

Wilmington Downtown Circulation Study

Listening Tour Responses

November 12, 2008

Includes responses from the following meetings/stakeholders:

- Wilmington Initiatives staff, July 30
 - Wilmington Area Planning Council
 - City of Wilmington Departments of Planning and Public Works
 - Delaware Department of Transportation
- Advisory Committee, October 1
 - Wilmington Area Planning Council
 - City of Wilmington Departments of Planning, Public Safety, and Public Works
 - Transportation Management Association of Delaware
 - Wilmington Parking Authority
- Wilmington Renaissance Corporation, October 2 and November 3
 - Downtown Visions (plus a followup interview)
 - Wilmington Main Street
- Riverfront Development Corporation, November 3
- City Economic Cluster, October 14
 - Mayor's Office
 - Department of Law
 - Department of Planning
 - Department of Public Works
- City Council Public Works and Transportation Committee, October 15
- ING Direct, October 29 phone interview
- City of Wilmington Department of Public Safety, November 6
- Greater Wilmington Convention and Visitors Bureau, November 10
- Developers, November 11
 - Preservation Initiatives
 - The Buccini/Pollin Group
 - The Commonwealth Group
- Delaware Historical Society, November 12
- The DuPont Company and Transportation Management Association, November 12 phone interview

In what ways is Wilmington a great city and in what ways can it become a great city? What role does transportation play?

- Compact, friendly. Greater support to pedestrians, bus users, tied to the increased proposed development.
- Easy transportation access, cabs, taxis (Geneva, Switzerland)
- Great arts institutions, good hotels, restaurants, strong employment base. Good transportation should enhance the ease of movement to and between all these institutions.
- Great location; between Boston and Richmond, New York and Washington, plus transportation to these cities plus to the north, west and south – New York state, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia. Transportation is key. More trolleys!

What transportation issues exist in downtown Wilmington today?

- Poor design of buildings failing to interact well with the street
- Rodney Square needs a solution for transit. Connect various parts of City to Downtown, more frequent service to other parts of the City. How can we move people more efficiently? Trams; access to tourist areas w/o a car. King St. is a highway, needs to be a boulevard, same with Orange St. More development of surface lots.
- Wilmington is not as pedestrian friendly as it could be. Intersections throughout Downtown (and neighborhoods) are not striped for crosswalks. Example: Pennsylvania Avenue is pedestrian unfriendly; it's auto-centric, yet it is bordered by dense neighborhoods.
- Wilmington police do not have a traffic enforcement so speeding and California stopping add risk to pedestrian proliferation.
- Bicycle lanes are not striped; generally speaking, we need to encourage more walking and bicycling.
- Rodney Square bus hub is problematic in all ways mentioned
- Pedestrian crosswalk counters to inform pedestrians of time to cross the street.
- Pedestrian disaster at Jackson and Pennsylvania Avenue.
- Implement a local transportation system – trolley or small bus – that is independent of the routes that move people in and out of the City.
- Lack of transit alternatives beyond standard DART buses. Need more variety: wheeled trolleys, vans, taxicabs, pedi-cabs (a replacement is needed for Philly Car Share!). Need bike fleets (as in Paris, Copenhagen, etc.).
- Multiple buses at a single stop can be confusing
- Need for more friendly-to-pedestrian ways.
- Safe and clean streets.
- Rodney Square “hub” does not work.
- Too much air pollution, vagrants, etc.
- City needs to have countdown pedestrian signals throughout Downtown, but especially along MLK intersections
- Parking Issues – need better enforcement
- Cost of parking may deter commuters but is especially difficult for employees of small businesses and service/hospitality workers. Can there be different parking rates for different levels of employment?
- There should be close ‘satellite Park & Rides’ on US-13, Miller Road S.C., Governor Printz to serve Downtown employees with high frequency transit/shuttles, as is done in Atlantic City for casino workers.
- Riverfront Park & Ride is too close and brings too many cars into Wilmington

- Trolley is not serving its intended purpose – trips are too infrequent for ease of use and costs too much. Music on the trolley is often too loud or not appropriate.
- 6th and 7th Streets both run in the same direction
- 9th Street (300 block) a choke point for fire trucks
- MLK sweep near the train station is confusing
- South Walnut Street and MLK has devastating crashes; signal timing issue?
- Quick speed transitions from Lancaster Ave to MLK to Front. Need better signage because lane numbers and widths change.
- Fire Station 1 has difficulty releasing trucks up West Street
- Difficult parking for emergency vehicles on 9th and Market St.
- The Rodney Square situation has angered some residents of BPG who want to enjoy the park on their terms—that is minus the heavy bus traffic, homeless and criminals. BPG is worried this keeps many away.
- Difficult to police Rodney Square area: transit users present all day, “opportunists” mix themselves in; homeless in the square (panhandle; some affluent residents and transit users do not like them and complain to police); criminals (members of gangs who conduct business; petty thieves)
- Rodney Square as currently configured is an impediment to pedestrian and vehicular traffic: buses often stacked; difficult for pedestrians to cross (ex. 10th and King Streets); fumes from idling buses not welcome
- Pedestrian crossings of MLK are too long and unsafe
- The trolley doesn’t work – it’s uncomfortable and service is far too infrequent
- King Street is too wide and fast
- Parking code is too restrictive for downtown residential development
- Pedestrian crossings of MLK are too long and unsafe
- 4th and King is uncomfortable for pedestrians
- Signals along MLK are not coordinated
- Bus schedules are hard to read and understand; transit needs to be something you can comfortably “hop on” and use without a lot of prior planning
- Walking under the Amtrak bridges is very uncomfortable
- Need better accommodation for school buses on 500 block of Market St; pulloffs?
- MLK and 4th Street are hard for pedestrians to cross
- Trolleys are uncomfortable and too expensive for short downtown trips – in many cities, they’re free
- Bad lane shift on Orange St at 9th
- Students can use parking permit stickers to park at meters on Market St; enforcement? policy?
- Walking a few blocks doesn’t even occur to a lot of people
- Perception that there’s not enough parking

How do you see downtown Wilmington changing over the next 5, 10, 20 years?

- Greater population density driving greater variety of activities and venues
- Strolling is a comfortable activity
- Development considers interaction with the street as an imperative.
- Need to be a more comfortable walking city, how to deal with new ways to do things.
- Washington Street, Delaware Avenue, now easy to walk – 4th Street or 6th, 7th Streets are not comfortable, Jackson Street not easy or comfortable.
- Work with City beautification projects, increase pedestrian safety measures.

- 7th Street has more residential, but there need to be neighborhood amenities, and getting people around. Buses are intrusive and require advance knowledge.
- Public open spaces, wider sidewalks, decorative treatments, streetscapes (4th & Shipley park), 4th Street, West Street to Downtown.
- Buses are not attractive, too big, use newer, smaller vehicles
- Buses should make a statement about a city.
- Development of South Wilmington across the river from the train station.
- Greatly increased housing opportunities, more of a “neighborhood” feel, more 24-hour activity.
- More of its own identity – not a suburb of Philadelphia
- Focus on unique aspects
- Focus on transportation investments that support quality development
- Improve transit facilities to improve perception – partner with development
- More residents; more businesses, commercial uses, neighborhood vibrancy.
- Encourage means of transportation without automobiles!
- Rodney Square needs to be a green space (it’s the only one for Downtown residents!) rather than a bus terminal
- Downtown should have dense, mixed uses with nighttime activity – the pedestrian experience is paramount
- Visitors, particularly from downstate, need a very positive first impression of downtown Wilmington
- A vibrant Downtown, with businesses open late, more residents to bring in a greater variety of retail businesses, and a well-lit, safe pedestrian environment
- Downtown needs to be prettier, not so dingy (although Downtown Visions has made a difference)

What would you like downtown Wilmington to look like then?

- Fully integrated with housing
- City with crosswalks and defined pedestrian corridors
- More attractive, safe, walkable
- Development should proceed in a more contiguous fashion, building on existing areas rather than creating isolated, “Fort Apache” style development
- More pedestrians; more improvements – trees, plantings, etc.
- Still consider bike paths, encourage bicycle-to-work from Highlands, 40 Acres, other neighborhoods.
- Downtown residential growth is one of the most important developments in Wilmington.
- Residents should have more transportation options, especially those who want to live Downtown. The transit system should serve Downtown and other city neighborhoods as well as it does the current suburban commuter network. Transit schedules are not intuitive if you are not going out to suburbs and not enough city bus stops are shown.
- The transit situation at Rodney Square must be addressed to reclaim the park as a Downtown center and reduce the number of buses around the Square. What is status of Front & Walnut Streets transit center?
- Free parking at the Riverfront could undermine the urbanity of Downtown
- Enhanced retail development on Market Street; provide access for target market from Trolley Square, Wawaset Park, Westover Hills, Greenville

In what ways can transportation improvements help accomplish that vision?

- City circulator that can interact well with a relocated hub at the train station
- Two-way: may need to do more within Downtown
- Be open to new ideas. Look at things in a new way.
- Most important to help with image of Wilmington.
- King gets very wide after 9th Street. Minneapolis has little parking on-street, this could be useful (Shipley Street?) – no parking and wider sidewalks; loading zones.
- Fine days to regulate loading/deliveries.
- Maintenance is important, so solutions must be considered.
- Use of water to move people on ferry inter- and intra-city
- Get [people] to arts community, Opera Delaware, Delaware Theater Company, Art Museum, need to connect to this study and to Downtown
- More 2-way streets, fewer one-ways
- Parking kiosks to do away with so many parking meters
- Cosmetic, streetscapes should be more durable and less prone to vandalism
- Transportation is key. Focus on good transportation handling will lead to better, more vibrant life in City and in Downtown.
- Streetscapes.
- Possible solutions for Rodney Square: another place for buses to layover (ex. Water Street); DART should police its own hub or pay for officers to do so
- Distinctive (color-coded) routes for downtown transit
- Signal progression that benefits pedestrians by keeping traffic flowing smoothly, but slowly
- Better rail service to Philadelphia and the airport (something between SEPTA and Amtrak in terms of time and cost)
- Better taxi service if there is a market for it
- Trolley extended to Trolley Square with much more frequent service
- Garages with longer hours to support around-the-clock activity
- Provide a better connection between the courthouse and Market Street for employees, jurors
- Enhanced pedestrian signs
- More opportunities for bicycling
- Have a bike rack design competition
- Excellent pedestrian access (good lighting, better pavement markings, countdown signals)
- Great pedestrian paths to the train station
- Very frequent bus service
- Transit shuttle between downtown transit hub and train station with almost constant service (like Denver)
- Remove the sweeps
- Two-way streets slow traffic and help pedestrians
- Keep big buses off of Market St
- Good guidance to parking: Web-based application to find available spaces, parking on maps, more parking guide signs

Who else should we speak with about the future of downtown Wilmington?

- College kids; we need a young demographic interested in living Downtown
- Arts community
- Greater Wilmington Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Major employers: ING, B of A, Chase, DuPont, etc.
- Arts institutions: Grand, DCAD, DCCA, Historical Society, etc.
- Restaurateurs, etc.
- As many “stakeholders” as possible – businesses, new apartment/condo residents; arts community; Convention and Visitors Bureau.

General comments

- Optimize signal phasing – extended all red/leading pedestrian interval
- Review DART hub location: unsafe condition Rodney Square, and confusing for riders
- Increase focus on multimodal – residential trend
- Need intelligent response on transit side – transportation vs development; green technology
- Downtown life after 5 pm
- Neighborhoods surrounding the City need good access to Downtown
- There is a misperception regarding Downtown safety
- Pedestrian amenities/green City
- Transit service to support residential growth
- Partner with communities to reduce cut-through traffic
- Small City feel/motto for city “One person can make a difference.”
- Needs: walkability / retail centers
- 24/7 character vs. work week
- Great location / train service
- “in the middle of it all”
- opportunities in close proximity / N/S train service only
- Mass transit investment (E/W?) needed if city becomes more livable and walkable
- Encouraging locals to walk – compared to other cities
- Distance to transit
- Timing of study related to how people are choosing
- Living alternatives – sustainable.
- Getting around downtown vs. to downtown
- Increase in jobs within city limits
- Encourage use of underutilized office space
- Ride/Share options – Philly car share example
- Street network – difficulty to get around
- Downtown center – Rodney Square
- Is one centralized transit hub needed?
- Existing infrastructure – focus on employment growth
- Attracting younger work force to live and work in city
- Return on investment (100% in city / 20% state)
- South bank of the Christina River access – how do you improve multimodal access?
- Available space / underutilized sites
- Master Plan ideas – ongoing study
- Parking Issues – safety perceptions

- Overall public safety
- Perspective from surrounding larger cities
- South Market St./ 8th & Orange – identified in previous plans but nothing has happened
- Need Market Street to take the lead
- Trends in parking demand / commuting habits
- \$20K-30K per space for new construction
- New large companies? Smaller workforce
- Travel link – subsidized travel issues
- Economy drives downtown growth
- Ensure that transportation doesn't limit growth
- Raise Market Street to allow development
- Hospital expansion to 600 jobs
- Interest in centers along south bank
- 14th Street connector
- Park and Ride studies / options
- Park and Ride future locations
- Congestion on roadways leading to city – buses stuck in traffic
- Density of corporate headquarters related to size of city
- In 20 years, we want Wilmington to be able to compete with the suburbs
- Wilmington needs to be a destination for future generations to live and work
- Concentrate on congestion issues
- Cost of parking may deter commuters
- Great increase in transit use from Middletown
- Intersection of downtown buildings with street - 10th St./12th St./Delaware Ave.
- No connection to multi-use – single purpose
- Code changes to encourage different use
- New design guidelines for riverfront
- Congestion on King Street
- During rush hour it's easy to leave downtown – problems occur outside of city
- Some streets were not designed to handle traffic they see today – transit can't access everywhere
- Political influences during traffic patterns
- Neighborhoods controlling traffic – Trinity
- Congestion in City is not bad
- On-street parking occupancy
- Coordinate with City climate change initiatives
- Wilmington needs to revive Transportation Department, or create a commission to bring all parking and transportation issues to one place. Could this be Downtown Visions? Go for quick wins, especially bicycle improvements.
- Coordinate signals; “show that the City cares” about transportation.
- Piggyback with a market study/economic development study
- Take historical assets into consideration: Old Swedes Church, Christina Landing (national park?)
- Need to better accommodate pedestrians at intersections, especially along MLK (connections between Downtown and the Riverfront). Basic crosswalks and signal visibility are important.
- Pedestrians and bicyclists must be accommodated everywhere.
- There should be an ‘Easy Pass’ or smart card that would allow use on transit, for parking (on and off street)
- More information and marketing needed for transit – where can you buy passes and get better schedule info. DART website should have trip planning.

- Downtown transit should have different vehicles than suburban routes. There needs to be a better partnership between City and DART. There could be funding partnerships with businesses but decision-making for transit needs to be cooperative.
- There needs to be better cooperation with Amtrak and more information available about improvement projects.
- Get feedback from the suburbs: Why are/aren't people coming Downtown?