

1. Introduction

Sussex County is the southernmost of Delaware's three counties. It is the largest and least densely populated county in the state, yet it accounted for almost half the state's building permits in 2006,¹ a sign of the growth the county is experiencing.

In the western part of the county are agricultural lands and scattered small towns. Along the Atlantic Ocean beaches, which attract millions of visitors every year, there is more development. More and more retirees are moving to the area, drawn by the natural beauty, the small-town

lifestyle, and the proximity to Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, DC. The appeal of the coast and the countryside has brought tremendous population growth, which could threaten tourism, agriculture, and natural resources if it is not planned for and designed well.

1.1 Charge to the Team

The University of Delaware Sea Grant program worked with Sussex County to request help through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and National Oceanic and

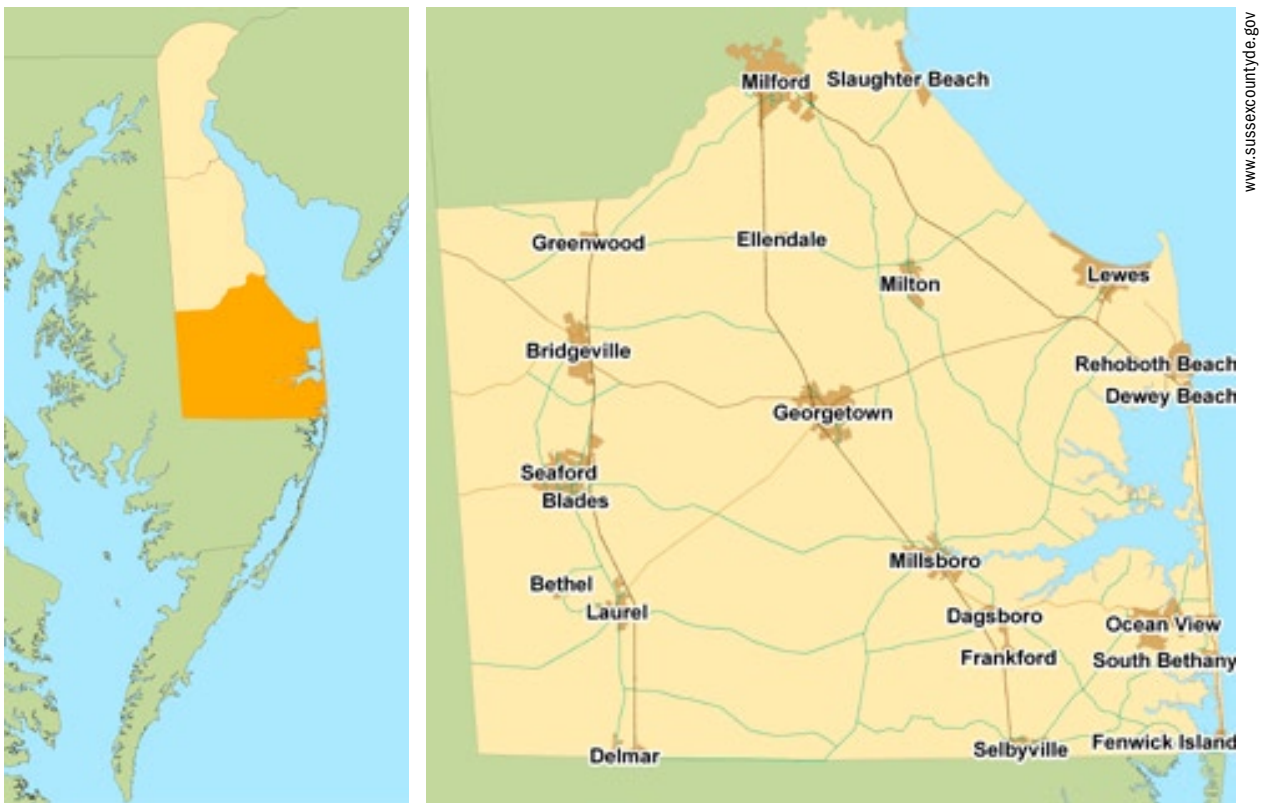


Figure 1. Maps of Sussex County, Delaware.

¹ U.S. Census Quickfacts, quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/10/10005.html, accessed January 10, 2008.

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Smart Growth Implementation Assistance for Coastal Communities (SGIA-CC) program (more information about the SGIA-CC program is in Appendix A). The team's charge was to develop design guidance that incorporates smart growth and sustainable stormwater management approaches.

It should be noted that Sussex County was in the process of revising its comprehensive plan during the team visit and subsequent writing of this report. As the plan was not final, the team did not link any of the options presented in the report directly to the revised plan. However, the report's options can be implemented under any comprehensive plan that promotes more sustainable, compact growth.

During a three-day site visit, from August 6 to 8, 2007, the team met with approximately 50

members of the community, including municipal officials and staff, developers, realtors, designers and engineers, businesspeople, and interested citizens, through public meetings, stakeholder interviews, and informal discussions. The team also toured a portion of the county near Lewes to see the development patterns that already exist.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Describe how smart growth and sustainable stormwater management approaches could be applied to Sussex County; and
- Provide site-level stormwater design strategies that could be used to manage stormwater at the scale of a front yard, neighborhood street, parking lot, or development parcel.