

Middle Township Visioning Process

From the Middle Township Master Plan:

In July and August 2009, the Township held a series of four Visioning Workshops with the public to gain a sense of the community's vision for the future of Middle Township and its Centers. Each workshop focused on a different Center. The first workshop covered the Villages (Del Haven, Green Creek, Swainton and Goshen), next was Cape May Court House, then Rio Grande, and the final workshop reviewed Whitesboro-Burleigh. A PowerPoint presentation was provided at the beginning of each session, to introduce the public to the planning process for Middle Township. The zoning scheme and recommendations (at that time) were discussed with a focus on the Center being discussed. Afterwards, attendees were asked to participate in a series of three exercises designed to gain insight on the public's interests and ideas for Middle Township. One exercise involved attendees illustrating ideas for the respective Center on a map with markers and photo examples.

Prior to these Visioning Workshops, the Middle Vision 2030 Community Questionnaire was distributed to residents and business owners in the Township. It was also available online. The Questionnaire contained a series of 41 questions related to demographics, vision for the future, parks and open space, transportation and mobility, economic development and physical transformation, historic resources, existing characteristics, housing, and other comments. The Township received 88 completed Questionnaires. The results of the Visioning Workshops and Questionnaires were reviewed and incorporated into this Land Use Plan, where appropriate.

The vision, as stated in the Master Plan, is: "to provide a center-based land use policy where growth is focused in the Centers and the surrounding Environs are protected from the impacts of sprawling development."

The vision and process was publicized extensively through press releases and presentations at public meetings. Specifically, the public hearing for adoption of the master plan was held on June 24, 2011. At each of the public meetings for adoption of the zoning ordinance, the vision/purpose of the master plan was re-stated, dates in 2011 include: May 26th; June 14; June 20; June 23; July 6 and August 1.

Middle Township MASTER PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following are the policy goals and objectives which support the Master Plan efforts. These goals and objectives update Township Master Plan goals and policy statements as set forth in the 2003 Master Plan to reflect the new direction toward Centers based development and to further protect lands in the Environs outside of the Centers.

Overall Goals

- Improve quality of life through sound land use planning.
- Provide for sustainable development.

- Balance development with the necessary infrastructure and land to support growth.
- Promote smart development and redevelopment in Centers.
- Protect environmentally sensitive lands and farmlands with appropriate development techniques.
- Identify transportation improvements to support planned growth.
- Support existing businesses and new initiatives to expand economic opportunities.

Land Use - Promote a balanced land use pattern compatible with the natural environment.

- Maintain the character and integrity of each community within the Township.
- Promote a balanced variety of residential, commercial, light industrial, recreational, public and conservation land uses.
- Maintain the residential character and scale of established residential neighborhoods through appropriate design standards reflecting specific area qualities.
- Identify creative development techniques to minimize impact of new development.
- Encourage redevelopment within Township Centers that supports higher density mixed-uses.
- Encourage mixed-use development including residential and commercial uses within the Center core areas.
- Promote conservation and preservation of sensitive lands outside of the Centers at a lower density through open space residential cluster and density transfer of non-contiguous parcels.
- Ensure that negative impacts of commercial and industrial development are addressed through appropriate performance standards to minimize residential impacts.
- Encourage sustainable development patterns.

Economy - Promote a balanced diverse and strong economic tax base.

- Promote the diversification and expansion of the local economy through appropriate development and redevelopment techniques.
- Provide for a diverse and balanced community with a mix of commercial and residential land uses which are guided into compact Centers.
- Promote design controls to support high quality commercial development.
- Update sign standards that promote safety while discouraging sign proliferation.
- Work with the business community to support and sustain a year-round economy through appropriate marketing efforts.
- Support existing coastal development and the water-based recreation industry as a component of the Township's economy.
- Explore alternative land use options outside of the Township's Centers to protect land use values.

Environment - Preserve the unique natural resources and habitat that are an integral aspect of the Township's quality of life.

- Provide environmental protection regulations to ensure protection of critical resources.
- Protect the quality of the environment such as groundwater resources and wetlands and encourage cooperation with organizations that promote the same.
- Encourage the conservation of the area's natural resources including water supply and open spaces.
- Protect critical environmental resources by limiting development in these areas and using creative zoning options to support cluster and density transfer to the Township Centers.
- Establish controls to limit disturbance of critical resources during land development.

- Provide measures to retain and preserve existing natural vegetation during new construction.
- Identify and prioritize farmlands as an important component of the Township's economy and develop appropriate mechanisms to retain these lands.
- Pursue state and federal funding for protection of open space and natural resources.
- Encourage renewable energy systems and energy conservation measures.

Infrastructure - Provide adequate infrastructure to promote sustainable development within the Centers.

- Promote adequate infrastructure and public services to enable development in the Centers.
- Maintain adequate public services for the projected growth of the Township.
- Develop and maintain adequate services to meet the transportation, economic and social needs of senior citizens and low/moderate income families.
- Promote 'green development' and identify appropriate regulations to encourage use of sustainable building construction and materials and design.
- Minimize storm water runoff impacts by encouraging the use of best management practices and protection of natural drainage systems.
- Encourage conservation practices to reduce use of resources and to promote recycling.
- Encourage the modernization of existing facilities and infrastructure.

Housing - Provide housing to meet the needs of current and future Township residents by providing a full range of housing opportunities for all income levels and housing needs.

- Encourage and provide opportunities for market-based affordable housing options.
- Support housing rehabilitation activities to maintain housing stock and housing affordability.
- Provide senior housing opportunities at all ability levels including independent living, assisted housing, congregate care, and nursing care.
- Provide for higher density housing within mixed-use structures that will encourage vibrant active Town Centers.
- Encourage innovative development options to cluster or transfer residential development to the Centers.
- Encourage affordable housing close to the job centers.

Transportation -Provide a transportation network that is safe, provides efficient traffic flow, pedestrian and bicyclist-friendly, and multimodal.

- Provide the opportunity for the improvement of the highways and alternative transportation networks (i.e. bicycle and pedestrian facilitates) to provide safe and efficient access through the region.
- Encourage public transportation
- Promote expansion of transit services (rail, bus, and jitney).
- Promote summer shuttle bus services to support summer visitors and reduce congestion through coordination with the County and other municipalities.
- Encourage campground, hotel and motel owners to work with the Township and County to develop alternative transportation programs such as shuttle operations to service visitors and to reduce summer vehicular traffic activity.
- Encourage the elimination of at-grade crossings on the Garden State Parkway.

- Evaluate the creation of Transportation Development Districts (TD Districts) to support needed transportation improvements.
- Promote bicycle facilities for commuting and recreational use in coordination with other transportation modes and regional and state facilities.
- Update design standards to support bicycle, pedestrian and transit facilities within the Centers to provide connectivity between neighborhoods and to services.
- Update regulations to provide consistency with State Access Management Code.

***Historic, Cultural and Aesthetic Resources* -Preserve the unique historic and cultural resources of the Township that provide historical continuity.**

- Preserve and enhance the historic and cultural and recreational aspects and visual environment of the Township.
- Promote design guidelines to preserve the Township's unique historic structures and districts.
- Identify and protect scenic local and county roadways with appropriate setback and buffer requirements and vegetation preservation measures.
- Provide for open space buffers to protect adjacent land uses from the negative impacts of traffic along rural roadways and to protect the scenic appearance of these corridors.

Recreation

Provide both active and passive recreation facilities and programs to serve Township residents.

- Plan for and provide active recreational facilities and programs that meet the needs of current Township residents.
- Identify and plan for future recreation needs consistent with forecasted growth.