

PLANNING FOR MIDDLETOWN

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A Report to the Commission
on the City Plan of Middletown,
Connecticut. Prepared by
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I INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to give a brief indication of steps which a community should take towards a progressive study of its future. The post war era is bound to bring about many changes in the pattern of our cities, and especially in the case of those which are long-established. In common with most cities, planning for Middletown's future must be chiefly a matter of alteration. Like the old house which is still serviceable, the pattern of the community must be renovated to meet the needs of the next generation.

The war has brought about a tremendous increase in the nation's industrial plant. New structures have been built all over the country, on a scale never before seen. After the close of hostilities, the factors of modern plants, decentralization, improved traffic facilities, better living, and lower taxes will favor many localities at the expense of some older ones. It will affect whole regions as well as separate communities. Therefore, the problem is not confined to the city limits, but must be considered on a regional and even a national basis as well.

Therefore it is essential for the citizens of communities like Middletown to take a careful inventory of the situation, to try to foresee the future picture, and to plan for the eventualities which can be predicted. In any planning, there is the danger of losing sight of the general aspects of the problem in a mass of details. Hence, the whole matter should be studied from a larger viewpoint, and general conceptions should be cleared up, before tackling specific matters.

The planning of public improvements has heretofore generally been carried on in unrelated series of individual projects, each undertaken under the impulse of special pressure. Yet they actually determine to a large extent the physical development of the community. And, directly or indirectly, they are responsible for an important part of the public expenditures. Lack of coordination in planning them is frequently a cause of subsequent loss, and prevents a wise and logical community development.

Middletown is located approximately in the geographical center of the state. On the Connecticut River, it is the nearest town of any size to the sea, which formerly gave it an importance as a port. It is the center of an area of surrounding towns which make up a trading district of growing importance. In turn, this area is definitely a component part of the general metropolitan region of Hartford. A study of the accompanying map shows the pattern of this region. Middletown occupies a position on the outer ring of the metropolitan area. Just as the neighboring towns are dependant on Middletown to a considerable extent for ordinary retail trade, so Middletown is dependant on Hartford as its metropolis. Its nearness to New Haven also gives it a second

large center in proximity. With the general trend towards decentralization, the outer areas of metropolitan regions are assuming more and more importance.

The accompanying Map of the Region shows the limits of the metropolitan district of Hartford, as set up by the U.S. Census. It includes Middletown and Meriden on the south, and extends from Manchester on the east to Bristol on the west, and to Windsor Locks on the north. Within this area live a half million souls. It is a region which, though not a political entity, has an economic and social life comparable to a single municipality of that size. Middletown has its own sphere of influence including the adjacent towns. The trends in the development of these areas are discussed later on under "Population".

The greatest advantage of Middletown's situation is the river. This was the cause of its early growth. Water borne traffic is important in modern trade, and is undoubtedly destined to increase. Oil, coal, and lumber are the principal cargoes of inland and coastwise water routes. An improved river channel would give Middletown an opportunity to become a leading distributing point for such commodities. The recreational value of the river could be much increased, both for the enjoyment of the people, and for profit. Another factor which contributes to Middletown's productive income is the presence of an important seat of learning. Similarly, two state institutions add considerably to the community's payroll.

In the ensuing report, all data regarding population and productivity are taken from the U. S. Census Reports. The census of 1940 was taken before the very large upswing of war production. Its figures are therefore much more reliable in forecasting a long range trend, than would be the actual statistics of today, even if they were available.

Sound planning of any sort must rest on a solid background of facts. First there must be a careful analytical study of all the factors which influence development. Then there must follow a common sense approach to the solution. Unfortunately, city planning was formerly thought of largely as a matter of beautification. Now it is seen as a vital enterprise of the community, affecting the interests, and the pocket books, of all the citizens who have a stake in the community's future.

II POPULATION

Middletown's growth has been relatively steady, from the settlement of the country, down to the present. In colonial days, it was at one time the largest community in Connecticut, in point of population, and its limits extended on both sides of the river, to include the present towns of Cromwell, Portland, East Hampton, and Middlefield. By 1800, the state had six towns of approximately 5000 inhabitants each. The largest of these was Stonington, followed by Hartford, New Haven, New London, Norwalk, and Middletown. By 1850, industrial development had begun to supersede agriculture and maritime trade. New Haven had then become the largest community in the state, with some 20,000 souls. Middletown stood fifth, with 8,441 inhabitants, exceeded also by Hartford, Norwich and New London. In 1900, the progress of industry had brought added population to numerous cities. Middletown then ranked 12th in the state, with a total of 17,486 for the town. During the past two decades, there has been a notable rise in the population of towns surrounding the larger cities, so that several suburban communities exceed Middletown, which is now 17th in point of size, with 26,495 inhabitants (1940 census).

During the early period of the state's growth, Middletown's maritime position kept it in the forefront, aided by an early industrial development. However, since the middle of the last century, the gradual decline of shipping, the introduction of the railroad to inland centers, and a greater concentration of industries in larger centers have contributed to larger increases in other communities. Considering the present tendency towards decentralization, it is probably fortunate for Middletown that its growth has not been too rapid. Chart I shows the trend of population from 1790 to 1940. Since the consolidation of the city and town in 1923, the census figures are given for the entire area of the town. Therefore, to obtain a correct comparison, the population of the town, and not of the former smaller city, has been used in this report for years prior to the consolidation. As used in this study, the terms city and town are synonymous as applied to Middletown.

During the last twenty years, the development of the motor car has been the primary cause of a strong trend towards decentralization. This tendency was much accelerated during the decade from 1930 to 1940. Although wartime shortages of rubber and fuel may temporarily restrict the movement in this direction, it is certain to become even greater in post war times. The trend is nationwide, and will certainly be greatly influenced by the further increase in air travel. A study of Table I, giving trends of the state as regards urban and rural population, shows that the move towards the city was continuous until 1930, but that it has begun to be reversed since that time.

TABLE I
POPULATION TRENDS OF THE STATE

Year	Population of State	Decennial Increase	Urban Population	Urban Increase	Rural Population	Rural Increase	PerCent of Total Urban	Total Rural
1940	1,709,242	6.4%	1,158,162	2.3%	551,080	16.0%	67.8%	32.2%
1930	1,606,903	16.4	1,131,770	20.9	475,133	6.9	70.4	29.6
1920	1,380,631	23.9	936,339	28.0	444,292	16.0	67.8	32.2
1910	1,114,756	22.7	731,797	34.6	382,959	5.0	65.8	34.4
1900	908,420	21.7	543,755	43.1	364,665	-0.5	59.9	40.1
1890	746,258	19.8	379,853	45.7	366,405	1.2	50.9	49.1
1850	370,792	19.6	59,321	52.3	311,471	14.9	16.0	84.0
1800	251,002	5.5	12,722	77.4	238,280	3.3	5.1	94.9

The trend of population in Connecticut follows very nearly that of New England as a whole, although the decline in rate of increase has been more accentuated in this state in the last two decades. The curve of population is apparently fast reaching a crest. One considerable factor for this slowing down is the decline of immigration. It is estimated that during the past century, two-thirds of the increase in New England's population was due to new comers from abroad. This is reflected in a gradual decline in the ratio of foreign born inhabitants in the state, which was 29.6 per cent in 1910, and 19.3 per cent in 1940. Middletown's foreign born population is approximately the same as the state average, being 20.3 per cent in 1940.

In the case of the larger cities, the decline in rate of growth is much more marked. Table II gives the population and rate of growth for 1940 and 1930 in the large cities of the state, and in those comparable in size to Middletown.

TABLE II
POPULATION TRENDS OF CITIES

City	Population		Rate of Increase	
	1940	1930	1930-1940	1920-1930
Hartford	166,267	164,072	1.3	18.9
New Haven	160,605	162,655	-1.3	0.1
Bridgeport	147,121	146,716	0.3	2.2
Waterbury	99,314	99,902	-0.6	8.9
New Britain	168,685	68,128	9.8	14.9
Stamford City	47,938	46,346	3.4	32.1
Stamford Town	61,215	56,765	7.8	40.8
Norwalk	39,849	36,019	10.6	29.8
Meriden	39,494	38,481	2.6	28.8
New London	30,456	29,640	2.8	15.4
Bristol	30,167	28,451	6.0	12.8
Torrington	26,988	26,040	3.6	26.3
<u>Middletown</u>	<u>26,495</u>	<u>24,554</u>	<u>7.9</u>	<u>10.8</u>
Norwich City	23,652	23,021	2.7	3.2
Norwich Town	34,140	32,438	5.2	9.3
Danbury City	22,339	22,261	0.4	17.5
Danbury Town	27,921	26,955	3.6	20.8

It is interesting to note that, although Middletown had the next to lowest rate of growth among cities of less than 100,000 during the twenties, in the decade ending in 1940 its percentage of gain was exceeded in this category only by Norwalk. Investigation further shows that the two cities with the largest recent growth, Norwalk and Middletown, are communities with large land area, including extensive undeveloped portions. Three of the cities listed in Table II are not consolidated with their towns, and occupy a much smaller area. Therefore, reference to the figures for the towns of Stamford, Norwich, and Danbury, given with the corresponding cities, afford a better comparison with the other communities in which city and town are co-extensive. It also bears out the fact that the greatest recent growth in cities is generally in their outlying areas. It is also interesting to note that higher rates of increase are found in communities which form definite parts of metropolitan areas. In further indications of the trend towards urban decentralization, we note that the largest gains of any communities are found in the proximity of the larger cities. Almost without exception, suburban towns are now growing much faster than the parent municipalities. Examples of this are shown in Table III.

TABLE III

POPULATION TRENDS OF SUBURBAN TOWNS

Per Cent of Increase of Population, 1930-1940

<u>Hartford Area</u>					
West Hartford	35.4	Bloomfield	32.7	Wethersfield	28.4
Windsor	21.4	Newington	19.2	East Hartford	8.7
<u>New Haven Area</u>					
North Haven	42.8	Cheshire	33.4	Milford	29.8
Hamden	22.8	East Haven	16.4	West Haven	16.3
<u>Bridgeport Area</u>					
Newtown	52.6	Trumbull	46.3	Easton	24.6
Fairfield	22.7	Stratford	17.5		
<u>New York Metropolitan Area</u>					
Westport	36.0	Darien	31.2	New Canaan	14.0
Greenwich	7.2				

The United States Census recognizes a metropolitan district of Hartford New Britain, covering an extensive area which is shown on the accompanying regional map. This is not to be confused with the smaller Metropolitan District, a political subdivision including Hartford and several of its neighboring towns, which exists primarily for water supply and sewage disposal. The census defines a metropolitan district as an area about a city of more than 50,000 inhabitants, two or more such cities being sometimes included in one such district. It is deemed to include the surrounding towns having a population of at least 150 persons to the square mile. This district is not a political unit, but rather an area including all of the thickly settled territory in and around a city or group of cities, more or less integrated as to economic and social interests. Although Hartford is the 51st city in point of population in the United States, the metropolitan district is

21st among such areas of the country. Among similar districts of the nation, it is somewhat larger than Atlanta, Indianapolis, and Seattle, approximately the same as Houston, and slightly smaller than New Orleans. Statistics of population shown in Table IV give further evidence of the more rapid increase in outlying areas surrounding large centers.

TABLE IV

POPULATION TRENDS OF THE HARTFORD-NEW BRITAIN METROPOLITAN DISTRICT

	Population		Increase	
	1940	1930	Number	Per Cent
Metropolitan District	502,193	471,184	31,008	6.6
Hartford and New Britain	234,952	232,200	2,752	1.2
Towns outside Hartford and New Britain	267,241	238,985	28,256	11.8
Per cent of Population outside Hartford & New Britain	53.2	50.7		

This table shows that the population of the district as a whole grew at approximately the same rate as the state. However, the communities outside Hartford and New Britain grew at more than ten times the rate of the central cities. Consequently, the proportion of inhabitants living in the outside communities is constantly growing. Middletown's position in the metropolitan district is that of a subordinate center, on the outer circumference. Among the similarly situated communities, it has as important a position as any. Surrounding it is an area of influence of considerable size, capable of much more extensive development. Table V gives comparative figures for Middletown and the six adjacent towns. Here again, except for the small agricultural communities of Durham and Middlefield, the outside towns are growing faster than the central city.

TABLE V

POPULATION TRENDS OF MIDDLETOWN AND NEIGHBORING TOWNS

	Area sq. mi	Population		Increase	Per Cent of Increase
		1940	1930		
Middletown	42.64	26,494	24,554	1,941	7.9
Cromwell	13.21	3,281	2,814	467	16.6
Portland	27.00	4,321	3,930	391	10.0
East Hampton	27.26	2,955	2,616	339	12.9
Haddam	45.90	2,069	1,755	314	17.9
Durham	38.03	1,098	1,044	54	5.2
Middlefield	13.13	1,230	1,204	26	2.2
Middletown					
Area	207.17	41,449	37,917	3,532	9.4
Area outside City	164.53	14,954	13,365	1,594	11.9

A study of the foregoing tables shows very clearly the progress of decentralization. Not only have the larger cities of the state probably

stopped growing, but the same is undoubtedly true of the central portions of the smaller cities. Those which show a continued growth are the communities which have the largest undeveloped area, and which form part of metropolitan areas. It is of course impossible to foresee every future development in population. The establishment of a large new industrial plant in any community may greatly affect the trend. However, general conclusions may be arrived at. Chart II gives the comparative rates of growth by decades for the Town of Middletown, for the Middletown Area, and for the area outside of the town. It shows that, up to 1930, the most rapid growth took place in Middletown itself, with a smaller percentage for the surrounding towns. However, by 1940, this was exactly reversed, the rate of increase for the outside towns being half again as great as for the city.

✓ The chief conclusion to be derived from this study appears to be that the future growth of Middletown itself, unless some new major factor comes into the picture, will be moderate. This growth will be almost entirely in the outlying part of the town. Desirable new industries could be brought into certain sections, as for example the area in the northern part of the town, along the Berlin railroad line. A proper development of the waterfront could allocate a sufficient part to shipping uses, fostering trade in the distribution of lumber, fuel, oil and similar products. A very much improved system of transportation would attract residents to Middletown among those employed elsewhere in the metropolitan district. To offset the factor of higher taxes, Middletown must plan so as to offer greater inducements than the surrounding towns. As it is, these towns appear destined to grow more rapidly than the city itself. ✓ Therefore, the primary development to be considered in future planning for Middletown is its position as the center of its region, and its relation to the metropolitan district.

III LAND DEVELOPMENT

1. Present Land Use.

The physical development of a community is patterned on the use to which its land is put. With the consolidation of the city and town of Middletown, there has been placed in one municipal jurisdiction both a compact urban area and a large rural territory. This is of great advantage in giving a unified control to the development of the land around the city proper.

The land use map shows how much of the total area is still distinctly rural. Outside of the former city limits, houses have been built chiefly along principal roads, or in a few subdivisions. Agricultural, chiefly dairy farming, accounts for a considerable acreage. Wesleyan University occupies a large area near the center, and its presence helps to create a considerable high class residential district around it.

In the old city limits, especially along the water front, there is a good deal of land which has been vacated, or which is occupied by very dilapidated structures. Industry is dispersed in many sections of the city, and in general occupies relatively small sites, hemmed in by residences, with little room for expansion.

2. Distribution of Population.

The accompanying map shows the general distribution of population in the various portions of the entire town. The state hospital and other institutions account for a large fraction of the total as inmates, fourteen per cent according to the 1940 census. The trend in population is towards the outlying areas, and Middletown is fortunate in having so much land still available to take care of this movement. In moving out from the center, people are likely to settle in a developed subdivision, or along quiet side roads. This leaves the principal arteries approaching the city as a difficult problem in future planning.

3. Land Values.

In comparing the relative values of land in different parts of the community, the figures most readily available are those of the tax assessors. These generally follow proportionately the actual values, and may therefore be used for study. Variations in relative land values, as indicated by the assessment rolls, are shown on an accompanying map. Although frontage on Main Street may be assessed as high as \$800 a foot, it is observed that the value falls off rapidly, even in the immediate vicinity, and that by comparison, the rural land bears a very nominal assessment.

Commercial property located in the center of a city has always by far the highest value, and consequently pays the largest taxes. Most of the city's residential properties do not pay as much in taxes as their share of the city's cost per capita for services rendered. Therefore, it is the commercial properties which make up the balance.

4. Present Zoning Law.

For some years, Middletown has been protected by a zoning law. This is the chief legal control which a community may invoke to guide its development. The present act divides the land of the entire town into five categories, which are indicated on the map. In outline, the provisions are briefly as follows: -

- a. Park Zone. Structures limited to public uses, such as monuments, memorials, museums, libraries, etc., and for recreational use. Height may not exceed the distance from the street, except that a tower of reasonable height may occupy not more than 25% of the building area.
- b. Restricted Residential. Uses as for park zone, also detached dwellings for not more than two families, schools, churches, philanthropic institutions, farming, truck gardening, green houses, railway or bus waiting rooms, air fields, together with telephone exchanges or transformer stations whose architecture conforms to the neighborhood, and when approved by the zoning board of appeals.
Height not over 40 feet, nor more than 2/3rds the width of the street. For land not yet subdivided, the provisions of the park zone apply.
Area of building to be not more than half the lot.
Yards required, front 20 feet, side 4 ft. each, rear 25 ft.
- c. General Residential. Uses as for previous zones, also group or multiple dwellings, lodging and boarding houses, social, fraternal, and club buildings, hotels, except those primarily for transients, professional offices for residents of structure, five-car private garages (for trucks only on permission of board of appeals).
Height not over 60 feet, nor more than the width of the street.
Area of building to be not over 75% of lot, over 90% of corner lot.
Yards required, front 10 ft., side 4 ft. each, rear 11 ft.
- d. Commercial. Uses as for previous zones, together with commercial uses. Manufacturing is not permitted except as incidental to retail business.
Height not over 100 feet, nor more than 1 1/2 times the width of the street.
Area of structure above the ground floor to occupy not more than 90% of lot, or 100% of corner lot.
- e. Industrial. Uses permitted include any use except that nuisances or noxious uses may be allowed only by special permit by the zoning board of appeals after a hearing.
Height and area as for commercial zone.

In the case of all zones there is a provision that 25% of the area of the highest story of a building may be built to any reasonable height.

IV FACILITIES.

1. Transportation.

Railroad transportation is limited to freight traffic only with direct connections to New Haven, Saybrook, Willimantic, Hartford, and New Britain. Of these lines the two most important are obviously the New Haven and Hartford connections. Middletown is approximately 30 minutes from the largest classification yards of New England, located in New Haven.

Bus service has supplanted the railroad passenger service and is therefore quite adequate, regular and at frequent intervals. Time, distances and number of trips to various localities are indicated on Map 9.

Water transportation is available on the Connecticut River. The present channel depth of 15 feet is a considerable limitation, however.

Air transportation is also limited at the present time due to the lack of suitable topography sufficiently near the city. At the present time Brainerd Field in Hartford is the nearest commercial airport of any size.

Highways are well developed in all directions, as has been seen in Map 1. The relative density of traffic on the different routes is shown graphically on Maps 10 and 11.

2. Water Service.

The area now serviced by water mains from the central system is shown on Map 12.

3. Sewers.

The area now serviced by sewers is shown on Map 13. This area is considerably smaller than the area serviced with water, and it should be noted that while the extent of water supply will encourage expansion into new areas, the cost of running sewers to all of these areas will be great. Such an expansion of sewer facilities should be controlled to prevent too rapid, and therefore too costly, growth.

4. Schools, Playgrounds, and Parks.

These public services are shown on Map 14.

5. Institutions.

The main institution, the State Hospital for Insane, plus Wesleyan University and Long Lane Farm, the School for Wayward Girls, are shown on Map 14, together with all other public and semi-public institutions.

V PRODUCTIVITY

In the long run, a community exists because it offers to its inhabitants an opportunity to make a living. Therefore, the most important single factor in the study of future planning is that of economics. To an important degree, it holds the key to the pattern of coming years. The income of the community may be considered as coming from three principal sources, as follows:

- I. Occupational income earned in the community.
- II. Income from investments, pensions, annuities, etc.
- III. Income from earnings outside the community by its residents.

In the case of Middletown, an important portion of the total community income comes from outside sources, included in the last two categories. Income from capital saved by this or a previous generation is spent in town, and contributes to its business. The situation of the town in proximity to its metropolitan center of Hartford, and to New Haven as well, makes it an attractive residence for a number of persons employed elsewhere. They bring in a certain amount of outside money into the town. On the other hand, there is probably also a certain loss in the income of some persons employed in Middletown, and residing elsewhere. However, of this latter group, the majority probably live in Middletown's own trade area, and consequently spend a part of their income, at least, in town.

In April 1940, when the decennial census was taken, the status of the employment of Middletown's inhabitants was as shown by the following table:

TABLE VI

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF RESIDENTS OF MIDDLETOWN
PERSONS 14 YEARS OLD AND OVER - 1940

Total number of persons 14 years old and over	-----	21,843
Total of above on labor force	-----	10,812
Total employed, except on gov't emergency work	9619	
Total employed on gov't emergency work	350	
Unemployed but seeking work	843	
Total not on labor force	-----	11,031
Total employed in own housework	4490	
Total in school	1690	
Total unable to work	886	
Total in institutions	3517	
Miscellaneous	448	

Middletown is the seat of a number of institutions, which contribute both to its population and to its income. The State Hospital is responsible for the major part of the abnormally large number of persons listed in Table VI as being in institutions, the largest number of any community in the state. On the other hand, institutions of this character provide a livelihood, directly or indirectly, for a large number of persons of all

classes, much of whose income is spent in town. Wesleyan University is another example of this, providing the community with a considerable income from employment, as well as bringing in a large amount of outside money through faculty and students. The presence of these institutions also accounts for the very large proportion of persons employed in professional occupations. The persons recorded in the 1940 census as employed were distributed in the following occupational groups:

TABLE VII

EMPLOYED PERSONS BY OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS

1. Manufacturing		3,904
2. Commerce, Retail trade	1,401	1,525
Wholesale trade	<u>124</u>	
3. Finance, banking, insurance, real estate		331
4. Agriculture and natural products		434
5. Construction		479
6. Service occupations, Domestic service	353	
Other service occupations	<u>377</u>	
7. Transportation and utilities		283
8. Professional and semi-professional		1,451
9. Government administration, federal, state, local		315
10. Commercial recreation		48
11. Miscellaneous and not recorded		<u>119</u>
	Total employed	9,619

The 1940 census gives certain information in regard to industry and commerce, collected for the calendar year 1939. This data as regards manufacturing, shown in Table VIII, excludes very small plants, and gives information concerning wage earners, wages, value of products, etc. For this reason, the number of wage earners given below is less than the number shown previously to be engaged in manufacturing as a whole. Also, figures given in Table VIII for wage earners does not include executives of plants nor management or office employees, whereas the occupational classification of manufacturing given above does include these categories.

Tables IX and X give comparative statistics of wholesale and retail trade, including sales for the year 1939, number of persons engaged, and total payrolls. In these tables, the number of active proprietors (of unincorporated businesses) plus the number of employees gives the total number of persons engaged in commerce. Table X also gives a comparison of retail sales per capita. The census gives the manufacturing and wholesale statistics for cities only. Tables VIII and IX cover data of these two occupations for the state and for the principal cities. Retail statistics, however, are available for towns as well. Therefore, Table X, covering this information, gives data for towns, since this offers a better comparison with Middletown, as previously explained.

TABLE VIII

STATISTICS OF MANUFACTURING - 1939

	Number of Establishments	Wage Earners Average for year	Total Wages for year	Value of Products
State	2,936	233,525	\$276,274,243	\$1,229,585,773
Hartford	332	21,180	27,901,669	97,954,598
New Haven	404	20,523	21,838,685	100,838,135
Bridgeport	365	29,419	34,331,569	160,348,923
Waterbury	150	19,458	24,853,976	112,217,649
New Britain	100	13,213	15,155,415	58,109,685
Stamford	101	5,821	7,023,983	27,003,811
Norwalk	105	7,531	7,773,673	32,516,922
Meriden	87	7,636	10,007,615	43,833,641
New London	47	1,447	1,349,492	5,436,421
Bristol	36	8,117	10,576,875	33,294,601
Torrington	41	6,158	7,578,092	31,456,349
Middletown	45	3,487	3,625,550	11,503,051
Norwich	59	3,167	3,094,676	16,423,354
Danbury	73	5,299	5,926,075	23,060,303

TABLE IX

STATISTICS OF WHOLESALE TRADE - 1939

	Sales (Thousands)	Active Proprietors	Number of Employees	Payroll (Thousands)
State	\$ 413,134	815	15,795	\$ 26,378
Hartford	115,046	167	4,949	7,746
New Haven	117,994	183	3,752	6,531
Bridgeport	52,842	110	2,153	3,971
Waterbury	20,982	43	862	1,370
New Britain	6,588	27	276	453
Stamford	18,131	23	543	1,096
Norwalk	4,653	15	217	347
Meriden	3,624	20	144	229
New London	7,197	20	256	385
Bristol	169	1	7	11
Torrington	3,350	20	103	158
Middletown	4,001	10	160	273
Norwich	11,007	32	510	803
Danbury	4,280	17	141	207

TABLE X
STATISTICS OF RETAIL TRADE - 1939

	Sales (Thousands)	Active Proprietors	Number of Employees	Payroll (Thousands)	Sales per Capita
State	\$ 717,262	21,715	70,248	\$ 79,905	\$ 419
Hartford	108,613	2,011	12,619	15,292	653
New Haven	87,311	2,535	9,417	10,821	543
Bridgeport	73,628	2,094	7,647	8,554	505
Waterbury	43,622	1,198	4,537	5,132	439
New Britain	26,197	764	2,589	2,769	381
Stamford Town	30,231	775	2,695	3,559	494
Norwalk	20,003	617	1,580	1,941	503
New London	19,256	445	2,016	2,233	635
Bristol	10,423	303	891	1,016	347
Torrington	11,054	386	1,039	1,104	410
Middletown	11,929	275	1,286	1,469	450
Norwich Town	14,828	481	1,479	1,476	435
Danbury Town	16,035	415	1,498	1,615	575
Manchester	9,833	286	886	934	421
Windham Town (incl. Willimantic)	8,176	272	715	762	586
Cromwell	458	30	27	30	139
Portland	1,106	48	113	136	250
East Hampton	925	42	83	83	313
Essex	1,167	47	91	116	408
Meriden	16,994	635	1,615	1,649	430

A study of the foregoing tables gives an idea of Middletown's position in comparison with other communities. It gives some idea of the relative importance of commerce and manufacturing in making up the total income of the city. Of special interest are the figure of retail trade per capita. Among cities of its size and comparable location, Middletown has a fairly good figure. The state average indicates that every person makes an annual total of retail purchases of \$419. Obviously much of this goes to the large cities, as shown by their higher figures per capita. Middletown should be able by community effort to attract more customers from surrounding towns, and to keep more of its own shoppers at home. A high retail trade is immediately reflected in much higher land values in the center of a town. Since the central property devoted to commerce bears a very large share of the taxes, this factor is seen to be of great importance in municipal income.

VI OUTLINE OF FUTURE PLANNING

1. Introduction.

Maps 15 and 16 following show in a series of sketches the most outstanding characteristics of Middletown that should be considered in the future development. Map 15 graphically diagnoses the principal potentialities of Middletown while Map 16 sets forth several aims toward which the city might proceed to secure for itself a stable foundation upon which the future can depend.

2. Analytical Data.

Although the present report offers the outline of a background of data as a basis for planning, this material should be amplified, and presented in greater detail. The co-operation of other agencies, such as the Housing Authority, the Chamber of Commerce, and others, should be sought. Administrative departments of the city, including the school authorities, could probably furnish more detailed information to be added to the statistics. The planning commission should be a central custodian of all statistics and data about the city. An outline should be prepared of material to be collected from time to time as facilities are available. A standard system of filing and presenting the data should be laid out.

3. Future Land Use and Zoning.

Probably the most difficult problem facing our communities in the future is that of finding a use for all the land. With the introduction of motor transportation, and the consequent decentralization of living, land has become available in tremendously increasing quantities. It is our most abundant commodity. Much of our land has little agricultural value, unless for forestry. The former speculative value of land in the cities is very much diminished, and the large amount of land available prevents the hope of any great rise in values. Furthermore, increased taxes of all kinds make it increasingly difficult for persons to hold land in large tracts, merely for the enjoyment of it. We must, therefore, face the future problem of idle land, and its use, both in the center of the city, and in rural regions.

The community will doubtless become the owner of increasing areas, for recreational and other municipal purposes. Individual homesites will tend to be larger. Industrial plants are more and more being located in the open country, and will occupy much larger properties than heretofore. There will be great opportunities for development of large tracts, both in new land and in the rehabilitation of older urban districts. This will require greater co-operation between owners, and greater participation by municipalities themselves. Middletown already has a Housing Authority, which is one step in this direction. Private enterprise has an equal opportunity through

joint efforts of citizens, property owners, financial institutions, and others directly interested. Several states have pointed the way through the enactment of urban rehabilitation laws, an example which will doubtless be found necessary in Connecticut.

The decentralizing trend seriously affects the tax structure of real estate, and will necessitate far reaching revisions in the basis of municipal income. The community must exert more and more control over its development, in order to prevent waste, and to safeguard the interests of all of its citizens. More and more it will become the partner of its citizens carrying out projects of general betterment.

Community control of land use is through the operation of the zoning laws. Middletown's ordinances on this subject are already becoming out of date. In common with those of most cities, they were conceived in a previous era. They permit congestion on a scale which would be applicable to a vastly larger community. Thorough studies should be initiated to bring the zoning laws into line with the future picture. Not only should the various zones be reviewed and restudied, but the area requirements of the act should be greatly revised in the light of future land use. Commercial zones should be restricted in amount to what the community can logically support in trade. They should be spotted in proper locations throughout the town to form neighborhood shopping centers. Long bands of commercial zone along a principal highway, as occurs on Saybrook Road, are an admission that the community can think of no use for this frontage except for gas stations and hot dog stands, in spite of the fact that only a small fraction of that roadside could ever be devoted profitably to such a purpose. But the establishment of a few businesses may be enough to ruin the values on a long stretch of highway, and proves detrimental to the whole community. The rehabilitation of residential areas along main highways is a major problem of planning.

Another field of study in zoning is that of industry. There are certain areas which could logically be assigned to industry, to provide room for expansion, and to encourage new enterprises in town. In both commercial and industrial zones, the area requirements for structures should be such as to provide ample protection to owners of adjacent land, and to prevent future costly congestion. Provision should be made for off-street parking to take care of the requirements of buildings of all types. The value of real estate in Middletown is not so high as to make it a hardship to make such requirements. They will pay dividends in the future. Especial care should be given to commercial and industrial zones as they apply to the undeveloped districts of the town. In residential zones, there should be a minimum area of ground required per family, both for single and for multiple dwellings.

The present absence of any building activity affords an excellent opportunity to carry on the work of revision of the zoning laws. It may be done without haste, and without treading on the toes of intending builders.

However, such a study should not be made in itself and based merely on the present use to which the land is being put, but must of necessity

be based upon a future plan of development, or, as it is commonly called, a Master Plan. Without a Master Plan of development future growth will continue in the unplanned, uncoordinated and utterly confused manner that it has to the present. Zoning without a Master Plan is but freezing the present pattern into a static confusion. The alternative is to prepare a plan of development and to create with it a DIRECTIVE zoning plan which will by an evolutionary process lead toward the desired objectives.

4. Highway Communications.

A second field for study is that of highway communications, both outside and within the community. The construction of the Wilbur Cross Parkway and of the new highway bridge at Middletown are only the beginnings of a comprehensive arterial system, which will be needed in the future. The planning commission has the task of studying these future requirements, and the opportunity of collaboration with the state authorities in planning the thoroughfares in Middletown. Such matters as a riverfront parkway forming part of a new thoroughfare up and down the valley, and of an improved connection to the new parkway come first to mind. Then this whole subject of traffic within the city should be studied. This should undoubtedly be a part of the entire development plan study.

5. Future Public Improvements.

The third subject for thought is that of needed public improvements. As was mentioned in the introduction, those projects should be conceived long in advance, and planned in a coordinated scheme to meet the requirements of the community for a long time. This study should begin with a general outline of needs. It should cover the question of possible sites, integrated with the general conceptions of the future plan of the city. Indeed, during the present stoppage of capital expenditures for building it would be wise economy for a municipality to expend the money which would otherwise be devoted to construction, for the acquisition of sites for future improvements. Improvements which suggest themselves are such matters as a civic center with municipal administration facilities and county court house, added recreational centers, educational facilities and the like.

6. Surveys.

Like most cities, Middletown is badly in need of accurate maps, which are required for the detailed planning of future improvements. From time to time, as the opportunity is offered, the city should undertake as much work as possible in making horizontal and vertical surveys.

7. MASTER PLAN FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

To insure the proper and best development of Middletown not only in the future, but at the present time as a guide for all construction projects, a development plan should be prepared as soon as possible so that when building and construction projects will again be realized at the end of the war, the Commission on the City Plan will have before them a guiding plan upon which decisions can be based, ideas can be tested, projects can be approved, and above all, development can be determined and coordinated.

POWERS OF THE COMMISSION ON THE CITY PLAN

The right to create a city plan and to set up a planning commission was granted to the Board of Common Council of the city of Middletown by special legislative action in 1931. The commission consists of the Mayor and six members appointed by him and approved by the Common Council. Their primary duty is to "make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the city". They "may from time to time amend, extend, or add to the plan".

In preparing the plan, the commission is especially charged to "make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of present conditions and future growth of the city, and with due regard to its relation to neighboring territory. The plan shall be made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development of the city and its environs, which will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare, as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development, ...adequate provision for traffic....adequate provision for light and air, the promotion of healthful and convenient distribution of population, ..wise and efficient expenditures of public funds..."

The commission may adopt the plan as a whole, or by successive parts, and may amend, extend, or add to it. Such action must be preceded by at least one public hearing, and must be by affirmative vote of not less than four members. Once the commission has adopted the master plan, or any major part of it, "no street, or public building or structure, or public utility, whether publicly or privately owned, shall be constructed or authorized in the city, or in such planned section or district until the location, character and extent thereof shall have been submitted to and approved by the commission." However, in case of disapproval, the commission must communicate its reasons to the Common Council, which may overrule the commission by a recorded vote of two-thirds of its entire membership.

The commission also has the "power to promote public interest in and understanding of the plan, and to that end may publish and distribute copies of the plan or any report, and may employ such other means of publicity and education as it may determine." It is also charged with recommending to "appropriate officials programs for public structures and improvements and financing thereof." Another important duty intrusted to the commission is in connection with subdivision control. It must approve all plats of subdivisions before they can be filed in the town clerk's office. Under this provision, the commission has adopted regulations governing subdivisions and conditions under which approval will be granted.

The duties imposed on the commission are not easy to perform. Requests for approval of subdivisions, of new streets, of public improvements are made in such a manner that the commission is frequently placed under pressure to make a hasty decision, or to decide a matter without sufficient relation to larger problems. The only manner in which it may avoid being placed in such a position is to carry on a long-continued study of planning, so that it may have the answers to its problems before the questions arise. Coupled with this should be a problem of public education, so that the citizens may realize the importance of planning, and may understand the many factors influencing the future of the community, both the external factors over which they have no control, and those internal factors which the city can control.