

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of the Middletown Comprehensive Plan is to provide a framework to guide future decision-making concerning growth, development and the provision of public services. As such, the Plan for the Town should reflect the community values of its residents and elected officials. These values are expressed through the Plan's goals and objectives which envision a desired future condition for the community. The goals and objectives are the basis for recommendations which are to be found in the Plan and are the basis for future actions the Town will take in regard to development proposals, rezonings, annexations and public works projects.

The adoption of a Comprehensive Plan is also important in that it can provide the framework for consistent decisions. The Plan can give succeeding administrations a better idea of what values have been stated through the public planning process.

A Comprehensive Plan has value to the staff planner, the Town Planning Commission, the elected officials, and the citizens. The planner will use the plan to evaluate land use proposals and to inform property owners about appropriate areas for development. The elected officials will use the plan to make decisions which are consistent with an adopted course of action and to make progress on issues which are identified as needing action. The citizens can use the Plan to judge the decisions of the planning body and elected officials, and to gauge the progress made in important areas of concern.

Another purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to coordinate planning activities with other levels of government and regional planning agencies. The State of Maryland through the Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act of 1992, and its subsequent amendments, requires plans to be updated at specified intervals and to include elements in the plan which will follow the 12 visions which were prepared in the wake of the 1987 Chesapeake Bay agreement with the addition of new visions from Senate Bill #273 to help achieve Smart and Sustainable Growth.

1. A high quality of life is achieved through universal stewardship of the land, water and air resulting in sustainable communities and protection of the environment;
2. Citizens are active partners in the planning and implementation of community initiatives and are sensitive to their responsibilities in achieving community goals;
3. Growth is concentrated in existing population and business centers, growth areas adjacent to these centers, or strategically selected new centers;
4. Compact, mixed-use, walkable design consistent with existing community character and located near available or planned transit options is encouraged to ensure efficient use of land and transportation resources and preservation and enhancement of natural systems, open spaces, recreational areas, and historical, cultural, and archeological resources;
5. Growth areas have the water resources and infrastructure to accommodate population and business expansion in an orderly, efficient, and environmentally sustainable manner;
6. A well-maintained, multimodal transportation system facilitates the safe, convenient, affordable, and efficient movement of people, goods, and services within and between population and business centers;

7. A range of housing densities, types, and sizes provides residential options for citizens of all ages and incomes;
8. Economic development and natural resource-based businesses that promote employment opportunities for all income levels within the capacity of the State's natural resources, public services, and public facilities are encouraged;
9. Land and water resources, including the Chesapeake and coastal bays, are carefully managed to restore and maintain healthy air and water, natural systems, and living resources;
10. Waterways, forests, agricultural areas, open space, natural systems, and scenic areas are conserved;
11. Government, business entities, and residents are responsible for the creation of sustainable communities by collaborating to balance efficient growth with resource protection; and
12. Strategies, policies, programs, and funding for growth and development, resource conservation, infrastructure, and transportation are integrated across the local, regional, state, and interstate levels to achieve these visions.

On October 1, 2006, the Maryland General Assembly enacted legislation that affects the laws governing municipal annexation and the makeup of municipal and county comprehensive plans. HB 1141, Land Use-Local Government Planning, amends Articles 23A and 66B, Annotated Code of Maryland. It created new responsibilities for municipalities and counties related to annexations, and established new mandatory elements in all municipal and county comprehensive plans, the provisions of which take effect on October 1, 2009. A few of the legislation's key components are listed below.

1. Every municipal comprehensive plan must have a Municipal Growth Element and annexations must be consistent with these elements.
2. All municipal and county comprehensive plans must have a Water Resources Element.
3. Sensitive Areas Elements must address agricultural and forestlands intended for resource protection or conservation as well as wetlands.

Equally important is the coordination with County planning efforts since much of the public facility planning is controlled at the County level. Coordination with Town plans will enable the County to attempt to provide public facilities sufficient to meet the needs of the populace.

Goals

All successful planning begins with an idea of a desirable end result. These desired end results are the goals toward which actions are directed. The goals provide the framework for policies and objectives to carry out the goals. The framework for the Plan can be stated in the four major goals:

A. Provide for Quality Living Environment

Preserve and promote quality residential developments with adequate provision of public facilities and services and explore opportunities for safe and affordable housing. In addition, new development should be directed to designated development areas and shall be encouraged only where it can be served at a satisfactory level by existing or planned

public improvements including roads, sewer, schools, water and park facilities. It is essential that in order to promote and ensure a quality living environment, improvements to the transportation system must be made. Specifically, extension of the Middletown Parkway should be kept as a top priority in Town and County plans.

B. Protection of Important Natural Resources and Historic Landmarks

The Town should require that the adverse impacts on the environment from development, including the impact on provision of public utilities, be minimized. It is important that the Town continue to ensure that flooding and erosion control steps are taken and that stormwater management and sediment control regulations are followed. The Town should also encourage the preservation of unique or historic landmarks, protection of the Town watershed and protection of Catoctin Creek and its tributaries. Promote concepts of a sustainable community to meet the needs of the present while ensuring that future generations have the same or better opportunities.

C. Encouragement of Sound Economic Base

The Town should provide for a variety of commercial and industrial areas which will be located so as to minimize the impact on adjoining land uses. It may also be helped by actions and recommendations of groups such as the Downtown Revitalization Committee, Main Street Maryland, and the Middletown Valley Business Association. The Town's natural and historic assets should also be fully utilized by encouraging tourism through promotions such as the Maryland Heritage Preservation and Tourism Program, and the Civil War Trails Area. The Town will provide for an efficient and streamlined development review process.

D. Manage and Sustain Middletown's Future Growth

The Town should ensure that its future growth is managed properly, per the towns residential and commercial growth policies, by requiring new development provide the necessary water and sewer resources, traffic impact studies and subsequent needed improvements to the Town's transportation infrastructure, and recreational resources for the town's residents, as determined by the Planning Commission and the Town Board. Additionally, developments will receive a set amount of permits per year.

The Town of Middletown is committed to fiscally, socially and environmentally responsible land use development. Sustainable development integrates the needs of the Town and its residents in the present generation without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their needs by balancing the economy, society and the environment in the process. In looking towards the future, the Town of Middletown will strive towards sustainable living and planning.

Sustainability in the Town will be guided by the following objectives:

- Preservation of Open Space and environmental stewardship areas in Town to ensure that the natural environment and the views it provides citizens are preserved into the future. This would include preservation and expansion of fragmented or isolated woodlands into

coherent greenways while providing water quality benefits for the Town's water resources.

- Continuation of the preservation of the greenbelt of open spaces and farmland established around the Town. This greenbelt physically separates Middletown from sprawl development in other areas of the County.
- Reduction of the total amount of impervious surface area within the existing Town limits of Middletown through the use of the latest stormwater management and pervious pavement designs.
- Continuation of its rain barrel partnership with the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB) and the Chesapeake Bay Trust and investigation of other sustainable stormwater management practices.
- Reduction of energy consumption and carbon footprint through energy efficiency programs, clean energy programs, alternative transportation fleet options and recycled procurement programs as part of the Town of Middletown government policies.
- Promotion of Frederick County's single stream recycling program for residents and development and enhancement of government and business recycling programs in conjunction with the County program.
- Reduction of water consumption and wastewater production through enhanced water reuse programs and low-flow technologies.
- Continuation of the use of the brown biodegradable paper bags to all Town residents as part of its Yard Waste collection program that eliminates yard waste from the municipal solid waste disposal stream.
- Promotion of sustainable building practices using the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED program or a similar system for government and commercial construction projects.
- Cooperation with Main Street Middletown and Frederick County Public Schools to help educate the public, schools, professional associates, business and industry about creating a sustainable community and to establish sustainable policies for all commercial and County buildings and operations in the Town.

It will be the policy of Middletown that...

1. Wetlands, streams, floodplains, forested areas, and steep slopes are not disturbed by development.
2. Streams and floodplains have vegetated buffers that help to restore the natural function of these areas. These buffers are planted in species native to Middletown and the surrounding area.
3. The Town actively seeks ways to lessen its impact on the environment by minimizing energy use, carbon emissions, water consumption, stormwater runoff, and implementing green design standards.
4. To the fullest extent practical, new development uses non-structural techniques and pervious paving to manage storm water and otherwise comply with the highest standards of the Maryland Department of the Environment.
5. Developers seeking annexation will plan their projects to the highest standards for community and environmental design using sustainable building practices.
6. Natural areas and farming remain the dominant use in the greenbelt.
7. An interconnected system of parks, shared use paths, and open spaces is created in and around Middletown. Every resident is within a five-minute walk from a community park and shared use path.

8. All residents and businesses in the Town of Middletown will participate in Frederick County's single stream recycling program.
9. An education program is put into place that teaches the public, school children, and business owners about sustainable development and sustainable living.

Planning in Middletown

This document is structured around 7 major components; population and housing, physical features, sensitive areas, water resources, municipal growth, land use, transportation and community facilities. Each of these components is a chapter in the Plan. Chapters 3 through 6 include background information, issues, objectives, policies, and implementation recommendations. The implementation recommendations include specific actions which are necessary to carry out the goals and objectives of the Plan.

Planning was initiated in Middletown on January 1, 1965, when a Planning & Zoning Committee was formed and given the task of preparing the appropriate ordinances to regulate development. The first meeting of the Planning & Zoning Commission occurred on January 19, 1965, at which time a State model zoning ordinance was adopted. This model zoning ordinance was amended from time to time and was in use until March 3, 1969, when the first Middletown Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance were adopted. Shortly thereafter, the Middletown Subdivision Regulations were adopted on March 17, 1969.

This Middletown Comprehensive Plan is the fourth comprehensive update since the original Master Plan was adopted in 1969. The target date for various housing and population projections used in the 1995 Plan was 2000.

Prior Middletown Comprehensive Plans sought to achieve a diversified community which avoided mixed land uses, provided easily accessible recreational facilities, and encouraged industrial and commercial development. The Plans also intended to provide for improved traffic patterns including a parkway around the downtown area. The Plans also intended for schools to serve as activity centers.

Some of the goals of the previous plans were achieved in the segregation of new residential development from other commercial and industrial uses. In addition, this residential development became a larger share of the Town's total land use acreage. However, other goals of the Plans were not achieved such as the provision of a complete parkway around Middletown or generally improved transportation patterns.

Over the past several years, Middletown has gained a new independence by the addition of a Town Staff Planner, Zoning Administrator, and Town Engineer and included documents such as approval of a Town Design Manual. In addition, the Town has instituted its own permitting authority, construction inspections, and is requiring annexation agreements for all new parcels coming into Town as stated in the town's residential and commercial growth policies.

Description of the Town & Regional Context

Middletown, located on the Maryland Historic National Scenic Byway, can be described as a historic small town which, over the last 35 years, has become increasingly linked with the

Washington Metropolitan area as growth from this area has spread into Frederick County. It is included in the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, recently designated by the State, and boasts a large number of historic residences along the Old National Pike. An especially unique characteristic of Middletown is the view from Braddock Mountain. Due to the inter mountain terrain, many views of Middletown are available. Depending on traffic, both Baltimore and Washington are within an hour's drive from Town. Frederick County is now considered part of the Washington Metropolitan Statistical Area, and has a County population of 228,856 (2006) persons according to the Frederick County Planning Department. This is expected to increase to 331,700 by 2030. Middletown is located 40 miles northwest of Washington D.C. and 45 miles west of Baltimore and has a 2000 population of 2,668 persons. The projected population for 2030 is 5,092 people.

Middletown encompasses a land area of 1,142 acres and has the sixth largest population of 12 incorporated towns in Frederick County. It is largely a residential community within the agriculturally dominated Middletown Valley. Land uses in the vicinity of the Town include large scale residential development east of its border with agricultural and scattered residential north, west and south of the corporate limits. The downtown area includes small specialty commercial establishments and a small shopping center with a grocery store on the eastern edge of Town. Frederick City provides a wide range of goods and services and is located 8 miles to the east over Braddock Mountain. Another city, Hagerstown (39,000 population), is located 14 miles west over South Mountain. Other incorporated areas in the Middletown Valley include Brunswick City (5,230 population), 8 miles south and Myersville (1,508 population), 5 miles north.

Historic Development

Development in the Middletown Valley began about 1740 with English settlers. These were soon followed by German immigrants who came to dominate the Valley. The Town of Middletown was originally laid out by Michael Jessorong, who deeded building lots described as being in the Town of Middletown¹. The origin of the name is unclear, perhaps owing to the central location of the Town in the valley between the Catoctin and Blue Ridge (or South) Mountains.

Middletown has experienced many historical events that occurred during our nation's development. In 1755 Colonel George Washington accompanied General Braddock on the old Indian Trail that ran through the valley on his way to Fort Cumberland. Westward expansion occurred on Main Street including the construction of the Old National Pike in 1806 and in 1896 Car 11 of the Frederick Middletown Railway made its first run to Middletown. The Civil War brought both armies passing through Town on their way to the battles of South Mountain and Antietam. In the aftermath of those battles, Middletown opened its churches and homes to care for the wounded. Confederate General Jubal Early held the Town for ransom as recreated in the past during the Heritage Days celebration.

Middletown was incorporated in 1834 with Jacob Hoffman serving as the first Burgess. In the early days, Middletown had large and thriving businesses owing a great deal to its location on the Old National Highway. At one time, Middletown was the voting place for the entire valley from the Mason-Dixon Line to the Potomac River. There were various trades and other business

¹ George C. Rhoderick, Jr., The Early History of Middletown, 1989

in addition to those serving the outlying agricultural area. Among the major businesses which were located in the Town were Hanover Shoe Company, the Valley Register Publishing Company, C.F. Main & Sons Ice Cream, Gladhill Furniture, Southern States Co-op, the Granger's Mutual Insurance Company, the South Mountain Creamery, L.Z. Derr General Store, Shafer's Plumbing & Heating, American Store, Arnett's Grocery, and the Middletown Cannery. For a variety of reasons, most of these companies have closed.

Recent development trends in the Middletown area show development east and west of Town and continued low density residential development in the agricultural areas. Since 1969, the corporate limits of Middletown have changed through both annexation and de-annexation of properties. As of August 2007, the land area of Middletown is 712 acres larger than the 1969 corporate limits.

Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area

Middletown is part of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, which stretches across much of western Maryland and provides recognition and funding for places whose history is intertwined with the Civil War. The Heritage Areas program encourages communities to identify, protect, and promote their unique heritage and to capitalize on that heritage through economic development tourism initiatives. State funds and assistance will be made available for interpretive and infrastructure improvements in State-approved heritage areas.

The Town endorses the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority's Management Plan for the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area. As part of the Heritage Area, a Target Investment Zone (TIZ) has been designated in Middletown. The Management Plan designates the Middletown TIZ for future activation. To be activated – and to receive the funding associated with having an active TIZ – the Town must submit a detailed work program showing how Heritage Area funds would be used.

The Management Plan of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area (HCWHA) was adopted and made a part of the comprehensive plans of Carroll, Frederick and Washington counties in 2006 and included the Town of Middletown within the boundaries of the certified HCWHA. Recognized in the CHWA Plan as the first Target Investment Zone for Frederick County, a designation indicating high potential for enhanced visitor services that creates opportunities for additional heritage area benefits, the Town supports the efforts of the certification of the CWHA Plan. In doing so the Town adopts by reference the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area Plan.

Middletown is also a part of the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area. Citizens wishing to become involved in the Town's historical heritage activities can contact the Middletown Valley Historical Society and the Central Maryland Heritage League both located in downtown Middletown.