

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Middlebury Encourages Architectural Harmony

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Chairman, Economic Development Commission

When you think of Middlebury, what comes to mind? For many people it is a smile and a happy memory of Quassy Amusement Park, walking along the eight-mile greenway, the scenic beauty of Fenn Farm and Tranquility Road, and that feeling of being in a part of Connecticut still largely unspoiled by urban sprawl. For new residents it is an aspirational community offering the highly regarded Region 15 school system, and the safe, small town feel they want for their children.

For businesses, Middlebury is considered an “upscale” town and a prestigious address with a good nearby labor force, great access to highways, and a unique proximity to Waterbury hospitals and acute care facilities. Fostering architectural harmony within the town's commercial districts and embracing our traditional New England character as it has evolved over the last 200 years will create and maintain the pleasing business environment that encourages visitation and increased patronage.

One of the duties of the Economic Development Commission [EDC] is to make architecture and design recommendations to the Planning and Zoning Commission as to whether a proposed building is a good “fit” for the area of Middlebury in which it will be situated. This is especially important for our town which, although generally considered “upscale,” is composed of seven distinct business areas ranging from suburban to almost semi-rural in character. A “one size fits all” design standard appropriate for large commercial buildings along Straits Turnpike wouldn’t make any sense for individual stores and clusters along Route 64 and Route 188.

It is not the duty of EDC to review technical construction specifications, although it does like to see them to understand dimensions and setbacks, etc., and get an idea of what the building will look like in its setting, after construction. The commission does require a visualization of the building from one or two perspectives that illustrates the colors to be used, building materials, landscaping, sidewalks, driveways, curb cuts, shrubbery, etc., with background representative of the actual surroundings. It needs to see the relationship between what already exists, and what it is that is planned. EDC needs to see property lines, fences, stone walls, parking, utilities, hydrants, driveways, curb cuts, lighting, plantings, colors, materials, and signage. Businesses in high visibility areas such as Middlebury Center, Middlebury Green, Judd’s Corner, and the Gateway District are encouraged to be particularly mindful of the economic benefit of visual harmony.

The Commission is comprised of seven members appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Commissioners are Town residents and business owners who possess a wide range of experience and expertise about Middlebury and its economy. The Commission operates in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes Sec. 7-136 Municipal Economic Development Commissions. Its work focuses on conducting research on economic conditions and trends in

Middlebury, promoting economic development, and supporting existing and prospective businesses.