



Town of Middletown Planning Department

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To: Hon. Robert J. Sylvia, President
Town Council Members

From: Paul A. Croce, Planning Board Chair

Date: June 12, 2020

Re: Proposed Atlantic Beach District overlay zoning

As requested by the Town Council during a joint meeting with the Planning Board and MEDAC on February 4, 2019, the Planning Board over the past several months has worked to draft a proposed Atlantic Beach overlay zoning district. The process included several Planning Board subcommittee and other public meetings and discussions, including two public workshop meetings held on July 31, 2019 and January 22, 2020, where draft documents were presented, and public input was received. Following consideration of public input, the Board revised the draft documents, the latest versions of which are attached for Town Council consideration.

As previously discussed, the idea for a special Atlantic Beach district dates back to at least 2007, when the Planning Board produced the Atlantic Beach District Master Plan. Since then efforts to implement the recommendations of that plan have been ongoing. These include recent intersection safety improvements completed or planned in cooperation with RIDOT, with designs consistent with the recommendations of the 2007 plan. Additional intersection and park improvements are currently being considered, as is the possibility of undergrounding overhead utility lines and removing utility poles within the district. The Town has adopted a tax increment financing (TIF) district to assist with funding such improvements.

Implementation of the Atlantic Beach District Master Plan is referenced in the Middletown Comprehensive Community Plan as follows:

Economic Development Element, p. V-10

"Investments and improvements made in carrying out implementation of the Atlantic Beach District Master Plan will boost tourism within Middletown."

Economic Development Element, p. V-14

"The *Atlantic Beach District Master Plan* serves as the primary document guiding the transformation of the area into a vibrant, walkable commercial area, capitalizing on its relatively dense development pattern and proximity to local beaches, historic Newport and other attractions. The following goals were adopted for the Atlantic Beach District:

- Develop and implement safety and aesthetic improvements to promote pedestrian activity that will support local small businesses, including streetscape improvements and pedestrian circulation throughout the district
- Study traffic flow and parking within the district to provide safety and efficiency
- Identify opportunities to capitalize on the proximity of the district to beaches, hotels and other attractions for the benefit of local residents and the town business tax base
- Identify options to promote private development that will be consistent with the vision for the district, including opportunities to promote an appropriate mix of uses and building and site design."

Economic Development Element, Action item E-I.E.2.

"Promote the development and enhancement of mixed-use business districts in appropriate locations (e.g. Atlantic Beach District, and West Main/Coddington redevelopment area)"

Economic Development Element, Policy E-III.C. & Action Item E-III.C.2.

E-III.C. Support economic growth and job creation in the local tourism and hospitality industry.

E-III.C.2. Facilitate implementation of the recommendations of the Atlantic Beach District Master Plan.

The proposed overlay zoning district would accomplish the following:

- Create new commercial building design requirements specific to the district, such as prohibiting flat-roofed buildings. Current town-wide commercial development design standards would also continue to apply in this area.
- Require site design and new building placement that preserves or enhances views of the ocean and Easton's Pond. This includes modifying existing landscape buffer and screening requirements.
- Parking in front of buildings would be prohibited and exterior lighting required to be dark-sky compliant.
- Installation of bike racks and pick-up/drop-off areas for those using ride-share services would be required. Installation of electric vehicle charging stations would be encouraged.
- Sign design standards for the district would include prohibiting all internally illuminated signs and encouraging the use of carved wood signs and other natural or simulated wood materials.
- A design manual (attached) has been created to assist property owners and developers to comply with standards.
- Use limitations in the area covered by the overlay district would continue to be substantially consistent with the underlying limited business (LB) zoning district, with some exceptions, such as:
 - Hotel buildings must include a commercial component on the first floor separate from the hotel use (except for buildings elevated for flood protection).
 - The number of hotel rooms would be limited to the number currently existing plus those currently in the application process, which totals 257.
 - Boarding of animals is prohibited.
 - Wind turbines are prohibited.
 - Multi-family dwellings, rooming houses and dormitories are prohibited.
 - General and special-trade contractors are prohibited.
 - Warehouse, self-storage, and distribution uses are prohibited.
 - Auto repair shops and car washes are prohibited.
 - Commercial catering operations are prohibited.
 - Some new uses are allowed: handicraft/custom manufacturing or small-scale craft or artisan-oriented production of goods; brewery/distillery, with retail sales and/or tasting room required.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.



Paul A. Croce, Planning Board Chair

cc. Town Solicitor
Town Clerk