

THOMAS P. GORDON
COUNTY EXECUTIVE



CHARLES L. BAKER
GENERAL MANAGER

DEPARTMENT OF LAND USE

April 9, 2003

Mr. David B. Carter
818 Union Church Road
Townsend, Delaware 19734

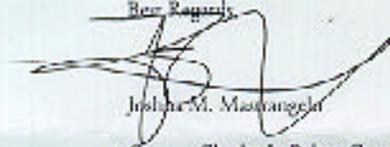
RE: M-O-T GROWTH ASSESMENT

Dear Mr. Carter:

In response to your March 4, 2003 letter and your comments from the March 4th Planning Board public hearing, New Castle County has prepared a growth assessment for the MCT planning district. Please review the attached materials as it will help to understand the data and planning principles behind the 2002 *Comprehensive Development Plan Update and New Castle County Unified Development Code*. You will find that given the myriad factors involved in the long term land use planning of unincorporated New Castle County, the *Unified Development Code* is still very much in accordance with the 2002 *Comprehensive Development Plan Update*.

Thank you for your interest and input into the planning process. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (302) 395-5416 to discuss this matter further.

Best Regards,



Joshua M. Mammarella

Cc Charles L. Baker, General Manager
George Haggerty, Assistant General Manager
David Culver, Planning Manager
Kenneth Bieri, Assistant Planning Manager
New Castle County Planning Board
Chuck Mulholland, NCC Southern Alliance

M-O-T Growth Analysis

Due to several issues raised as a part of a recent Planning Board Public Hearing concerning the New Castle County Department of Land Use has undertaken a further review of both its 2002 *Comprehensive Development Plan Update* and the Unified Development Code in an effort to ensure that growth is and will occur in a manner consistent with its long range planning goals and objectives as well as existing zoning and subdivision regulations.

As stated in the 2002 *Comprehensive Development Plan Update* (Pg. 24), at the time of adoption the most recent population/household projections were in October of 2002, after the completion of the *Plan Update*. Below, in Table 1, are the most recent population projections from WILMAPCO (Xander, 2002), the County's regional planning organization. A close examination of these numbers with those initially included in the 2002 *Plan Update* will show roughly a 20% increase in the projected number of households needed for 2025 in the MOT planning district. Also shown is a 29% increase in the projected population growth for the year 2025.

Table 1.

M-O-T Planning District Revised Population & Households Projections*					
	1900	1990	2000	2025	2030
<i>Population</i>	13,120	18,634	29,682	68,115	74,587
<i>Households</i>	4,454	6,225	10,101**	25,102	25,485

*Included as a part of the *Regional Transportation Plan 2025*

**2005 Projected Households = 11,837

Source: Census Bureau, WILMAPCO - Metropolitan Transportation Plan (October 2002)

A 6% increase of households is also shown for the year 2000 with the number rising to 10,181. Revised projections for the years 2005, 2010, 2015 & 2020 show household numbers of 11,847, 13,808, 15,848 & 20,098 respectively, equating to an average increase of 16% yearly in household growth.

It is important to realize that the driving force behind household projection is the average size of the household unit or the number of persons per dwelling. Currently in Southern New Castle County a size of 2.9 persons/household is assumed based upon trends of increasing household size. This increase of household size is a reversal of the trend of decreasing household sizes in the late 1990's. The 2000 decennial US Census showed that the average household size in New Castle County was 2.45 persons/household. If the trend in household size shifts again in Southern New Castle County and household sizes decrease by 7% to 2.7 persons/household the number of households that will be needed to meeting the projected demands for 2025 would increase by 8% with a total of 25, 228 households needed.

Changes to population projections can cause the dynamic fluctuations in household projections. Given the normal planning period for Comprehensive Plan and Updates the potential for such changes are accounted for when establishing a Future Land Use Plan. However, as required under State law, Comprehensive Plans are revisited every five years to ensure that a sustainable pattern of growth is being achieved by balancing development demands with concurrency requirements and environmental protections.

Given the recent changes to the WILMAPCO projections, an analysis of MOT Planning district reveals that in the (S) Suburban zoned land the average of (Single-Family & Open Space Option #1) development options would provide a total number of 26,413 housing units. Therefore, the potential demand of 23,102 housing units for the year 2025 could be met. However, if all land within the Suburban zoning district was to be developed using only the single-family development option, the projected demand could not be met. If all lands were developed using solely Open Space Option #1 then the projected demand would be met beyond 2025.

It is unrealistic to assume that all development within the MOT Planning District would be developed using only one development option. Also, these numbers represent only potential development and do not take into account factors such as environmental constraints and concurrency requirements, market demand & interest rates.

An actual number for the area would be difficult to gauge based on the incompleteness of existing environmental data. Therefore, in conducting its long range planning, the County established a balance by allowing the projected demand to be met roughly at the median of all development options within the New Castle County Unified Development Code.

Table 2.

M-O-T Planning District Density & Zoning Analysis (Suburban Zoning District)					
Development Option	Average	Gross # of Units*	% Increase of Units	Open Space Average Reserved**	% Increase of Open Space
Single-Family	30,014.72	20,102.86	0	4,502.21	0
Open Space Option #1	30,014.72	32,716.01	58.53	9,001.42	50
Open Space Option #2	30,014.72	37,518.40	46.40	10,505.15	57.15
Open Space Planned	30,014.72	39,019.14	48.46	11,007.36	70

*Gross # of Units = Total Average of Suburban Zoning Land * Minimum Gross Density

**Open Space Average Reserved = Total Average of Suburban Zoning Land * Open Space Ratio

In addressing the concerns raised in reference to the increase of units provided by the Open Space Option #2 and Open Space Planned development options, a consideration should be noted in the balance between the % increase in the number of units provided and open space area preserved. As shown in Table 2 above, although the % of units provided increase by roughly 47% and 49% for the

OS #2 and Open Space Planned development options, the Open Space increase by 57% and 70% respectively, therefore accommodating a larger percent of development while providing greater environmental protection and open space preservation.

In terms of gross density, a range between 0.67 units/acre – 1.30 units/acre exists. However, at a gross density of 0.67 units/acre only 4,502.21 acres of open space area would be set aside whereas at a density of 1.30 units/acre half of the 30,014.72 acres (15, 007. 36 acres) would be designated as open space.

Table 3.

M-O-T Planning District Land Consumption Analysis (Suburban Zoning District)				
Development Option	Gross # of Units*	Acreage in Lots**	Open Space Acreage Reserved***	Acreage of Open Space****
Single-Family	30,109.86	25,512.51	4,502.21	4,502.21
Open Space Option #1	32,716.04	21,010.30	9,004.42	9,004.42
Open Space Option #2	37,518.40	19,502.57	10,505.15	10,505.15
Open Space Planned	39,019.14	15,007.36	15,007.36	15,007.36

*Gross # of Units = Total Acreage of Suburban Zoning Land * Maximum Gross Density

**Acreage in Lots = Total Acreage*OSR/Total Acreage

***Open Space Acreage Reserved = Total Acreage of Suburban Zoning Land * Open Space Ratio

****Acreage of Open Space = Total Acreage*OSR

Given evolving understanding of past suburban development patterns, its costs and impacts on the environment, government services, air & water quality and transportation systems, the County Council adopted a vision for future growth that is expressed in the *2002 Comprehensive Development Plan Update*. It directs residential growth to achieve increases in open space and environmental protection while consuming less land and supports the provision of additional development options other than traditional suburban subdivision designs. A further consideration when discussing the amount of potential development is that the land use industry is very much driven through supply and demand. The projected demand being the number of households needed during each planning period. If the demand for new homes ceases, the development, improvement and construction of land and households will also slow. However, if the demand for homes increases and the County has not adequately accounted for any fluctuations in the market projections and supply is limited, housing prices would increase, causing secondary issues to arise such housing affordability.

In conclusion, upon review New Castle County has determined that the New Castle County Unified Development Code is very much in accordance with the *2002 Comprehensive Development Plan Update*. The regulations within development code provides adequate development opportunity to meet projected household demands in the MOT planning district as of right. They also provide

flexibility that increases environmental protection and open space preservation, requires concurrency with State policies as well as providing a range of development options that allow for a diversity of housing types to be constructed to meeting the needs of a wide range of income levels.