

## MIDDLETOWN MASTER PLAN

### Past Planning Efforts

August 24, 2004

This memorandum is intended to summarize the results of previous efforts to identify key issues regarding the future of Middletown. The sentiment of the community in this planning process was that critical issues and concerns for future growth were identified. This is a summary of past planning efforts and documents that highlight the most critical obstacles to economic and community growth along with appropriate recommendations. Plans that have been summarized include the following, in chronological order by year:

- **Middletown Master Plan (1965)**
- **Middletown, Ohio Corporate Area Master Plan Document (1977)**
- **HyettPalma Creating the Future Downtown (1992)**
- **City of Middletown Sewer Master Plan (1996)**
- **Downtown Middletown Urban Design Plan (1996)**
- **Middletown Master Plan Amendment (1997)**
- **A.C.T.I.O.N. (1998)**
- **Downtown Middletown Market Analysis and Development Strategy (1999)**
- **Middletown Own It! (2000)**
- **Midpoint Centre Conceptual Design and Development Project (2000)**
- **Elements of a Strong Regional Economy (2001)**
- **Strategic Marketing Plan (2001)**
- **An Overall Housing Assessment of Middletown, Ohio (2002)**
- **Hook Field Municipal Airport Strategic Development Plan (2002)**
- **Creating a Competitive Community Advantage (2003)**

Throughout the plans, there are a few key recurring themes that Middletown has been dealing with. First, the City has a poor regional image and self-image. As a mid-point between Dayton and Cincinnati, demand should be high for companies to locate here. Middletown is commonly perceived as an industrial-based economy with a poor housing stock (no housing costing above \$200,000), poor public schools, and copious amounts of crime.

Second, although Middletown has an effective transportation access system and its own interchange on Interstate 75 (I-75), the entire west side of Middletown including downtown is underserved by transportation access. Many people believe downtown's economy is struggling because there is no direct access from I-75. A visitor typically follows S.R. 122 west from I-75, following 122 as it changes direction and heads north. A left on Central or Manchester are the best options for accessing downtown, however these two points offer the visitor no welcome signage and the turns are logistically confusing.

Downtown commercial and office building owners have struggled to attract retail businesses because of the poor access. The new commercial and industrial development that has come to Middletown has focused at the interchange, but development was initially slow because of a lack of appropriate public infrastructure. An additional blow to Middletown's commercial development has been the rapid development of commercial land to the south with excellent interstate access and existing infrastructure.

Finally, the City has not been successful in creating economic and community development programs to stimulate growth. Programs like Activating Community Teams to Improve Our Community (A.C.T.I.O.N.) and Middletown Own It! were honorable in purpose but lacked the appropriate direction and funding that would have jump-started community growth.

The fifteen plans that were reviewed and summarized covered a very broad range of topics concerning Middletown's growth. Some cover the overall growth of the City as a whole; others focus specifically on topics such as downtown street design. Whether the scope was large or small, the recommendations made mostly fall into two categories: quality of life improvements such as housing, traffic, and education; and economic improvements such as tearing down the mall downtown, business clustering, business attraction/retention, and airport changes.

Although the tone of many of these plans is less than positive, most made positive recommendations that will very much improve the City as a whole. Two plans recommended tearing down the mall downtown to return that part of the City to a more travelable and friendly condition. Many others referred to traffic improvement changes that could be made. Overall the feeling is to create a better City for the community to share.

### **Master Plan: Middletown Urban Area (1965)**

Last amended in 1997, the 1965 Master Plan for Middletown included an overview of existing conditions, as well as steps the City should take for future development. The Plan pointed to a few areas of important concern including education, land use, annexation, infrastructure, and housing.

**Education:** In 1963, the Plan reported that the majority of schools were built after 1950 and were "in excellent condition." Interestingly, while the Plan indicated that schools were operating within their maximum capacity, three elementary schools were overcrowded. The major concern during this period was securing space for new schools to be constructed and coordinating student transportation.

**Land Use:** The Plan indicated that developed land was increasing quickly in residential, commercial, and industrial uses, with the only historically steady increase coming from commercial land use. The Plan also indicated the need for land for future development of multi-family units.

**Annexation:** The Plan questioned two things. First, was annexation necessary or desirable in light of prospective development and population growth? Second, would annexation promote a more desirable and sounder growth in the areas beyond corporate limits? The Plan answered these questions by stating that annexation agreements between communities were nearly impossible and it questioned the feasibility of any such agreement.

**Infrastructure:** Whereas infrastructure availability for new development is a concern today, the 1965 Plan does not concern itself with guidance for future infrastructure construction.

**Housing:** A major concern of the 1965 Plan was blight. The Plan looked at the housing stock of each census tract and indicated whether or not blight existed. There were also references to demolition of blighted areas. Concerns were based upon economic reasoning that poorly maintained buildings created a poor image of a community and would lead to economic decline.

### **Middletown, Ohio Corporate Area Master Plan Document (1977)**

This Plan identified problems, needs and development issues relating to Middletown. These were:

- Low-cost housing for homeowners.
- Sterility from high-rise elderly housing.
- Defined growth-annexation policies.
- More small lower-rent shops for small businesses.
- Commercial vacancies and environmental problems along Central Avenue.
- Appearance of centrally located industrial sites.
- Direct access from Central Business District (CBD) to I-75.
- Improved west Middletown bridge crossing.

The Plan also indicated seven development issues:

- Concentration of new commercial development.
- Nature and extent of hospital expansion.
- Nature and extent of services to unincorporated areas.
- Additional interchange access to I-75.
- Increased densities in surrounding areas.
- Provision of additional affordable single-family housing.
- Provision of additional industrial land reserves.

### **HyettPalma Creating the Future Downtown (1992)**

The HyettPalma plan targeted specific economic development actions that a City could take to revitalize a downtown. The plan began by comparing the historical and economical trends towards decline cities have taken over the past several decades to the growth suburban retail centers and malls have shown over the same period, and how the two relate to one another. The plan offered numerous strategies the City should take for successful downtown revitalization:

- Create private-public partnerships that are driven by the public sector
- Create a downtown vision
- Follow market-driven forces: know your customers and potential customers
- Create downtown economic themes
- Create a formal marketing campaign that is as effective as retail marketing at attracting customers
- Create a retail market assessment
- Identify opportunities for downtown offices and housing

The plan noted that old-fashioned economic strategies do not need to be relied upon as much and a greater emphasis should be placed on new progressive strategies. Rather than sending press releases to the local media, the City should create a new marketing program that includes hiring a marketing firm to create ads and target appropriate audiences. The City should also consider running downtown the way that a suburban mall is run; hire professional staff and management; coordinate business attraction, placement, and retention; and create a unified marketing strategy.

Among other recommendation for downtown revitalization, HyettPalma recognized the importance of business clustering. When similar businesses are located within very close proximity to one another, they can be effective at attracting more customers and customers that make multiple purchases. However, revitalization will not be successful unless good planning decisions are made and the new identity of the downtown is promoted.

### **City of Middletown Sewer Master Plan (July 1996)**

URS Consultants created a twenty-year plan for the City of Middletown, to indicate the state of the sewer system. The plan reported on deficiencies in the system and appropriate steps to take to improve the system and meet future growth patterns, as well as ensuring minimal negative environmental impacts. URS' planning area for this report included not only the City Middletown but also portions of Madison and Lemon Townships in Butler County and Franklin, and Turtle Creek Townships in Warren County.

The planning area considered by URS had a population of 64,000 in 1990. URS calculated that the buildout population for the area would be 124,000 persons. The population is projected to increase to 82,000 in 2005 and 98,000 in 2015.

The City Manager developed a ten-year capital projects plan to replace or rehabilitate aging sewage equipment at a cost of \$20,000,000. According to URS, the fee schedule in place at that time could adequately provide for capital and operational expenses for sewer and wastewater services for the next ten years.

In order to create effective models of sewage system demands and usage in the future, URS assumed that development would occur first in the west/south, east-central, and east regions. The population of the central region would remain static until the other regions developed to the point that made development in the central region desirable.

Development would occur first in the east and east-central regions because of access to I-75. Development would likely avoid the region west of the Great Miami River because of unsuitable topography and soil conditions.

URS recommended a variety of tasks to improve Middletown's sewage system. These recommendations ranged from increasing staffing to monitor the system more effectively, to replacing antiquated raw sewage pumps. One of the most critical recommendations was the replacement of deteriorated and partially collapsed sewers along Yankee Road.

### **Downtown Middletown Urban Design Plan (1996)**

This plan is an overall physical design summary of Downtown Middletown. It looks at a variety of aspects of downtown including streetscape details, traffic flow patterns, historical context of new and redeveloped buildings, and functionality of downtown retail, signage and community facilities.

Specific changes were proposed for the following components of Downtown:

- Traffic flow changes are required to improve the vehicular circulation of downtown. Traffic should be emphasized on Verity and Central. Traffic intensity on Manchester and First Street should be reduced. Verity, First, and Manchester should be re-aligned to accommodate two-way traffic.
- Parking lots should be screened from street view with visual improvements. Parking usage should be improved by encouraging workers to use parking garages and shoppers to use street parking in order to maintain the highest and best uses for downtown parking. Security and lighting should be increased at parking locations to improve the perception of safety. Consolidate parking facilities for common use at the corner of Reinartz and Verity to serve more users and uses.
- The plan proposes to change the zoning of downtown to provide for more functionally cohesive development. Recommended zoning districts should include multi-use,

residential, institutional, industrial, and business uses. Historic designation and special standards to are recommended to maintain the historic character downtown sections.

- Three recommended entry signs are proposed to indicate the main entrances to downtown. The proposed signs are recommended at Central Ave. just after crossing the river from the west, Verity Pkwy. just south of Smith Park, and University Blvd. and Central Ave. Wayfinding signs are proposed downtown to direct traffic to key downtown locations.
- Specific improvements are recommended along the following corridors:
  - Central Avenue: An emphasis should be placed on maintaining the historic character of buildings along this corridor by using development incentives. Parking lots should be screened from the view of drivers. Any new construction or redevelopment should be consistent with the district's overall historic form. A unique point of entry should be created at the corner of University and Verity.
  - City Center Plaza: Because the City Building's parking has always been inadequate in terms of quantity, additional parking spaces should be provided. The vacant parcel directly west of the City Building should be developed. The Manchester Hotel is an important and significant landmark and should be supported by the City.
  - City Centre Mall: The plan recommended that the downtown mall be demolished. Demolition was seen as an opportunity to free up new development opportunities as a downtown focal point. The City has implemented the demolition recommendation.
  - Financial District/Main Street: As the last remaining symbol of the historic heart of the City, business attraction and retention efforts should be focused here. Emphasis should be placed on saving the Sorg Theatre.
  - Canal: Reuse the hydraulic canal as public recreation, or at least make an effort to clean it up for public display.
- Central Avenue Streetscape Plan:
  - A large portion of this plan focuses on the streetscape design of Central Avenue from Carmody Blvd. to the west and University Blvc. at the east. The plan calls for paving improvements to the sidewalk, street trees, parking screening and other landscaping improvements. Construction drawings are provided showing details of the construction materials. The plan also recommends building façade improvements and related regulations that will ensure cohesive building lines.

### **Middletown Master Plan Amendment (1997)**

The 1997 Master Plan Amendment is an amendment to the 1977 “Corporate Area Master Plan Document.” The document focuses mostly on land east of Interstate 75, including land that is unincorporated but may be considered for annexation in the future. Although the plan focuses on a total of 10.4 square miles of land, only 4.3 square miles are incorporated and thus governed by the plan. The 10.4 square miles of land is divided into six planning areas:

- Breiel Boulevard-Miller Road Area
- Sawyer-Finkelman Annexation Area
- Towne Mall-Smith Annexation Area
- Lewis Annexation Area
- Commerce Drive Annexation Area
- Planning Area Beyond Corporation Boundary

The Master Plan considers the following four major policy issues: land use, thoroughfare system, public utilities, and community facilities.

- Land Use: The land use plan was created based on a variety of criteria. Consideration was given to topography and existing natural features, existing street system, existing structures and land use, capacity for land to sustain development, and the market potential for various growth patterns. Specific recommendations are made for each of the five planning areas governed by the plan.
  - Breiel Boulevard-Miller Road Area: This area is bound by the Great Miami River to the north, the City of Franklin and Franklin Township to the east, Poor interstate access, topography and a lack of utility service have kept development from occurring in this area until recently. The land use plan recommends development of low and medium density residential uses, mostly on large lots due to topography. The completion of the Breiel Boulevard extension and the introduction of utility service will create pressure to develop this land.
  - Sawyer-Finkelman Annexation Area: This area is bound by the City of Franklin and Franklin Township on the north, east, and west. Manchester Road and Dixie Highway subdivides this area into four quadrants. The northwest quadrant, known as the Sawyer Annexation area, is recommended to develop in a mixed-use configuration. A mixture of low, medium and high density residential along with a commercial development area for a proposed neighborhood commercial district is proposed. The southwest quadrant is proposed to be low density residential. The northeast quadrant is proposed to have commercial development consistent with existing land use and zoning patterns. However public utilities must be extended before development can occur. The southeast quadrant is proposed to have predominately residential use. Large-lot residential development will be the focus of development patterns until public utilities are extended to provide this area with service.

- Towne Mall-Smith Annexation Area: This focus area is bounded on the east by Interstate 75 and has excellent interstate access. There are two distinctive districts within this area. The area to the north of Towne Boulevard is planned to remain low density residential. The area to the south is planned to have a commercial focus. Public utilities and roads already exist but may need to be upgraded to permit added capacity.
- Lewis Annexation Area: This area is at the southwest quadrant of the I-75/SR 122 interchange, roughly bounded by SR 122 to the north, I-75 to the east, Cincinnati Dayton Road to the west and Bigler Road to the south. With good access to Interstate 75 and an abundance of vacant land, this area has a potential for a variety of development patterns. Development will occur based upon location of land on both sides of Dicks Creek. Land west of Dicks Creek will support medium density residential, and land east of the Creek can support regional commercial uses with the extension of Towne Boulevard to the south providing access to the interstate. Light industrial development will occur south of the intersection of Towne Boulevard and Lefferson Road.
- Commerce Drive Annexation Area: Accessible and visible from I-75, the Commerce Drive area is well suited for light industrial, office and commercial development. The development potential for this area will be achieved only with the provision of adequate public infrastructure.
- Thoroughfare System: The thoroughfare plan identifies the general layout and function of streets throughout the City. The plan also proposes changes to the existing street system to improve the street network. Major improvements include Breiel Boulevard upgraded to a primary thoroughfare; major widening of Dixie Highway; Hendrickson Road widened to serve as a major east-west thoroughfare; widening of Union Road as a primary thoroughfare; widening of State Route 122; improvements to traffic ramps at State Route 122 and Interstate 75 to improve movement and turn lane stacking at that intersection; and future interstate connections at Manchester Road and Greentree Road.
- Public Utilities: The public utilities plan identifies: existing utilities facilities; proposed facilities; utility needs; and discusses the impact development will have on the provision of public utilities. The plan area is currently served by two water systems. The City of Middletown's water service area is west of I-75, Warren County's service area is east of I-75. Middletown planned expansion of water lines in the Breiel Boulevard/Miller Road, Sawyer-Finkelman Annexation Area, Lewis Extension Area, and Commerce Drive Annexation Area service districts. Sanitary sewer extensions were planned in the following service areas to provide sanitary sewer service: Breiel Boulevard/Miller Road, Sawyer-Finkelman Annexation Area, and the Commerce Drive Annexation Area. In 1995 the City adopted legislation creating a Well Field Protection Plan. The Plan created an overlay zoning district with specific control devices built in, and the overlay district nearly follows the existing municipal boundary of Middletown.
- Community Facilities and Services Plan: This part of the plan discusses facilities and services such as parks and recreation, schools, emergency medical service and fire protection, police protection and public works depots. The plan recommends

development of a 4.2-acre neighborhood park in the Breiel Boulevard-Miller Road, Finkelman Annexation and Manchester Meadows area based on a projected population of 4,099. Because of low population projections in other areas of the City, no other neighborhood parks are proposed. Because of population size and increasing demand for recreational facilities, a community park is to be constructed in the northeast part of the Commerce Drive Annexation Area that is between 15 and 20 acres in size. The plan notes that new development will affect demand upon the public school systems and has projected the number of students that will be generated by new development. Over the next 10 to 15 years a total of 2,304 additional students will be generated, affecting the Middletown, Franklin and Lebanon School Districts. Two new fire stations are proposed, and there is a recognition that demand for police service will increase as well. An unmanned police workstation is being considered on the east side of the City to serve mobile patrol units since the main police station is located in the western portion of town.

#### **A.C.T.I.O.N. (1998)**

This process was facilitated by the Middletown Hospital and began as a way to address health care issues facing the residents of eastern Butler and western Warren Counties. Over the 2-1/2 year life span, ACTION broadened to focus on other quality of life issues such as housing, education, job access, and development. ACTION dissolved due to a lack of ongoing funding, direction, and conflict of interest among those involved with the program.

During its life, ACTION did accomplish a few important goals. ACTION collaborated with United Way by providing resources to establish the Community Volunteer Resource Center. Public forums were held to establish needs and goals for the region. ACTION was awarded a grant from the Mid-Miami Healthcare Foundation for 1999, and was able to hire a Director.

The largest concerns shared by regional residents were identified at ACTION public forums and other community events. Action then organized teams to focus individually on each concern:

- Community Connectedness –To create a cooperative concept of community featuring free and easy sharing of information under the assumption that teamwork will not harm individual organizations with differing goals, the team established an informational clearinghouse of organizations and agencies throughout the region and posted on the web.
- Cultural Diversity – The team’s mission was to initiate dialogue among the business community, educators, religious institutions and the media. It organized the CINergy CommUNITY training in Lebanon for junior and senior high students, diversity training for Warren County Mental Health System, helped establish police and fire exam preparation classes to help prepare minority applicants, participated in conflict management dialogue with Northern Irish Policemen, and met with the Middletown Journal publisher to discuss the position of the paper regarding cultural diversity.

- Enhancing Family Living – The team desired to be an advocate and a resource for education, motivation, and inspiration, and to provide families with opportunities to improve their quality of life. Barriers affecting family living included poor transportation options and access to grocery, retail and medical services.
- Substance Abuse – The team desired to influence attitudes against substance abuse through the engagement of every sector of the region in an ongoing substance abuse prevention and awareness campaign. The team created “Substance Abuse Awareness Week” and sponsored a community event featuring school administrators, the Chamber of Commerce, and representatives of other public agencies. The team helped create a television program shown on local cable access featuring nationally known speaker Dr. Mike Thompson.

### **Downtown Middletown Market Analysis and Development Strategy (1999)**

Submitted by ZHA, Inc. in December of 1999, this study focuses on downtown Middletown’s potential to be economically successful. The study revolves around existing commercial and office development and the potential for creating a lively downtown home to residents, workers and visitors.

The single largest barrier identified to reviving downtown economically was removing the roof above the City Centre Mall. This recommendation has since been implemented. The Strategy acknowledged that the mall site would not compete with regional shopping centers because downtown lacks the proper population and traffic.

To make downtown viable, ZHA recommends the following steps be taken:

- Linkages: Improve downtown’s functional linkages by removing the mall roof structure and improving street frontages, and improve linkages between former mall site and other downtown amenities.
- Capitalize on unique assets: Suburban communities with real urban blockface that provide a walkable downtown attractive to pedestrians are not very common. Middletown should exploit this asset by investing streetscape improvements, ordinances requiring direct streetfront orientation for new and existing structures, and Tax Increment Financing (TIFs).
- Focus on Employment and a mix of uses: Redevelopment programs should focus on mixed uses that reinforce each other. The city should work to attract one single large employer downtown so as to create a stable daytime downtown population that small business can cater to. Also, the City should offer incentives on City-owned property to promote redevelopment.
- Activity Generators: The City should create entertainment and recreation facilities to increase residential presence downtown. Two ideas ZHA recommends are an indoor ice skating rink and a drive-in movie theatre.

When retailers look for new places to develop, they generally seek locations that have access to major freeways, proximity to major retail anchors and concentrations, and access to markets where households and buying power are growing. Downtown Middletown lacks all three of these attributes and the City cannot provide any assistance to create these attributes. Therefore, downtown would succeed to attract urban businesses such as eating/drinking establishments, theatres, specialty shops, and functional goods and service establishments. These attract and thrive on pedestrian activity from downtown employees, underserved areas in Madison and Wayne Townships, and visitors.

### **Middletown Own It! (March, 2000)**

Middletown Own It! was an effort headed by the Middletown Community Foundation, with additional financial support from the City. During its existence, four committees were set up to address needs and obstacles facing the City. These committees were infrastructure, community involvement, economic development, and culture, arts, recreation and education.

The economic development committee kept the best records from committee meetings. They were interested not only in what will bring more jobs to the City, but educational needs, community diversity, housing, and recreation. The economic development committee determined that the primary need of the City was: “The image of our community needs to be improved and the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century need to be met through the development of a community-wide visionary process”. Research of various Middletown reports brought to light the most important issues the city faces.

The effectiveness of the school system and how the community perceives its success is an important issue facing Middletown. Between 1990 and 1999, approximately 700 residents were surveyed three times on their thoughts of the public education system. In the most recent survey, 46% of respondents gave the school system “report card” rating of “C.” To contrast, in 1990 when asked the same question, 49% gave the school system a “B” rating. The respondents indicated that they liked the quality of teachers and individual attention given to the students, but were disappointed with money management policies of the school system and indicated a concern over a lack of discipline of students. In 1990 75% of respondents indicated a willingness to pay more property taxes to improve education. In 1999, that number fell to 51%.

A second major issue facing Middletown has to do with quality of life issues. Abraham Maslow proposed a two-tier hierarchy of needs explaining what people generally strive to achieve happiness. The first tier of needs include food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services. The second tier of needs pertains to personal growth, fulfillment, and self-esteem including deriving meaning from religious, civic, family and work activities. In order to meet the second tier of needs, all of the first tier needs must be met.

Middletown residents who were asked to list the most important issues facing quality-of-life in the City responded with the following needs, ranked in descending order of importance:

- Quality public education
- Crime control
- Economic development
- Jobs

The quality of life issues in Middletown appeared to address mostly the second tier of Maslow's theory. This was a good indication that the community was generally meeting the basic needs of its residents such as providing food, clothing, and shelter.

Beyond quality of life needs, the residents of Middletown have perceptions about their neighbors, government, local businesses, and diversity. Public input identified a feeling of distrust in the local government because of a lack of responsiveness to community wants and needs. Residents find the people of the city to be "cliquish" and difficult for new residents to mix. There is a perception within the community that since the locally owned Armco Steel was sold, the sense of community the company created was lost. Finally, many people believe Middletown is a city divided by racial and economic inequalities, evident in the products supplied by local retailers.

The economic development committee concluded that economic development has a significant impact on other community issues such as educational quality, homelessness and crime. Local resources should be used to promote development. The cause for lack of development downtown needs to be addressed. Middletown should strive to attract more young professionals to work and live in the greater Middletown area.

Sometime in 2001, Middletown Own It! stopped seeking funding and operation. Correspondence between members indicated a lack of direction and a vision statement with no executable goals. There are no clear records stating Own It! recommendations or future plans.

### **Midpoint Centre Conceptual Design and Development Project (2000)**

This report is a conceptual design and development project focused on 1,100 acres of land at the I-75 and State Route 122 interchange on the east side of Middletown. This report was completed in 2000.

The plan's focus area, at the time the plan was completed, was approximately 80% vacant land and 20% strip commercial development initially constructed when the interchange was built. The plan intends to guide investment to higher-end development. The study found development potential to be promising in the next five years.

Development at the interchange should include high-end corporate offices, hotels, and other upscale facilities. Many of the properties in the development have good "curb appeal" and are visible from the interstate.

Economic Analysis shows that Greater Cincinnati is a competitive physical location on a regional level offering cultural and other activities and amenities but it cannot compete at a national or international level. Therefore, Middletown should concentrate marketing efforts on the regional base. The analysis also concluded that high-end development found along I-75 between Cincinnati and Dayton could not be supported at Midpointe Centre for at least another five years. However, the types of facilities that could eventually be supported include back-office and administrative offices, regional headquarters, and similar white-collar jobs.

A conceptual design was created showing what a potential build-out development would look like. The plan included residential uses in the southeast and northeast quadrants, professional/corporate uses in relative close proximity to the center of the interchange, commercial/retail uses north of SR 122 and west of I-75, and medical/professional uses northeast of the interchange.

### **Elements of a Strong Regional Economy (February 2001)**

This short report by the OKI Land Use Commission summarized the importance of a strong and balanced regional economy. The findings were generalized, and while they did not directly suggest any improvements for Middletown, the objectives would form important starting points for any community.

The Commission indicated the following ten elements of a strong regional economy:

- **Jobs and Income** – Income levels are an indication of the economic status of a community. Barriers to increasing jobs and income include poor transportation, local rather than regional advertisement of job openings, and low wage service sector jobs.
- **Diversity in Industry Sectors** – A community needs a variety of different industry sectors so that economic slowdowns in one sector do not cause a complete failure in the local economy. Also, different industries provide employment options for people with a variety of educational and skill levels.
- **Developing Economic Clusters** – Clusters are geographic groupings of businesses related by industry. By working together and providing parts and/or service to each other, transportation costs are reduced and sharing of knowledge increases.
- **Public Facilities and Services** – These include public infrastructure, education, and recreation services. Public facilities serve the basic needs of a community's business and residential populations, and without them the community could not compete for new residential, commercial and industrial development and growth.
- **Historic Preservation** – Identifying and protecting the structural and geographical culture and history of a community. Preservation of residential and commercial buildings is becoming a big trend in development today as people begin to realize the importance of preserving our heritage. Authentic historic structures are the center of thriving neighborhoods all across the country.

- **Brownfield Redevelopment** – Brownfield sites are properties previously used for industrial uses and may have environmental issues preventing re-use. Brownfield redevelopment is assisted by state and federal grants and loans to clean sites and provide a new tenant a place to develop free from environmental cleanup concerns.
- **Transportation Linkages** – This term refers to the linkages between transportation modes, people and places, and regions. Public transportation systems such as bus systems are important to link skilled workers to jobs, students with schools, the ill and elderly with medical care. Road systems link all of the above as well as products to producers consumers, but road systems are viable only for those who own personal transportation.
- **Quality of Life** – The collective components that impact a person's daily life. These include ability to meet food, clothing and shelter needs as well as ability to gain self-worth in life. Tangible improvements to quality of life include recreational and cultural programs, perception of safety, social character, educational access, and health services.
- **Incentive Programs** – Economic incentive programs are used to attract and retain businesses and jobs. Incentive programs include tax abatements and credits, grants and loans, infrastructure financing, training, marketing, communications and more.

### **Strategic Marketing Plan (August 2001)**

The Middletown Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) was established as a cooperative effort between the City of Middletown and the Mid-Miami Valley Chamber of Commerce. The plan calls for the attraction of 15 to 20 new businesses in three years, as well as the creation of 675 new jobs with a payroll of \$34,000,000. The short-term objectives of the plan were:

- Create and maintain an umbrella economic development organization.
- Attract new businesses.
- Retain and expand existing businesses.
- Improve internal and external image.

MEDC focused heavily on their marketing campaign to attract businesses to Middletown. The marketing campaign presented Middletown as an ideal location along I-75, halfway between Cincinnati and Dayton with adequate room for new business and residential growth.

This plan identified the fact that Middletown is at a competitive disadvantage because the land around I-75 in Middletown is not serviced by adequate infrastructure. With intense development occurring to the south, businesses have an incentive to locate at Union Centre, Tylersville, or Cincinnati-Dayton interchanges where infrastructure, as well as strong public-private partnerships that assure results, exists.

### **An Overall Housing Assessment of Middletown, Ohio (August 12, 2002)**

The Danter Company created this report as an analysis of the overall housing market of Middletown. Danter broke Middletown into five geographic categories then analyzed the housing stock within each area, as follows:

#### I) Housing Stock

- The Downtown/Airport geographic area had a declining population and an estimated 2001 median household income of \$57,908 in 2001.
- The Central/University geographic featured an increasing population, the highest percentage of homeowners in the City, and an estimated 2001 median household income of \$53,577.
- The I-75 Corridor had an estimated 2001 median household income of \$57,902.
- The South Main Street geographic area featured a declining population, the highest percentage of renters in Middletown, and an estimated 2001 median household income of \$27,272 in 2001.
- The South/AK Steel area featured an increasing population and an estimated 2001 median household income of \$32,885 in 2001.

#### II) Income Distribution

- The income distribution of Middletown was heavily weighted at both the top and bottom. The data showed that the majority of the population had an average income of either less than \$30,000 or more than \$60,000 a year. A healthy income distribution would feature a large middle class with both a small amount of wealthy incomes and a small amount of poor incomes.

#### III) Absorption Potential

- Absorption potential is a term used to describe the capacity for an area to handle new housing units. According to Danter, Middletown would be able to absorb between 125 and 161 new homes within a three-year period and 372 to 480 new apartment units within a three-year period. Danter indicated that elderly housing services were adequately addressed in Middletown over the next three years.

#### IV) Future Demand for Housing

- Subsidized housing demand was projected to increase by 42 families and 32 senior households by 2006.
- Tax Credit housing demand was projected to increase by 79 households by 2006.
- New home demand was projected to be 205 units per year.
- Congregate care housing demand was projected to increase by 52 units between 2001 and 2006.

- There was a demand for 266 step up/down rental units.
- There was a 537-unit surplus of assisted-living units.

### **Hook Field Municipal Airport Strategic Development Plan (2002)**

This strategic development plan was created in the third quarter of 2002 by Whitworth-Borta & Co., the Gem Real Estate Group, Inc. and McKenna Associates, Inc. at the request of the City of Middletown. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the potential value of Hook Field Municipal Airport as a catalyst for economic development in the City of Middletown. The plan found that Hook Field is generally at a disadvantage as a community asset when compared to other general aviation airports in Southwest Ohio. General Aviation is defined as all aviation other than military and commercial airlines. 145 million passengers are carried annually on general aviation aircraft, and approximately 70 percent of the hours flown by general aviation are for business purposes.

Hook Field is currently owned and managed by the City of Middletown. Middletown always provides assistance to the airport when in need, but to its disadvantage the City rarely keeps a close eye on management and operation. This type of relationship has allowed Hook Field to dip into a state of poor maintenance with facilities in need of improvement.

The plan suggested several changes that should be made to position Hook Field as a competitive general aviation airport in Southwest Ohio. Unlike most small airports, Hook Field is funded directly from Middletown's general funds. The airport should be financially and organizationally separated from the general fund and public services to make it operate in the best interest of the City and the competitive marketplace for general aviation. An enterprise zone should be created as a budgeting and funding system for the airport to reduce the dependence upon the City. Also, an airport manager position should be created at the City level to manage day-to-day activities. All current leases at the Airport should be evaluated and re-negotiated to raise rents to market levels at the benefit of increasing cash flow to the City.

Physically, the airport is surrounded by industrial and residential uses. An analysis of land use determined that the highest and best uses of land surrounding the airport would be industrial and airport related. This limited land use recommendation was made in part because of the proximity to the airport itself, transportation reasons, and because of environmental issues related to airport operations are better dealt with by industrial uses than residential. Currently there is little room for expansion of the airport or for industrial development near the airport grounds. Airport expansion may not be a feasible option, though, because the airport sits on a wellfield protection site, and environmental controls may prevent the expansion of the airport to limit the amount of non-point source pollution (i.e. fuel, motor oil spills).

Hook Field competes directly with six other airports in Southwest Ohio in terms of general aviation. These are Dayton International, Lunken Field, Wright Brothers, Hamilton-Butler Regional, Lebanon-Warren County, and Cincinnati-Blue Ash. The plan identified that Hook

Field operates at approximately 44-67% of capacity relative to the competitive market. Hook Field should be able to capture 13-20% of the general aviation market in Southwest Ohio; however, it currently conducts only 8.6% of the total annual flight operations of the seven competitive airports located in Southwest Ohio.

The plan analysis projects that all seven airports will see growth in the number of fixed base based aircraft. Based aircraft are important to general aviation airports because they generate revenue through hangar rentals, airport usage fees, gas sales, and maintenance fees. The report notes that it is unlikely that Dayton International will want to expand the number of based aircraft because it is better suited for larger uses. Additionally, Lunken Field and Cincinnati-Blue Ash do not have space available for storage of additional based aircraft. This positions Hook Field to pick up more than its projected share of new based aircraft growth.

Hook Field is at a competitive disadvantage in a few areas that could easily be improved. First, it does not offer adequate Field Based Operations that provide service and maintenance to airplanes on the ground. Second, the waiting facilities for passengers are not very impressive and the restroom facilities are not in the best condition. Finally, the airport is not managed like a business, and a professional staff manager would improve the overall appearance of the Airport.

### **Creating a Competitive Community Advantage (March 26, 2003)**

Ed Barlow is nationally known as a Futurist, someone who analyzes trends and makes an assessment of the circumstances that will be found in the future. Mr. Barlow made a presentation in March 2003 at an event organized by the Middletown Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)

Six specific topic areas were introduced as important for future growth:

- Human Capital
- Smart Communities
- Workforce Development
- Reduce Cycle Time
- Community Knowledge – Scanning & Monitoring System
- Infrastructure

From the above topic areas, specific strategies were defined. These included:

- Improve schools
- Define Middletown's niche and market it (small urban area)
- Develop high tech jobs
- Train/retrain underemployed
- Education/academic partnerships

Few conclusions were made from Barlow's presentation. The majority of the comments he made were abstract and generalized, and at the greatest level of detail only dealt with issues concerning the State of Ohio as a whole.