

## Middletown 2020-2030 Plan of Conservation and Development

### Introduction

Middletown’s Planning and Zoning Commission is pleased to present the City’s 2020-2030 Plan of Conservation and Development (PoCD). In January of 2019 the City began the comprehensive process to develop this plan which was ultimately approved and adopted on **May 11, 2020**. Over the last year, the City, with assistance from its consultant and via the guidance provided by the Planning and Zoning Commission and PoCD Steering Committee conducted an open planning process to ensure that the document ultimately presented to you today is in every way, the City’s plan.

Middletown Planning and Zoning Commission Members

Plan of Conservation and Development Steering Committee Members

The intent of this plan is the same as all other PoCDs in the State of Connecticut, however the overall format is more distinct. From the start, both the Steering Committee and the general public expressed clearly that they were seeking a plan that was different from the last plan. The previously adopted PoCD was not seen as an engaging document overall and as a result was not valued as the resource it could have been. In an attempt to reconnect the City with this document a less traditional approach was taken.

As a result, you will find a document that contains all of the important elements of a PoCD which have been organized into five major thematic sections; “Vibrant, Healthy, Connected, Growing and Sustainable”. Each of these sections has been prepared in the same format:

#### ***Where Are We?***

This section will help establish a baseline for each thematic section. Readers will better understand what has happened up to this point as it relates to this topic and any notable changes since the last PoCD was adopted.

#### ***What Are People Saying?***

This portion of the thematic section will give an outline of what the people of Middletown are saying about this topic area. Feedback from Department Heads at City Hall, both community workshops, the

online survey, stakeholder meetings and listening sessions have all been combined together to build these sections.

### ***What Are The Big Ideas?***

This subsection will contain the major topics that rose to the surface during all of the various public input sessions. Many of the “big ideas” may seem overly ambitious but they serve as the foundation for the recommendations made within the final portion of each chapter and the Implementable table.

### ***What Should We Do?***

Considered by many to be the most important component of any PoCD, this section will make specific recommendations to help achieve the goals outlined by the “big ideas” of the chapter. These recommendations range from small scale, short duration tasks to long range policy changes.

### ***How Do We Get There?***

While each thematic section has been organized into the subsections outline above, in an effort to increase the overall utility of this plan an implementation table has also been created. This table has been written with intent that it is to be used by the Planning and Zoning Commission and other policy makers to guide the decisions of the City over the next ten years. This table includes the task, timeframe, partners and priority for each of the specific recommendations made within each of the “What Should We Do” chapters.

This plan has been adopted in conformance with Connecticut General Statute’s Chapter 126, Section 8-23. This Section outlines specifically what a Planning Commission **must do** when updating it’s PoCD and what the Plan **must do**.

The Commission is **required** to:

- Prepare, amend and adopt this plan as an update to the 2000-2010 Plan of Conservation and Development within the 10 year statutorily required timeframe.
- Consider the following:
  - The community development action plan (if applicable)
  - The need for affordable housing
  - The need for protection of existing and potential public surface and ground drinking water supplies
  - The use of development patterns to the extent consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity within the municipality.
  - The State’s Plan of Conservation and Development
  - The Regional Plan of Conservation of Development
  - Physical, social, economic and governmental conditions and trends.
  - The needs of the Middletown as they relate to; human resources, education, health, housing, recreation, social services, public utilities, public protection, transportation and circulation and cultural and interpersonal communications
  - The objectives of energy-efficient patterns of development, the use of solar and other renewable forms of energy and energy conservation.

- Protection and preservation of agriculture
- The most recent sea level change scenario updated pursuant to subsection (b) of section 25-68o
- The need for technology infrastructure in the municipality

The Plan of Conservation and Development is **required** to:

- Be a statement of policies, goals and standards for the physical and economic development of the municipality;
- Provide for a system of principal thoroughfares, parkways, bridges, streets, sidewalks, multipurpose trails and other public ways as appropriate;
- Be designed to promote, with the greatest efficiency and economy, the coordinated development of the municipality and the general welfare and prosperity of its people and identify areas where it is feasible and prudent (i) to have compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented mixed use development patterns and land reuse, and (ii) to promote such development patterns and land reuse;
- Recommend the most desirable use of land within the municipality for residential, recreational, commercial, industrial, conservation, agricultural and other purposes and include a map showing such proposed land uses;
- Recommend the most desirable density of population in the several parts of the municipality;
- Note any inconsistencies with the following growth management principles:
  - (i) Redevelopment and revitalization of commercial centers and areas of mixed land uses with existing or planned physical infrastructure;
  - (ii) expansion of housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs;
  - (iii) concentration of development around transportation nodes and along major transportation corridors to support the viability of transportation options and land reuse;
  - (iv) conservation and restoration of the natural environment, cultural and historical resources and existing farmlands;
  - (v) protection of environmental assets critical to public health and safety; and
  - (vi) integration of planning across all levels of government to address issues on a local, regional and state-wide basis
- Make provision for the development of housing opportunities, including opportunities for multifamily dwellings, consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity, for all residents of the municipality and the planning region in which the municipality is located, as designated by the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management under section 16a-4a
- Promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing, including housing for both low and moderate income households, and encourage the development of housing which will meet the housing needs identified in the state's consolidated plan for housing and community development prepared pursuant to section 8-37t and in the housing component and the other components of the state plan of conservation and development prepared pursuant to chapter 297

- Consider allowing older adults and persons with a disability the ability to live in their homes and communities whenever possible

While a PoCD is only required to note any inconsistencies with the State’s Growth Management Principles, this process and the ultimate recommendations this plan makes are very much in line with the State’s PoCD and those similarities are worth noting:

**Redevelopment and revitalization of commercial centers and areas of mixed land uses with existing or planned physical infrastructure;**

This plan makes recommendations in multiple chapters for different strategies the City could successfully implement to facilitate increased revitalization across the various commercial nodes within the City, specifically in the Downtown core area.

**Expansion of housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs;**

One of the recommendations noted within this plan to not only increase the overall viability of the Downtown core but to also increase sustainability and equity in Middletown as a whole is to diversify the housing stock within the City. Replacing older, less up to date and energy efficient units with newer units that are a mix of market rate and affordable will help ensure a diverse and healthy housing stock in Middletown.

**Concentration of development around transportation nodes and along major transportation corridors to support the viability of transportation options and land reuse;**

Perhaps one of the stronger opinions that resonated throughout the visioning process relates to growth in Middletown and that any additional growth in the City should be smart, targeted and planned growth. A key recommendation outlined as part of making this smart growth more viable was to focus development energy along existing commercial nodes. Specifically, where transportation options already exist in an effort to remove transportation barriers for residents.

**Conservation and restoration of the natural environment, cultural and historical resources and existing farmlands;**

Both the “Sustainable” and “Healthy” chapters of this plan make specific suggestions for how the City can promote conservation and preservation of its existing resources. Programs such as PA-490 and Transfer of Development Rights could be implemented as well as giving preference to development applications that make use of “Brownfield” sites as opposed to developing “Greenfields”.

**Protection of environmental assets critical to public health and safety**

Middletown has already done a great job at identifying, protecting and appreciating environmental assets. Within the City, these areas include forests, farmlands, ridgelines and the Connecticut River. While many actions have already been taken to ensure their preservation, more can always be done. Water and air quality have been seen as being of paramount important throughout the various chapters of this PoCD

**Integration of planning across all levels of government to address issues on a local, regional and state-wide basis**

This plan makes reference to the need for agency wide collaborate in many places. Most notably the City must work with the State's Department of Transportation to ensure that the solution developed for the Route 9 Traffic Signal project balances the needs of the City. This Plan also outlines the importance of working with the regional planning agency on issues such as the regional Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan.

The most key component to developing this plan was the public input and visioning process. Throughout the development of this plan the Commission had the opportunity to engage hundreds of members of the public in various formats. Surveys were conducted in person and via the internet, multiple community workshops were held at local schools, stakeholder groups including the City's Department Heads, the Chamber of Commerce and the Westfield Residents Association were specifically identified and asked to provide input as part of this plan.

The goal of this extensive public input process was to be able to gauge how the prior plan worked (and didn't) but to also develop a common group of priorities that were shared by the majority. Following this evaluation 5 major priorities were shared between the various stakeholders that participated. Each thematic category represents an area in which Middletown currently excels but also can make great strides to improve the overall quality of life for the people that live, work and spend time in this City. Ultimately, Middletown is and should continue to be Healthy, Vibrant, Thriving, Connected and Sustainable. The content of this plan, in the chapters that follow outline how such an accomplishment may be achieved. Each thematic section of this plan contains specific task and policy suggestions to guide staff, the Planning and Zoning Commission and other City leaders over the next ten years so that this plan will be effectively implemented.