retail."

Troy noted the historically familiar 6 D's of Auto Independent Development: Density (18 persons per acre is the density which DART advises is necessary for somewhat frequent transit service); Diversity (mixed used; i.e., shops housing, work places, public buildings unseparated by artificial zoning barriers); Design (good sidewalks, benches, parks, integrated land use); Destination accessibility (lots of places you want to walk or ride a bike to); Distance to transit (most people will feel comfortable walking 1/4 mile to a bus stop); Demographics (younger folks and older folks in Delaware....and historically...prefer such walkable, bikable communities).

How will these communities happen? They will happen if there is political pressure to change the status quo. We will need to alter our transportation and community investment priorities, as in the Healthy and Transit-Friendly Development Act approach. A cultural shift may need to take place, given that only a small percentage of Delawareans live near where they work.

A Complete Communities Enterprise District will have these characteristics: It will be contiguous (think: an outline that does not look gerrymandered); it must be big enough

to matter (this bill requires from 1 to 9 square miles); oriented around a center; zoned to enable frequent transit (area must be exempt from minimum parking requirements).

To get started, the proponents of the district need to submit a master development plan. DeIDOT will have to do a transportation planning study. Investments must be designed to make auto independence possible in CCED.

Where might effective districts be designated in Delaware? A CCED would be transformative for most communities, but having at least a few of the following components in place would be helpful: Density - both population and employment density; Diversity - with a jobs/housing balance; Design - with short blocks and frequent intersections conducive to walking; Destination Accessibility – with ready access to shopping and services; Distance to Transit – with more existing stops in an area preferred; Demographics – with consideration for the opportunity to lessen the burden of households faced with high transportation costs as a percentage of their incomes.