

Dear Fellow Middletown Residents,

March 13, 2009

On behalf of the Planning and Zoning Commission, I would like to invite you to participate in creating the city's Plan for Conservation and Development. We need people from all over the city to share their ideas about what we can do differently in Middletown, and how to make it a better place to live.

As you may or may not know, the state requires cities to update their Plans every 10 years. This plan (sometimes considered the zoning plan) will guide growth for the next 10 years and many years beyond. In December, I volunteered to direct the effort as a P&Z Commissioner. I think this is the most important project we can be involved with as citizens. I especially want to make it an enjoyable and thought-provoking experience for everyone who participates.

The first question many of you probably are asking is, "What is this Plan?" Let me summarize it in plain English. The state says (see attached) we can plan for ourselves in any manner we see fit: we decide where we want different things to happen in the city, what are our priorities, and what precautions we will take to protect our resources. WE create our own reality. The Middletown we see today is a result of decisions made in the 1960's and a reflection of the conventional planning ideas of that time.

So the job ahead of us is to decide what we want. No one else can decide what we want our city to look like, where best to concentrate new development, and what to conserve, except us.

What's our vision? Without a common belief about what we want our city to become, how do we make decisions, especially how best to use public money? We need a shared conviction, so we realize goals even through different political administrations and economic cycles.

Once we decide what we want, we'll describe ideas in detail. Details help us to have increased faith. The clearer a picture can be seen in our minds, the more quickly it can be brought into our physical world. The best way to determine which details work best is by testing different ideas on paper, at different scales. In the 2009 phase, we will simply identify areas that we want to concentrate new development and what areas we would like to see protected. In the years ahead, more detailed plans will be created for every neighborhood. These master plans, created with neighborhood residents working with urban designers and planners, will show the best locations for new streets, transit links, areas for new development, parks and other civic uses. For each master plan, a new form-based (zoning) code will be written just for that neighborhood to ensure new development follows the neighborhood's vision.

So we're looking for a few good men and women, mostly people who like to put in their 2 cents. You do not need to know anything about planning. You don't need to know planning terms. You just need to say you'll come to 4 very conveniently scheduled meetings, you'll listen to ideas and think about them, and then share your thoughts about what might work. What makes you ideal for this job is that you LIVE here, shop here, maybe even work here. I am inviting anyone who wants to participate to contact me anyway you prefer.

Hope to hear from you soon, Catherine Johnson
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