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GENERAL PLAN
for the
CITY OF MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT
adapted by the
COMMISSION ON THE CITY PLAN

June 16, 1955

COMMISSION ON THE CITY PLAN

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EXISTING

GENERAL PLAN PRINCIPLES

This General Plan of the City of Middletown and the General Plan Map which is a part of this document of the City of Middletown have been drafted in accordance with the provisions of "AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF MIDDLETOWN TO PROVIDE FOR CITY PLANNING", passed by the General Assembly, 1931.

"SEC. 6 General Powers and Duties: The Commission shall make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the City. Such plan with the accompanying maps, plats, charts and descriptive matter, shall show the commission's recommendations for the development of said territory, including among other things, the general location, character and extent of streets, building lines, viaducts, subways, bridges, waterways, waterfronts, boulevards, parkways, playgrounds, squares, parks, aviation fields and other public ways, grounds and open spaces, the general location of public buildings and other public property and the general location and extent of public utilities and terminals, whether publicly or privately owned or operated, for water, light, sanitation, transportation, communication, power and other purposes; also for the removal, relocation, widening or narrowing, vacating, abandonment, change of use or extension of any of the foregoing ways, grounds, open spaces, buildings, property, utilities or terminals, as well as a zoning plan. As the work of making the whole master plan shall progress, the Commission may, from time to time, adopt and publish a part or parts thereof, any such part to cover one or more major sections or divisions of the city or one or more of the aforesaid or other functional matters to be included in the plan. The Commission may, from time to time, amend, extend, or add to the plan."

The General Plan is intended to implement the purposes stated in the aforesaid Act:

"SEC. 7. Purposes in view. In the preparation of such plan, the Commission shall make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of present conditions and future growth of the city, and with due regard to its relation to neighboring territory. The plan shall be made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development of the city and its environs, which will, in accordance with present and future needs; best promote health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development; including, among other things, adequate provision for traffic, the promotion of safety from fire and other dangers, adequate provision for light and air, the promotion of good civic design and arrangements, wise and efficient expenditure of public funds and the adequate provision for public utilities and other public requirements."

With this authority and with the above purpose in view, the Commission on the City Plan of the City of Middletown has prepared this General Plan, the General Plan Map, and the supporting documents and maps which together make up the General Plan for the City of Middletown.

The General Plan is a guide to the future development of the City, showing the general trends which the City may take on the basis of the studies and analyses already made, and on the basis of the guiding principles for the development of Middletown evolved by the Commission on the City Plan.

These general guiding principles are enumerated below. The planning process consists essentially of determining goals for an area, and the means of achieving these goals. In order to accomplish this aim, it is necessary to comprehend fully the physical, economic and social environment of the community, and to determine the best means of achieving the enunciated goals within the framework of this environment. The General Plan document and map encompass these features, and serve to guide the future development of the City.

Consideration of current struggles of cities and towns throughout the United States to undo the results of no planning or of short-sighted planning in the past demonstrates that good, continued, long-range planning is essential to municipal government. Through this General Plan, Middletown is moving to exploit the golden opportunity of an orderly and prosperous future with which it is currently confronted.

The Commission on the City Plan has undertaken a variety of studies of the Middletown community on the preparation of this General Plan. These studies have included the physical resources of the community, its economic base, its past development, its social attributes, and its most significant resource: the people. The process of study and analysis can never be completed. New conditions and circumstances continually arise which require understanding to evaluate properly their place in the future of Middletown. The studies already completed have provided the basic groundwork for the evolution of the Plan.

On the basis of factual evidence, it is now known that Middletown's vast geographic area is deceptive when future growth and development are considered. A large portion of the total land area has in fact limited useability either because of topographic difficulties or because of flooding and swampy conditions.

Public sewer and water systems do not extend very far beyond the limits of the First Taxing District, which renders current, intensive residential or non-residential development infeasible for the major portion of the City. Soil conditions are generally such that private sewage disposal and water supply systems cannot be employed for intensive land uses.

The economy of the community is rather evenly divided between retail trade, centered on Main Street, and manufacturing, which is generally concentrated in the areas served by public sewer and water systems. The tax base places a relatively heavy burden on the home owner, and increased industrialization is called for to provide a better balance in the tax structure.

Middletown's position as an agricultural center, particularly in dairying, is known. The farming industry of the town should be encouraged, and steps, principally through zoning, should be taken to protect those sections in which it has developed. Otherwise, Middletown may experience what has already happened in other Connecticut towns: the complete loss of its income-producing farms to housing developments. These steps should be taken not only to protect an existing and important industry, but also to protect a rural feature which helps make Middletown an attractive place in which to live.

At least 8% of the land area has limited useability for future development because of its tax-exempt status. The highway system serving Middletown is soon to undergo a considerable change as a result of construction by the State Highway Department. This development will enhance Middletown's position as a regional shopping center, as well as its growing position as a dormitory community for the larger industrial centers to the north.

The Air Force atomic research facility to be located in the Maromas section will increase the demands on Middletown's shopping facilities, school systems, utilities systems, and residential land.

Thus, appreciable development in Middletown must be anticipated within the foreseeable future, which will make considerable demands on the available and usable land, utilities, and other attributes of the community. It is the function of this General Plan to anticipate and provide for these developments in such a way that the maximum advantage to the City at large will be received. Through revised zoning, subdivision regulations, building and housing codes, and urban redevelopment, this General Plan can be put into effect to achieve this result.

Within this framework of known facts about the community, and anticipated developments in the near future, the Commission on the City Plan has adopted the following guiding principles as a means of helping to maintain Middletown as the rural city that it is:

- I. The position of the downtown district as the shopping center for the City and surrounding area should be retained. Development of large scale commercial centers in any other section should not be fostered. Small, limited, development of neighborhood shopping centers providing only convenience shopping should be provided for. The location of the central business district, directly on a major expressway system from which cars can easily get into downtown, must not be wasted. The City has unparalleled opportunity found in few, if any, other cities, through redevelopment of the East Side and the riverfront, to increase its tax revenues, to increase its commercial activities, and to advertise itself through a show window a mile long.
- II. Land must be made available for the expansion of existing industry and for the attraction of new industry. Because of the urgency of providing facilities for industrial expansion, areas for industrial use must be selected on the basis of (1) relation to the rest of the community, (2) availability of and access to transportation facilities, (3) availability of the utilities of sewer and water, (4) suitability and practicability in relation to topography and soil.
- III. Greater control over residential development to the benefit of the City as a whole must be achieved through stronger zoning regulations aimed at providing varying types of residential areas with lot sizes and densities in harmony with topography, soil and location, and through strengthened subdivision regulations strictly applied. This purpose is not to prohibit residential building, but to make certain that "build-in" blighted areas are not encouraged. We need only travel through certain parts of Connecticut to see future slums already built. Through a careful revision of the zoning ordinance and map and the subdivision regulations, based on this General Plan, the City can avoid the fostering of tomorrow's blighted areas and rural slums.

On these principles the General Plan map has been prepared. The more detailed and specific suggestions and recommendations which follow are predicated on these principles and have been keyed to the General Plan Map.

GENERAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. East Side-Riverfront: The entire East Side from the Portland Bridge to the Acheson Drive turn-off should be redeveloped, through either private or public means, into a more productive and attractive area, for commerce, apartments, parking, civic center, or similar uses. The programs of the Redevelopment Agency and the Parking Authority can do much to further this aim. The city has here an unparalleled opportunity - an opportunity offered to few other cities - to use this area as a "showcase" both for the City as a whole and for the downtown business center. In addition to redevelopment of the blocks between Acheson Drive and Main Street, the riverfront itself should be put into recreation and park use, and the riverfront should be opened to provide the vista to the south.
2. Neighborhood Centers: Provision may be made for neighborhood center type of areas which would include neighborhood convenience shopping of a limited nature (for example, to include only a few stores of a specified type, with onsite parking to be provided and minimum area requirements.) schools, churches, and similar uses. These areas would be located at various points within the City where the nucleus of such centers already exists (e.g., Westfield Center and Farm Hill), and the area within a quarter mile of such center would be that within these uses may be encouraged.
3. There should be no commercial expansion beyond the western frontage of Broad Street. The East side of Broad Street is presently in a Transitional Business Zone, and this zone would be expanded to include the frontage on the west side.
4. The area between Broad Street and Wesleyan University, Washington and Church Streets, which now has moderate to high density residential uses, should be considered for apartment uses.
5. The area bounded by Pearl, Spring, Prospect and Washington Streets should also be considered for apartment uses.

6. North end: From Stack Street north, expansion of industrial uses should be encouraged. The remainder of the area from Washington Street north to Stack Street and from Johnson and Berlin Streets east to the east frontage of Pearl Street should remain in residential uses at densities not exceeding those presently existing.
7. Portland Bridge area: This area needs rehabilitation for more open uses. Park and recreation uses for this section may be provided in the area. In cooperation with St. John's Church, a program of redevelopment may be feasible for this section.
8. South Farms, bounded approximately by Sumner Creek, Mill Street, Wall Street, Walnut Street, River Road, and Acheson Drive cut-off: A high intermixture of land and structure uses; the juxtaposition of residential, business, industrial; haphazard development; topographical difficulties; traffic hazards; all indicate the need in this area of a program of rehabilitation and renewal.
9. The area between the Acheson Drive and the River, in the vicinity of Sumner Creek, is in need of redevelopment. Possible uses include both light industrial and recreational or park reserves.
10. The area between the present Saybrook Road and the proposed extension of Acheson Drive will approximately parallel it should be considered and investigated for possible light industrial uses. The Acheson Drive extension would provide a buffer for the residential area to the west and Saybrook Road would provide a service road for such uses.
11. Union-Park, Middlesex Hospital area: This is now something of an institutional area, with churches, YMCA, fraternal groups, and hospitals, and this type of use should be encouraged. This may be done through zoning for institutional uses, with adequate off-street parking required. In addition, there is also the possibility of developing some parts of this section, especially on both sides of South Main Street, south of Crescent Street, for professional offices, of which there are already some in the area.

12. Maromas: The presence of the AEC laboratory in this area will put a large part of the Maromas section into either Federal or State ownership. The remaining parts of this area are topographically difficult for large-scale building, and they should be put into residential use on large lots. The use of the riverfront for recreational uses should be considered, depending on the land taken for the new atomic research laboratory. If at all possible, land opposite the undeveloped State Park on Dart Island should be considered.
13. Millbrook Road, south of Randolph Road and between Saybrook and New Haven Roads: This section includes topography similar to that of the Maromas area, as well as flat, broad valley land. The latter is largely devoted to farming uses. The area as a whole should be retained for farming and for residential uses, on large lots.
14. Farm Hill Area, north of Randolph Road between Saybrook Road and South Main Street: This area is fairly well built up in many parts, for the most part in good residential use. The area's development should be continued in residential use, on lots of moderate size. Commercial expansion along South Main Street, on both sides of that street, should not be permitted beyond the intersection of Highland Avenue and South Main Streets.
15. Randolph Road: This street should be maintained as a traffic-carrying street, and commercial and industrial uses in the vicinity of this street should be discouraged. A possible future extension may be warranted through Middlefield to the Meriden Road, as a circumferential route.
16. Pamecha Pond: Development of this into a water recreational area should be a future project to provide at least a boating and fishing recreation section near the center of the City, with swimming if pollution can be eliminated.
17. Ravine Park: Development of this area into a more completely usable, year-around recreation area of the playground type should be undertaken.
18. The city dump area at Washington Street should be zoned into Industry I to preclude any more residential building, and to provide a buffer between well-situated industrial land.

19. Development of the newly acquired Park Department property off Jackson Street should be encouraged to serve not only as a park and recreation area but also as a buffer between the residential section and existing and possible future industrial uses.
20. Areas which are presently largely agricultural sections should be encouraged to be retained in those uses. This may be done through zoning for residential uses on very large lots, and giving precedence and priority to farming uses in such a zone.
21. Washington Street Extension between the West River and Camp Street should be developed for light commercial, showroom and office uses requiring a relatively low traffic volume. The same uses can be encouraged for Main Street Extension between the Acheson Drive overpass and East Main Street.
22. The existing Industry I Zone on Newfield Street should be expanded to include the northern frontage of Mile Lane, (I) between the intersection of Mile Lane and Newfield Street and a point approximately .6 miles west of that intersection with boundaries as approximately shown on the General Plan map, to the westerly portion of this zone, and to include the entire eastern side of Newfield Street to the Congdon Street intersection in the easterly portion of the zone.