



**COUNTY OF DELAWARE  
GOVERNMENT CENTER BUILDING  
201 W. FRONT STREET  
MEDIA, PENNSYLVANIA**

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**Expansion and Advancement Across the County**

Good Morning and welcome to the 2019 State of the County address.

I'm Colleen Morrone, Vice Chair of Delaware County Council. I am honored to be here today to be joined today by my fellow Council members: Michael Culp, Kevin Madden, Brian Zidek and our Executive Director, Marianne Grace. Our Chairman, John McBlain was not able to be with us today.

We are also joined by various elected officials and leaders in our County:

- Katayoun Copeland**, District Attorney
- Chief Joseph Ryan**, CID
- Jerry Saunders**, Sheriff
- Joanne Phillips**, Controller
- Mary Walk**, Register of Wills
- Marianne Grace**, Executive Director
- Michael Maddren**, Solicitor
- Patrick Killian**, Commerce Center Director
- John Daly**, Director of Workforce Development
- Lori Devlin**, Director of Intercommunity Health Department
- Cathy Bittle**, Director of Library Services
- Linda Hill**, Director of Planning and Housing and Community Development

Every year, we present a State of the County address that is positive and optimistic about our past accomplishments and future visions. We have a lot to be proud of as a County and as residents and business owners, we all take pride in our community and celebrate its successes.

I am proud to say that in 2018, County Council made a great deal of progress, serving as a collective, bi-partisan group, working on behalf of our residents. All of us on Council share the common goal of serving our residents and putting our residents' interests first.

Over the past year, Council has covered a variety of issues, inspired by the public's renewed interest in County government. We've taken a deeper look at the concerns brought to our attention by citizens, including conducting a safety analysis for pipelines, forming a subcommittee to address the challenges of stray animals in the County and launching a new, easier to use website which includes more videos and links to key documents and resources.

Delaware County's economic development landscape has continued to grow and prosper, with a great deal of opportunities on the horizon. The County continues to be fiscally responsible and we were proud to announce a decrease in the 2019 property tax rate.

Delaware County is ideally located between New York City and Washington D.C., making it an area which is ripe for attracting business development. Everywhere you go in our county, you see buildings going up, apartments and townhomes opening, new hotels, and investment in renovations, all of which connect people with jobs.

We could see this as we arrived today at the Drexelbrook... In June, the **Drexelbrook** will debut its brand new, state of the art Holiday Inn & Suites. There is no doubt that Delaware County is now an overnight destination for guests and a place where residents can stay-cation.

Delaware County was once again in the national spotlight last year when the **Aronimink Golf Club** hosted the BMW Championship. This tournament was the 3<sup>rd</sup> leg of 4 in the PGA FedEx golf playoffs and featured the top 70 players.

We have great schools and universities, excellent health care systems, public transportation, wonderful neighborhoods, open space, parks, and recreation. And we're within minutes of the airport, and a short drive major attractions in Philadelphia, the scenic Pocono Mountains and the relaxing Jersey shore and Delaware beaches.

Before I go into more details about our great County, I'd like to thank President of the **Delaware County Chamber of Commerce**, Trish McFarland and her team for hosting the State of the County. While the focus of the State of the County is on economic development, it is our hope that you will find ALL of the information helpful in your everyday lives as residents, parents, and active members of your community.

### **Economic Success of the County**

Our economic success is a direct result of partnerships and collaborations with Delaware County's business leaders, many of whom are with us this morning. It's also one of the factors that ensured the county maintained its high-grade rating of Aa1 from **Moody's Investors Service** and AA from **Standard & Poor's Ratings Services**. Moody's praised the county's tax base. This is excellent news for economic development, and for businesses who are looking to locate or expand in Delaware County.

Council unanimously approved a 2019 budget that decreases property taxes while maintaining services. This is a testament to the financial management skills of our Executive Director, Marianne Grace and our budget staff under the direction of the County's Budget Director, Jim Hayes. Together, we work to hold the line on staffing and operational expenses wherever possible. In addition, the County continues to be diligent in collecting fees, court costs, and fines. Moving forward, we will continue to be mindful of our spending, tighten our belts like residents do with their personal budgets and be good stewards of our residents' tax dollars.

For the 24<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, **The Delaware County Controller's Office** was awarded a "Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting" by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada. The recognition was for the 2017 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and finance reporting and represents a significant accomplishment by government. Congratulations to our **Controller, Joanne Phillips** and her staff for on this recognition.

## **Business and Development**

Now, let's look at some of the major developments across the county. As you drive up and down major roads like Route 1, Route 352 and Route 3 you'll notice construction and renovation taking place. Business Owners and residents are investing in our County, creating jobs and boosting the economy, which is a win-win for the entire County.

BET Investments knocked down and "de-malled" the former Granite Run Mall site to build a brand-new Promenade with 860,000 square feet of retail stores and restaurants. Many of us have already shopped or dined at some of the new businesses in the **Granite Run Promenade** such as TJ Maxx, Chipotle, Panera, Five Guys and a Wine and Spirits store. The newest tenant, Edge Fitness opened in January and there are many more exciting businesses that will soon be setting up shop. Still to come are Petco and Turning Point restaurant.

BET Investments is also constructing an apartment complex at the old mall site, next to the Acme. The leasing office opened in February. In the first phase, 192 luxury apartments will be available and there are plans to build an additional 208 units.

**Ellis Preserve** in Newtown Square continues to expand with new stores and restaurants including a new Whole Foods Market, which opened in January. Phase Two of Town Center will include a fine dining Mexican restaurant, Ruth Chris Steakhouse and a Dine-In Cinema featuring a full service bar and restaurant.

**AmeriHealth Caritas**, an Independence Blue Cross affiliate that manages Medicaid plans and other public insurance programs, is moving its corporate operations from Tinicum to a new headquarters at Ellis Preserve. The move will relocate AmeriHealth Caritas executives and administrators to a new, custom-built 378,000-square-foot home in the Ellis Preserve commercial park. The relocation is part of an office upgrade that also involves renovations at their existing space in Tinicum, where customer-service teams and other support workers will remain working. In an interview with the Philadelphia Inquirer, an AmeriHealth Caritas spokeswoman said the company's goal was to provide a rejuvenating environment for its employees. And we think beautiful Ellis Preserve was a perfect choice!

Last fall Council was proud to participate in the groundbreaking of **Kimberly Clark's** new natural gas power plant at their Chester facility. The company's \$150 million investment into the Chester facility includes replacing the current coal-fired co-generation power plant with a more eco-friendly and more efficient natural gas-fired plant. The Chester Mill has manufactured Scott tissue products for more than 100 years and plays a vital role in our community. The mill employs more than 800 people, many who are 2<sup>nd</sup> or even 3<sup>rd</sup> generation employees. The Chester plant is the primary manufacturer of Scott toilet paper in North America. We applaud Kimberly Clark's investment in Delaware County and their investment to protect the environment.

**Upper Darby Township** is currently in the middle of a major redevelopment project of the Drexline Shopping Center. It will be transformed into a town center with expanded parking, improving traffic flow and enhancing the overall economic vitality of the surrounding community. Plans include walking paths and improved access to public transportation.

German-based grocery store chain, Lidl (Lie-Dell) opened its very first store in Pennsylvania at the site of the former Pathmark supermarket in **Ridley Township**. Planning and development have been underway in that area and the addition of Lidl is another step towards the revitalization of MacDade Boulevard.

## *Hotel & Tourism Industry*

Out of the five surrounding counties in our region, Delaware County saw the largest hotel growth in 2018. The occupancy rate rose 3.9% and revenue increased 16.3% to \$102.2 million.

In 2018 we had 2 new hotels open:

The **Fairfield Inn** in Broomall opened last May and the **Hampton Inn** in Media opened last August.

And four new hotels are scheduled to open this year. **Drexelbrook's** new state of the art Holiday Inn & Suites, right next to us here will be opening in June. The venue will offer bridal suites with beautiful views of Darby Creek. This will add another hospitality asset to Drexelbrook's growing portfolio, giving people who hold weddings and banquets a place to stay during their event.

**Candlewood Suites** in Chester is scheduled to open in June. **Home 2 Suites by Hilton** in Concord is scheduled to open this summer and **Home 2 Suites by Hilton in Ridley** is scheduled to open this fall. Several more hotels are in the planning stages in Radnor, Newtown Square, Middletown, Chadds Ford, and Upper Darby.

## *Celebrating Small Businesses*

While we highlighted many big business developments, I'd also like to highlight some of our small businesses that contribute tremendously to our economic success. Small businesses are the backbone and strength of Delaware County.

Last month, County Council was honored to participate in the Chamber of Commerce's annual Small Business Awards, honoring several members of our small business community. These individual or family-operated businesses are innovative, determined and fill an important need in our county.

**The Small Business of the Year -Click Canyon:** a digital marketing agency established in 2009 in Wayne.

**The Small Business Person of the Year- Domenick Savino:** CEO of the Drexelbrook Catering & Special Event Center, where we are gathered this morning.

**The SCORE Business of the Year-Delightful Detail:** a Glenn Mills company specializing in custom embroidery, screen printing, and promotional products.

**The Family Business of the Year- Health Mats:** founded in the 1950s in Chester.

**The Entrepreneur of the Year-Rachel Whitlock:** franchise owner of Board and Brush, a "Do it Yourself" art class in Glen Mills, Newtown Square, Downingtown and Lancaster.

**The Emerging Business of the Year- Risk Averse Insurance:** located in Media.

**And The Business Association of the Year-The Lansdowne Business and Professional Association.**

Congratulations once again to these well deserving business leaders!

One of the ways that Delaware County works to attract and sustain business in our county is through our Delaware County Commerce Center. Heading up our **Commerce Center is Patrick Killian**, who with his team, has made a significant impact on the County's economic development.

Council will join stakeholders next month to discuss economic development opportunities which are eligible for assistance from the federal government. The meeting will highlight the federal opportunity zone tax provision and ways to utilize the program to spur economic development in Delaware County.

There are 6 approved Federal Opportunity Zones in Delaware County including Marcus Hook, Trainer, Chester City, Clifton Heights and Lansdowne. To be eligible for consideration, a census tract had to be deemed as "low-income" by federal definition. Only 20% of eligible tracts in Pennsylvania were selected.

This federal program encourages investment in low income areas by providing tax breaks on capital gains. The tax break increases with the amount of time the monies are invested in an approved zone.

The Delaware County Redevelopment Authority has brought in consultants who are heavily engaged in this program to assist in the development of a prospectus to attract investors. Investments can be made in real estate or businesses located within the approved geographic area.

### **Property Tax Re-Assessment: What this means for property and business owners**

You have likely heard about the **county-wide reassessment** that is currently underway. For the first time in more than 20 years, every property in Delaware County, all 200,000 plus parcels, will have a new assessment and tax bill in 2021.

In March of 2017, Delaware County was ordered by the Court to conduct a countywide property tax reassessment. In response to that court order, Delaware County Council contracted with Tyler Technologies to provide real property appraisal services implemented through the County Treasurer's Office. To be as transparent as possible, and communicate openly with residents and businesses about the reassessment process, Council launched a communications plan, holding a series of public meetings and sharing updates with the public through our website and social media pages. In December, the County held a presentation specifically for members of the business community.

For many of you in this room, we understand that business owners may wonder what the reassessment means for them. We would like to reiterate that the reassessment does not raise additional money. Instead, it is intended to redistribute the tax burden. Ultimately, it is intended to more fairly distribute school, municipal and county real estate taxes.

### **Delaware County's Skilled Workforce**

All of the new development mentioned earlier means jobs for residents. When businesses look to locate in Delaware County, one of the key factors they look at is the workforce. We are proud to say that one of the county's major assets is our hard-working, skilled workforce with almost 300,000 of our residents being gainfully employed.

The County's **Office of Workforce Development** contracts with 37 different organizations to provide assistance to people looking for work, and for businesses looking for employees. Last year, they served over 1,500 individuals.

A few of the programs provided by The County's Office of Workforce Development are:

Business Education Partnership, a new program which provides career-related experiences and development opportunities to students through internships, workplace experiences and career mentoring.

Second Chance Employment, a program created in 2017 assists residents transitioning from the criminal justice system and substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation centers to enter back into the workforce.

The County partners with the Delaware County Literacy Council to assist recent immigrants with meeting challenges, such as language barriers, to find employment.

They contract with Delaware County Community College and PathwaysPA to provide services to residents 50 years or older, who may struggle with finding employment.

And we have several partnerships with providers to assist Delaware County Veterans who are unemployed.

All of these services help to prepare, train and connect our residents with jobs. Delaware County's unemployment rate is currently 3.6% down from last year and also below the state's rate of 4%.

### **Community Development**

I am also happy to report that among all of this commerce, Delaware County has been able to sustain community development. We often hear about libraries closing but here in Delaware County, we are celebrating **library** openings, renovations and milestone anniversaries.

Last year Ridley Township opened their new state of the art public library and Radnor Township completed a major renovation and expansion project on its public library. Sharon Hill is currently renovating its library and the Middletown Free Library will be relocating, and almost tripling their usable space.

Norwood Public Library celebrated 80 years of service in January and the Swarthmore Public Library will be celebrating 90 years of service in May. Our libraries are thriving, growing and providing resources to our residents in new and exciting ways.

**The Delaware County Planning Department** has been hard at work, taking some fresh new approaches to create and improve positive community identities across the County. They hosted the first of a three-part series titled Placemaking: the act of creating vibrant spaces for communities last month. Placemaking is a technique which focuses on designing creative spaces or events catered to the community's character.

The presentation included discussions among elected officials, including Council, municipal staff, professional planners, economic development officials, and non-profit leaders looking to make a lasting impact in their community. The discussion focused on strengthening the connection between residents and the places they share. When people are connected to the places they live, they invest in that space: financially, socially, and emotionally.

The second event in the series, being held in June, will bring together local experts to share their experiences in facilitating placemaking projects with a focus on the details of the projects such as funding, timelines, road closure and parking for events and finding artists to collaborate.

### **Preserving Open Space**

While we encourage economic development, Delaware County also works to preserve its natural resources for environmental protection and for recreational use. Open space, parks, and recreational areas are assets that draw people to a community and enhance their quality of life, making them want to stay.

One of the things that make Delaware County unique is its size. We are the third smallest county in the state land-wise, behind Philadelphia and Montour counties. We all know it's critical to our quality of life to plan growth and conserve resources for our children and grandchildren.

Delaware County's Planning Department works with municipalities and other partners, such as the Natural Lands Trust, to preserve our communities while promoting smart growth through the **Delaware County Open Space, Recreation and Greenway Plan**. We have 12 county parks and 1,824 acres of county-owned open space, in addition to 2,721 acres of state-owned open space, mainly Ridley Creek State Park, and 713 acres of federal land in Heinz Refuge. Our municipalities have 4,654 acres of open space and parkland. There are countless scenic settings across the county to enjoy the outdoors.

Council recently approved a Master Park Plan for the County's newest park, **Little Flower** in Darby Borough. The Plan sets forth a roadmap for the park to provide recreational opportunities while respecting the environmental integrity of the site and serves as a trailhead for the Darby Creek Stream Valley Park Trail, a segment of the Darby Creek Greenway. Major features of the first development phase include a new primary entrance, construction of a new path along Springfield Road, a walking trail loop, two picnic areas, and a community garden.

Council also continues to work with stakeholders to stabilize the severely deteriorated historic **Woodbourne Mansion** located on this site. Council intends to pursue the development of a preservation plan for the building.

Work on the trail network continues, as design and engineering work is well underway on Phase II of both the **Darby Creek and Chester Creek Trails**.

Council recently adopted the recommendations of the Open Space Task Force and committed to investing county funds to local municipalities for open space and recreational projects, capital improvements to County Parks and professional services support for open space and recreation projects. Work is underway to establish guidelines and roll out the first round of funding in Fall 2019.

### **Go Greener!**

The County is also expanding its efforts to go greener. We recently created the **USE Committee** (Utilities, Sustainability and Energy) to identify opportunities for Delaware County employees to reduce the amount of utilities, supplies and/or energy we use in our jobs each day. The team is working to create change to reduce the County's environmental footprint.

On Monday, Council was proud to participate in an **Earth Day** project. We rolled up our sleeves and joined our Parks and Recreation teams and members of the Friends of Darby Creek to plant trees along the Darby Creek in Kent Park. This was part of a 2019 maintenance project at Kent Park, including buffer plantings, maintaining the rain garden, vine removal, and debris cleanup along the stream.

All year long we also work with the **Delaware County Transportation Management Association** to provide residents with information on programs such as the Ride Share Program and Bike to Work events.

We also now have a dedicated area on our website for residents to learn more about ways they can do their part to protect our environment. Search “Delco Goes Greener.”

### **Building a Strong and Healthy County**

(Heroin Task Force)

Our community and the entire nation is facing a heroin and opioid addiction crisis that is claiming the lives of our children, friends, colleagues and loved ones. Sadly, probably everyone in this room has been touched by or has known someone touched by this epidemic.

Since the **Delaware County Heroin Task Force** was formed in 2012 by County Council and the District Attorney’s Office, we’ve accomplished a lot, but we are still fighting the grip of this devastating epidemic. We are starting to see what we hope will be a continuous DECREASE in drug deaths.

In 2017 there were 278 drug-related deaths. Of those 257 were opioid related.

In 2018 there were 209 drug-related deaths. Of those 155 were opioid related.

Those are promising statistics and motivates us to keep attacking this epidemic head on—with creative solutions and involvement from the entire community. One death is one too many and we will continue to place emphasis on education and provide treatment programs.

The Task Force, chaired by District Attorney Kat Copeland is committed to addressing this public health threat with partnerships and support from community members, law enforcement, the criminal justice system, our schools, places of worship, and the business community.

One incredible success story is the lives that have been saved thanks to the continuing support and work of our District Attorney, our police and first responders. In 2014, Delaware County’s District Attorney fought to have state law changed so that our police officers, who are often the first to arrive on the scene of an overdose, can administer the lifesaving drug, **Narcan**. Since then, more than 1,400 people have been saved, and are now connected with treatment and recovery resources through our Certified Recovery Specialist program.

Within the last few months, Narcan has also been installed in all County Buildings, at the Ridley Area and Lansdowne YMCA’s and most recently at Delaware County Community College. Narcan is readily accessible to the public at those locations and is located in automated external defibrillator (AED) cabinets, enabling anyone who is nearby an overdose victim to potentially save their life.

Secure **Medicine Drop Boxes** are located at every police department in the county, at the Delaware County Government Center and at many of our local hospitals. Residents can dispose of expired or unwanted medications safely and free of charge and keep them from getting into the wrong hands. Since 2013, we have collected almost 30,000 pounds of prescription drugs.



## (Court Programs)

Delaware County Council is also proud to support the efforts of our court system under the leadership of President Judge Kevin Kelly and the Board of Judges, who are working to provide options for those struggling with addiction and mental health issues who end up in the criminal justice system.

**Delaware County's Drug Treatment Court**, led by Judge Frank Hazel and his team is an intensive drug treatment program that allows offenders to address substance addiction while under the strict supervision of the Office of Adult Probation and Parole. In 2018, 74 individuals entered the program. Since its inception, 234 graduates have successfully completed the program and 84% of the graduates have remained arrest free.

**Second Chance Court Pretrial Drug Program**, under the leadership of Judge Capuzzi, takes a proactive approach by giving those struggling with addiction a second chance early on, when they are first arrested. The goal is to put low to moderate risk offenders into treatment in their pretrial phase. If we can intervene early, right after their arrest, and get them into treatment, evidence shows that we can stop the cycle of abuse for some of these people. This program is preventing offenders from repeating their criminal behavior so they can go back to being healthy, contributing parents, workers, sons, daughters and members of our community.

We also have a **Mental Health Court and Veterans Court Program** here in Delaware County, which seeks to address the underlying problems that contribute to criminal behavior and links offenders who would ordinarily be prison-bound to long-term community-based treatment.

I would like to thank our Board of Judges for all their efforts in working with County Council on these initiatives, and in particular, President Judge Kelly, Judge Hazel, and Judge Capuzzi and for all the work that goes into these life-changing and transformative programs.

## **Excellent Education**

When people think about relocating to an area, one of their first thoughts is education.

In Delaware County, we have excellent school districts and an outstanding Intermediate Unit that we partner with on many trainings and public safety initiatives.

We also have excellent institutions of higher education. Many of our local colleges and universities are experiencing tremendous growth and development and have or are undergoing major renovations projects.

**Neumann University** opened a new Health Sciences Center in January. An extension of the Rocco Abessinio Building, the Center adds approximately 17,000 square feet of instruction and lab space to accommodate projected growth in the doctoral program in Physical Therapy, the new master's degree in Athletic Training, and undergraduate programs in Nursing and the Health Sciences.

**Villanova University** is in the midst of a nearly \$300-million-dollar development project, which is transforming its campus along Lancaster Avenue. Highlights of the project include The Commons Residence Halls, a student-operated retail store, a new Performing Arts Center and a pedestrian bridge. The Commons will open this summer and the Performing Arts Center will be open in 2020. The University also just completed a \$65-million-dollar renovation of its on-campus arena. Now known as The Finneran Pavilion, it provides an exciting home-court environment for the University's championship-winning men's and women's basketball teams. And Villanova was once again ranked among the nation's Top 50 Best Colleges by *U.S. News & World Report*.

**Widener University** is currently renovating its building at 17<sup>th</sup> and Melrose in Chester, which will house its new Doctor of Occupational Therapy program. The University also recently completed a total renovation of its Alumni Auditorium, transforming it from an outdated auditorium to a modern gathering space that seats 500. Last October Widener celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its iconic Old Main administration building.

In December **Delaware County Community College** joined in a new, innovative job training partnership with the Port of Philadelphia. The college joined several community colleges in the region and Drexel University to participate in a unique job training partnership that will benefit the Port of Philadelphia. Through a public/private partnership the Collegiate Consortium created the new Citizens Bank Regional Maritime Training Center. The Center, which will be up and running soon, will provide the latest in high-tech training to longshoremen working with cargo at the Port of Philadelphia.

Also of interest... an economic impact study, done by Emsi, a nationally known econometric company found that in 2017 the college's alumni, students, former students, employees, operations and construction provided \$610 million in added income to Delaware County, primarily through the newly acquired education and training provided to alumni and students, as well as through goods and services purchased by students, alumni and college employees.

A similar study found that **Penn State Brandywine** contributes \$51 million annually to the Pennsylvania economy. The local Penn State campus also recently started the Brandywine Boost Program, part of the Invent Penn State initiative, to provide microgrants and business development expertise to local entrepreneurs. And on the sports front- Penn State Brandywine's men's soccer team became the campus' first national champions, winning the U.S. Collegiate Athletic Association title.

### **Technology**

We are proud to have made some advances in technology across the County. Several of our departments have worked to include updated technology in their offices and online to make services and information more accessible and more convenient for our residents.

This year we launched a brand new website: [delcopa.gov](http://delcopa.gov). It has a more modern and clean look, is more mobile friendly and includes more videos and links to documents and resources. We have a section titled "Live, Work, Play" which is just what it suggests: an area highlighting why Delco is a great place to live, work and enjoy the outdoors, entertainment and restaurants.

**The Delaware County Court of Common Pleas and the Office of Judicial Support (OJS)** launched E-filing for non-family civil matters last summer. Delaware County now offers attorneys and self-represented litigants the ability to electronically file documents and pay filing fees over a secured website.

E-Filing for family law cases will soon be available to attorneys and self-represented litigants.

Our **Register of Wills Office** now offers online marriage applications and created a new online probate application process.

The **Controller's Office** has an area online where financial information, including Comprehensive Financial Reports are now available online.

The **Delaware County Library System** offers online library card registration and Pronunciator, where residents have access to basic and advanced language learning courses in over 80 languages through activities, drills, quizzes, interactive coaching, and live practice with native speakers for free with a Delaware County library card.

We hope these updates allow our residents to have better access to the services and resources provided by the County.

### **Conclusion**

I hope you all feel more informed about County Government, as business owners and also as residents raising your families and contributing to our communities.

Delaware County is committed to making Delaware County a safe, vibrant, great place to live, work and raise a family and we are grateful for our business community. Thank you for attending this morning to learn more about Delaware County Government, what we've accomplished and what's on the horizon. Thank you for investing your time this morning and thank you for investing in our great county!