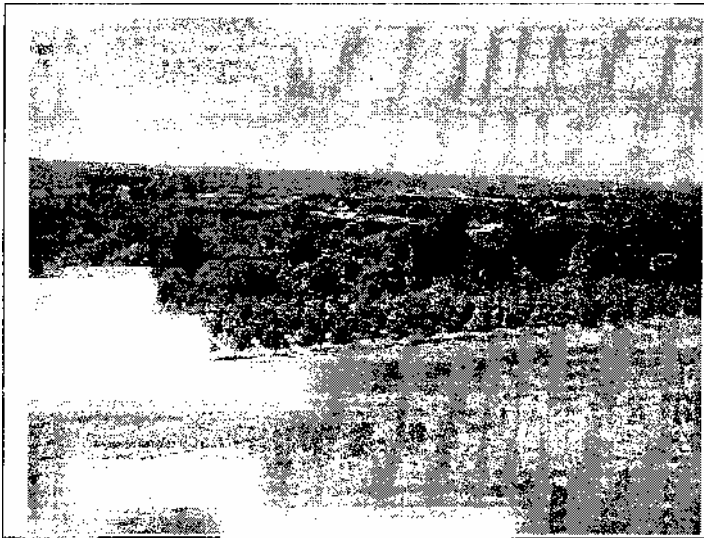


CHAPTER 10 Maromas, Middletown's Last Frontier

The area of Maromas is in southeastern Middletown. On the east, it borders the Connecticut River. It is loosely bound to the north by the Connecticut River and Portland, to the west by Route 9, to the south by the Higganum section of Haddam. Maromas represents a large portion of Middletown's Connecticut River frontage approximately, It is home to the City's 2nd and 3rd largest tax payers, Pratt & Whitney and NRG Power. Pratt & Whitney is also one of the City's largest employers. Soon, these large entities will be joined by Kieen Energy, currently under construction. Maromas pays a significant fraction of the city's tax base but only requires a small fraction of the City's services on account of the sparse population. The area is 16 square miles or 10, 240 acres. This represents almost 38% of the City's land area but only 5% of the City's population resides in Maromas. For comparison purposes, the entire town of Cromwell has a population 13,000 and is 13.5 square miles or 8,640 acres. Figure 10-1 displays the Maromas section of the city



A view from Maromas

Maromas is a unique area. Its large uninhabited, unfragmented forestland is also of environmental value to the State, the Nation and the World. It represents tremendous passive recreation and conservation opportunities. It has thousands of acres of privately held undeveloped land, much of which is held by only a few owners.....Pratt & Whitney, Northeast Utilities and the State of Connecticut.

Both geology and history have contributed to this unique situation. The steep and rocky topography make much of the area inhospitable to agriculture or residential development. However, the CT River frontage, frequently marshy and flood prone, is home to abundant wildlife as are the uplands. In the past, the large landowners purchased the vertiginous rocky ranges of Maromas in order to have sufficient buffers for concentrated industrial development. United Aircraft's secret development lab for the nuclear airplane and a possible nuclear power plant site for NU required many acres of surrounding land.

Planning is about achieving a balance between conservation and development. It is the Planning and Zoning Commission's responsibility to ensure good planning for the future of this unique are as designated by the International RAMSTAR Convention and under consideration by the Silvio O. Conte Fish and Wildlife Refuge.

A group of concerned residents created an organization known as Advocates for a Maromas Plan (AMP). This organization secured grant funds to develop a detailed natural resource inventory of the area and recommendations for future uses. This information is available in the Department of Planning, Conservation and Development.

The Conservation Commission and Planning and Zoning Commissions conclude that industrial development in an I-3 zone and natural resource protection can be achieved with careful land use planning and open space preservation.

The AMP study introduced the concept of a city's "green infrastructure". This plan certainly recognizes Mount Higby and Lamentation Mountain in the western section of the City and the unfragmented forestlands of Maromas in the eastern section of the City as major components of the City's "green infrastructure".

Open Space Preservation

The I-3 Industrial Zone, referred to in Chapter 9 of this document, has received considerable attention in recent years. Maromas also includes an expansive Open Space corridor. This corridor includes the Cockaponsett State Forrest, the Spiderweed Nature Conservancy land the watershed land owned by the State of Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and very significant land holdings owned by CL&P and its affiliates.

These lands have varying degrees of protection and public access. The Planning and Zoning Commission has identified these lands as a priority for open space acquisition on its approved open space plan.

The Commission recommends that the City step up its efforts to permanently protect this land as open space and ensure full public access. Specifically, the City should pressure the state to transfer the CVH watershed lands to the DEP. The DEP would then incorporate these lands into Cockaponsett State Forest. Additionally, the City and the DEP should pursue the acquisition of the utility lands not planned for industrial use as permanent open space. [Together, the city and the DEP should pursue the acquisition of the utility lands as permanent open space.

This strategy will lead to the creation of a publicly accessible open space corridor in excess of 2,000 acres

. Future Commercial and Industrial Development

Understanding the need to balance conservation and development, the Commission recognizes that the I-3 zone is Middletown's largest industrial zone. In the future, the zone may represent the city's largest tax and employment base. Clearly, due to topographic and environmental constraints, the majority of the I-3 zone will remain undeveloped. Future development within the I-3 zone needs to be carefully planned and consistent with the guidelines outlined in Chapter 7 and in concept, with the discussion in Chapter 9 of this document.

Issues of Concern in the I-3 Zone

- **Significant Wetland Systems and Vernal Pools**

There are two (2) extremely significant and interrelated wetland systems in the I-3 zone. The first system straddles the zones western boundary. This system leads to the second wetland system at the mouth of Hubbard Brook adjacent to the Connecticut River. These large, biologically and ecologically diverse wetlands as well as the numerous vernal pools I deserve permanent protection and preservation.

- **Blue Trail**

The blue trail was identified as a very significant recreation resource in the zone. This trail runs the entire length of Maromas and is located in the I-3 zone on the northern utility property. The trail was established by the Connecticut Forest and Park Association with landowners' permission.

At this moment there is no legally binding agreement to ensure that this trail remains. However, the Department-of the Interior has legislation before Congress which creates

the 1st National Scenic Trail of which this Blue Trail would be a part.! This trail deserves preservation including a significant buffer around the trail.

- **Undisturbed Ridgeline along River Road**

There is a significant block of continuous undisturbed slopes in excess of 25 % along River Road. The public has identified views from the river and adjacent communities as a major concern. Preserving these steeply sloping areas will protect the view from the Connecticut River and from towns across the river. Therefore, these areas are identified as worthy of protection.

- **Traffic**

There have been concerns over industrial traffic feeding into residential zones. The Planning and Zoning Commission should exercise its authority to prevent future industrial land uses from using streets in residential zones. The Commission also-recognized Planning and Zoning's and the State Traffic Commission's authority to require transportation improvements when development occurs, including terminating the connection between residential and industrial roads. A through road from Exit 10 on Route 9 to Aircraft Road to River Road Connecticut Valley Hospital should be established. Because Aircraft Road is a state highway and Silver Street services Connecticut Valley Hospital, the Commission feels the city should consider asking the State take over the entire road network.

- **Habitat Preservation**

Recognizing that there could be significant, multiple and diverse habitats that are sensitive in some of the areas that are designated as potentially developable, these habitats need to be taken into consideration during the site development process. Detailed environmental impact evaluations for large projects are warranted.

The Planning and Zoning Commission should also amend the I-3 section of the Zoning Code to add uses that are more desirable and eliminate the undesirable uses, which are currently allowed. For instance, corporate offices, research and development facilities, emerging high technology and telecommunications-type uses should be allowed and the more heavy industrial uses currently allowed such as junkyards and solid waste facilities should be prohibited.

Other issues the Planning and Zoning Commission should consider for the I-3 zone regulations are mandatory buffers, ridgeline protection, required environmental impact evaluations and traffic impacts.

Recommendations

Middletown can be a leader in promoting public access to its Connecticut River Frontage and undeveloped forestlands. By promoting unrestricted access for passive recreation, Middletown will help to avoid a repeat of the highly restricted Connecticut coastline. By fostering interest in one of its greatest assets, the unique lands of Maromas, and forging relationships with the State and Federal government, Middletown will improve the quality of life for citizens.

- The Planning and Zoning Commission should change zoning regulations to prohibit inappropriate uses of I-3 lands.
- Lands within the Open Space corridor as shown on Figure 10.2 should be preserved. This is especially true of the Blue Trail and lands adjacent to it. Various means, i.e. partnerships, grant and outright transfer of easements and purchases should be employed. Use of state and federal funding should be encouraged.
- Promote access to the Connecticut River
- The Planning and Zoning Commission -should-require for the-I-3-zone-and other zones in Maromas, zone regulations which reflect the need for mandatory buffers, ridgeline protection, wetland and vernal pool protection, environmental impact evaluations when required, as well as traffic impact studies. This will insure that responsible development can occur while diversity in the area will be sustainable. Wherever possible, linkages should be explored with other towns.
- The Conservation Commission and the Planning and Zoning Commission should seriously consider adopting a Conservation Overlay Zone for this area-

- MAP ADJUSTMENTS

____ Figure 10.1

1. New parcel along the Connecticut river needs to be included. Connecticut Forest and Park Association holds the easement..

2. It might be helpful to separate out lands owned by different entities i.e. The : Nature Conservancy, DEP, the City of Middletown etc.

Figure 10.3

1. This map needs to be replaced by the new map. Would a new # be assigned?

2. The most recent new Concept Plan (Revised Dec.08) for the area needs to be included .and possibly the alterations in the Open Space Corridor (the green line) adjusted

CONCLUSION

Figure 10-3 is a concept plan that incorporates a number of the concerns identified. The purpose of the concept plan is to graphically identify those areas worthy of protection and those areas available for future development.

The tremendous potential and importance of the Maromas area to the City's long-term environmental and financial health is clearly recognized and cannot be overstated.

After reviewing the natural characteristics and the areas with development potential in Maromas, the Commission concludes that a balance between economic and environmental objectives can be achieved.