

A POLICY PLAN FOR
THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
OCTOBER 1984

AN ELEMENT OF THE
COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN
FOR WILMINGTON, DELAWARE

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Recommended by
City Planning Commission
Resolution No. 55-84
Date: November 27, 1984

Adopted by
City Council
Resolution No. 84-330
Date: November 29, 1984

POLICIES FOR THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

The Central Business District is that area of the City bounded on the north by the Midtown Brandywine residential area, on the west by the West Center City residential area, on the east by the East Side residential area, and on the south by the Christina River. The Central Business District extends generally from the Christina to the Brandywine, between West and Walnut Streets, excepting the residential blocks between 13th and 16th Streets from King to Walnut Streets, which are included within the East Side planning area, and the residential blocks north of 12th Street between Washington and Orange Streets, which are included within the Midtown Brandywine planning area.

Within the Central Business District, the dynamics of interrelated uses and the desirability of mixing uses make it inappropriate to use the traditional plan technique of designating on a map the areas planned for each type of development. Instead, a policy plan is proposed, stating in priority order the policies that will guide decisions on allocating land to a particular use.

The policies proposed as the plan for the Central Business District are listed in order of priority. Each policy is accompanied by a statement of purpose, as a guide for application of the policy to specific cases, and to help resolve potential conflicts with other policies. A list of possible strategies or means for implementing each policy is provided as a guide to appropriate implementing actions. Finally, objective measures are described, which can be used to monitor progress on each policy, and which can also serve as check points for coordinating several strategies. The objectives describe the changed physical development that will accompany progress towards each policy goal.

Application of the policies to specific land use decisions requires that current data be available, at a parcel or block level, on land use, population, economic activity, housing, and infrastructure and transportation system capacities. This data has been compiled by the Office of Planning and is being maintained on a current basis in cooperation with the City Department of Commerce.

LAND USE POLICIES

POLICY I--Development in the Central Business District should be consistent with its function as the metropolitan area center for administrative office, government, and cultural activities, as a metropolitan area center for specialty retailing, tourism and entertainment, and as a subregional center for general retailing.

Purpose: To stimulate creation of new employment opportunities, to retain existing employment, and to reinforce the unique advantages of the Central Business District's existing infrastructure and central location in relation to the regional transportation network and population distribution.

Strategies for public investment and regulatory and incentive programs:

1. Administrative offices--those primarily associated with the internal functions of an enterprise, rather than with production, sales, or services to the public--should be concentrated within the downtown office center.

Objective: New office building construction in the 11th - 12th Street corridor between Walnut and Jefferson Streets, and in the King - Walnut Street corridor from the Christina River to 12th Street.

2. Uses should be grouped in a functional relationship to other uses which they support or upon which they depend.

Objective: Full occupancy of Market Street Mall first-floor retail and services space.

3. Low intensity development should be discouraged within the downtown office core; scattered high-intensity development outside this area should also be discouraged.

Objective: No permanent commercial surface parking; commercial uses requiring accessory parking located adjacent to major thoroughfares.

4. Major cultural and entertainment facilities serving the metropolitan area should be encouraged within the Central Business District.

Objective: Evening activity on and adjacent to the Market Street Mall on a continuing basis.

5. General neighborhood retailing and services for residents of the Central Business District should be located in planned centers that can also serve adjoining residential neighborhoods. Convenience goods retailing for residents should be accommodated within the retail fabric of the Central Business District.

Objective: Development of neighborhood shopping centers at the Fourth Street interchange with I-95 and on the East Side.

POLICY II--Facilities and amenities developed in the Central Business District should be designed to support multiple office, retail, residential, arts and cultural, entertainment, and recreational uses.

Purpose: To stimulate mixed use development, 24-hour occupancy of the area, and full utilization of existing infrastructure.

Strategies for public investment and regulatory and incentive programs:

1. Encourage new high-rise residential uses and residential reuse of vacant upper floors of commercial buildings.

Objective: Increase housing stock in Census Tract 1 from under 500 to over 1,500.

2. Demolition of residential units for surface parking should be strongly discouraged in the Central Business District and in adjoining residential neighborhoods.

Objective: Residential development on existing surface parking lots in residential neighborhoods surrounding the CBD.

3. A multi-purpose convention facility should be encouraged at a location compatible with other policies for Central Business District development.

Objective: Development of a multi-purpose convention facility.

4. Cultural institutions contributing to the vitality and variety of the Central Business District should be assisted in maintenance of their facilities.

Objective: No loss of existing cultural institutions from CBD.

5. Entertainment facilities should be particularly encouraged when integrated with other uses in the Central Business District.

Objective: Daytime and evening activity generators sharing the same site.

6. Amenities like water-edge treatment, plazas and open spaces, landscaping, and similar projects should receive high priority only if they relate functionally to other land uses. Nonfunctional or single-purpose open space should be discouraged.

Objective: Public spaces and amenities that are used as well as viewed.

POLICY III--Group land uses for maximum benefits from their functional interrelationships.

Purpose: To maximize labor market accessibility, provision and quality of services, operational efficiency, and area identity by grouping activities that are mutually supporting.

Strategies for public investment and regulatory and incentive programs:

1. Shopper goods or general retailing, serving primarily commuters and City-wide markets, should be concentrated on the Market Street Mall and intersecting cross streets south of Tenth Street.

Objective: Full occupancy of Market Street Mall retail space.

2. Convenience goods retailing serving primarily downtown employees should be accommodated within major employment centers, including large office buildings.

Objective: First-floor retail space in all high-rise office buildings.

3. Specialty or theme retailing should be established on the Christina Gateway waterfront to recapture tourist and regional markets for entertainment and impulse buying and to complement the focus of the Market Street Mall on shoppers' goods (general) retailing.

Objective: Development of a specialty retail center in the Christina Gateway area.

4. Primary people-oriented services such as branch banks, travel agencies, etc. should be dispersed through the office and retail area, rather than related to their administrative offices.

Objective: Reduce number of automobile trips between points within the CBD.

5. Residential development should focus upon the Market Street Mall and Lower Market Street Historic District, the area between Shipley Street and West Center City, and the Christina and Brandywine Gateways close to the waterfront.

Objective: Minimum two-fold increase in number of housing units in each of the four areas.

6. Major parking facilities should be located on or adjacent to major thoroughfares, either within major office buildings or in freestanding parking structures. Further penetration of commercial parking into adjoining residential neighborhoods should be strongly discouraged.

Objective: No increase in traffic on internal streets of the CBD, or in land area used for surface parking.

7. Manufacturing uses should be selectively accommodated within the Central Business District, but subject to strict performance controls to minimize adverse impacts upon other uses.

Objective: No interference with other uses as a result of manufacturing operations.

POLICY IV--Allocate adequate land conveniently located to accommodate support services required for administrative and government offices in the central office core.

Purpose: To minimize costs of auxiliary and support services like business equipment maintenance, printing and graphics, office supplies, and professional services.

Strategies for public investment and regulatory and incentive controls:

1. Provide economic development incentives for new or expanding service providers.

Objective: All necessary services represented within the Central Business District.

2. Restrict intensity of development in areas most suited to auxiliary and support services.

Objective: Increased number of business service establishments within the CBD, especially west of Orange Street from Fourth to Ninth Street.

POLICY V--Provide access without excess impact on the character of the Central Business District or surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Purpose: To move residents, commuters, tourist, and business visitors quickly and efficiently, both to and from and within the CBD, but with minimum disruption to an active livable downtown and to the character of adjoining residential neighborhoods.

Strategies for public investment and regulatory and incentive programs:

1. Pedestrian ways that are obvious and that follow desire lines should link activity centers with each other and with parking facilities on major thoroughfares.

Objective: No increase in traffic on internal streets.

2. Major new intrusions of thoroughfares into the Central Business District or through adjoining residential neighborhoods should be discouraged.

Objective: No additional demolition to increase traffic capacity.

3. Increased use and expansion of transit bus service should be encouraged.

Objective: Significant increase in passengers per day.

4. Maximum levels of parking provided or permitted should be established at levels consistent with maintenance of existing bus service and its expansion to serve new activity generators.

Objective: Increase to ten percent portion of daily person-trips made by transit.

URBAN DESIGN POLICIES

POLICY VI--Quality design should be encouraged at each step in the development process.

Purpose: To maintain the pedestrian street scale in areas functionally dependent on pedestrian traffic, and to protect investment in and maximize benefits from existing public and private facilities in the CBD that exhibit quality design.

Strategies for public investment and regulatory and incentive programs:

1. On major pedestrian ways, reduce dead spaces like blank walls, nonfunctional open space, curtained windows, parking lots, and similar conditions that inhibit pedestrian movement past them.
2. On major pedestrian ways, encourage visually open and active uses like retailing or consumer services.
3. Design landscaping to require minimum maintenance, unless a program for maintenance can be assured.
4. Screen rooftop, heating ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment if visible from street level.
5. Locate and design new buildings to respect existing buildings' access to light and view.
6. Public viewable art should be encouraged in all buildings accessible to the public.

POLICY VII--Preserve those elements of the past that are significant for their contribution to the history or diversity of the Central Business District.

Purpose: To maintain the character and scale of the downtown area, particularly its diversity and quality architectural elements.

Strategies for public investment and regulatory and incentive programs:

1. Preserve buildings which reflect high standards of architectural design.
2. Encourage replacement of obsolete buildings lacking architectural merit or historical significance.
3. Limit demolition of significant buildings unless they constitute a hazard to public health and safety, or are unfeasible for reuse.
4. When an entire building is not feasible for reuse, encourage retention of facades, but only where the architecture is of high merit or contributes significantly to the scale or character of the street.
5. Provide technical assistance to developers in understanding the relationship of development proposals to the existing architecture around the site and to public policy objectives.
6. Enhance the setting of significant historic buildings.
7. Encourage adaptive reuse of historic or architecturally significant buildings.

Objective: \$10,000,000 annual activity qualified for historic preservation Investment Tax Credit.

POLICY VIII--Create new open space only where it can be functionally related to land uses in the area.

Purpose: To provide contrast and innovative form in a manner that respects the functions of the Central Business District.

Strategies for public investment and regulatory and incentive programs:

1. New open space should be designed for multiple specific purposes. For example, a pedestrian way might link two pedestrian activity generators, and provide an aesthetic amenity, a transit interchange, and a small marketplace for specialty retailing.

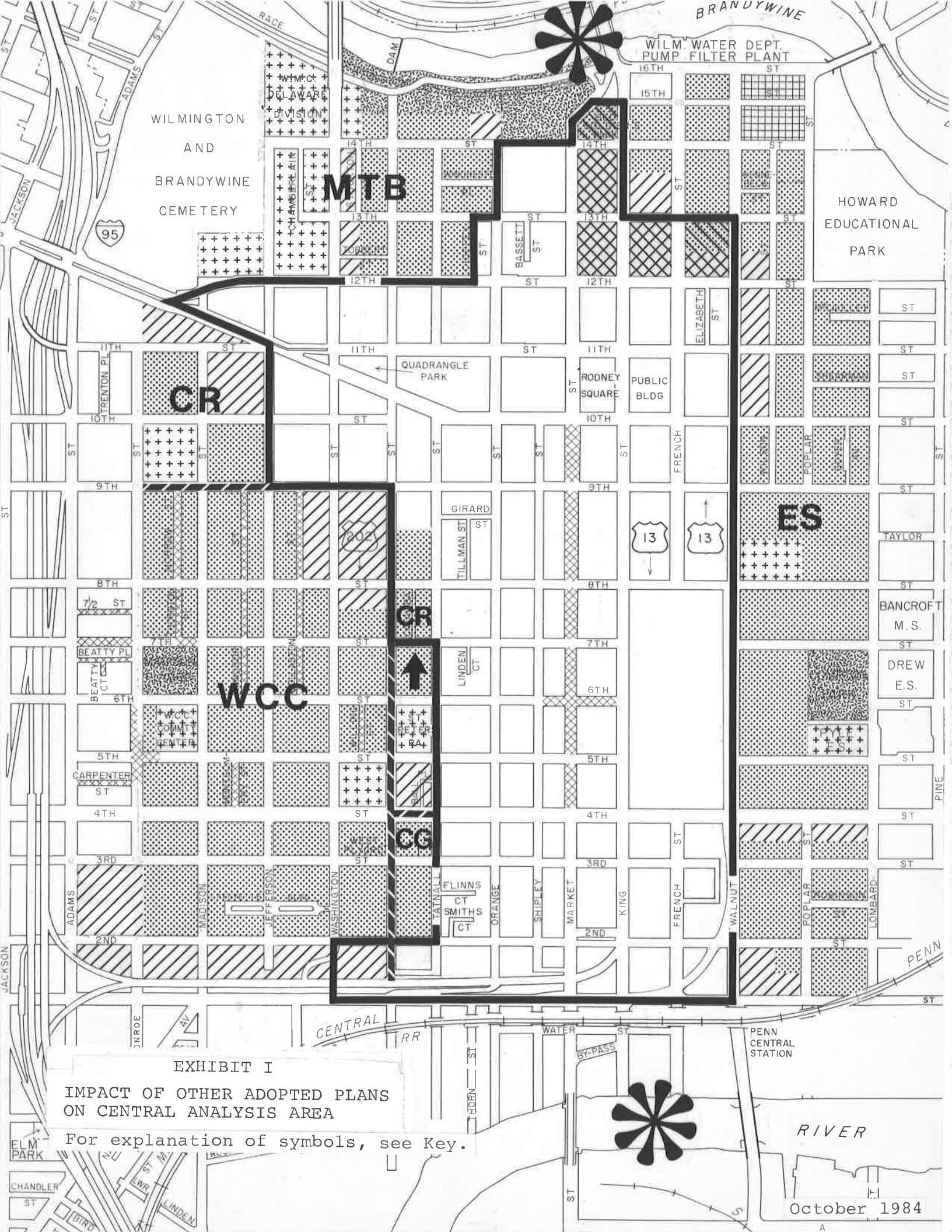
POLICY IX--New construction should improve and diversify, in a complementary and functional manner, downtown Wilmington's character and architecture.

Purpose: To encourage construction for economic development, while assuring developers and owners of existing structures that investment in quality design and construction will be protected from future development that would lower property values.

Strategy for public investment and regulatory and incentive programs:

1. Encourage use of recognized principles for good site design and relationship to surrounding development.

Objective: Annual addition of 200,000 square feet of commercial office space; no increase in street-level wind velocity.



WILMINGTON
AND
BRANDYWINE
CEMETERY

WILM. WATER DEPT.
PUMP FILTER PLANT

MTB

CR

ES

WCC

CG

CG

EXHIBIT I

**IMPACT OF OTHER ADOPTED PLANS
ON CENTRAL ANALYSIS AREA**

For explanation of symbols, see Key.



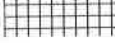





RIVER

October 1984

EXHIBIT I

Residential areas surrounding the Central Business District
as mapped in other adopted plan elements

KEY

-  Residential
-  Commercial
-  Industrial
-  Institutional
-  Park
- MTB** Midtown Brandywine Plan, 1981
- ES** East Side Plan, 1977
- CR** Community Renewal Program, 1966
- WCC** West Center City Urban Renewal Plan
- CG** Christina Gateway Urban Renewal Plan
-  Blocks proposed for deletion from
East Side Plan, November 1982
-  Central Analysis Area Boundary (Census Tract 1)
-  Riverfront Activity Centers, Waterfront Pilot Plan

