

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 # 1 - CULTURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES

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

1. To save ... historically or architecturally significant properties and natural heritage sites
2. To preserve historic landscapes
3. To share historic resources and make history and culture a vital part of the community

SOME SPECIFIC AREAS OF HISTORIC & CULTURAL INTEREST

Many Middletown areas are significant in that they contain Victorian, Late Victorian, and early 20th Century residences as well as agricultural settings that often include stone walls and windmills as well as natural and man-made landmarks.

Residences include those on Indian Avenue, Mitchell's Lane, Paradise Avenue, and Greene Lane. Stone walls can be found throughout the town while windmills are featured at Prescott Farm on the Middletown-Portsmouth town line and at Paradise Valley Park.

Natural wonders include Paradise Rocks and Hanging Rocks as well as Purgatory Chasm.

Among the sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places are Whitehall, the Witherbee School, the Paradise School, Bailey Farm and well-known area enclaves such as the Church of St. George and the Clambake Club.

Historic Landscapes identified by the RI Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission include Rhode Island Nurseries, Gray Craig, and both the Green End and West Main Road Agricultural Landscapes.

ISSUES THAT MIGHT PRESENT CHALLENGES

Unfortunately, there is an absence of protective historical identification or designation of some areas, so they remain unprotected in spite of the recognition of their historical and/or cultural value.

In addition, the forces of time and change – and other considerations – often bring development that some consider a threat to the historic resources or farmland.

It may be that the answer to any opposing forces is balance – the importance of respecting and valuing the past – oftentimes by documentation - while facilitating appropriate growth that meets the needs of the residents of the future.

The Comprehensive Plan tries to address these issues by adopting and enforcing ordinances, developing zoning restrictions, and otherwise identifying and protecting historic and cultural resources while partnering with organizations such as the Middletown Historical Society and the Preservation Society of Newport County.

NEXT WEEK -

The January 12, 2019 newsletter will discuss Natural and Ecological Resources as they are 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 in the following blog: MiddletownLeads@blogspot.com.