

# MIDDLETOWN LEADS

## WHAT IS MIDDLETOWN LEADS?

*Middletown Leads* is a weekly newsletter intended to connect the Middletown community by providing information about the civic undertakings of the Town.

## COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLANS – THE CHALLENGES OF CHANGE & TIME

The State of RI requires that each community review and revise its Comprehensive Community Plan every 10 years. It recognizes that change is inevitable with the passage of time. Thus it requires a progress review every 5 years and allows as many as 4 amendments per year.

## MIDDLETOWN'S COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN

The current Community Comprehensive Plan was approved by The Middletown Planning Board on September 10, 2014; it was adopted by the Middletown Town Council On March 2, 2015.

## MIDDLETOWN'S PLAN – THE OVERALL VISION

Middletown will preserve its *quality of life* for all generations as a *safe and friendly* community with a *distinctive heritage*, *extraordinary cultural and natural resources*, a *strong local economy* and *fiscally sound government*.

In this and future newsletters, we will explore the various areas addressed by the Comprehensive Plan to see how it addresses the values it has defined as equally important to the community's character:

1. Cultural & Historic Resources
2. Natural & Ecological Resources
3. Recreation, Conservation, & Open Space
4. Economic Development
5. Transportation
6. Housing
7. Facilities & Services
8. Land Use

## AREA # 3 – RECREATION, CONSERVATION & OPEN SPACE

The chief goals of this area of the Comprehensive Plan include the following:

1. To provide new recreational facilities to ensure that the Town meets the ongoing recreation needs of the community
2. To maintain and improve recreational facilities to meet needs identified during the planning process
3. To acquire additional open space as appropriate for conservation and passive recreation
4. To properly manage and maintain town-owned conservation and passive recreation land

5. To support expanded access to water based recreational opportunities through maintenance of existing facilities and, where appropriate, expansion of facilities
6. To expand and enhance the trail system in Middletown
7. To promote active and healthy lifestyles in Middletown

## SOME SPECIFIC AREAS RELATED TO RECREATION, CONSERVATION & OPEN SPACE

Areas accessible for active recreation include public fields, primarily at school sites, that are generally dedicated to specific sports, e.g., the football field complex, Little League fields, even an adult softball field on West Main Road.

Specific passive recreation sites include the Sakonnet Greenway Trail, the Sachuest Point Natural Wildlife Refuge, Sachuest and Third Beaches, a site for moorings at Third Beach, the Norman Bird Sanctuary, and various rights of way along the properties on Easton's Point.

Conservation and Open Space Preservation of areas not accessible to the public are protected under the auspices of the Aquidneck Land Trust.

Properties proposed for additional acquisition are ranked according to the following criteria:

- 1) Groundwater and watershed protection potential, 2) ecologically significant habitat, 3) proximity to other protected land, 4) farmland preservation, 5) historic/cultural/scenic qualities, 6) size of parcel, 7) potential to offset the impact of residential development, 8) leverage of Town funds in project acquisition, 9) potential for recreational use.

## ISSUES THAT MIGHT PRESENT CHALLENGES

Maintenance is currently being split between the School Department for its facilities and the Department of Public Works for all the town-owned property other than the schools. Some of the leagues also participate in maintenance of the fields.

But the costs of new facilities can be affected by different variables such as site considerations (e.g., environmental constraints, soils); the presence of hazardous materials; drainage and stormwater management; materials, etc.

It is not irrelevant to consider costs in a town where the state projects that the population is expected to decline from its current (approx.) 15,000 to 12,000 by 2040 and the average age of the residents is rising. As with all aspects of life, balance is vital; ignoring it is consequential.

## NEXT WEEK -

The January 26, 2019 newsletter will discuss Economic Development as it is addressed in Middletown's Comprehensive Community Plan

## FOOTNOTE

Weekly essays about Middletown community and municipal affairs will appear on the Middletown Public Library website. Questions and suggested topics are welcome. Editorial essays may appear occasionally in the following blog: [MiddletownLeads@blogspot.com](mailto:MiddletownLeads@blogspot.com).