



**MIDDLETOWN**  
Rhode Island

## PLANNING DEPARTMENT

**TOWN OF MIDDLETOWN**

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### MEMORANDUM

Date: May 17, 2022  
To: Hon. Paul M. Rodrigues, President  
Town Council Members  
From: Paul A. Croce, Chairman  
Planning Board  
Subject: Planning Board Recommendations – Middletown Center concept review

The Planning Board conducted a Public Workshop on April 21st to receive comments from the public on the proposal for a Middletown Center development along the West Main Rd/Coddington Ave corridor. After opening comments by the Town Planner, the project team was introduced and made a presentation of their conceptual development. Comments were made by Planning Board members, and the floor was opened to the public. The meeting was well attended, and many comments were received from the public; the minutes of that meeting as well as copies of written comments received prior to the meeting are attached.

Members of the public who spoke included many residents and some individuals representing organizations (e.g., the Middletown Library, the Aquidneck Land Trust, the Middletown Prevention Coalition, etc.). Not surprisingly, comments from the public included some speaking in support of the proposal and some against. Most supported the proposed mixed-use approach; however, many expressed disagreement with the details of the proposal in meeting the goals of the RFI.

Below is an excerpt from the Town's RFI that established the goals and potential uses for the project:

#### *5. Development Goals and Potential Uses*

##### *Vibrant Town/Community Center*

*A Town Center that offers common space for community gatherings, strong urban design, a Town "gateway," and improved pedestrian experiences. This Center might also retain some level of municipal-related use.*

##### *Mixed-Use Development*

*Provide office or residential uses above retail, creating density, encouraging investment, and promoting alternative forms of transportation.*

##### *Affordable and Workforce Housing*

*Multi-family housing units, available for rent or purchase at affordable prices. See appendix C for a Housing Profile of Middletown.*

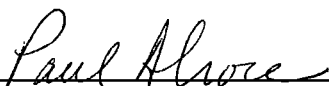
After hearing comments from the public, the Planning Board decided to separate its action into two aspects of the proposal, the first being to consider the general consistency of the proposed project with the Town's Comprehensive Plan; and the second being to consider recommendations to the Town Council regarding how specific components of the proposed project align with the expressed goals and uses specified in the RFI.

Planning Board members thought the proposal was clearly consistent with the Town's Comprehensive Plan and voted unanimously to that effect. However, they also believed that the submitted details did not meet the stated goals of the RFI, and decided to hold a special meeting to discuss specific recommendations to send to the Town Council.

The special meeting was held on May 12<sup>th</sup>. After deliberations, the Planning Board voted unanimously to put forth the following recommendations to the Town Council, which reflect the important issues raised by both the residents and the Planning Board members:

1. There is general concern about the traffic that will be added to West Main Road. A careful traffic study for this development should be submitted and reviewed by an independent expert. The study should address east-to-west pedestrian connectivity across West Main Road.
2. There is not much support for the hotel among residents; however, if there must be a hotel in the Middletown Center development, it should not be the prominent structure of the development.
3. The West Main-Coddington intersection, as the gateway to Middletown, should present the appearance of a Town Center.
4. The new library should be designed to be a state-of-the-art facility that meets the needs of the residents of Middletown, with adequate space for community activities.
5. Open green space for community use should be provided, including possibly securing use of the Navy-owned open space to the west of the JFK school building.
6. Preferably, more than 10% of residential units should qualify under the State's definition of affordable housing.
7. Retail space providing services to local residents is seen as favorable.
8. All current community activities and facilities that are displaced by this project, particularly Potts Field, should be accommodated either within this development or in an appropriate location elsewhere in the Town.
9. The swimming pool and the bike lane on West Main and Coddington depicted in the concept submission do not seem to be popular or have high priority among residents.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. Please contact me with any questions.



Paul A. Croce, Chairman  
Planning Board