

SUSSEX ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION COMMITTEE



www.sedac-de.org

2024 Annual Report

SEDAC Mission Statement:

To leverage the experience, intellect, and creativity of the Sussex County community to inform, develop, recommend, and communicate strategies for creating sustainable economic prosperity.



Report from the Outgoing Chair – Joe Conaway



SEDAC Annual Report 2024

Report from the Chair – Joe Conaway

This is my last annual report as chairman of SEDAC. I have served since 2008 as a charter member of SEDAC and the last six years as Chairman, but it is now time for new leadership, but I am not going away. Sorry. I have already paid my dues for 2025 so I will take my back row seat where my mouth will no doubt get me into trouble.

I want to thank all of the past and present members of SEDAC for all their support these 16 years. The many accomplishments of SEDAC over these years would not have been possible without them. SEDAC is not a one-person operation. I would also like to thank the many folks who stopped me on the street to thank me for my columns and to tell me how much they agreed with SEDAC's positions. A very special thank you to Linda Price, member and secretary, for all that she has done for SEDAC and for me. Mr. Scott Thomas, executive director of Southern Delaware Tourism will be assuming the Chairman position in January of 2025.

We had great news in 2024 with the result of our research into the ability of Sussex County to support a medical school. Tripp Umbach, the national authority on medical education expansion has said that establishing a branch campus of an existing osteopathic medical program in Sussex County, Delaware, is needed and feasible. The question was asked and answered and SEDAC has begun the process to do just that with total cooperation from our three hospitals. Thanks once again to the eleven groups that provided the \$85,000 that were necessary for this study; they include Bayhealth, Beebe Healthcare, Tidal Healthcare, the Sussex County Council, Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Delaware, Carl M. Freeman Foundation, Christian and Julie Hudson Family Foundation, Chesapeake Utilities, Delaware Electric Cooperative, Fulton Bank and, of course, SEDAC. Again, we must thank Chris Weeks, Chairman, and George Beckerman, Co-chair of our committee for all their time and energy with their committee to make

this happen. We look forward to additional news releases as we move this Medical School Committee into the next step, the actual approval and construction of such a facility.

The second major initiative of SEDAC in 2024 was housing. We supported a number of pieces of legislation that dealt with the shortage of both affordable and work-force housing in Delaware. This package of legislation was just the beginning of facing the shortage of housing in Sussex. All of these bills were passed. In the meantime, SEDAC created two housing committees to address these problems, one for Affordable Housing, under the leadership of Lillian Harrison, and the second led by Preston Shell and Seth Collett for Workforce Housing. Both committees have a number of changes that will be proposed in the early part of 2025 that will make it possible for the private sector to more heavily involve themselves in these types of housing. To give you a heads up, two areas in particular will help in really solving our housing shortage and they are increased density and less costly and better thought-out government regulations.

Over the past year, SEDAC has reached out to various government agencies, taken a number of positions that, in our view will make life better in Sussex and supported our State and County elected officials when we thought that they were correct in their decisions and let them know when we thought that they were wrong. We look forward to continuing our efforts in these regards and will continue to address housing needs and improved medical opportunities in Sussex. As I finished my report last year, once again I will state, please join us as we all look forward to the day when our children and grandchildren will not have long drives home during the holidays because good paying jobs that they presently hold elsewhere are available right here in Sussex County and the cost of housing close to where they work is manageable and available.

Joe Conaway
Chairman
SEDAC

Message from the Incoming Chair – Scott Thomas



Having been a part of SEDAC since its creation in 2008, I am excited and humbled to serve as incoming chairperson in 2025. SEDAC has made significant strides the last six years under the leadership of Joe Conaway, including growing membership by 60% and spearheading the many achievements captured in this report. In short, Joe has brought a lot of gravity to SEDAC and, thanks to his perseverance, many community, business and government leaders up and down the state are working with SEDAC as a trusted partner and advocate for a prosperous Sussex County. I will certainly be leaning heavily on Joe, Secretary Linda Price and many other SEDAC members to keep and grow the momentum that we have established. Action is the largest part of our namesake and SEDAC is addressing some really difficult challenges like creating attainable housing and bolstering industry in the county. With a new state administration, three new county council members and increasing new residents, SEDAC has much work to do in 2025. No small task but by utilizing our collective knowledge and connections, I am confident that SEDAC can continue to affect change for a thriving Sussex County. Thanks to all of you for being a part of this ride and here's to making a difference in '25!

SEDAC Board Members

2024 Executive Committee & Directors

Joe Conaway, Chair/Conaway & Assoc

Scott Thomas, Vice Chair/Southern Delaware Tourism

Lillian Harrison/Elevated LLC

Rich Hartnett, Treasurer/County Bank

Linda Price, Secretary/GT Chamber

Bob Ruggio/Ruggio & Assoc

2024 Members

Joe Conaway/Conaway & Asso	Doug Liberman/Larson Engineering
Linda Price/GT Chamber	Chris Baker/George & Lynch
Kevin Yingling/DE Electric Coop	Rob Tunnell/Tunnell Companies
Tom Thunstrom/SBDC	Ray Sander/DE Botanical Gardens
Scott Thomas/SDT	Cathy Bassett/Zach Evans/Mountaire
Ernie Felici/Beacon Hospitality	Jessica Mumbulo – Willow Construction
Bob Ruggio/Ruggio & Assoc	Jamie Burk/Town of Millsboro
Chris Weeks/Core States Group	Kim Lewis/Fulton Bank
Ed Lewandowski/UD	Brian Shannon/Laurel Redevelopment
Pete Keenan/IBEW	Seth Collett/LNWA
Walt Bryan	Lillian Harrison/Elevated CDC
Trisha Newcomer/City of Seaford	Jamie Smith – Town of Laurel
Jerry Esposito/Esposito LLC	Mike Vanderslice/Environmental Alliance
Rebecca Snyder/ABC	Bobbi Barends/DTCC
Sandra Ware/Berkshire Hathaway	Karen Falk – Milton COC
Stephanie Moody/SCAOR	Kati Brown/Solutions IPEM
Mark Davidson/Pennoni	Lauren Weaver – BFACC
Preston Schell/OA Properties	George Beckerman/HoartBeckerman
Derek Southard/Neighbor Good Partners	Gus Mergenthaler/Tetrattech
Shelby Gillis – NAI Coastal	Josh Mastrangelo/Freeman Companies
Jack Riddle/Community Bank	Eric Doroshow/Doroshow & Assoc
Jared Shelton/Chesapeake	Joe Ashton/Ashton Pools
David Rinnier – 9SDC	Adam DiSabatino - EDIS
Jerry Denney/Corrado Const	John Jones/GreenLea
Bruce Patrick/Tidewater	Sarah Gilmour/Pathways to Success
Sunny Gyani/Affordable Housing	Jo Schmeiser – COC of Greater Milford
Matt Robinson/UD – Slam Dunk to the Beach	
Jerry Denney/Corrado Construction	Tony Holt - BDK
Chad Robinson/Food Bank of DE	Joe Reed/Capstone Homes
Katie Brittingham/CFS Financial	Anne Angel/Millsboro COC
Michael Glick/Lighthouse Construction	Guy Marcozzi/Verdantes
Mike Nally/Nally Ventures	Mary Dupont/La Plaza Delaware
Joe Sabelhaus/Sabelhaus Team	Matt Volk – GGA Builds
David Tam/Beebe Healthcare	Terry Murphy/BayHealth
Enrique Nunez/Splash Laundromat	Vanessa Jones/Whayland Company
Sarah Bronson	Penny Short/Tidal Health
Tanya Williamson/Tanya Williamson	Steve Parent/CPA
Mike Dunmyer/US Wind	Scott Dickenson/Eastern States
Gertha Jean/One Way Insurance	Lucy Pope/Hillis Carnes Engineering

Ex-Officio Members

Sussex County Association of Towns (SCAT)

Bill Pfaff, Sussex County Economic Development

Lauren Swain – Delaware Division of Small Business

Brian Shannon – Laurel Re-Development

Sussex County Legislators

SEDAC'S Continued Strategic Doing

2024 efforts were made on the following strategic doing initiatives

- A substantive Advocacy Committee – focused on providing support for Sussex County Projects that continue to help foster the growth of the County; as well as addressing challenges to that growth. The Advocacy Committee saw many more projects wanting to present before them and asking for SEDAC support
- Housing Committee – focused on the challenges of workforce/affordable housing. The committee provided a report in December 2024 presenting a path forward to meet some of the housing challenges. These will begin to move forward in 2025
- Support job creation and retention
- Every job is worthy and thoughtful of consideration
- Focus on communicating the role of SEDAC
- Continued to bring on board key stakeholders to build a coalition
- How we got there ○ Op Eds ○ Social Media ○ Direct Action ○ Endorse Economic Development Projects ○ Monthly agenda discussions
- 4 Op Eds were completed by Chairman, Joe Conaway and circulated through local print media
- SEDAC continues to move forward by furthering our initial strategic doing areas which include continuing to bring on key stakeholders to further our message. Establishing committees to address challenges and barricades to economic growth
- Social Media initiatives – SEDAC continues to see increased traffic to our social media pages, FB and LinkedIn. With better and more consistent postings, we have furthered our reach to those interested in the Economic Development of Sussex County

SEDAC & Aquaculture

SEDAC has served on the aquaculture taskforce formed with 15 members appointed by the Governor. This taskforce met several times during the year and have come up with several actionable items for continued work

SEDAC Reaches Across and Beyond the County

To support our mission of economic development in Sussex County, our members continue to participate with a number of local and regional initiatives that help develop businesses, entrepreneurs, and the region overall

Sussex County Council

SEDAC continues to work with Sussex County Council on a number of initiatives. We continue to provide support to projects going before Planning & Zoning as well as council. We began an initiative with local builders and housing experts early in the year to come up with actionable items that can possibly help the housing crisis in the County.

Sussex County Today & Tomorrow Conference

Sadly there was no Conference this year.

In SEDAC Committees address a variety of key issues:

- **Healthcare Committee** – The committee has worked hard to bring the Medical School Feasibility Study to fruition. The report was released to stakeholders, the hospitals and the public early in 2024. With the report being completed, the work of this committee continues to partner with all stakeholders to bring medical education and ultimately a medical school in Sussex County to fruition. The feasibility study can be accessed via our website www.sedac-de.org
- **Advocacy Committee** – Over the 2024 year, the advocacy committee and SEDAC increased its position as a leader in the ED world with several projects being presented to them. These presentations led to almost all being presented to the membership to vote for a letter of support issued on their behalf.
 - Rebecca Snyder and Ed Capadano of ABC Delaware have continued their work at quarterly meetings with DelDot representatives to work through many of the issues. The committee is looking forward to moving forward in 2025 with new Transportation Secretary Shante Hastings (Deputy Director in 2024) who the committee has already established a working relationship with
- **Infrastructure Committee** – key initiatives included the Oyster/Aquaculture Industry and Offshore Wind
- **Housing Committee** – in 2024 this committee was established for both affordable and workforce housing. The separate committees met several times over the year and in December presented a report for a way forward in 2025

Each month SEDAC also hears from the following:

- Town of Millsboro
- City of Seaford
- Town of Laurel

- GGTCC - Georgetown Chamber of Commerce
- BFACC
- Greater Milford Chamber of Commerce
- Milton Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Millsboro Chamber of Commerce
- Sussex County Economic Development
- Laurel Redevelopment Corporation
- 9th Street Development
- Small Business Development Center
- Delaware Division of Small Business
- Infrastructure Committee
- Southern Delaware Tourism

Organizations that have presented to SEDAC

SEDAC recognizes the importance of keeping up to date on major activities in Sussex County and the surrounding region. These guest speakers have made presentations to SEDAC in 2024.....

- Bob Wheatley – Chair Sussex County Planning & Zoning
- Charlie Vincent – Spur Impact
- Scott Meyer – CEO Aloft Aeroarchitects
- Kurt Foreman – Delaware Prosperity Partnership
- Kate Gemma – Carl Freeman Companies
- Mike Ramone – Candidate for Governor
- Matt Meyer – Candidate for Governor
- Bethany Hall Long – Candidate for Governor
- Colleen Davis & Ted Griffith – State Treasurer & DE Earns Director
- Andrew Cottone – 1st State Hydrogen
- Patti Grimes – Freeman Stage
- Trinidad Navarro – DE Insurance Commissioner
- Bob Fulton – Superintendent Cape Henlopen Schools
- Faye Blake – Pathways to Success
- Brian DiSabatino – Chair of DE Business Roundtable

The SEDAC Website – www.sedac-de.org provides many resources and more information about our mission and members. It also contains FAQ's (updated regularly) on the Medical School Feasibility Study.

SEDAC is organized for charitable and educational purposes including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501c3 of the Internal Revenue Code.