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Master Plan 2022

Middleton, New Hampshire

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Introduction

What is a Master Plan?

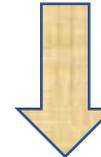
A master plan is a planning document that serves to guide the overall character, physical form and development of a community (RSA 674:2). It describes how, why, where and when to build or rebuild a city or town. As described in documents produced by the previous NH Office of State Planning, it provides guidance to local officials making decisions on budgets, ordinances, capital improvements, zoning and subdivision matters, and other development-related issues.

While the master plan is not a legal document, it does provide the legal basis for zoning and other land use regulations. NH RSA 674:18 requires that a Master Plan be in place in order for a Town to adopt a Zoning Ordinance, a Capital Improvements Program, or Site Plan Review Regulations. The order of priority and detail is illustrated to the right and below.

Master Plan – General Policy Statements/Community Goals from which the following are derived:



Zoning Ordinance – Specific provisions regarding land uses



Subdivision Regulations – Land Development



Site Plan Review Regulations – Site Development



**Master Plan
2022**
Middleton,
New Hampshire



ZONING ORDINANCE

TOWN OF MIDDLETON, NH

Approved: January 9, 2017 Adopted: March 11, 2017

| | |
|------------|---------|
| | 11/9/17 |
| Vice Chair | Date |
| | 11/9/17 |
| Member | Date |
| | 11/9/17 |
| Member | Date |
| Ex Officio | Date |



Development Regulations*

Town of Middleton
Middleton, New Hampshire

Adopted by Middleton Planning Board May 12, 2016

*Replaced in their entirety both the Middleton Subdivision Regulations adopted March 9, 1977 (last revised October 12, 2006) and the Middleton Site Plan Review Regulations adopted 1954 (last revised July 10, 2003.)

Certification

Certification (Pursuant to RSA 675:6 (III))

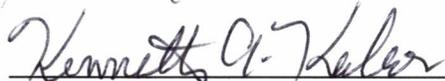
The Middleton Master Plan 2022 was adopted by the Planning Board at a duly-noticed public hearing on September 29, 2022. This Master Plan shall take effect upon the filing of a copy of this certificate with the Middleton Town Clerk.

Attest: Middleton Planning Board
Middleton, New Hampshire

Mackenzie Brisson, Member



Janet Kalar, Chair



Kenneth Kalar, Alternate



Roxanne Keegan-Tufts, *Ex Officio*



John Mullen, Alternate

John Quinn, Sunrise Lake Village District Representative

Acknowledgments

The Middleton Planning Board would like to thank the following individuals who provided information essential to the creation of this document:

- Fire Chief Michael Donovan-Lavoilette
- Police Sergeant Jonathan Swift
- Road Agent Dan Phillips
- Elementary School Principal Kathleen Crosby
- School Board Member Ken Gerry
- Conservation Commission Carol Vita

Planning Consultants: Municipal Resources, Inc.
<https://www.mrigov.com/> 66 Main Street, Plymouth, NH 03264;
Carol Ogilvie Senior Consultant and Ivy Vann.

Chapter 1: Public Outreach & Vision

When a town begins the process of updating its Master Plan the first step is to find out what residents value in their town, what they think is missing, and what they want for the future.

Middleton poses some very specific issues to anyone hoping to engage in public outreach, because the town doesn't have many of the usual places to interact with residents. We addressed this by gathering our information through a comprehensive on-line survey with more than 130 responses. The survey was publicized on social media, through a flyer that went home with every student at the elementary school, and with a postcard mailed to every household.

Residents were asked what is important to them now, particularly as compared to what was important in the 2007 Master Plan survey - why they chose to live in Middleton, why they would move away, what they love, and what they don't love.

The Guiding Principles:

1. Encourage development at Four Corners/Town Center area
2. Prevent sprawl into outlying areas
3. Conserve scenic areas and natural landscape
4. Facilitate accessible recreation for all residents
5. Accommodate growth while preserving small town look and feel
6. Encourage housing for all income levels
7. Support local agriculture
8. Support local businesses

9. Minimize land consumption for individual dwelling units
10. Ensure that population growth doesn't outstrip ability to provide services

Residents were offered the same list of guiding principles in the 2022 survey as were offered in the 2007 survey, to see whether what is important has changed. The survey required respondents to put the guiding principles in order, from what they saw as most important to least important. Asking the question this way prevents people from saying that all the guiding principles are equally important!

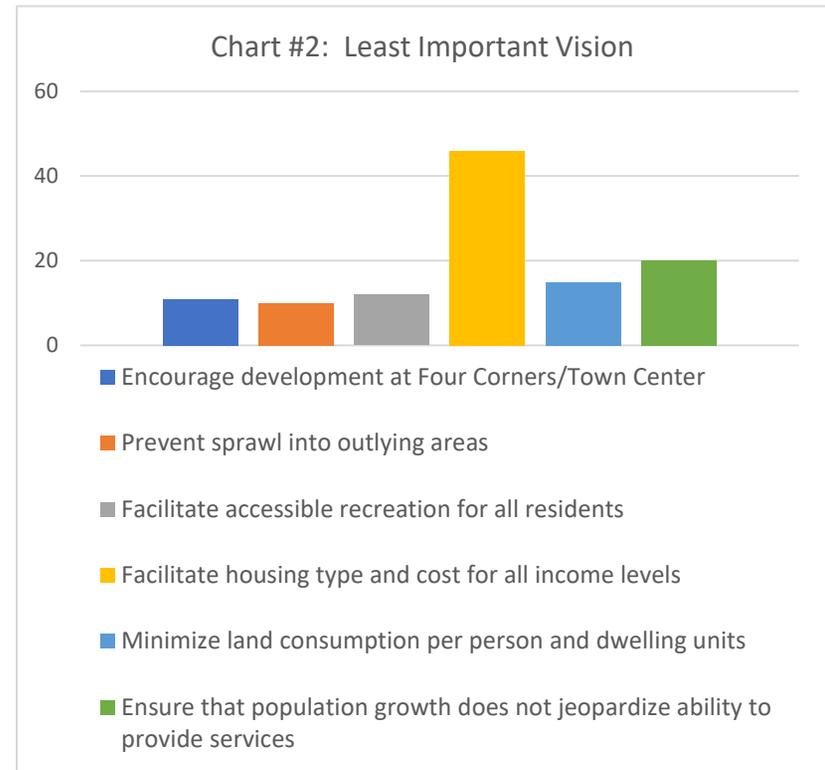
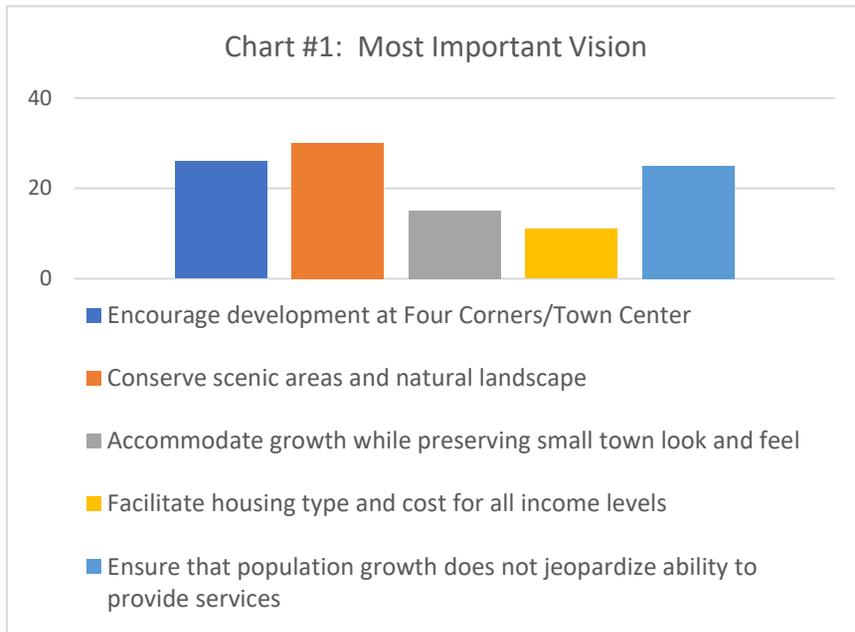
The results were that residents value Middleton just the way it is, particularly its rural quality and scenic areas. As the charts following show, even with forcing people to order the guiding principles the responses are closely clustered, indicating that most of these issues are important to people.

The highest ranked principles have to do with keeping Middleton as it is today, while the lowest ranking principle has to do with ensuring housing choice at all price points.

What else did Middleton residents say about their town? When asked why residents had chosen to live in Middleton, it was that the schools are good, the quiet small-town feel of the town was appealing, and housing was less expensive than in surrounding towns. Respondents repeatedly mentioned the lack of housing development as a reason for choosing Middleton.



Chapter 1: Public Outreach & Vision



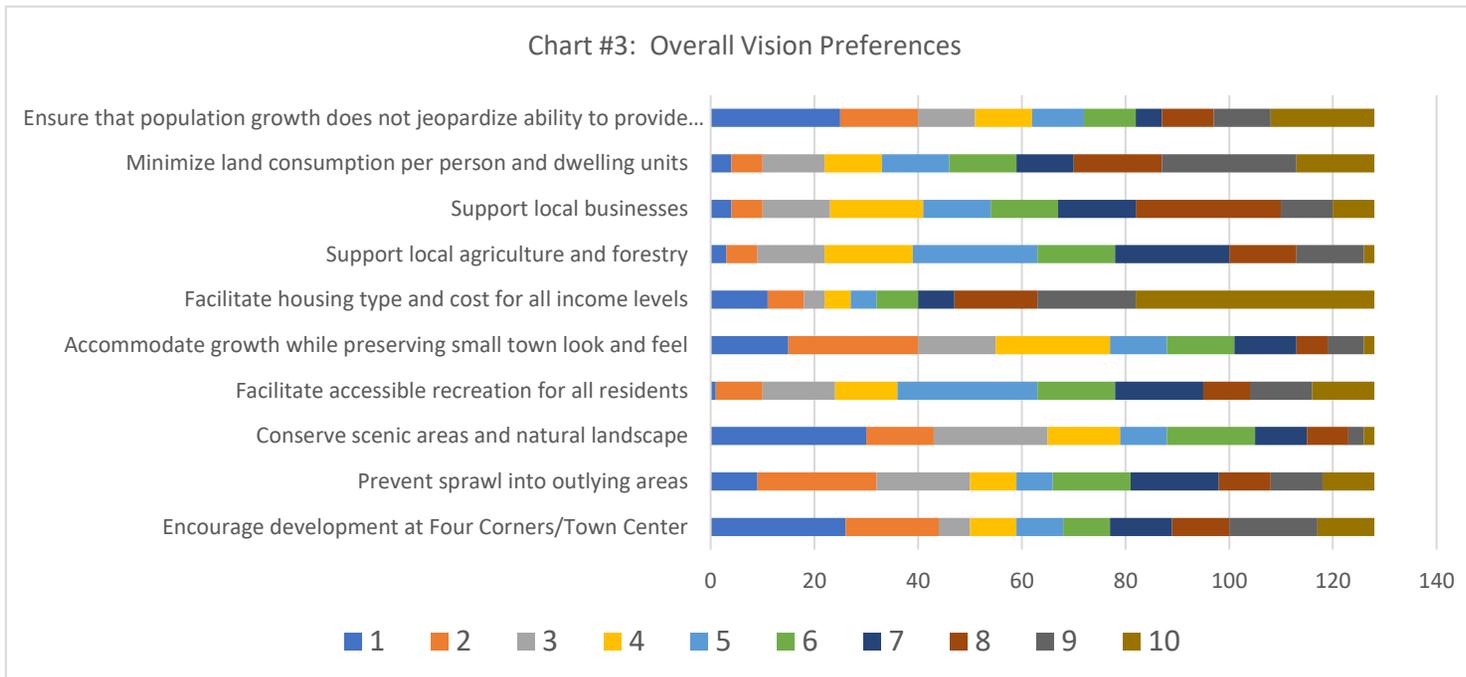
Why do you stay in Middleton? Again, the small-town atmosphere, quiet, rural feeling, and the school were compelling reasons for remaining in town. People mentioned how much they liked having lake access, although there is concern about the continuing health of the lake. Changes to those qualities would be reasons to move, as well as increasing taxes.

“Reminded me of how my home town used to be, small and quiet.”

What would you tell someone who is thinking of moving to Middleton? Respondents mentioned high taxes as a negative, along with the drawbacks of rural life: needing to drive everywhere and the purely residential nature of the town. On the other hand, people especially noted that the Fourth of July is a wonderful day in Middleton.

“We like the small-town feel.”

Chapter 1: Public Outreach & Vision



Since the Master Plan is intended as a road map for the future of town, it's important to ask what is currently missing and what residents would like to see in the future.

More days like the Fourth of July is a clear desire: people mentioned wanting a central gathering place and more events that brought the town together.

Respondents would also like to see a general store in Middleton, and perhaps some commercial enterprises to contribute to the tax base. Balanced against this was an often-repeated desire for things to mostly stay the same.

"Love and appreciate the elementary school where my kids have thrived; have made several close friends; appreciate the local natural environment and resources."

That community feel that people would like more of was a top response to the question of what are Middleton's greatest strengths, along with its elementary school. Sunrise Lake was also frequently mentioned as a strength of the town. Weaknesses include the high taxes and a sense that the town government could be more responsive to residents.

We see in the word cloud following many of the same concerns: taxing, schools, housing, budget. The larger the word, the more times it was used – sometimes positively, sometimes, negatively.

tax

base_{small} lake_{spending} Maintaining_{low} Middleton_{put}

selectmen_{cost} development Reducing

taxes police_{want} services_{residents} town_{business}

school_{small}

town Taxes_{building} Keeping_{roads} growth

Work force housing housing Making

sure budget_{infrastructure} lower

taxes_{need} higher_{departments} community_{pay} police

department_{Controlling} good

Chapter 2: Demographics – People & Housing

This chapter takes a look at who lives in Middleton: how old are they, where do they work, their education level, what kind of housing do they have. Since a Master Plan is intended to plan for the future of the town, it is necessary to know for whom one is planning. For example, will we need new schools, or more housing, or better access to health care? Unless otherwise noted, all of the data in this section come from the 2019/2020 U.S. Census. Details can be found at www.census.gov.

Population

The 2020 US Census estimate for Middleton was 1823 people, an increase of only 40 from the 2010 estimate of 1785. The median age is 43 years, putting Middleton's median age 20% higher than the median in Strafford County as a whole, but equal to the NH median which is also 43 years. There are 385 persons under 19 in Middleton, approximately 90 of whom are under 5 years of age.

Working adults, aged 16 to 64, make up 68% of the population.

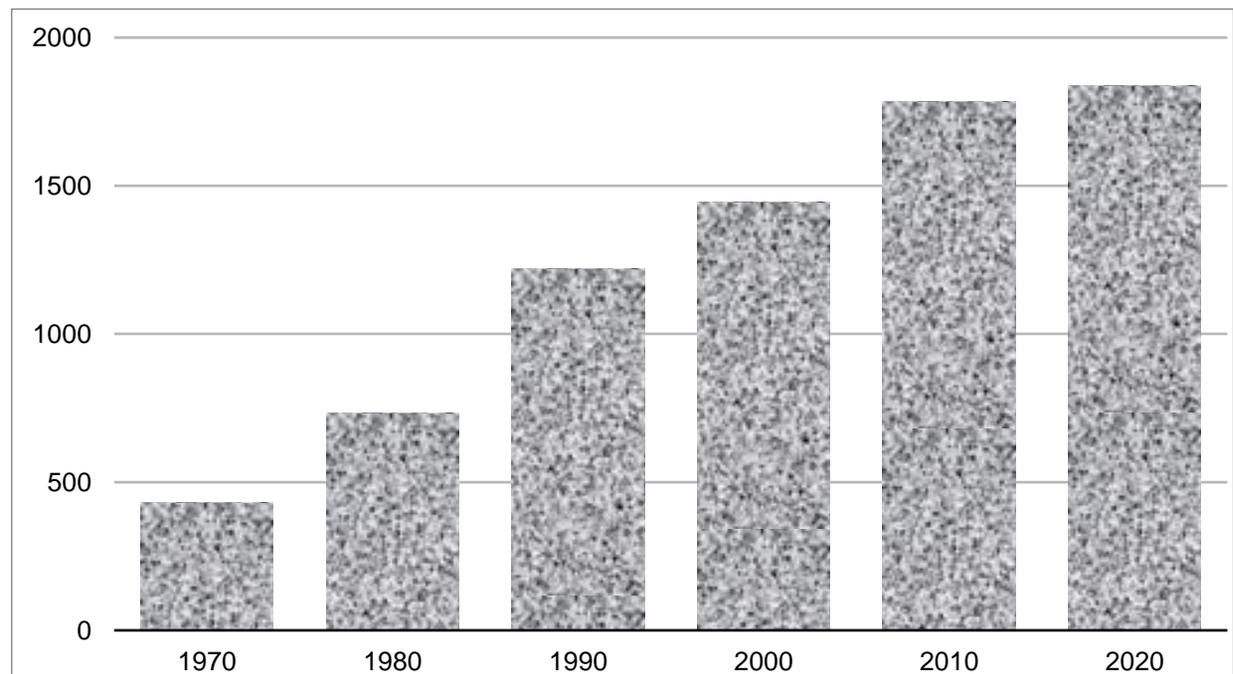
Almost 90% of Middleton residents over the age of 25 have a high school degree, and approximately 20% have a bachelor's degree or higher.

Population Trends Over Time

Middleton's population saw its greatest growth between 1970 and 1980, with a 71% increase, and between 1980 and 1990, with a 66% increase. This rate has slowed considerably, with the last decade registering only 2% increase in population.

Today, Middleton's population is more stable than that of the state as a whole: fewer than 8% of the population moves house in any given year. Nationally about 10% of households move in any year.

Chart #4: Middleton Population 1970 - 2020



Chapter 2: Demographics – People & Housing

Employment

Nearly everyone in the workforce living in Middleton works outside the community: 85% commute to another NH town to work, and 7% commute out of state. Only 8% of residents work in Middleton. The town's largest employers are the Town of Middleton, with 23 employees; Middleton Building Supply, DiPrizio Pine Sales, and DiPrizio Truck Sales, with 76 employees; and the Middleton Elementary School, operated by SAU 61, with approximately 30 employees.

Out of town employment translates into a mean travel time of 38 minutes, and 87% of commuters make that drive alone.

Income

Per capita income in Middleton is reckoned at almost the same as Strafford County as a whole, at \$36,659; median household income is approximately the same for the state as a whole at \$72,682. This number is for a household of four people.

Thirty percent of households earn less than \$50,000; 40% earn between \$50K and \$100K; 23% earn between \$100K and \$200K; just under 10% earn more than \$200,000 annually.

Housing

According to census estimates, Middleton has about 600 separate households, with 2.6 persons per household, 70% in married person households.

All of Middleton's housing stock is single family, and 91% of those units are owner-occupied. There are 867 total housing units; 808 are single family units; 59 are mobile homes. There are no multi-family units in Middleton. Of this stock, 161 units (18.5%) are seasonal, and stand vacant at least part of the year.

Not surprisingly, given that Middleton more than quadrupled in size between 1970 and 2020, most of Middleton's housing stock is less than 50 years old. The mean listing price for a single-family home in 2022 was \$272,450, and the average rent was \$1,287 per month. As of the Census data collection, the median value of a home in Middleton was \$199,500. These prices are all likely to have increased significantly since the census data were collected.

According to state data, 93% of the taxes collected by Middleton are collected on residential land and buildings, and only 3% on commercial land and buildings. The remaining portion is collected on public utilities or land held in current use.

Housing Condition/Affordability

RSA 674:2 – Master Plan; Purpose and Description includes a housing section as one of the optional sections of a master plan. The purpose of this section is to "...assess local housing conditions and project future housing needs of residents of all levels of income and ages in the municipality and the region as identified in the regional housing needs assessment performed by the regional planning commission..." The Strafford Regional Planning Commission is in the process of updating the regional housing needs assessment. It is anticipated to be complete by the end of 2022; when complete, it can be accessed at the Commission's website at www.srpc.org.

Housing Condition: Information on housing conditions is collected by the U.S. Census. The Census looks at three primary factors to assess conditions: occupancy per room; and the absence of complete plumbing or kitchen facilities. An overcrowded home is one in which there are more than 1.51 persons per room. Middleton has no home that meets this

Chapter 2: Demographics – People & Housing

criterion; nor are there any homes that report lacking complete plumbing or kitchen facilities.

Affordability: Regarding the issue of affordability, federal and state guidelines define “affordable” as housing expenses (mortgage or rent, utilities, and insurance) that are not more than 30% of the homeowner’s income. This is also the definition in New Hampshire of “workforce housing,” which all towns in the state are required to address in some fashion. RSA 674:59 states that every municipality in the state that adopts land use regulations must provide reasonable and realistic opportunities for the development of workforce housing, including rental multi-family housing.

In Middleton, currently there are 392 housing units with a mortgage and 113 without a mortgage. Table #1 presents Census information on the numbers of households, both with and without a mortgage, that are paying more than 30% of their income on housing costs (otherwise known as “cost-burdened”). Those without a mortgage are much less cost-burdened than those with a mortgage. This is not necessarily surprising; what is surprising, however, is that of those with a mortgage, there are those that are cost-burdened in the higher income brackets.

Table #1:

| # of Households Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing | | | | |
|---|---------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Income | With Mortgage | % of All Homes | Without Mortgage | % of All Homes |
| Less than \$20,000 | 12 | 3.06 | 14 | 12.39 |
| \$20,000-\$34,999 | 22 | 5.61 | 11 | 9.73 |
| \$35,000-\$49,999 | 43 | 10.97 | 0 | 0.00 |
| \$50,000-\$74,999 | 30 | 7.65 | 0 | 0.00 |
| \$75,000 or more | 16 | 4.08 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Totals: | 392 | 31.38 | 113 | 22.12 |

Note, however, that less than 32% and 22% respectively of those with and without a mortgage are cost-burdened; the majority of households are not.

Housing Projections

In addition to evaluating the condition and affordability of homes in Middleton, it is also important to look to the future and assess whether Middleton will be able to meet the expected housing demand based on projected population.

The NH Office of Planning and Development has just released population projections for all municipalities out to the year 2050 ([2022-state-county-municipality-projections-final-report.pdf](#)). These data project a population of 2,063 for Middleton, which is an increase of 240 people from the 2020 Census, or an average increase of eight people per year. If this bears out, it would be one of the lowest rates of increase in Strafford County.

Based on available Census data, in 2020 Middleton had 2.6 persons per occupied housing unit. Assuming that this ratio holds over the projected timeframe (which seems reasonable at this point in time, since households generally are getting smaller rather than larger), Middleton would need 793 housing units to accommodate this population, or an additional 87 units. Over a 30-year time period this equates to an average of three units a year. This is less than the rate of housing growth the Town experienced between 2010 and 2020 – gaining 45 occupied units over those 10 years. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that, all things being equal, Middleton will be able to accommodate the projected future population.

Chapter 3: Municipal Resources

A. LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Town of Middleton is governed by a three-member Select Board that is elected by the citizens of Middleton at the annual Town Meeting.

In addition to the Select Board, Town business is managed by a number of other officials, boards and commissions, all of which are detailed in the Town's Annual Reports. Some of these officials are elected at Town Meeting, and others are appointed by the Select Board. All these positions are optional and unpaid¹, with some receiving payment for their work, and others – such as Planning and Zoning boards, receive no financial remuneration.

The Town Office building has office space for the Select Board, the Tax Collector and Town Clerk, and a meeting room. The Police Department is housed in the lower level of the building.

The Old Town Hall, just next door, is used for many of the Board and Commission meetings, as it has a room that can accommodate larger gatherings.



Figure #3: Municipal Complex



Figure #1: Old Town Hall



Figure #2: Town Office Building

¹ The exception to this is the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment, which are required when a town adopts zoning.

Chapter 3: Municipal Resources

B. FIRE & RESCUE

Overview

The Fire Department is housed in a four-bay structure on King's Highway, in the area that serves as the municipal complex. The building has three bays for fire trucks and one bay for an ambulance.

Scope of Service

The Department is responsible for ambulance calls, fire service, inspections, and mutual aid to neighboring towns. As part of the mutual aid agreement, the Department responds to other towns when called, from Rochester to Center Ossipee, even into Maine.

The Department handles more than 300 calls for service in a typical year, for combined fire and ambulance calls. Fire calls consist primarily of chimney fires, out-of-control burns, and carbon dioxide issues. Ambulance calls are predominantly motor-vehicle related and medical assists. Fire trucks also respond to motor vehicle accidents and trees on wires or in the road. All of the Department personnel are cross-trained, so that they can respond to both fire and medical issues.

Staffing

Personnel consists of 18 members, four of which are Emergency Medical Responders, four have a Class B License (EMTs) and one is a paramedic.

Equipment

The Department maintains a Pumper, a Tanker, a Rescue/Forestry Truck, and an Ambulance.

The ambulance is paid for out of a revolving fund that is funded by fees generated from medical transports and other fees paid for medical/ambulance services; this results in no taxpayer impact for purchasing and supporting the ambulance. Other equipment is funded by Town Meeting appropriations.



Figure #4: Fire Station

Chapter 3: Municipal Resources

Issues/Concerns for the Future

Chief Michael Donovan-Laviolette states that there are several issues he sees that would improve the Department's ability to provide service²:

1. The building cannot meet National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards for several reasons, a significant one being that there is not adequate ventilation in the building to protect personnel from vehicle exhaust.
2. There is also no shower or any means for firefighters to clean their gear when returning from a call. This means they must take that gear home – with the fire-fighting chemicals on them, and wash them at home.
3. Staffing is a problem. As with so many small towns, there is usually no one – or not enough members, in town during the day to respond to a call-out. The Department can only provide coverage from 6 P.M. to 6 A.M. When there is a call, a neighboring town will respond under the Mutual Aid agreement; but if this is a medical call, Middleton will be charged for that response.



Chief Donovan-Laviolette
on August 13, 2022

The solution to these challenges would be:

1. To have funds appropriated at Town Meeting to bring the Fire Station up to NFPA standards.
2. Acquire the appropriate washer & dryer to clean the firefighting gear at the station, as well as a suitable shower room for the firefighters to use before going home.
3. To include in the budget funds to hire *per diem* personnel to provide coverage from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M.



Figure #5: Fire Station

² Based on an interview with the Chief on August 13, 2022 conducted by the MRI Planning Consultant.

Chapter 3: Municipal Resources

C. POLICE

Overview

The Middleton Police Department is housed in the lower level of the Town Office Building.

Scope of Service

The Department provides public safety protection for the Town, with 19 hours of coverage every day; officers are on call for the remaining five hours.

Calls for service are predominantly related to motor vehicle speeding and traffic noise.

Staffing

The Department employs four full-time officers and four part-time officers.

Equipment

The principal pieces of equipment for the Department are five cruisers.

These are replaced every 6-7 years when the vehicle has approximately 100,000 miles; although it should be noted that these are road miles – the engine has had much more wear and tear due to hours of idling and reversing, which are necessary on many calls and vehicle stops.

When cruisers are replaced, the old one is sold, bringing in \$3-\$5,000 in revenue; the new cruiser is paid for from a revolving fund maintained by the Department.

The money in this fund comes from outside detail work of the officers and therefore results in no tax impact to the residents of Middleton.



Figure #6: Police Station

Issues/Concerns for the Future

According to Sergeant Jonathan Swift³, the biggest issue facing the Department is the lack of a suitable Public Safety facility. The space allocated for the Department in the Town Office Building does not meet the needs of the Department. Among other deficiencies, there is not a separate room for interviews, nor is there a holding cell. In the event someone needs to be detained, an officer must drive them to the Strafford County jail, which puts them out of town for several hours.

Sergeant Swift feels that the Department is sustainable at this point; however, if the Town population should grow by more than 10%, he believes the Town will need to invest in upgrades to the existing facility, or construct a new one, and add additional staffing.

³ Based on an interview with Sergeant Smith on August 13, 2022 conducted by the MRI Planning Consultant.

Chapter 3: Municipal Resources

D. HIGHWAY

Overview

The Highway Department is housed on Kings Highway next to the Old Town Hall. The building has four bays, an office and a breakroom.

Scope of Service

The Department is responsible for maintaining all of the Town roads – paved and unpaved, and the parking lots and landscaping at the municipal-owned properties.

Of the 24 miles of Town roads, approximately eight are unpaved.

The Department also maintains the Town Beach; the chemical toilet and trash are handled twice a week, and the beach is raked once a week.

Staffing

In addition to the Road Agent, the Department employs two full-time employees and one part-time seasonal worker, who is employed from mid-November to mid-April.

Equipment

The Department owns the following pieces of equipment:

- 3 state-sized plow trucks (2003, 2009 and 2016)

- 2011 mid-sized truck with plow and wing used for the dirt roads
- 2014 front-end loader
- 2008 rubber-tired excavator used for ditching and scraping
- 1980 grader
- 1978 York Rake
- Rubber-tired Case backhoe
- 2015 pick-up truck with plow used by the Road Agent
- 2022 Bandit brush chipper
- 42” zero-turn mower

Issues/Concerns for the Future

According to Road Agent⁴ the Department is in good shape. The equipment they have meets their needs. The only piece of equipment he thinks is lacking is a flail mower for cutting along the roadsides; this must be done by hand and it is time-consuming.

In the Fall, the staff repaint the plows and do other maintenance to prepare for the winter.

As far as staffing goes, he also believes the Department has the staff it needs. All the employees are mechanics, so

they can fix machinery and vehicles, and they can all operate any piece of equipment the Department has. Furthermore, the number of miles of road to maintain is manageable for the current staffing and equipment.



Figure #7: Highway Garage

⁴ Based on an interview with Dan Phillips on August 13, 2022 conducted by the MRI Planning Consultant.

Chapter 3: Municipal Resources

E. RECREATION

The Town of Middleton has a volunteer Recreation Committee that offers a range of activities for the residents, including Easter and Christmas events, penny sales, and community yard sales. The Strafford Regional Planning Commission also offers opportunities for residents to participate in regional recreational activities, as illustrated by the flyer.



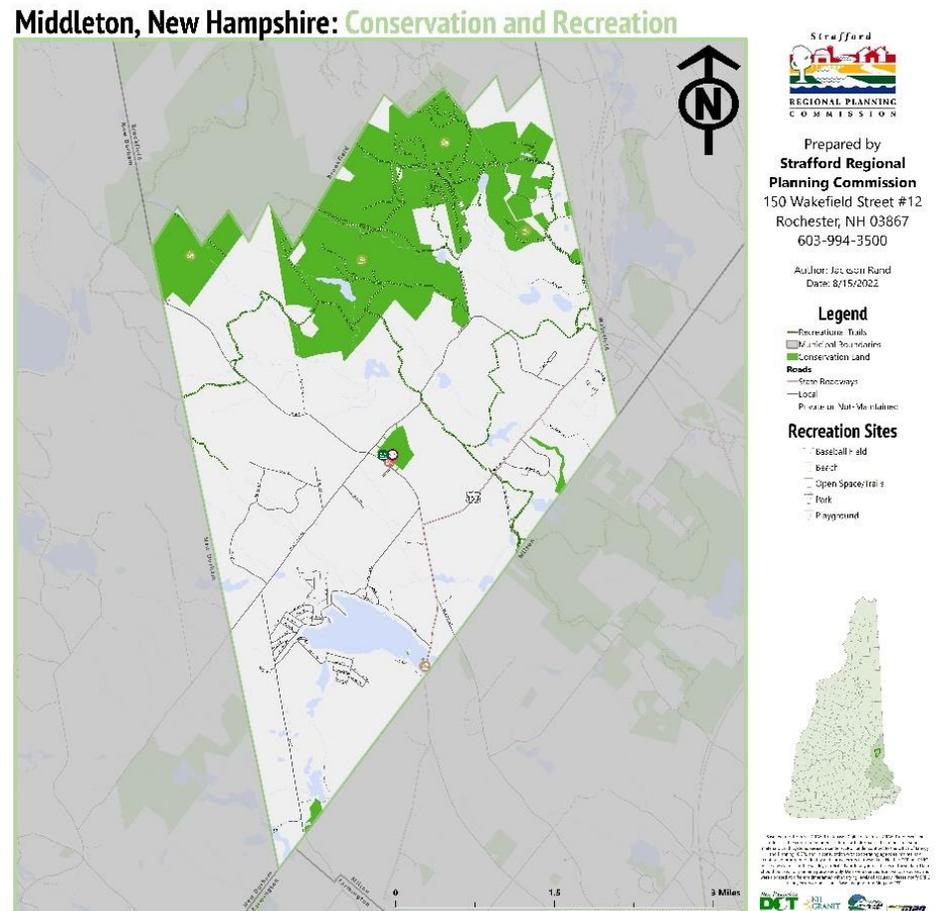
Map #1

shows the location of recreation sites in Middleton which, while not under the management of the Committee, are important assets that contribute to recreation opportunities in Town.

The map also illustrates the location of conservation land in Town that is accessible for the public.

Please note that all of the maps in this Plan are accessible at the Strafford Regional Planning Commission website www.srpc.org.

Map #1: Conservation & Recreation



Chapter 3: Municipal Resources

F. WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Town of Middleton has full-service trash pickup. Household trash is always collected twice a week; bulk items are collected twice a year.

There is also an annual recycling day, usually in August, where electronics and tires can be disposed of (at the Highway Garage) for a fee, and scrap metal for free.

In the spring, residents of Middleton can participate in a hazardous waste collection day at Turn Key in Rochester.

G. SCHOOLS

The Middleton Elementary School on Kings Highway provides education for pupils from Grade 1 to Grade 6. Grades 7 – 12 attend school in Wolfeboro at the Kingswood Regional Middle School and the Kingswood Regional High School. SAU 49 provides services to Middleton on a contractual basis.

The Elementary School opened in 2016 and that first year accommodated 134 students.

Current enrollment at the school is 154.

Although the school is relatively new, it is already experiencing capacity issues.

The school was designed to accommodate 175 students, and this number has not yet been reached. However, classrooms were designed based on state education standards of no more than 25 students per classroom. Currently, some of the classes still meet this standard, while others now exceed this standard.

In order to remain compliant with the state guidelines, the library has been converted to a classroom, and the staff continue to explore other possible options to resolve this issue.

Based on state guidelines, more than 24 students in a class requires another teacher – in other words, one teacher per 24

students. The state recommends no more than 20 students per classroom.

Table #2:
Middleton Elementary School Student Population

| YEAR | POPULATION |
|------|------------|
| 2016 | 134 |
| 2017 | 133 |
| 2018 | 137 |
| 2019 | 142 |
| 2020 | 144 |
| 2021 | 154 |

Source: NH Department of Education



Figure 8: Middleton Elementary School

Chapter 3: Municipal Resources

As Table #2 illustrates, in just five years, the school population has increased by 20 students – which equates to a classroom.

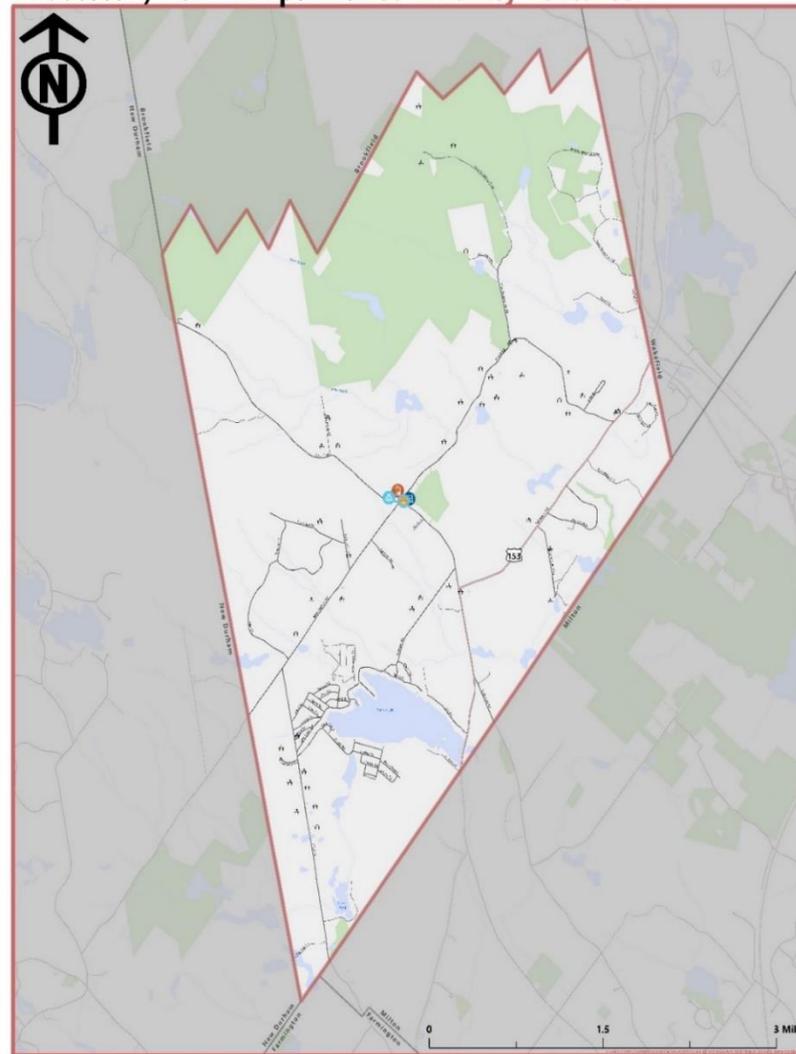
In addition to the problems of finding room to accommodate the student population, there is also the issue of teacher and other staff shortages – a problem that is being experienced by schools nationwide.

At this point it is unclear whether the influx of students is a temporary circumstance that could resolve in a few years, rendering the need for an addition to the school moot. At this point, however, school officials continue to explore their options.

Map #2 to the right shows the location of Middleton’s municipal resources. The Town Offices, Police Station, Fire Station, and Highway Garage are all located within close proximity to one another at the Four Corners.

Map #2: Community Features

Middleton, New Hampshire: Community Features



Prepared by
**Strafford Regional
Planning Commission**
150 Wakefield Street #12
Rochester, NH 03867
603-994-3500

Author: Jackson Rand
Date: 8/15/2022

Legend

- Town and City Halls
- Governmental Services
- Police Stations
- Fire Stations
- ▲ Graveyards
- ▭ Municipal Boundaries
- Roads**
- State Roadways
- Local
- Private or Not-Maintained



Map data is from the National Geographic, © 2022. All rights reserved. This map is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to be used for navigation or other purposes. The map is provided as a service to the public and is not a guarantee of accuracy. The map is provided as a service to the public and is not a guarantee of accuracy. The map is provided as a service to the public and is not a guarantee of accuracy.

Logos for NH GRANIT, DIT, and MPO.

Chapter 4: Natural Resources

The natural resources section of a master plan functions not only to describe the resources that exist within the Town's boundaries, but also to help in the evaluation of the land and its potential for various types of development. Natural features can enhance a site, but they can also post significant barriers or obstacles to development; therefore, it is important to know what the Town has, where these resources are located, and whether they can co-exist with human activity, or should be avoided.

Middleton has a variety of natural resources, depicted on the map on the following page. The Town's Conservation Commission (established in 1988) is charged with the promotion and preservation of the area's natural resources, and to protect and manage the watershed resources and wildlife habitat areas. This three-member volunteer Commission, appointed by the Board of Selectmen, is also responsible for managing the Town's Forest and other town owned conservation lands.

Moose Mountain Reservation

One of the largest protected areas in Town is the Moose Mountain Reservation, an approximately 2,700-acre forestland that Middleton shares with Brookfield. There are more than eight miles of trails to explore at the Moose Mountains Reservation. These trails are combination of foot paths, woods roads, and snowmobile trails.

The main trails have been signed



Figure 9: Moose Mountain Reservation

and blazed; however, some trails are not shown on the map. More detail and information about the Reservation can be found at [Moose Mountains Reservation | Forest Society](#).

Sunrise Lake

Sunrise Lake is a significant natural resource in Middleton as it is the largest water body in town at 247 acres. The lake is a relatively shallow, man-made waterbody, about a mile long by a half mile wide, within a watershed area of roughly 2,100 acres.



Figure 10: Sunrise Lake

It is a mix of silty, sandy, and rocky bottom types that offers excellent opportunities for boating, fishing, and swimming for residents and visitors to the Sunrise Lake Town Beach. There are also seven association-owned community beaches and several small private beaches along the shores of the lake. There are 138 homes surrounding the lake, a combination of seasonal and year-round⁵.

([sunriselakewatershedmanagementplan_20211231.pdf](#))

The lake is maintained & monitored by the Conservation Commission, and the dam that creates the lake is maintained by the Sunrise Lake Village District.

⁵ Sunrise Lake Watershed Management Plan; December 2021; Strafford Regional Planning Commission, NH Department of Environmental Services.

Chapter 4: Natural Resources

materials that prohibit water infiltration, or have land uses taking place above the aquifer that could damage the quality of the water. The Middleton Zoning Ordinance includes an Aquifer Protection Overlay District that restricts certain uses above an aquifer that are considered harmful (e.g., petroleum storage or junk yards), and further restricts lot coverage to no more than 20% of the lot.

There are no identified aquifers in Middleton, however that does not mean that none exist. The Zoning Ordinance description of the boundaries of the Overlay District is based on soil categories that are considered to have potential for aquifers.

Floodplains

While floodplains themselves are not a water resource, they are critical to providing storage for water in the event of flooding. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) prepares flood studies and maps of identified flood-prone areas for every community in the country. FEMA administers the National Flood Insurance Program that offers flood insurance for structures that are located in flood-prone areas. In order for an individual to have access to this insurance, however, the town must participate in the Program, which means the adoption of a Floodplain Management Ordinance. The ordinance requires all new and substantially-improved buildings to have the lowest enclosed floor elevated above the estimated water level in the event of a flood. Middleton does participate in this program and six homeowners have availed themselves of the NFIP-supported flood insurance.

Shorelands

The Middleton Zoning Ordinance does not have a specific zoning district for shorelands; it does, however, reference the state's Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act, and includes performance standards for any development within the state-designated protected shoreland.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, identifying the location and extent of sensitive natural resources is necessary in order to avoid or minimize negative impacts from human activity.

Comparing the existing development pattern in Middleton (Map #5) with the Water Resources Map (Map #3) it appears that development has not encroached into these resources; furthermore, the aforementioned ordinances are now in place to ensure that this does not happen.

Chapter 5: Regional Perspective

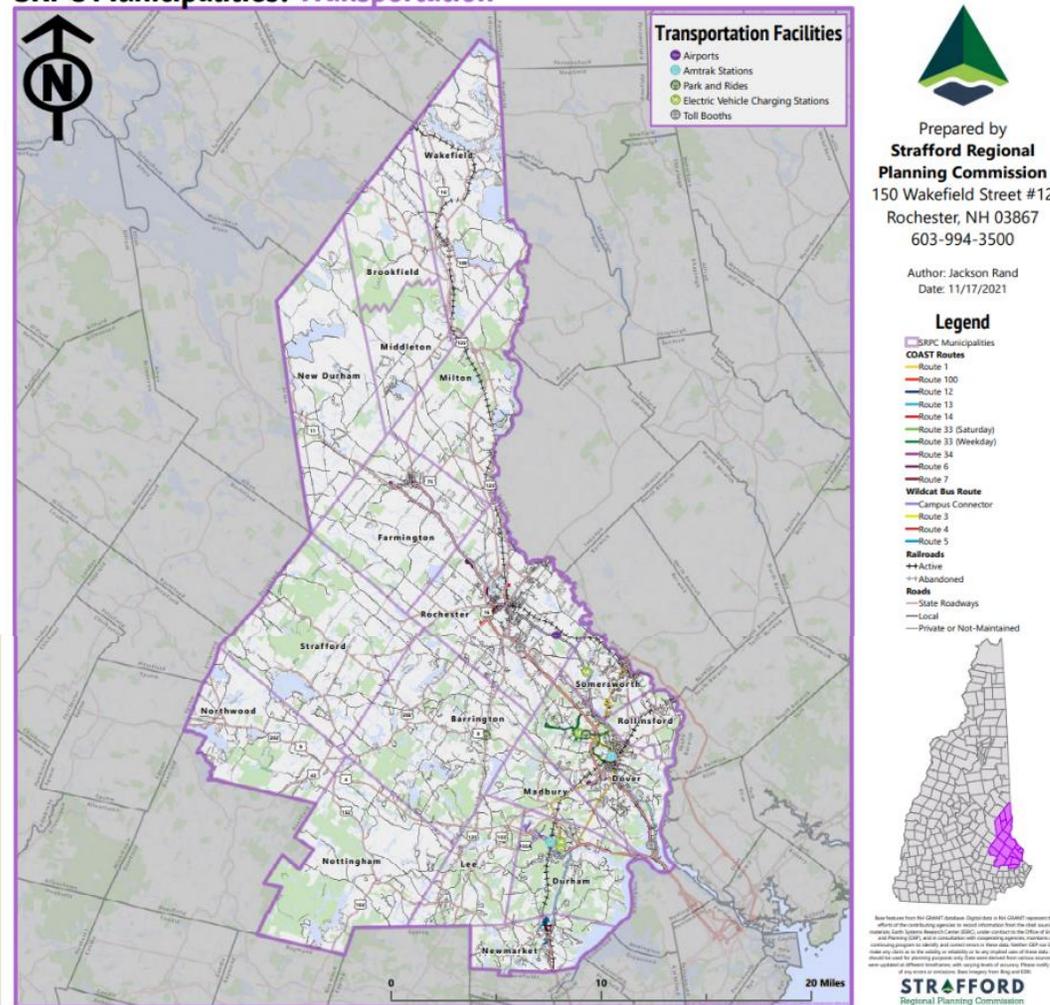
Often tied for Strafford County’s least populated municipality, Middleton is a central community of the Moose Mountains region. Like its neighbor, Brookfield, Middleton was developed as one of a handful of communities along the historical route to Governor John Wentworth’s summer home near Wolfeboro. Middleton was less suited than its neighbor for agriculture, and instead became known for a small cider industry. With the arrival of the automobile in the 20th century, a second-home market expanded around Sunrise Lake, bringing vacationers from southern New Hampshire, metropolitan Boston, and elsewhere in the Northeast every year. Today the town is home to many summer residents on the shores of Sunrise Lake⁶.

Middleton’s immediate neighbors consist of the towns of Brookfield, Wakefield, Milton, Farmington, and New Durham. As a member of the Strafford Regional Planning Commission, however, Middleton participates in and is able to take advantage of programs that address issues of a regional nature that include Middleton, such as transportation, hazard mitigation planning, and natural resource protection.

Census data indicates that most of Middleton’s work force works outside of town, commuting to nearby towns including Rochester and Farmington. In this regard, while Middleton itself does not play a major role in the regional economy as an employer, it certainly does in its role providing workers for the regional economy.

Map #4: Strafford Region

SRPC Municipalities: Transportation



⁶ From the website of the Strafford Regional Planning Commission.

Chapter 6: Existing Land Use

Land use in Middleton consists predominantly of residential use, and specifically of single-family homes, as described in Chapter 2. This development is located along existing roads, with the densest development being around Sunrise Lake. The dispersion is fairly evenly distributed around Town with the exception of the northern part adjacent to Moose Mountain Reservation.

Non-residential uses consist of the building supply, flooring, and vehicle sales at the intersection of Route 153 and Kings Highway, the school, Town government, and the church. There are a few small commercial operations scattered about Town; in addition, there are a number of home occupations or home-based businesses.

This pattern of land use has not changed appreciably since the previous Master Plan was completed in 2007.

The Middleton Zoning Ordinance designates four distinct zoning districts: Rural Residential, Sunrise Lake, Residential-Commercial/Industrial, and the Four Corners Districts. In addition to these are four overlay districts related to natural resource protection: Wetlands, Floodplain, Aquifer, and Shoreland. The geographic location of these districts is shown on the Zoning Map (Map #6).

As the map illustrates, most of Middleton is zoned for Rural Residential uses. The Residential-Commercial/Industrial District encompasses the area where Middleton Building Supply and DiPrizio Sales are located. The Middleton Four Corners District is, as the name suggests, located at the intersection of King's Highway and New Durham and Ridge Roads. Both of these districts are relatively small in land area compared to the Rural Residential District. Finally, the Sunrise Lake District encompasses the residential uses that surround the Lake.

Permitted uses in these districts cover a range of residential and non-residential uses. In the Rural Residential District, one- and two-family homes and agriculture are permitted by right, as is agriculture. A number of non-residential uses are permitted by Special Exception of the Zoning Board provided they can meet certain criteria.

The Residential-Commercial/Industrial District allows one- and two-family residential, as well as a number of varied non-residential uses by right, and a number of light industrial uses by Special Exception of the Zoning Board.

Middleton Four Corners District allows one- and two-family residential, a number of non-residential uses, and mixed uses subject to certain conditions.

The Sunrise Lake District permits only single-family homes, essential services, and accessory uses.

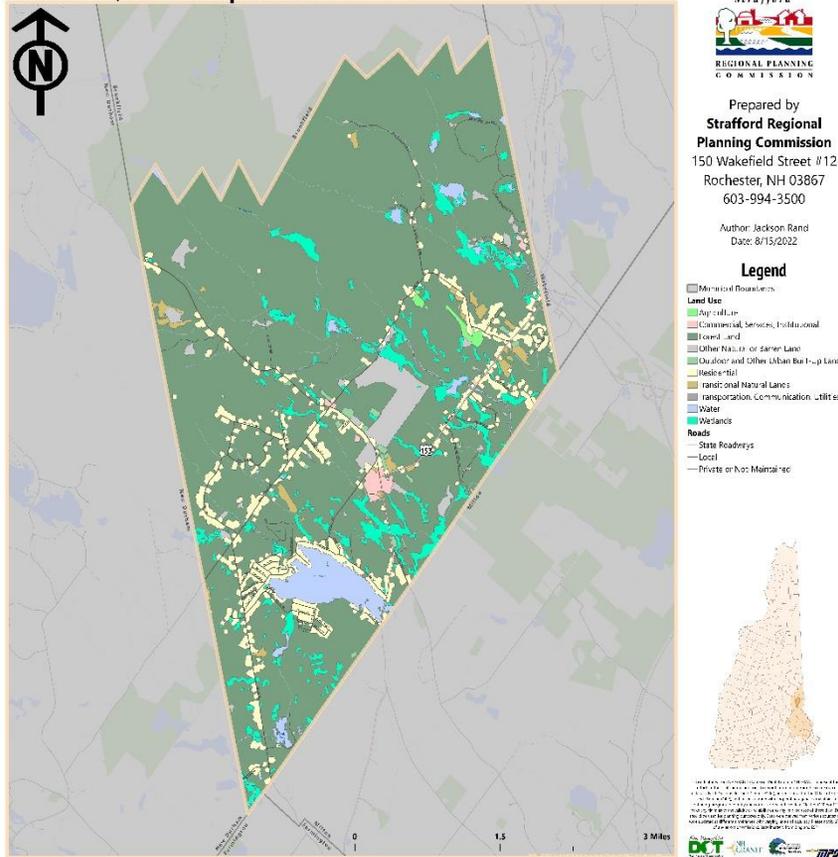
The minimum lot size in all of these districts is five (5) acres for a residential use and one (1) acre for a commercial use. In addition, there are property line setbacks, minimum road frontage, and vegetated open space requirements.

In all of the four overlay districts, the underlying zoning district dictates the uses that are allowed, as applicable; what varies will be special conditions or criteria that are specific to the natural resource being protected. For example, the Wetland District is comprised of the wetlands, therefore only very specific uses are allowed within it, whereas the Floodplain District requires structures to be built above the base flood elevation.

Chapter 6: Existing Land Use

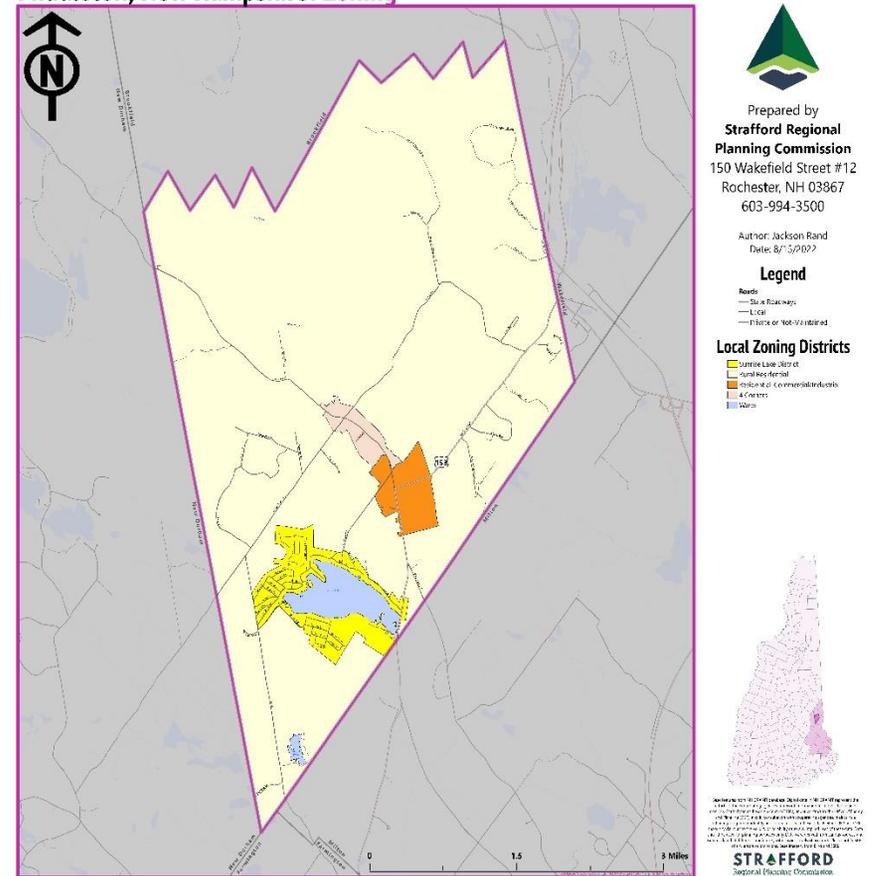
Map #5: Existing Land Use

Middleton, New Hampshire: Land Use



Map #6: Zoning Map

Middleton, New Hampshire: Zoning



Chapter 7: Future Land Use Plan

The Future Land Use Plan is the core of a Master Plan. It is this document that reflects the vision of Middleton's residents going forward and provides the land use strategies that help to achieve that vision.

Middleton's first Master Plan was adopted in October of 1982 and revised in 1990; the Plan was updated in 2007-2008. Many of the goals expressed in both 1982 and 2007 continue to be of importance to the residents today, for example, providing balanced orderly growth, protecting natural resources, and preserving Middleton's small-town look and feel.

In developing this Plan, certain assumptions are made that take into account the previous master planning efforts as well as the 2022 planning. These assumptions are:

1. Middleton will remain a predominantly rural residential community.
2. Home occupations and home-based businesses will continue to make up an important segment of the local economy.
3. Residents remain concerned that population growth will outstrip the Town's ability to provide services.

Population growth has been a concern for Middleton residents for quite some time. In 2004 the voters adopted an Interim Growth Ordinance that restricted major developments, condominiums, and multi-family homes for one year. The 2007 Master Plan referenced this Ordinance and noted changes that were made to the Zoning Ordinance as a result of it.

Furthermore, on October 2, 2021 the voters approved a one-year moratorium on building permits for single-family and multi-family dwellings and on any site plan or subdivision applications.

The moratorium also required "prompt attention to develop or alter...a zoning ordinance, a master plan, or capital improvements program." The Planning Board has given prompt attention to the issue by embarking on the development of this Master Plan.

The Future Land Use presented herein consists of two primary components: (1) Goals – statements that reflect the wishes of the residents expressed through the visioning process; and (2) Strategies – specific action items that are intended to accomplish the Goals, commonly through land use regulations.

Goal #1: Encourage Development at the Four Corners

Residents expressed a clear desire to see the Four Corners area become more village-like. This desire has been acknowledged for some time, in that the Zoning Ordinance does include a specific district for this area. No such development has occurred, however, and it raises the question of whether the standards of this district do not facilitate the desired type of development; for example, the smallest lot allowed is five (5) acres with 200 feet of road frontage; lots of that size are simply incapable of creating a village look or feel.

Strategies:

1. No minimum lot sizes beyond what is required to provide adequate septic and well separation, which can be achieved on a 10,000 square foot lot with most soil types.
2. No minimum frontage requirements and it may be best to create a frontage maximum of 50 feet. To create a village, buildings need to be close to one another to foster a sense of enclosure. Encouraging narrow deep lots will create that sense of place which people respond to in a village.

Chapter 7: Future Land Use Plan

The board may wish to write the ordinance to say that a wider lot may be permitted by Conditional Use Permit, requiring the applicant to make the case for a wider frontage.

3. Allow up to four dwelling units on a lot, rather than two. Again, adding more people to the area will create more of a sense of place.
4. Adopt some simple building and lot standards to ensure that what gets built in the Four Corners District furthers the sense of place and enclosure.
5. Buildings should not be set back more than 30 feet from the right of way.
6. Parking not be permitted in front of the building but behind the building, or, if truly necessary, to one side of the building.
7. Retail establishments should have transparent glass in at least 50% of the front facade.

The Town should also work with the Strafford Regional Planning Commission to adopt a Complete Streets Policy and name King's Highway as a place where any road work be done in a manner that promotes walkability and bikeability.

These strategies would also be helpful in realizing the Townspeople's desire to have a general store in town. Under the current zoning ordinance, it is permissible to create a general store of up to 1000 square feet in the Rural Residential District. This provision is actually incompatible with the town's desire to maintain the rural feel of the town.

It is also permissible, under the current zoning ordinance, to have a general store in the Four Corners District. Recommendations have already been discussed above for increasing the likelihood that retail and mixed uses would be developed in this district.



Figure 11: Middleton Four Corners

Since this is the location that residents have said they prefer such uses to occur, it makes sense to remove the general store use from the Rural Residential District and focus instead on the Four Corners District.

Goal #2: Accommodate Growth/Maintain Small-Town Look and Feel

Residents recognize the inevitability of some level of growth. It is important, however, that any growth does not come at the cost of sacrificing the small-town look and feel of Middleton – which has been expressed as being very important to people.

Chapter 7: Future Land Use Plan

Strategies:

1. Amend the Conservation Subdivision Ordinance

This ordinance does affect the ability to maintain the rural character of the town, something that was the first priority in the most recent vision survey. Currently, the town has a conservation subdivision ordinance for land in the rural residential district. This ordinance, not unlike the ordinance for the Four Corners District, appears to provide insufficient incentives for a developer to use it, since the density is based on five-acre house lots that are no different from a conventional subdivision.

- Apply the ordinance to parcels of 20 acres or more.
- Density should be calculated based on four dwelling units per acre, or eight per acre with community well and septic.
- Houses should be clustered on 10% or less of the land area.
- Access to the parcels should be by an entrance road which has no more than two curb cuts on the town road.
- There should be no minimum lot size or frontage requirement on the internal road.
- The internal road should remain a private road.
- Community septic systems and wells are encouraged.

The purpose of this is to create small nodal communities within Middleton without creating additional road maintenance burdens, and to allow for more ecologically-significant open land. Cutting rural parcels up into five acre lots with 200 feet of frontage for each leads to rural sprawl and significant increases in road maintenance costs. These costs outstrip the property taxes likely to be brought in on these properties.



Figure 12: Example of a Conservation Subdivision

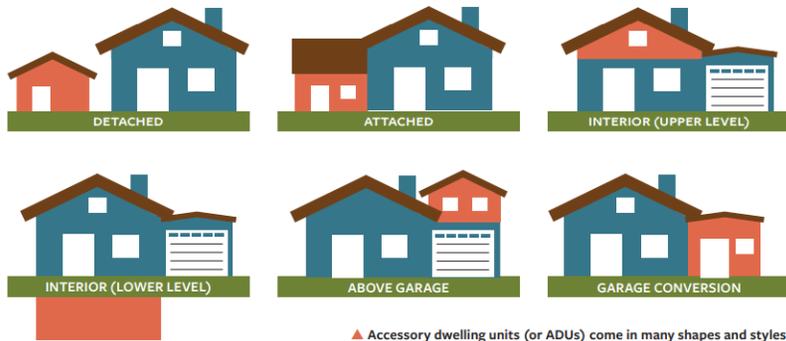
2. Increase Options for Accessory Dwelling Units

While increasing housing choices at all price points was not in the top five priorities in the recent vision survey, this Plan would be remiss, given the current housing situation in New Hampshire, if it did not address non-burdensome ways to increase housing in Middleton.

Chapter 7: Future Land Use Plan

Here, as in all towns and village, the easiest, least visually aggressive way to increase housing is to allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) by right in all residential districts. Middleton currently has an ADU ordinance; following are suggestions on ways to further incentivize the use of it:

- Permit two ADUs on any residentially zoned lot so long as the septic and well can be demonstrated to allow for the additional burden; ADUs are permissible by right, not by conditional use permit.
- Do not require additional acreage, regardless of the size of the ADU.
- Do not require owner occupancy of either the ADU(s) or the parent house.



The purpose of the changes is to make it easier and more straightforward to create ADUs. ADUs are typically created by a homeowner, rather than by a developer, and homeowners are easily dissuaded by burdensome regulation. If you want a thing to happen, you have to make it not only possible, but also easy.



Figure 13: Attached ADU



Figure 14: ADU above the Garage

Chapter 7: Future Land Use Plan

3. Explore Other Approaches to Housing Availability

Even though housing opportunity did not rank as an important issue for many survey respondents, the fact remains that housing availability is a serious issue throughout the entire state. Middleton is no exception to the effects of an aging population and a housing stock that meets only the needs of a limited demographic – i.e., households with children. The Town should work, within its capacity, to accommodate other households, such as single people, elderly needing/wanting to downsize, or simply people who are not interested in home ownership.

Goal #3: Preserve/Protect the Natural Environment

This was actually the highest ranking of the 10 guiding principles of the visioning survey. As noted earlier, these are the same questions that were posed to townspeople for the 2007 Master Plan, therefore it seems clear that the natural environment was and continues to be important for Middleton.

The Zoning Ordinance does include provisions to protect aquifers, wetlands, floodplains, and shorelands. The Planning Board should evaluate these ordinances to determine whether they are providing adequate protection, or whether any of them need strengthening.

Goal #4: Ensure that population growth does not outstrip the Town's ability to provide services

Towns in New Hampshire are limited in what they can do to limit population growth. There is a statute that allows municipalities to institute interim growth management measures; these are intended to be short-term, usually a year, and during

that time the municipality is expected to adopt land use measures that are aimed at addressing the problem that led to the moratorium.

Middleton has availed itself of this approach on two occasions: in 2004 the Town adopted an Interim Growth Management Ordinance in response to unprecedented subdivision over the previous several years; and in October of 2021 the Town adopted a one-year Moratorium on new building permits for single-family and multi-family units. Following this vote, the Planning Board engaged the services of a consultant to update the Town's 2007 Master Plan.

A master plan, in and of itself, cannot directly affect the rate of growth in any community; at best, it can provide recommendations and techniques for managing expected growth. This Plan has attempted to do that with strategies intended to accommodate the expected growth; it has not – nor can it, recommend that growth be limited.

One of the ways a town can manage impacts is by phasing development for larger projects, which the Planning Board is aware of and makes use of when feasible.

The Town's Development Regulations also contain provisions for requiring Impact Studies for larger projects, giving the Planning Board the ability to evaluate various impacts on Town services by a particular development proposal.

Another technique is to maintain a viable Capital Improvements Program (CIP) in order to ensure that necessary services are adequately funded. This is also something the Planning Board is actively engaged in, and should continue to do.

Chapter 8: Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan is a synopsis of the strategies described in the Future Land Use Plan. It is presented in this fashion to make it easier for the Planning Board to monitor progress on an annual basis.

| STRATEGY | RESPONSIBLE PARTY | TIME FRAME |
|--|--|------------------|
| 1. Amend the Four Corners Zoning District to encourage/facilitate new village-type development. | Planning Board | To be considered |
| 2. Adopt a Complete Streets Policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Planning Board ♦ Select Board ♦ Strafford Regional Planning Commission | To be considered |
| 3. Amend the Conservation Subdivision Ordinance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Planning Board ♦ Conservation Commission | To be considered |
| 4. Increase Options for Accessory Dwelling Units | Planning Board | To be considered |
| 5. Explore Other Approaches to Housing Availability | Planning Board | To be considered |
| 6. Preserve/Protect the Natural Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Monitor the natural resource overlay districts and amend when deemed necessary. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Planning Board ♦ Conservation Commission | To be considered |
| 7. Continue to utilize the provisions of the Development Regulations (e.g., Phased Development, Impact Studies) to facilitate managed, balanced growth in Middleton | ♦ Planning Board | On-going |
| 8. Maintain the Capital Improvements Program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Planning Board ♦ Select Board ♦ Department Heads | Annually |

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: VISIONING SURVEY

| GUIDING PRINCIPLES (Based on public response to the 2007 Master Plan) | RANK NUMBER 1 (lowest) through 10 (highest) |
|--|--|
| Encourage development at Four Corners/Town Center | |
| Prevent sprawl into outlying areas | |
| Conserve scenic areas and natural landscape | |
| Facilitate accessible recreation for all residents | |
| Accommodate growth while preserving small town look and feel | |
| Facilitate housing type and cost for all income levels | |
| Support local agriculture and forestry | |
| Support local businesses | |
| Minimize land consumption per person and dwelling units | |
| Ensure that population growth does not jeopardize ability to provide services | |

1. Why did you settle in Middleton?
2. What makes you stay in Middleton?
3. Why would you move away from Middleton?
4. What would you tell someone who was thinking of moving to town?
5. What is Middleton known for?
6. What is your favorite day of the year in Middleton?
7. What do you want Middleton to be like/look like in 10 years?
8. What do you think are Middleton's greatest strengths? Weaknesses?
9. Please list the topics you think are important to Middleton now and in the future.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX B: RESOURCES

Accessory Dwelling Units

[Accessory Dwelling Units - New Hampshire Housing \(nhhfa.org\)](http://nhhfa.org)

[Planning for Accessory Dwellings | Planning Division | NH Office of Strategic Initiatives](#)

Conservation Subdivisions

“Minimizing the Impact of Subdivisions” [Microsoft PowerPoint - Cons Sub ASLPT 102707 \(nh.gov\)](#)

[Conservation Subdivisions | Better Town Toolkit \(designyourtown.org\)](http://designyourtown.org)

Complete Streets

[Complete Streets - Smart Growth America](#)

[Complete Streets | US Department of Transportation](#)

[Dover Complete Streets and Traffic Calming Guidelines – Strafford Regional Planning Commission](#)

Growth Management

[Growth Management | Resource Library | NH Office of Strategic Initiatives](#)

[CommunityViz: Exploring New Techniques to Help New Hampshire Communities Shape Their Growth | New Hampshire Municipal Association \(nhmunicipal.org\)](#)

Smart Growth

[About Smart Growth | US EPA](#)

Smart Growth is a term and approach supported and encouraged by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that covers a range of development and conservation strategies that help protect public health and the natural environment. It is intended to make communities more attractive, economically stronger, and more socially diverse.

The EPA notes that communities of all sizes have used smart growth techniques to develop in ways that preserve natural lands and critical environmental areas. Some of the benefits include:

- Conserving resources by reinvesting in existing infrastructure and rehabilitating historic buildings.
- Designing neighborhoods that have homes near shops, offices, schools, houses of worship, parks, and other amenities, communities give residents and visitors the option of walking, bicycling, or driving as they go about their business.
- A range of different housing types makes it possible for senior citizens to stay in their neighborhoods as they age, young people to afford their first home, and families at all stages in between to find a safe, attractive home they can afford.
- The high quality of life makes these communities economically competitive, creates business opportunities, and strengthens the local tax base.

The table on the following page lists the 10 principles and provides case study examples of communities that have implemented smart growth techniques.

APPENDICES

| Smart Growth Principle | Case Study |
|--|---|
| 1. Mix land uses | Eighth and Pearl, Boulder, CO Legacy Town Center, Plano, TX |
| 2. Take advantage of compact building design | Belmont Dairy, Portland, OR Highlands' Garden Village, Denver, CO |
| 3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices | Hismen Hin-Nu Terrace, Oakland, CA Benedict Commons, Aspen, CO |
| 4. Create walkable neighborhoods | Northwest Landing, DuPont, WA Bethesda Row, Bethesda, MD |
| 5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place | The Can Company, Baltimore, MD Downtown Brea, Brea, CA |
| 6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas | Abacoa, Jupiter, FL East Lake Commons, Decatur, GA |
| 7. Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities | Mizner Park, Boca Raton, FL Uptown District, San Diego, CA |
| 8. Provide a variety of transportation choices | King Farm, Rockville, MD The Crossings, Mountain View, CA |
| 9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective | Green Tape Program, Silver Spring, MD Compact Development Endorsement Program, San Francisco, CA |
| 10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions | Barrio Logan, San Diego, CA East Russell, Louisville, KY |