

New Castle County Executive Marcus Henry signs order to increase land use transparency



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New Castle County Executive Marcus Henry signed an executive order calling on the [Department of Land Use](#) to increase transparency efforts. The order comes after calls for land use reform in Delaware's most populated county.

Here are the details.

Land Use directed to make development plans more public-facing

[Executive Order 03](#), signed on Monday, March 3, calls for proper distribution of plans that go through the New Castle County Department of Land Use to elected officials and the general public.

Under the ordinance, the Department of Land Use is directed to send weekly notices of all development plans received and accepted by New Castle County to all members of the General Assembly, County Council members and registered civic associations.

The department is also directed to send out public notices and conduct community outreach and educational programs, stating that the department will take "all necessary steps to inform the public."



County Executive Henry said that on his campaign trail that he heard from constituents that previous efforts to communicate land use and development plans were unclear enough where even some elected officials weren't made aware of some developments that were taking place in their own districts.



“We need a little more than just the yellow sign notifications to create some transparency and opportunities for both our elected officials and the public to know when developments come into their area,” Henry said.

According to Henry, some notices already have been sent to public officials. New Castle County’s website will have a webpage that publishes the notices on a regular basis. The webpage will be available in the “next several weeks,” he said.

The directives are applicable to any plan that requires approval from New Castle County Land Use. Incorporated jurisdictions with their own land use processes may not be required to abide by these public notice directives, depending on the approvals their plans require.

New Castle County’s Department of Land Use oversees proposed development plans to ensure they meet legal requirements set forth by agencies such as the Unified Development Code, the Delaware State Code and the county’s Comprehensive Development Plan.

Land use policies have recently come into focus for nonprofit organizations and activists looking for a change in how Delaware’s development is processed.

Land use & environment: [How will Delaware navigate Trump-era environmental goals? Land use may be one answer](#)
[Rethinking Delaware](#), an informal group that advocates for land use reform around the state, penned an [editorial](#) opposing the lack of consistency between different jurisdictions.

“In Delaware, 60 government entities make land-use decisions under a structure designed when our state was 60% less populated and confronted fewer critical challenges,” the group wrote. “There is little coordination between those entities and there are no penalties for deviating from state planning guidance or county comprehensive plans.”

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