

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Middletown is a mid sized city in central Connecticut, which has tremendous potential. Its central location, access to the Interstate highway system, available undeveloped land, a vibrant downtown, a well diversified economic base, choice in residential housing, and almost 9 miles of frontage on the Connecticut River combine to make Middletown's future bright.

A decade ago, few felt Middletown's future was so bright. In the last decade, Middletown's Common Council, boards and commissions have followed the 1990 Plan of Conservation and Development and have made many wise decisions. These decisions have defined Middletown as a model for city planning. For instance;

- Middletown has spent almost \$10 million acquiring and permanently preserving over 2,000 acres of open space;
- In 1996 Middletown invested \$10 million in its dying downtown by constructing a new Police Station on Main Street. The design and location of the Police Station was in accordance with the downtown section of the Plan of Conservation and Development.
- This public investment in the downtown created the confidence for private investment. In the last eight years Middletown's downtown has experienced unprecedented reinvestment and revitalization. Including a 12 screen movie theater, over 40 new restaurants, new historic street lights, a \$1.4 million rehabilitation of the Metro Square block, a \$2 million investment in the Green Street School arts center, a \$1 million artist cooperative, over \$5 million invested in Kid City Children's Museum over \$25 million in new downtown housing and a new \$10 million downtown hotel, The Inn at Middletown.
- Middletown now has a downtown to be proud of. It is looked to as a model for downtown revitalization.
- Middletown spent almost \$5 million preserving and rehabilitating the Cenacle property into the Long Hill Estate Conference Center.
- Middletown has regulated residential growth in a manner that has resulted in increased property values and much higher quality design in residential developments. Demand for single-family homes is high and supply is low. Homes now regularly sell for \$400,000-\$600,000.
- Middletown is investing in its education system with the construction of a new \$100+ million high school which at the same time also allows for a new and larger middle school at the former high school.
- Middletown acquired and effectively manages a 184,000 sq. ft. industrial building, which has increased in value from \$830,000 to over \$ 2 million

and now contributes in excess of \$100,000 to its Economic Development Fund.

- Middletown has used its Economic Development Fund and created and used its Tax Abatement Ordinance to invest in new companies interested in moving to the city. This short-term investment in growing companies has resulted in over one million square feet of new industrial development, significant growth in the grand list, and over one thousand (1,000) new jobs in the last decade.
- The Planning and Zoning Commission has been instrumental in promoting this new growth by fast tracking applications for commercial and industrial growth in commercial and industrial zones.

While much has been done and Middletown is well positioned for the future, Middletown still has many opportunities to take advantage of and many challenges to confront. The need for effective planning in Middletown has never been so great.

The last Plan of Conservation and Development was prepared and adopted in 1990, the plan includes the ***Lamentation Mountain Tri-Town Plan*** and ***Downtown Visions: 2000 and Beyond***. Also on file in the Department of Planning, Conservation and Development is a comprehensive study prepared between 1998-2002 by planning consultant Buckhurst, Fish and Jacquemart, which provides much of the data included in this update.

This document is intended to be an update of the 1990 Plan of Conservation and Development. It is the intent of the Planning and Zoning Commission to keep the 1990 Plan of Development in effect and to adopt this document as an "Action Supplement" to the 1990 plan. This document will identify specific actions, which Middletown must take now to confront the myriad of challenges, which face mid-sized cities in Connecticut.