

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.

WEST SIDE DEVELOPMENT

Fifteen years ago, the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission (AIPC) gathered a representative group of island leaders to draft the 2005 West Side Master Plan in anticipation of the US Navy's release of land that had been in its possession by eminent domain since 1941, after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Nothing in government happens quickly. Nearly 70 years later, much of that land is going to be released for reuse.

At a recent review of the 15-year-old Master Plan, seven areas were discussed:

1. Highway access and connectivity
2. Affordable workforce housing
3. Transportation
4. Commercial and Industrial growth potential
5. Resilience and sea level rise
6. Broadband, water, sewer, and other infrastructure
7. Utilizing existing models for development.

Areas described as critical with vast potential included the tank farms and the 50 acres the Navy is cleaning up; the Melville Marina district, the land behind the New England Boat Works, Weaver Cove, Greene Lane, and the Navy Lodge Property (now a ballfield) among others.

While AIPC is interested in development of the properties as a whole, each island community has been focused on the areas that fall within their town lines. In that regard, Middletown developed the West Main/Coddington Development Center Master Plan in September, 2011.

THE WEST MAIN/CODDINGTON DEVELOPMENT CENTER MASTER PLAN

The Development Center consists of 4 publicly owned parcels that have been targeted for potential development:

1. The former Navy Lodge property
2. The Town's Recreation Complex
3. Middletown Public Library
4. The former JFK Elementary School

GOALS OF THE 2011 PLANNING STUDY

1. The West Main/Coddington Development Master Plan would serve to guide development and redevelopment within the project boundaries.

2. The Plan would focus efforts on the Core Study Area, consisting of the former Navy Lodge property, the Recreation Complex, Middletown Public Library, and the former JFK Elementary School.
3. The Plan would provide recommendations and strategies for:
 - a. Identifying redevelopment options for the Core Study Area
 - b. Integrating surrounding areas into the Core Study Area, including pedestrian and vehicle connections
 - c. Becoming a mixed use center and unique destination in Town
 - d. Enhancing future redevelopment of private property to complement the core area
 - e. Identifying opportunities for streetscape improvements
 - f. Identifying potential transportation improvements

PUBLIC OUTREACH IN 2011

The community outreach process included numerous events and meetings that helped guide the development of the overall Master Plan. The process lasted for approximately 10 months and included Steering Committee meetings, stakeholder interviews, community meetings/workshops, and Town Council meetings.

The stakeholder interviews provided insight early in the process regarding issues and opportunities.

Two public meetings were held to gain an understanding of the community's goals for the study area, and to facilitate discussion regarding alternatives that were developed.

2011 – POTENTIAL IMPACT

The Master Plan saw the potential for the Core Study Area to be transformed into a thriving mixed use center, accommodating a wide range of uses that could include retail, office, housing, and civic uses.

In addition, there was potential to create new civic places, such as a Town Common, where planned community events could take place adjacent to possible new municipal uses.

The goal was to create an integrated district, connected to the surrounding area.

2019 PROPOSAL

The August 19, 2019 Town Council Meeting included a docket item intended to re-open discussions that had lain fallow due to the prolonged transfer of the Navy land. The Town Council was asked to approve the hiring of a consultant to assist the Town in preparing an RFP (Request for proposals) from potential developers at a minimal cost of \$12,990, which would have been funded from the General Fund Committed Fund Balance.

The proposal was defeated by a vote of 4 to 3.

Editorial essays appear occasionally at the following website: <https://middletownleads.blogspot.com/>