

## FHWA's Livable Communities Case Study Series

### **Blue Ball Properties Project—Providing for and Working with an Expanding Community**

#### **Challenge**—Protecting Natural Beauty and Incorporating Change

In the small communities of Brandywine Hundred north of Wilmington, Delaware, remnants of history can still be seen, including black powder mills along the Brandywine Creek, museums, gardens, mansions, and hospitals left behind by the DuPont family. In 1999, the pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca sought to establish its North American headquarters in the area. Attracting a major business such as this was great for the local economy, but it also brought challenges in accommodating the traffic generated by 5,000 new or relocated AstraZeneca employees. It was very important to the community to continue to respect the historic features of the area, such as the 1914 Blue Ball Dairy Barn and the natural beauty of the nearby Alopocas Woods and historic Brandywine River Valley.

With projected traffic growth, major roadway modifications and extensions were necessary in the area surrounded by parkland and established communities. The State and other transportation entities were responsible for determining how to ensure adequate capacity for the existing and projected traffic flow as the project entailed significant infrastructure investments, improved transit services, and opportunities for community interconnectivity in the area. From an economic standpoint, it was important to create new jobs with good supporting infrastructure for the Wilmington area as it is strategically located between two major cities—Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Baltimore, Maryland, and is within a short drive of I-95 and the regionally important US 202 Corridor.

#### **Solution**—Public-Private Partnering for a Livable Community

Dealing with the complexity of this situation required active participation from more than 100 stakeholders including local agencies, members of the community, and private entities. The Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), in conjunction with Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) and the Delaware Economic Development Office (DEDO), collaborated to determine how to best provide transportation options for the community while preserving over 200 acres of land for parks.

The Blue Ball Properties project stemmed from the initiatives outlined in the Transportation and Recreational Master Plan developed by area businesses, government, and the community. Over 125 representatives from the lead agencies, local environmental and historic preservation groups, the political and business arena, and the community were involved in its establishment. After dozens of working group meetings and public workshops, the Master Plan was produced. During the process, over 250 design alternatives were considered, requiring extensive and thoughtful collaboration among State, county, and local officials and the public advisory committee.

The preferred design alternative included more than two miles of local roads that weaved through nearby parkland providing dedicated access for the community and diverting local traffic from the major regional roadways. Per community members' request, traffic calming techniques such as narrow lanes, grass shoulders, curvilinear horizontal geometry, landscaping, and roundabouts were incorporated to ensure low travel speeds. A connector spur road was built between US 202, which bisects the hundreds of acres in Brandywine Hundred, SR

Creating more livable communities through transportation choices



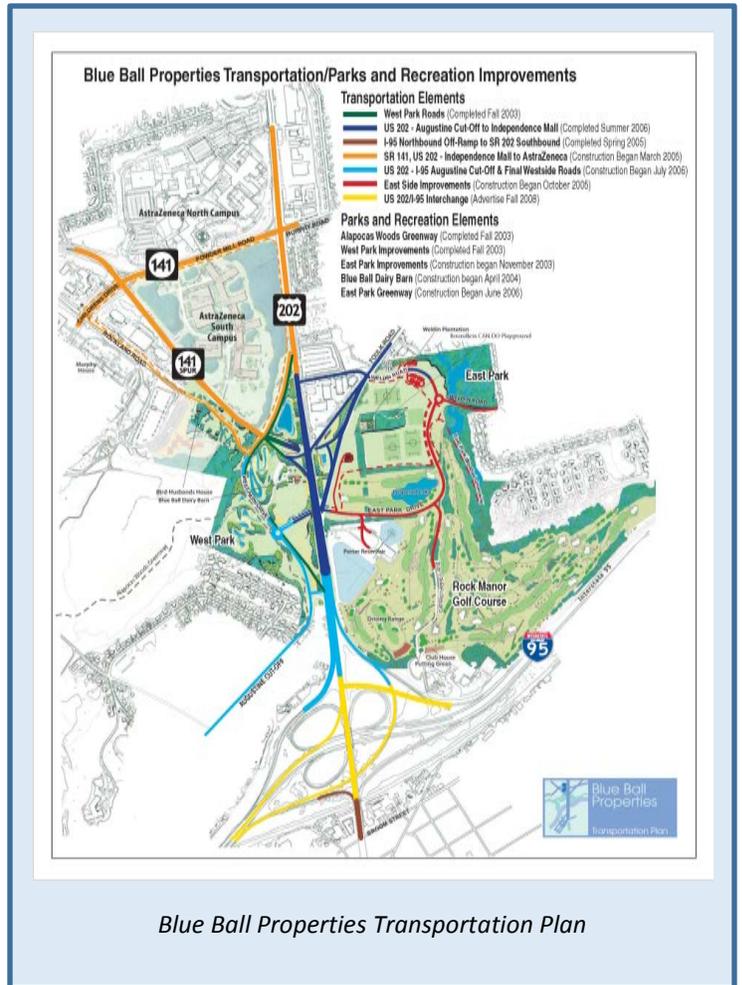
141, and Foulk Road. In addition to the construction of two new overpass/bridge structures, these improvements allow for the effective separation of local and regional traffic while providing for bike path and pedestrian route connections. This led to the creation of an expanded Alopocas Run State Park, incorporating the restored Blue Ball Dairy Barn under DNREC ownership in the area. These investments have since resulted in the creation of the Northern Delaware Greenway Trail as part of the [East Coast Greenway](#).

**Funding**—Providing for All Focus Areas

In order to implement the project, stakeholders coordinated with Federal, State, local, and private entities for funding. While such work as park improvements, historic property renovations, and greenway construction were funded with state funds and private donations, FHWA funds supported West and East Side road improvements as well as updates to US 202 and SR141 including overpasses and additional turn lanes. By 2010, FHWA had contributed over \$30 million for preliminary engineering for multiple projects in the vicinity of the Blue Ball property, and over \$55 million for construction on roadway improvements for the \$150 million project.<sup>1</sup>

**Results**—Successfully Integrating Diverse Interests

The Blue Ball Properties Project is recognized as the first major project in Delaware to successfully integrate transportation, historic preservation, environmental and economic development, and recreational planning goals and efforts. For its accomplishments, it has received numerous awards across many focus areas. The distinctions received include the Corporate Environmental Action Award by Bucks County Audubon Society in 2003; one of the DelDOT’s Outstanding Special Projects in 2004; the Historic Preservation Award for Weldin Plantation by New Castle County Historic Review Board in 2004; and FHWA’s Excellence in Highway Design Honorable Mention for Project Development Process and Environmental Protection and Enhancement Awards in 2006. The work behind the project has produced lasting effects as the Master Plan has been adopted as a blueprint for land use and a guide for future design initiatives in recreation, environmental enhancement, cultural resource preservation, and transportation.



*Blue Ball Properties Transportation Plan*

<sup>1</sup> Information provided by the Finance Department at the Delaware Department of Transportation.

