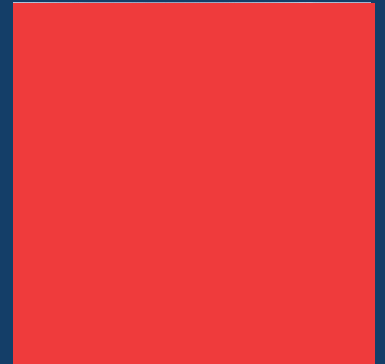


# ACTION PLAN for Wilmington

*Mayor-elect Carney's  
Transition Team Report*

*December 2024*





# Leadership for all of Wilmington

## *Fellow Delawareans,*

As I reflect on my time serving as Delaware's Governor and as we look ahead to the future of our great state, I am filled with hope and optimism. I am proud of the progress we've made together, but I am equally excited about the opportunities that lie ahead for Wilmington. In this spirit, I am pleased to present this report as part of the transition for my mayoral administration.

Wilmington is closely connected to the work of the state—what happens in Wilmington effects every corner of Delaware, and vice versa. It is in this context that effective governance requires a strong partnership between local leadership and the state. Whether it's enhancing public safety, growing our economy, or addressing the needs of our most vulnerable citizens, the challenges before us are significant. But I have every confidence that with thoughtful leadership, collaboration, and an unwavering commitment to the well-being of our communities, we can continue to build a brighter future for Wilmington.

This transition report has been compiled with the input of many dedicated public servants and residents who have worked diligently to ensure a seamless transition. It reflects the priorities and recommendations that will help the next Mayor tackle the most pressing issues facing our city. From infrastructure improvements to workforce development, housing, and education, the path forward will require both vision and action.

I understand the magnitude of the responsibilities and challenges that come with the role of Mayor. I also know that the strength of any city lies in the collaboration among its residents, leaders, and city employees. This report is a guide for the next administration. It is also a reminder that our progress depends on a shared commitment to service, progress, and opportunity.

I am grateful for the trust that voters have placed in me in the past and in my new role as Mayor. I have learned that our success will be based, in large part, in our ability to put our differences aside and work together. I look forward to meeting the challenges ahead with this transition report as our guide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John C. Carney". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**John C. Carney**  
Governor of Delaware, Mayor-elect of Wilmington

December 16, 2024

The Honorable John C. Carney  
State of Delaware  
Office of the Governor  
820 N. French St., 12th Floor  
Wilmington, DE 19801

Dear Mayor-elect Carney,

On behalf of the entire transition team, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to participate in this process to help shape your vision of Wilmington's future. For the past two months, this diverse team of community leaders has worked tirelessly to identify Wilmington's greatest needs and present you with recommendations to move the city forward.

It is with great pleasure that we present to you and your administration this Action Plan for Wilmington, which represents input from over fifty committee members and countless community members, all of whom care deeply about the success of our great city. This plan aims to ensure that all neighborhoods in Wilmington are strong, vibrant, and connected, prioritize economic development, and support an efficient and effective government.

While Wilmington has seen significant growth and investment in many neighborhoods, we are mindful of the disparities across the city. This plan's clear priorities seek to support your administration in lifting all neighborhoods to create a more equitable and dynamic city that works for all residents.

This plan was only possible with the time, expertise, and commitment of many Wilmington residents. They spent countless hours sharing their experiences, debating ideas, and identifying solutions to strengthen Wilmington. We are ready to support you and your administration for the next four years.

Sincerely,



**Doneene Damon**  
Mayoral Transition Co-Chair



**Kevin F. Kelley, Sr.**  
Mayoral Transition Co-Chair



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# The Big Picture

Wilmington is a small city with much to offer residents, businesses, and visitors. From the vibrant neighborhoods filled with thriving small businesses, strong civic associations, and committed nonprofits to the renowned art scene of the Delaware Art Museum and Grand Opera House, Wilmington is a city many are proud to call home. The city also offers spaces for residents to connect with neighbors and nature through recreational activities in Wilmington's beautiful parks and annual community events like the Clifford Brown Jazz Festival.

Over the past decade, Wilmington has undergone a transformation focused on economic development, urban revitalization, and cultural growth. After many years of population decline, the last few years have seen population growth. The city has become a destination for entrepreneurs, top chefs, and artists. Its strategic location makes it an ideal place to live and work.

While revitalization efforts have been successful, they have been geographically limited. The poverty rate in the city is significantly higher than the national average, highlighting the need for targeted economic development initiatives in historically underresourced neighborhoods and workforce development programs that support residents with barriers to employment. To build stronger, more vibrant neighborhoods, investments must be made in high-quality education, community safety, health and well-being of residents, and arts and culture. Increased communication and engagement will require government, businesses, community organizations, and residents to work together to make Wilmington the best place to live, work, and play.

To make this vision a reality, Mayor-elect John Carney brought together a team of over fifty of the city's nonprofit, business, and civic leaders to provide strategic support in envisioning the plan for his administration. Alongside input from Wilmington residents, the team outlined priorities to help Wilmington achieve its full potential for everyone living and working in the city's diverse neighborhoods. This Action Plan for Wilmington shares these strategic priorities to build stronger, more vibrant neighborhoods in Wilmington.



## Managing Resources and Fostering Communication

***The Carney administration will focus on managing and maintaining essential city resources while improving communication with key stakeholders and the public by:***

- Solidifying a long-term solution to keep Emergency Medical Services (EMS) available to all Wilmington residents.
- Prioritizing the health, stability, and resiliency of the city's water, sewer, and stormwater systems through a review of the Resilient Wilmington Climate Change Impact Study and educate the City Council and public about their significance.
- Improving Wilmington 311 services to create a more responsive government that addresses resident requests adequately and efficiently, ensuring timely responses.
- Addressing recruitment, hiring, and retention challenges for city employees to ensure that the government is fully staffed and able to serve the community effectively.
- Establishing better communication between the city, City Council, and the public through proactive community engagement, more open communication channels, and more frequent touch-points.
- Understanding the impacts of the recent county tax reassessment to set an appropriate property tax rate for the city and transparently communicate with residents about the process.
- Identifying and implementing a new Enterprise Resource Management System to improve city operations.

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“ *We need more equality and unity in the city. Not 'this side or that side'.* ”

*-Wilmington Resident*

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## Creating Jobs and Supporting Economic Growth for Residents

***The Carney administration will focus on economic prosperity for residents through investment in all neighborhoods and support for businesses by:***

- Developing a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the city, including investing in all neighborhoods, improving access to training and jobs with livable wages, and supporting small and diverse businesses.
- Creating the Mayor's Economic Development Roundtable to strengthen the relationship among the administration, businesses, and nonprofits and to set a unified vision for sustainable and equitable growth.
- Making doing business in the city accessible through streamlined, transparent permitting processes and increased support for businesses.

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“ ***Better communication between different levels of the government, as well as the state and federal governments, is needed to implement [economic development] ideas better.*** ”

*-Wilmington Resident*

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**“ The city needs more resource hubs  
where people can get services without  
giving their whole life story... It is hard  
to get resources in one place. ”**

*-Wilmington Resident*

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## Building Resilient, Safe, and Connected Communities

***The Carney administration will partner with community members and civic leaders to support new and ongoing initiatives to build resilient, safe, and connected neighborhoods by:***

- Investing in infrastructure, from repairing roads and sidewalks to addressing vacant properties, to support safe, functional, and resilient neighborhoods.
- Building safer, cleaner neighborhoods through collaboration with community leaders, enhanced clean team efforts, and a focus on addressing violence and trauma.
- Establishing a citywide Council on Homelessness, driven by community organizations, to connect individuals experiencing homelessness with housing and services tailored to their immediate and long-term needs.
- Redesigning Neighborhood Planning Councils, as necessary, based on the needs of each, to better reflect resident priorities and improve coordination with city services.
- Streamlining the permits, inspections, and zoning processes for residents and businesses with clear guidance and transparent decision-making that eliminates unnecessary barriers.



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***“ The way we use out-of-school time is  
not nice to have but essential. ”***

*-Transition Committee Member*

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# Fostering Community Well-being through Education, Health, and Culture

***The Carney administration will increase community well-being in all neighborhoods through enhancements to education, health, and culture by:***

- Expanding after-school and out-of-school time programs that provide academic support, enrichment, and social-emotional learning opportunities.
- Ensuring every child has access to high-quality learning opportunities and holistic family support, including investments in early childhood care and K-12 education and collaborating with community-based partners to support families.
- Improving access to health services through collaborations with local partners to provide free screenings, clinics, and enrollment events.
- Collaborating with local grocers, farmers, and restaurants to expand access to fresh, affordable, and nutritious food options.
- Advocating for affordable housing development and programs supporting safe and affordable housing access.
- Supporting the creation of resident-driven comprehensive community engagement plans to allow residents to shape their communities based on their needs.
- Ensuring the structure, partnerships, and investments are in place to support cultural events, the arts, and artists through collaboration and partnerships among city departments and cultural institutions.

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**“Teens need a proper place to stimulate themselves to use their talents and gifts.”**

*-Wilmington Teen*

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**JOHN  
CARNEY**  
MAYOR-ELECT

# Thank you!

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the individuals whose time, expertise, and dedication have made this plan a reality. Their thoughtful feedback, valuable insights, and constructive guidance have been essential in advancing this work. In addition to those named below, we also acknowledge the many Wilmington residents who generously shared their knowledge and perspectives—without whom this effort would not have been possible.

**Doneene Damon, Transition Co-Chair**  
**Kevin F. Kelley, Sr., Transition Co-Chair**

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Raye Jones Avery  
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## **Strong Neighborhoods Committee**

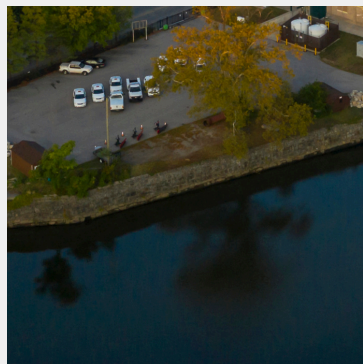
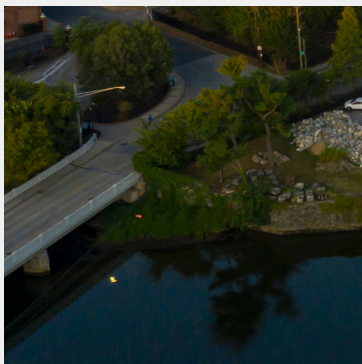
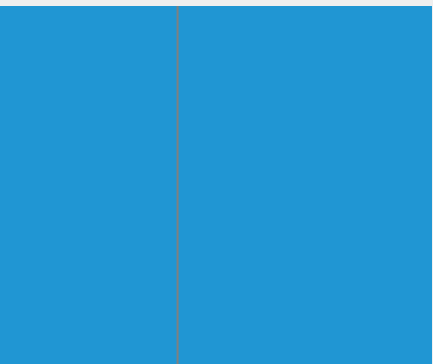
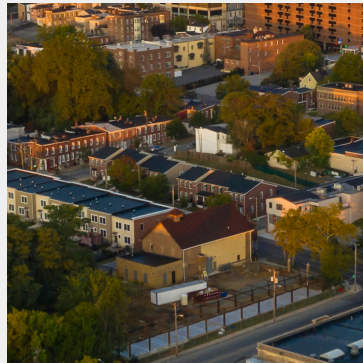
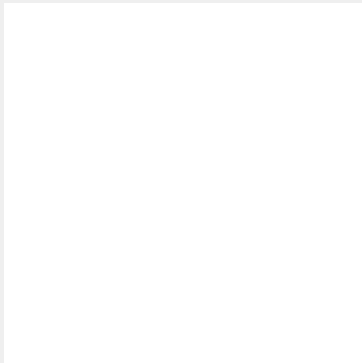
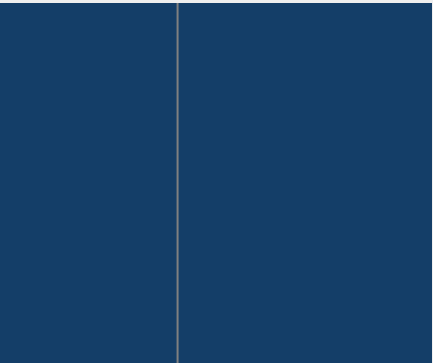
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*This report was compiled by Social Contract, a Wilmington-based consulting firm.*

JOHN  
CARNEY  
MAYOR-ELECT