

## MIDDLETOWN

## Board rezones space for homes

*One supervisor was concerned with the amount of retail and office space tentatively included in the project.*

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The Middletown portion of the Octagon Center development started to take shape late Tuesday night when the township supervisors rezoned 43 acres near the Oxford Valley Mall for probable townhomes and a small amount of retail and office space.

A vote earlier this year barred the residential part of the project from being age-restricted. The supervisors don't want any more of that kind of housing in a township that already has more than 1,000 age-restricted homes.

By a 5-0 vote Tuesday night, Supervisors Robert McMonagle, Jasper Caro, Chuck Thompson, George Leonhauser and Kathy Heuer rezoned the land from light manufacturing and mobile home park to multi-residential and commercial.

The 140-acre Lower Makefield part of the development to be built by the Matrix Development Group of Cranbury, N.J., will be 522 age-restricted homes and some small office buildings and retail shops.

In Middletown, there would be somewhere between 100 and 200 housing units, probably townhouses, on about 38 acres south of Big Oak Road and as much as 11,000 square feet of retail space and 22,000 square feet of office space on 5 acres north of Big Oak Road. Matrix vice president of development Russ Tepper said exact dimensions and specifics of the Middletown project wouldn't be known until the company submits land development plans.

Heuer was concerned about 33,000 square feet of retail and office space but voted for the rezoning after being reassured she could work to lower the size of that portion of the development during land development hearings. She also indicated she would push Matrix to install sound muffling walls along portions of the development bordering I-95, something Tepper said wasn't necessary.

"Sound walls are something we'll have to consider," insisted Heuer, who before becoming a supervisor served on the township's Matrix Advisory Board.

"It can be very difficult for residents living close to a major highway," added township Manager Richard Gestrich.

The Lower Makefield part of the project hasn't been started, even though it was approved in November 2006.

"We hope to start construction in Lower Makefield next year," said Tepper. "It's difficult to say. The residential market is not very supportive of new construction right now."

Township solicitor Mike Savona said there is still a sufficient amount of township land zoned mobile home park and light manufacturing after Tuesday's rezoning.