



Town of  
*Middletown*  
Delaware

## 2022 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



*Adopted October 2022*

Prepared by the  
Institute for Public Administration  
[www.ipa.udel.edu](http://www.ipa.udel.edu)



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE  
BIDEN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC  
POLICY & ADMINISTRATION

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# 2022 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## *Town of Middletown*

New Castle County, Delaware

Adopted by the Mayor and Council on October 3, 2022; Ordinance 22-09-01

Certified by the Governor on January 17, 2023

***Prepared by***

Institute for Public Administration

Joseph R. Biden, Jr. School of Public Policy & Administration

University of Delaware



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

**BIDEN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC  
POLICY & ADMINISTRATION**



STATE OF DELAWARE  
**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**  
TATNALL BUILDING, SECOND FLOOR  
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DOVER, DELAWARE 19901

JOHN CARNEY  
GOVERNOR

PHONE: 302-744-4101  
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January 17, 2023

The Honorable Kenneth Branner, Jr.  
Mayor, Middletown  
19 West Green Street  
Middletown, DE 19709

RE: Certification of 2022 Middletown Comprehensive Plan

Dear Mayor Branner,

I am pleased to inform the Town of Middletown that the Comprehensive Plan for Middletown, adopted October 3, 2022, is hereby certified.

The certification signifies that:

- (1) The submitted Comprehensive Plan complies with the requirements of Title 22, Section 702 of the Delaware Code.
- (2) The Office of State Planning Coordination has applied all aspects of the Comprehensive Plan review process, evaluated the components of the plan, and provided a recommendation regarding the status of the plan.
- (3) Middletown will not enact any significant or substantive changes to the Comprehensive Plan adopted October 3, 2022.
- (4) Middletown has worked with the State to incorporate comments before adopting the Comprehensive Plan.

Thank you for working with the State to complete this process and for the Town's diligence to ensure the implementation of this Comprehensive Plan. We look forward to working with you as you implement the Plan. Congratulations on this certification.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John C. Carney".

John C. Carney  
Governor, State of Delaware

# ORDINANCE 22-09-01

Introduced: September 12, 2022

Approved: October 3, 2022

## AN ACT TO AMEND AND READOPT THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE TOWN OF MIDDLETOWN

BE IT ENACTED BY THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF MIDDLETOWN (a majority of the members elected thereto concurring therein) THAT:

**WHEREAS**, Title 22 of the Delaware Code empowers municipalities to develop a comprehensive plan to guide the future of the Town; and

**WHEREAS**, Title 22, Chapter 7, reads that "At least every 5 years a municipality shall review its adopted comprehensive plan to determine if its provisions are still relevant given changing conditions in the municipality or in the surrounding areas. The adopted comprehensive plan shall be revised, updated and amended as necessary, and readopted at least every 10 years;" and

**WHEREAS**, due to the changing elements in the Town of Middletown since its last Comprehensive Plan update in 2012, it is necessary to update the plan at this time; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Middletown contracted with the Institute for Public Administration (IPA) at the University of Delaware to assist in the development of the Comprehensive Plan Update; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Middletown applied for and received advisory comments regarding this Comprehensive Plan update from State of Delaware agencies, New Castle County and other local jurisdictions, at the June 27, 2022, Preliminary Land Use Services (PLUS) meeting; and

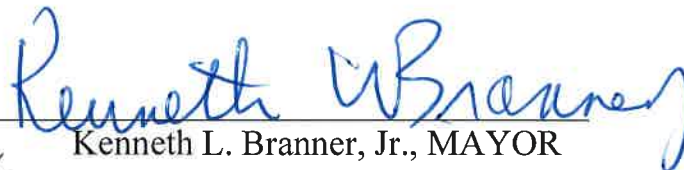
**WHEREAS**, the Planning and Zoning Commission of the Town of Middletown, at its meeting on September 15, 2022, has reviewed the Ordinance; and now, it is therefore

**ORDAINED** that the Mayor and Council of Middletown hereby adopt, pending certification, the 2022 Town of Middletown Comprehensive Plan, a copy of which is attached hereto, and made a part of, this ordinance; and it is

**FURTHER ORDAINED** that this Ordinance shall be effective upon adoption.

**ADOPTED THIS THIRD DAY OF OCTOBER, 2022.**

(SEAL)

  
Kenneth L. Branner, Jr., MAYOR

ATTESTED TO BY:



WITNESS, TOWN OF MIDDLETOWN

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# TOWN, COUNTY, AND STATE OFFICIALS

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## Town of Middletown

### Town Council

Mayor Kenneth L. Branner, Jr.

Vice-Mayor James Reynolds

Councilman Aaron Blythe

Councilman James Royston

Councilman Drew Chas

Councilman Bruce Orr

Councilman Craig Sherman

### Planning Commission

David Chillas - Chairperson

Donald Dibert

Frank Bailey

Billy Duck

Chuck McClausland

Joe Pontak

Gretchen Rachko

Charles Roberts

Keith Thompson

### Town Attorney

Scott Chambers

**Town Staff**

Morris Deputy, Town Manager  
Tyler Reynolds, Finance Director  
Kristen Krenzer, Public Relations  
Tim DeSchepper, Town Planner  
Diamelen Bowman, Permits & Inspections Clerk  
Rae Yingling, Administrative Assistant  
Katie Morris, Billing Manager

**New Castle County**

County Executive

Matthew Meyer

County Council

Karen Hartley-Nagle, President

Kenneth R. Woods

Dee Durham

Janet Kilpatrick

Penrose Hollins

Lisa Diller

David Carter

George Smiley

John Cartier

Timothy Sheldon

Jea P. Street

David Tackett

Bill Bell

Land Use Department

Richard E. Hall, AICP, Director

## State of Delaware

Governor

John Carney

Senate

Stephanie Hansen, District 10

Bruce Ennis, District 14

House of Representatives

Sherae'a Moore, District 8

Kevin S. Hensley, District 9

Jeffrey N. Spiegelman, District 11

Office of State Planning Coordination

David Edgell, AICP, Director

# INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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The *Town of Middletown 2022 Comprehensive Plan* was prepared by the Town of Middletown with assistance from the Institute for Public Administration (IPA), a unit within the University of Delaware's Joseph R. Biden, Jr. School of Public Policy and Administration. IPA links the research and resources of the University of Delaware with the management and information needs of local, state, and regional governments in the Delaware Valley. IPA assists agencies and local governments through direct staff assistance and research projects as well as training programs and policy forums.

## **Institute Director**

Jerome R. Lewis, Ph.D.

## **Project Team**

Sean O'Neill, AICP, Project Manager

Jennifer Reitz, AICP, Principal Planner

Nicole Minni, GISP, Mapping and GIS Support

Jack Levine, IPA Public Administration Fellow

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# OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

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## Overview

The Town of Middletown's founding dates to 1861, and for most of the town's history it was known as a small quaint place in southern New Castle County. However, in recent decades that identity has changed significantly. The town has grown from just over 3,800 people in 1990 to an estimated population of just over 23,000 in 2020. Middletown is now the fourth largest municipality in the state of Delaware in terms of population, trailing only Wilmington, Dover, and Newark. The town has also grown a very healthy employment base and has become a regional center for commerce in the southern New Castle County area. Currently, Middletown is almost completely built-out, with very little open space or available land for new development. Despite these constraints, Middletown is interested in managed growth in the near future, both through limited annexation and expansion and through infill development and redeveloping properties within the current town boundaries. Many of the goals from the town's 2012 Comprehensive Plan have been addressed over the past 10 years, including encouraging continued diversification of the housing stock, working with the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) on planned road improvements within town including the new Route 301 highway, and developing an in-house geographic information system (GIS) system. However, the town continues to pursue additional goals focused on improving the quality of life for town residents. The 2022 Comprehensive Plan incorporates information and actions from the previous comprehensive plan while providing an updated vision for the town over the coming decades.

In addition to carrying forward some of the goals of its prior comprehensive plan, the Town of Middletown has identified new policies and guidelines to be considered in this comprehensive plan. This includes an additional focus and interest on redeveloping some areas within town, expanding traffic capacity through roadway expansions and extensions, preserving and enhancing the downtown Main Street area, improving bicycle and pedestrian access throughout town, and seeking potential expansion opportunities particularly in the southwest portion of town. Planning for an appropriate amount of new development while simultaneously protecting existing neighborhoods and the town's community character will be a challenge and a focus for the town moving forward.

## Purpose

The purpose of the 2022 Comprehensive Plan is to guide future decisions by delineating the policies on which these future decisions will be based. These policies are developed through the comprehensive planning process and informed by factors affecting the community. These factors include demographic trends, land uses, the transportation system, natural resources, economic development, historic resources, and both utilities and community facilities. An assessment of existing conditions and the creation of a guiding vision and goals have informed the development of recommendations for the town to consider after the adoption of this plan.

## Vision for the Town's Future

"The Town of Middletown will work to maintain its historic core and small-town atmosphere while seeking opportunities to strategically grow and expand. Middletown plans to do this by maintaining a close connection to its community's needs and desires and continuing to address those needs and desires through measured growth, infrastructure investments, and economic strength."

## Goals of the Plan

The following five goals represent the primary objectives of the plan, with elements of each impacting various chapters throughout the plan:

1. Improve the safe and efficient flow of vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians throughout town.
2. Maintain the quality of life in town by focusing on the public health, safety, and recreational opportunities of current and future residents.
3. Continue growing Middletown's economy by expanding employment and business opportunities in the town and the region.
4. Maintain the integrity of Middletown's historic core and small town atmosphere.
5. Ensure that natural resources are protected for the health and enjoyment of existing and future residents of Middletown and the surrounding region.

## Planning Process

The comprehensive planning process involves establishing goals for the future of a municipal government, analyzing current and projected conditions, and laying out steps that can be taken to help a municipality reach its goals. Important town information and data have been updated to summarize the existing and projected conditions for Middletown in the areas of demographics, infrastructure, environment, economics, transportation, and land use.

## Public Participation

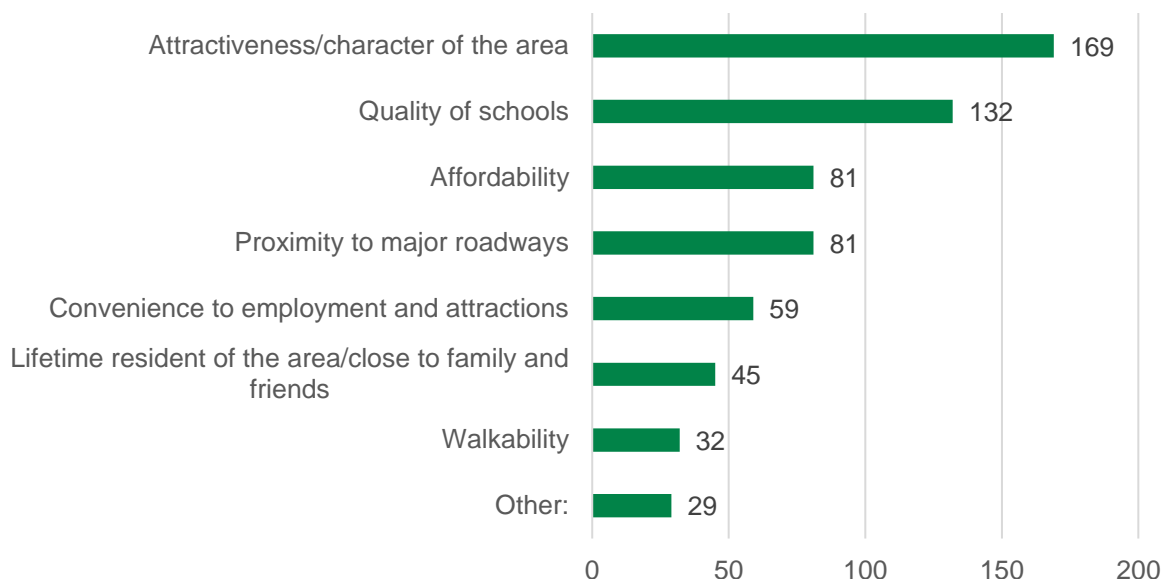
IPA staff began meeting with Town of Middletown staff and the town council in May 2021. Each of these meetings were advertised and open to the public. At subsequent meetings, various plan components were discussed.

### *Public Online Survey*

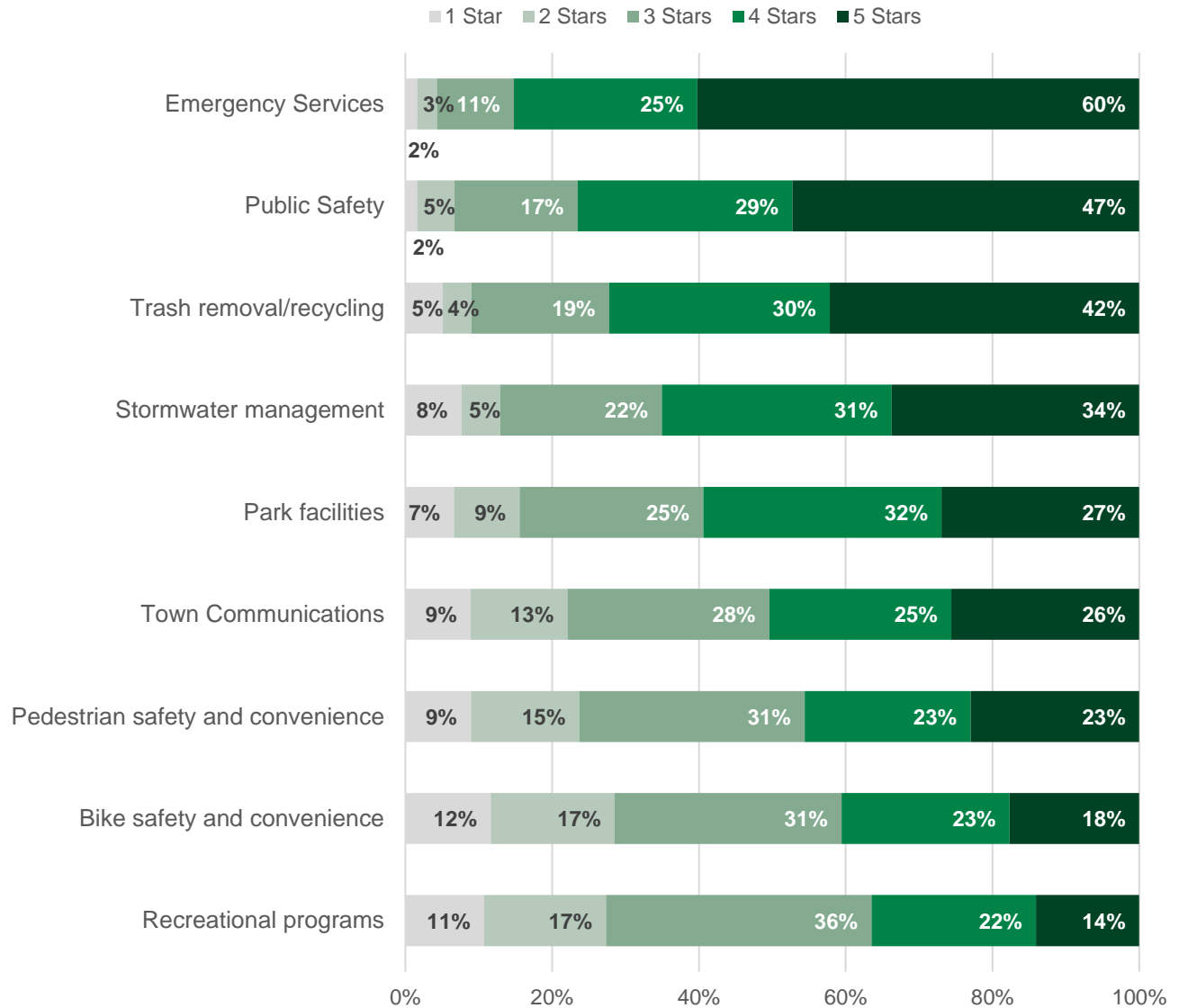
IPA worked with town staff to develop and distribute a public online survey. The survey was made public in early September 2021, a link to the survey was posted to the town's website, and a message was included in the town's monthly newsletter in September. The survey was closed in November 2021, and over 500 responses were received. Key findings from the response to the survey included that most residents seem generally happy with Middletown, with most identifying the "attractiveness of the area" and "quality of the schools" as the primary things they like about the area. The two areas where survey respondents were least satisfied were "pedestrian safety and convenience" and "bike safety and convenience." Survey

respondents also identified “protecting natural resources” and “enhancing the small-town atmosphere” as two other desired objectives for the town.

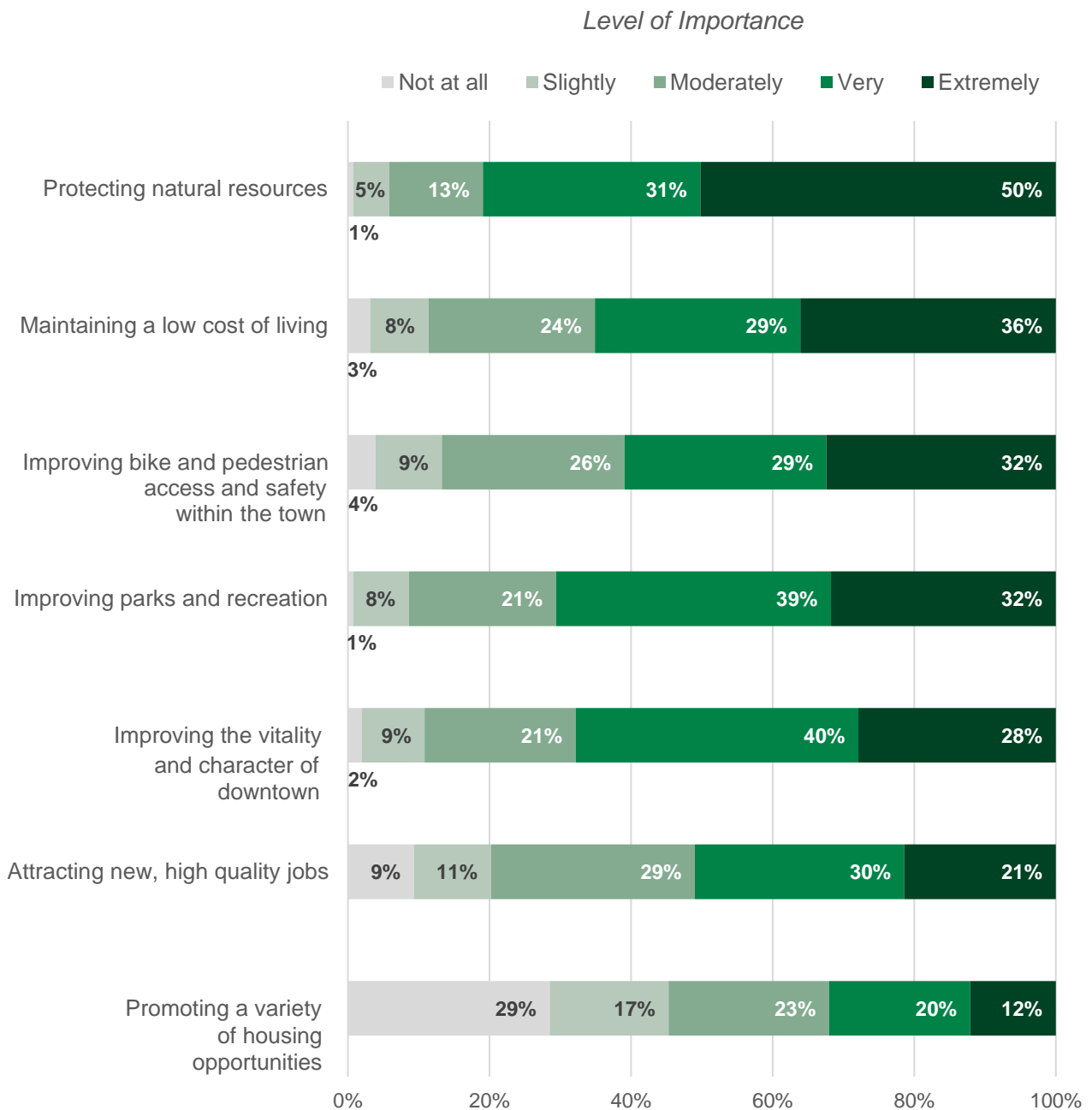
**Figure 1. Responses to Survey Question 3: “Here are some reasons that people may choose to live or work in Middletown. Which of these are most important to you? Choose all that apply.”**



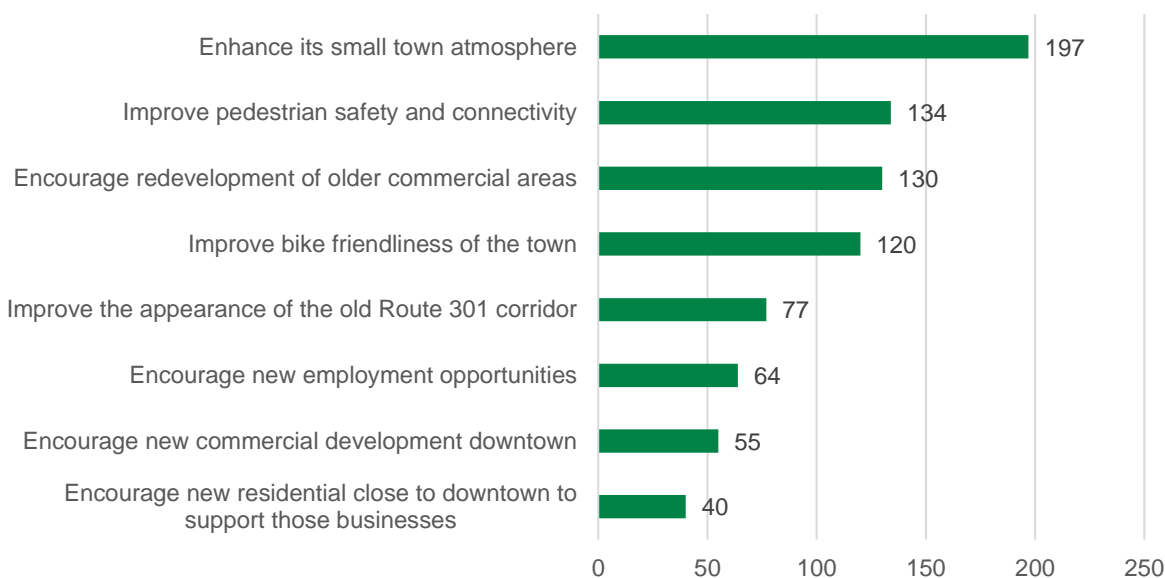
**Figure 2. Responses to Survey Question 5: “How satisfied are you with the following services in Middletown?” Rated on a scale of 0 to 5 stars.**



**Figure 3. Responses to Survey Question 7: “How important are the following to Middletown’s future?”**



**Figure 4. Responses to Survey Question 8: “In managing growth and development in town, Middletown should seek to...”**



### *Public Information Event*

On March 29, 2022, IPA worked with Middletown staff to host a public information event at the Middletown Memorial Hall from 5 to 8 p.m. Approximately seventy members of the public attended the event, along with Mayor Branner, several council members, and State Senator Stephanie Hansen. The most common comments at the event were focused on a perceived need for increased open space and recreational space within town. While some of these concerns are already being addressed through the new New Castle County “Southern Park” just north of the town boundary, the YMCA expansion, and the new County library located in the center of town, these concerns are notable for the town to consider in the future.

### *Public Feedback Summary*

Between the survey feedback in the Fall 2021 and the well-attended public information event in March 2022, a few themes stood out from the town residents’ feedback. It is clear that many residents perceive a need to increase recreational opportunities and open space both within and around town. To some extent, these perceived needs are being addressed through ongoing efforts, including the development of Southern Park and the YMCA expansion. Other comments focused on topics such as the need to improve traffic congestion, the desire for safer walking and biking throughout town, and maintaining the town’s character while keeping the cost of living relatively low. The town is also making significant progress in addressing these issues, especially through the Westtown and Easttown Transportation Improvement District projects and the construction of a new centrally located public library in town. It is helpful to understand residents’ concerns as the town looks to the future, particularly as it relates to improving pedestrian and bicycle safety throughout town. Additionally, it was notable that emergency

services, public safety, and trash removal were rated as the three areas that the town does most effectively, highlighting the town's success in delivering well managed and cost effective town services that are critical to the residents' experience and the town's success.

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

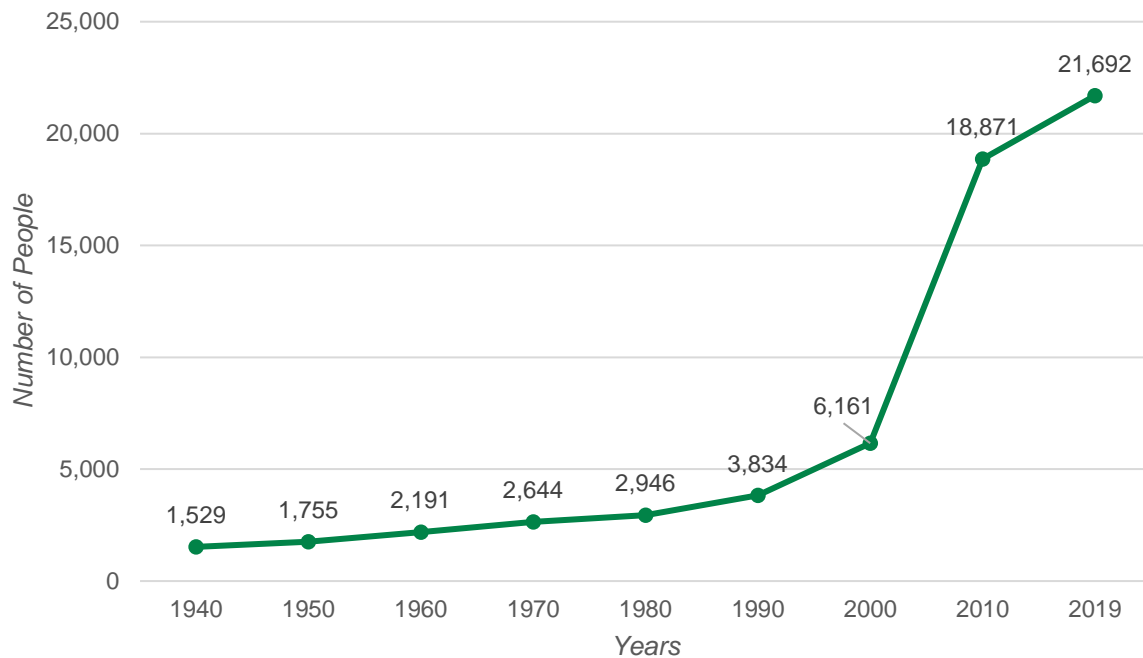
Middletown's population has grown exponentially since 1990 after a previous history of very measured and steady growth. The population of Middletown grew by only 2,305 between 1940 and 1990, but since then has grown by 17,858 people. Most of that growth happened between 2000 and 2010, but the town has continued to grow since 2010, increasing by 2,821 residents. Figure 5 displays these trends graphically. This level of growth is expected to continue. The town has little ability or interest to grow significantly in the near future, but continued measured growth is anticipated. New Castle County and the state have seen continued steady growth over the past 80 years. Growth rates in New Castle County have slowed somewhat since their peak between 1980 and 2000, but still increased nearly 8 percent from 2000 to 2010.

**Table 1. Population 1940 to 2019**

	Middletown	New Castle County	Delaware
<b>1940</b>	1,529	179,562	266,505
<b>1950</b>	1,755	218,879	318,085
<b>1960</b>	2,191	307,446	446,292
<b>1970</b>	2,644	385,856	548,104
<b>1980</b>	2,946	398,115	594,338
<b>1990</b>	3,834	441,946	666,168
<b>2000</b>	6,161	500,265	783,600
<b>2010</b>	18,871	538,479	897,934
<b>2019</b>	21,692	556,165	957,248

Source: U.S. Census, 1940–2019.

**Figure 5. Middletown Population Trend 1940–2019**



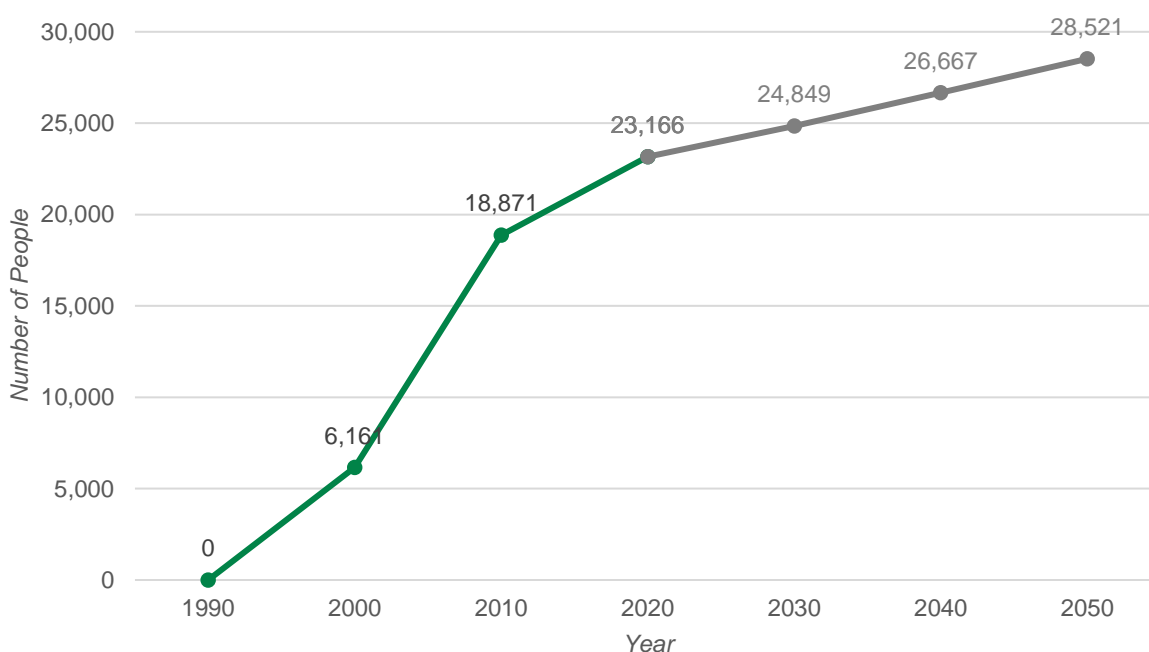
Source: U.S. Census, 1940–2019.

Table 2 summarizes the town's population between 1990 and 2020 as well as the projected growth in Middletown's population from 2020 to 2050, and Figure 6 portrays this data graphically. These projections are based on methodology formulated by the Delaware Population Consortium (DPC). After rapidly growing between 1990 and 2010, Middletown's population leveled off slightly over the past 10 years to 23,166 in 2020. The U.S. Census recorded 3,834 residents in 1990, which increased by 61 percent to 6,161 in 2000, and then skyrocketing to 18,871 in 2010. It is worth noting that the DPC population projection for Middletown for 2020 was approximately 16 percent higher than the actual population of the town from the 2020 Census.

**Table 2. Population Trend 1990–2010, Projection to 2050**

	Middletown	New Castle County	Delaware
<b>1990</b>	3,834	441,946	666,168
<b>2000</b>	6,161	500,265	783,600
<b>2010</b>	18,871	538,479	897,934
<b>2020</b>	23,166	558,863	979,920
<b>2030</b>	24,849	566,642	1,024,158
<b>2040</b>	26,667	571,198	1,050,497
<b>2050</b>	28,521	566,364	1,055,289

Sources: Actual population data, 1990–2010, were obtained from the U.S. Census. Projections 2020–2050 were obtained from the Delaware Population Consortium.

**Figure 6. Middletown Population Trend 1990–2020, Projection to 2050**

Sources: Actual population data, 1990–2010, were obtained from the U.S. Census. Projections 2020–2050 were obtained from the Delaware Population Consortium.

Population projections tend to be more accurate over longer periods of time with larger populations, and therefore are very difficult to make with a significant degree of accuracy at the municipal level. As stated above, projections made by the DPC prior to the completion of the last plan for Middletown were significantly inaccurate (16% higher than the actual 2020 U.S. Census population). With that said, currently approved and anticipated residential developments are likely to continue the recent pattern of growth experienced over the past 10 years in Middletown. The area surrounding Middletown is expected to continue experiencing more

significant growth than has been seen in the town over the past 10 years. In addition, the population forecasted in the charts above are reliant on historic development patterns and data that do not align with the recent growth experienced in the southern New Castle County area. It is also worth noting that these projections can have the unintended effect of pushing new growth and development toward the areas where it projects growth rather than where it is most appropriate from an effective land-use planning perspective.

As stated above, development in the Southern New Castle County area, including areas adjacent to Middletown, is likely to continue accelerating over the next few decades. Most of the surrounding area still consists of open space and farmland that are ripe for new development, while Middletown is mostly built out. This creates a dilemma for Middletown if it would like to limit new growth in the near future, because when properties on its boundary are likely to develop it asks the question of potential annexation. The construction of the new Route 301 highway to the town's western boundary only increases the likelihood of new commercial development in the near future along that corridor. The town of Townsend has also expressed a great desire to expand and develop in the near future, which will directly impact Middletown as that growth would likely occur very close to the town's boundary. This new development as well as the potential redevelopment of additional infill sites in and around Middletown are likely to ensure that the town and its surrounding area continue to grow at a relatively fast pace unless the County or State take very significant efforts to preserve more open space around the town's borders.

### *Position on Population Growth*

The Town of Middletown will continue to pursue reasonable opportunities for moderate growth that is consistent with the level of growth experienced in town between 2010 and 2020. The town will continue to grow over the next two decades through planned and recorded new developments, infill development, redevelopment of existing properties, potential annexations, and up-zoning properties in appropriate locations.

### *Demographic Characteristics*

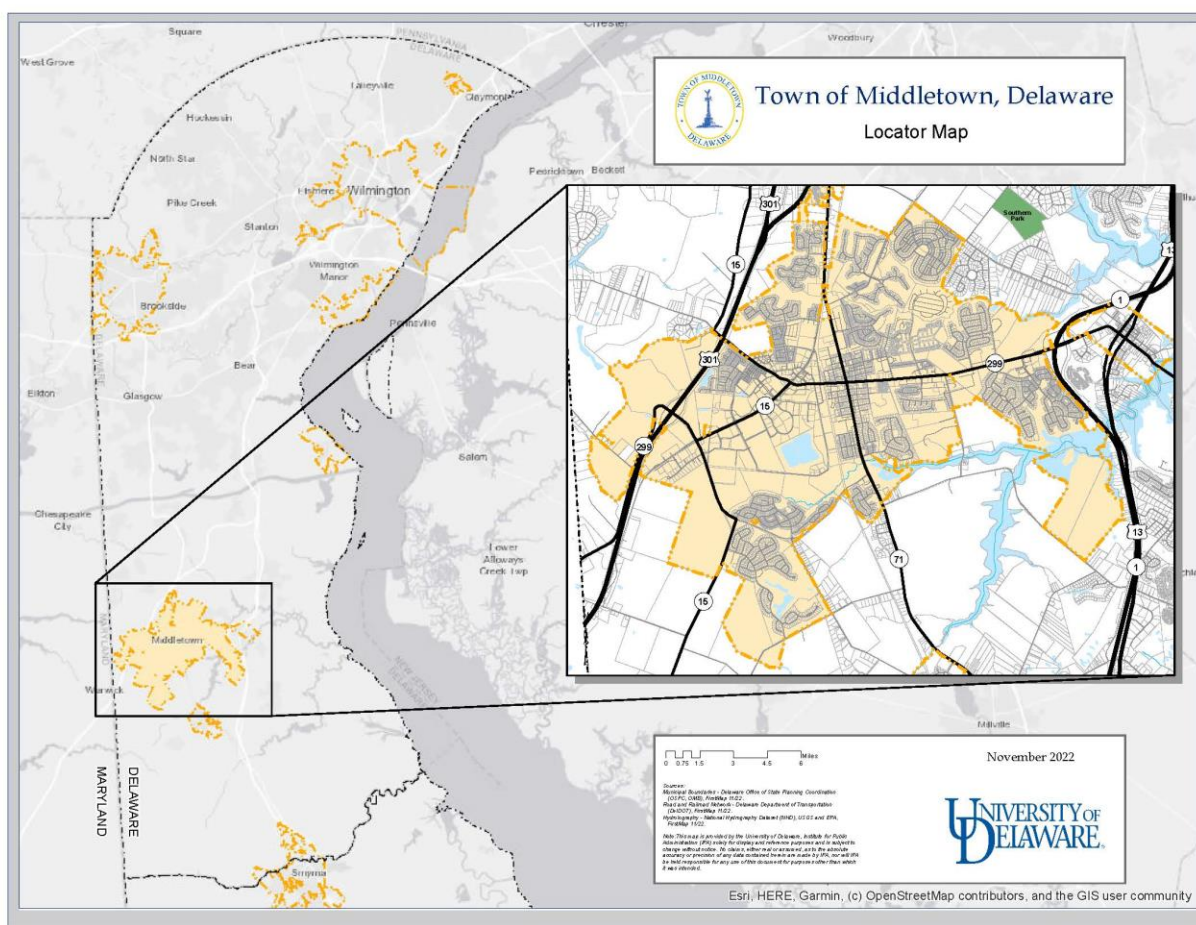
According to data from the American Community Survey 2015–2019, Middletown's population became more diverse between 1990 and 2019, going from a town with a white population making up over 76 percent in 1990 to 64 percent in 2020. Middletown has grown a larger Hispanic and Latino population as well over this time, with almost 10 percent of its current residents identifying as Hispanic or Latino. The town is slightly older than New Castle County and slightly younger than the State of Delaware in terms of median age, which is 39.2 years of age. However, the town's population over 60 has grown significantly since 2010, from just 13.6 percent of its total population in 2010 to 24.3 percent in 2019. Middletown has a much larger population between the ages of 5 and 19 than either New Castle County or the State of Delaware, reflecting the large number of families with children living in town. When compared to the rest of New Castle County or the state, more Middletown residents have a bachelor's degree or higher and fewer have not graduated high school. Middletown residents also have a much higher median income than the rest of New Castle County or the state and is one of the wealthiest local governments in the state based on its median household income of \$90,134, according to the 2019 U.S Census 5-year ACS.

A detailed description and analysis of the town's demographics can be found in Appendix A, and more detailed economic information can be found in the Economic Development chapter.

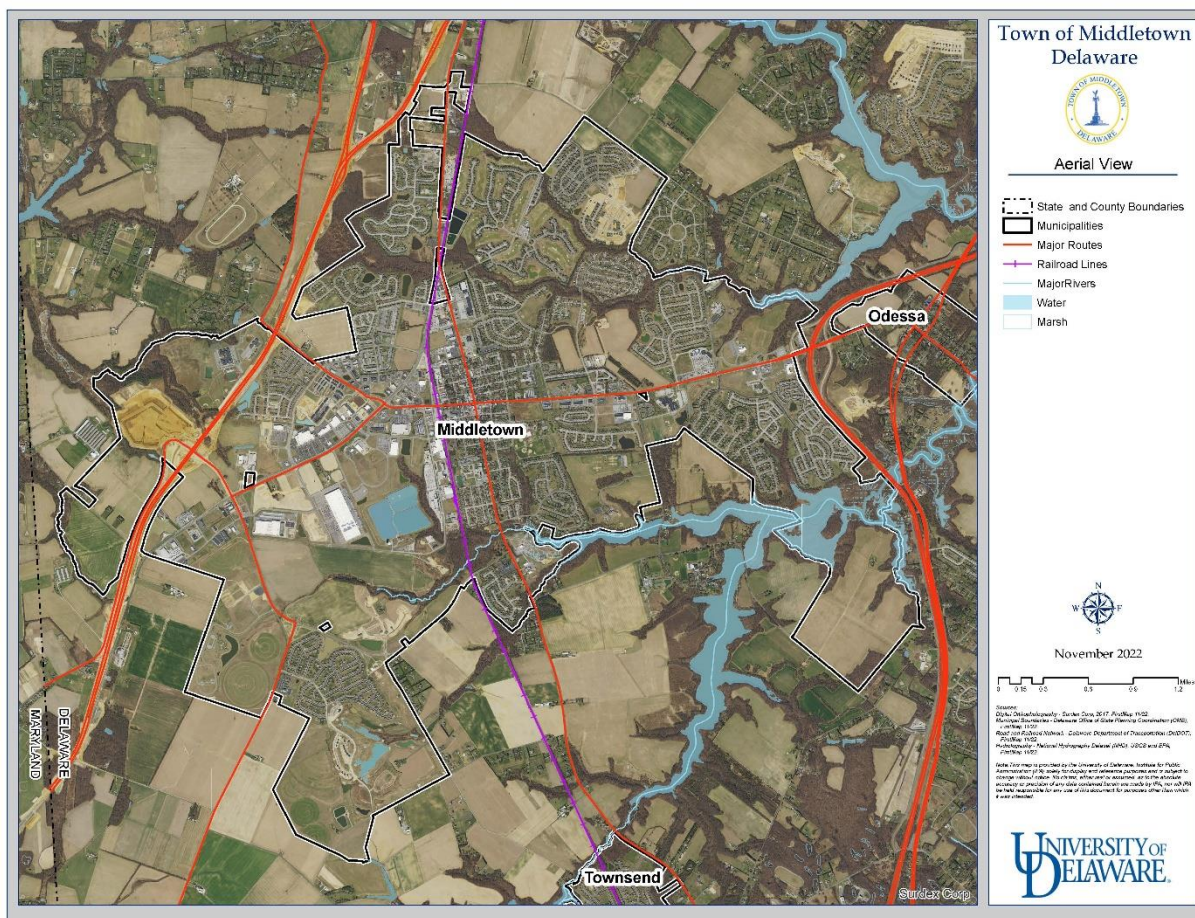
## Community Character

Map 1 depicts Middletown's regional location. The town is located in the southwestern portion of New Castle County, and the closest municipalities are Odessa to the east and Townsend to its south. It is located conveniently between Wilmington and Dover (approximately 27 miles from both), roughly 60 miles south of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and 70 miles northeast of Baltimore, Maryland. An aerial view of the town is provided by Map 2, which shows a surrounding area that is still largely rural, but is increasingly becoming suburbanized. The aerial map also shows the town's convenient proximity to both the City of Wilmington and Dover, the railroad corridor extending through the center of town, and the Route 1 corridor, which is the primary state highway extending from Christiana Mall in the north down to Fenwick Island in the south of the state.

### Map 1. Middletown Regional Location



## Map 2. Middletown Vicinity Aerial View



### Town History

The area where Middletown is located was first settled in 1875, approximately 25 miles north of Dover and 25 miles south of Wilmington in the “middle” of the state’s two most significant municipalities. It was around the 1750s that the name Middletown first came into use for the area, but not due to its position between these two cities. The town’s name refers to its location midway on a trade route known as the “Cart Road” between the head of the Bohemia River on Maryland’s eastern shore and the waters of the Appoquinimink Creek.

Schools, including the Middletown Academy built in 1826, were erected as Middletown’s population grew. The regionally acclaimed school, which once offered students a classical education, is the site of the former Town Hall, but now serves as a small office building located just north of the intersection of Main Street and Broad Street. In 1855, the Pennsylvania, Baltimore, and Wilmington Railroad (PB&W) built a depot in Middletown, and the town entered into a new era of growth with the arrival of the railroad. The construction of the Delaware Railroad on Middletown’s western border had the impact of drawing new development toward the northwestern side of town where most of its historic buildings are located today.

In 1861, the town was granted a charter and elected five commissioners to 1-year terms. By March 1866, town leaders began to consider providing street lighting. In 1873, police protection was provided for residents. The organization of the Volunteer Hose Company came 14 years later in 1897. In 1893, the first Light and Water Commission was organized, making Middletown one of the first towns in the state to have electricity.

The town continued to grow in the early 1900s. In December 1922, the Everett Theater opened and still stands in the historic core of the town. Middletown was reincorporated in 1923 under the Mayor and Council system, and in 1924 the town took over the daily operations of the water system. St. Andrew's School—the setting for the 1989 Robin Williams movie *Dead Poet's Society*—was founded by Alexis Felix du Pont in 1929. The town remained relatively small with little growth until its recent expansion over the past 30 years.

Since 1990, there has been significant growth in and around Middletown. In 2004, a proposal was developed for a 1,100-acre mixed-use development to be called Westown. Additionally, a Walmart Supercenter was approved by the town in December 2004. Many more improvements were added in the second half of the decade. These include the new Industrial Drive water tower and Appoquinimink Library in 2006, the reestablishment of the Middletown Police Department in 2007, and a new dog park in 2008. Additionally, Middletown Levels Road Park opened in May 2009, and DART bus route 43 began servicing the town in June 2009. All Main Street streetscape improvements were finalized in 2010, and Middletown Levels Road Park was renamed in honor of Charles E. Price in May 2011.

Since 2012, Middletown has continued to grow with more development and jobs coming to the Westown area along with new apartment developments. Most significantly, the new Route 301 highway was completed on the western edge of town in 2019. This new raised highway corridor changes the regional positioning for Middletown from a transportation and economic development perspective and provides faster and easier access to both northern New Castle County and Maryland's eastern shore. More recently a new state of the art library in the heart of town was completed in June 2022, and is now one of the largest libraries in the state with room to expand by 10,000 square feet. A new YMCA is also currently under construction, and a new regional park is also planned to begin construction soon in the area, adding to the local amenities available for town residents.

See the Historic and Cultural Resources chapter for a more detailed narrative of Middletown's history.

### *Community Design Overview*

Middletown offers a wide variety of housing types and sizes. The historic center provides primarily single-family housing on consistently sized quarter-acre lots. East of Broad Street and north of Main Street are a series of multi-family units and duplexes, gradually shifting into single-family residences in the north. An apartment complex on Lake Street as well as new multifamily developments in the Westown area have added to the diversity of housing types offered.

Two- and three-story, attached commercial buildings front Main Street's western corridor, with first-story storefronts lining the sidewalks. These first-story uses include retail stores, service businesses, offices, restaurants, and the Everett Theatre. The historic center of Middletown is a

highly walkable area, both between neighborhoods and the center and among neighborhoods. Important spaces, both commercial and civic, are within easy walking distance (approximately a quarter-mile radius) of most neighborhoods. The density of the center, in addition to the well laid-out grid that generally has sidewalks on both sides and rear alleys, ensures that the town is adequately connected. Streetlights ensure that these paths are inviting to pedestrians by adding an element of safety.

On Broad Street, immediately north of Main Street, are a collection of retail businesses. The Neighborhood House—a resource center designed to enable people of the Middletown-Odessa-Townsend area to improve their lives and to strengthen their community, is located farther north on Broad Street near Cedar Lane Road. Services provided by the Neighborhood House include a food closet and prescription assistance. The Town Hall is located one block south of West Main Street on West Green Street. Completed in December 2005 on the former site of a grocery store, the Town Hall is located within the core of the historic town center and can be easily accessed by foot and car.

As one leaves the core of town, these attributes begin to fade. Crosswalks are minimal, streets become wider, and safety becomes more of an issue. This reflects Middletown's growth over the past 30 years from a small historic town to a fast-growing suburban commuter hub. Commercial development has expanded a great deal beyond the town core, particularly in the Westtown area. Large big box stores now anchor the large commercial centers located in the Westtown area along with many new restaurants and employers such as Amazon, Datwyler, Clarios, and Breakthru Beverage. Overall, Middletown now has more of a suburban character and auto-oriented design while the center of town along Main Street maintains its walkability and historic charm.

### *Position on Community Character*

Middletown will continue to value and protect its unique history and character, particularly in the Main Street area, while maintaining its strong local economy by continuing to identify opportunities to strategically expand and redevelop properties as appropriate.

## **Community Character and Design Recommendations**

1. Maintain the character and design of the historic center of town and utilize it as a model for new infill development throughout town.
2. Encourage the redevelopment of underutilized locations for their highest and best use in the town.
3. Ensure that new developments are designed to accommodate a pedestrian-friendly environment while connecting to and complementing surrounding neighborhoods.
4. Continue to make investments in the construction of bicycle and pedestrian pathways and improve bicycle and pedestrian connectivity throughout the town.
5. Encourage “complete street” policies for Middletown-Warwick Road, with a focus on improving the safety of the corridor for all modes of travel.



## PLANNING ENVIRONMENT

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Middletown's planning environment consists of more than its own plans and policies. It encompasses the plans and policies of the state and New Castle County. Together with the town's planning issues, plans developed by the state, county, and other entities, form the backdrop for the development of Middletown's future land use and its growth and annexation strategy.

### Strategies for State Policies and Spending

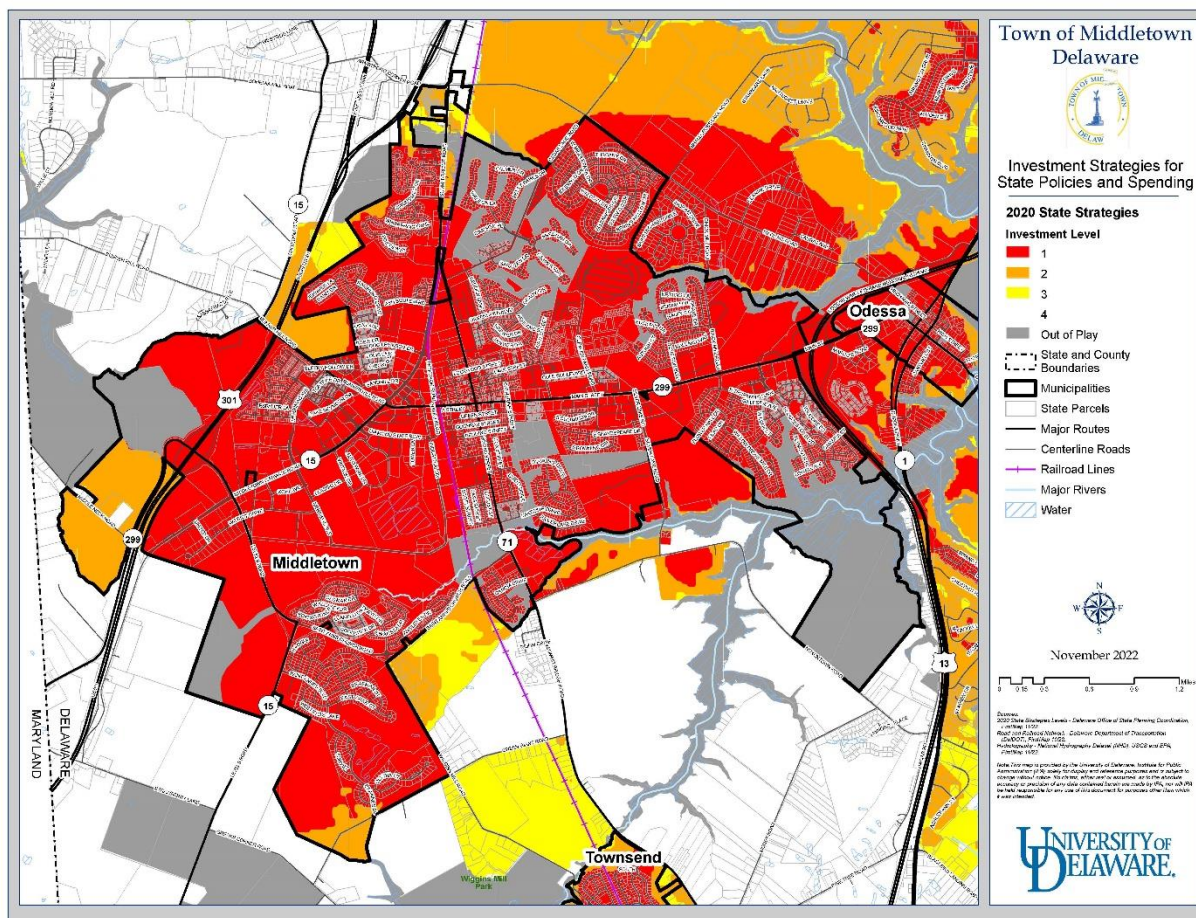
In 1999, the Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues adopted the Strategies for State Policies and Spending, outlining needs and concerns for future state planning and growth and identifying geographic areas where the state was most prepared for growth. This document was updated in 2004, 2010, 2015, and 2020.

The State Strategies are important because municipal and county comprehensive plans must consider them in the development of future land use within their boundaries and, for municipalities, the identification of potential annexation areas. The Strategies document classifies the entire state into four investment levels based on the predominant type of development. Shown on Map 3, these levels form the basis for identifying locations where state-supported growth should occur and establish guidelines for state investment in those areas. The state is most prepared for growth to occur in Level 1 and accepts growth in Level 2. The state is prepared to channel investments such as new schools, roads, state service centers, and public safety facilities in these areas. In Level 3 areas, development—and therefore state investment—is not encouraged in the immediate future. These areas are adjacent to, and sometimes within, more densely developed areas in Levels 1 or 2. In Level 4 areas, state investment will be made only when necessary to preserve the rural or natural character of the lands.

Out of play areas are not available for development or redevelopment. In these areas, the state intends to expend funds primarily on land preservation and management and environmental protection and mitigation, with limited development of public facilities that further health, safety, and welfare goals. Out of play areas in and near Middletown primarily consist of creeks, streams, and parkland.

Middletown's town limits are almost entirely within Investment Level 1. Areas within Middletown's town limits that are not within Investment Level 1 include a limited number of Level 2 areas, parkland, or other "out of play" areas. Outside of Middletown's boundaries, much of the immediate surrounding area has been identified as Level 4 with a notable exception for properties located to the town's northeast boundary which include many suburban single-family developments. Much of this area has been identified as Level 3 or 4.

## Map 3. State Investment Strategies



## New Castle County

New Castle County's plans and policies are important for Middletown's planning efforts. New Castle County's land use actions have underscored a commitment to growth management, protecting environmental resources, and historic preservation. Responding to community concerns about growth and sprawl taking place in the county throughout the 1980s and 1990s, New Castle County adopted the Unified Development Code (UDC) in 1997 with the purpose of better regulating land use. According to New Castle County's website, the UDC regulates and controls the creation and administration of zoning districts; general development of real estate in the unincorporated areas of New Castle County; planning and subdivision of lands; and use, bulk, design, and location of land and buildings. The UDC has been revised multiple times since 1997, but this ordinance continues to serve as the foundation of New Castle County's growth strategy by heavily regulating all new development that takes place within county boundaries. New Castle County recently adopted a new comprehensive plan in the summer of 2022 titled "NCC 2050." The new plan identifies most of Middletown as a "Redevelopment and Infill" area, and almost all of the land surrounding the town is not identified for future growth and instead is identified as a targeted preservation area.

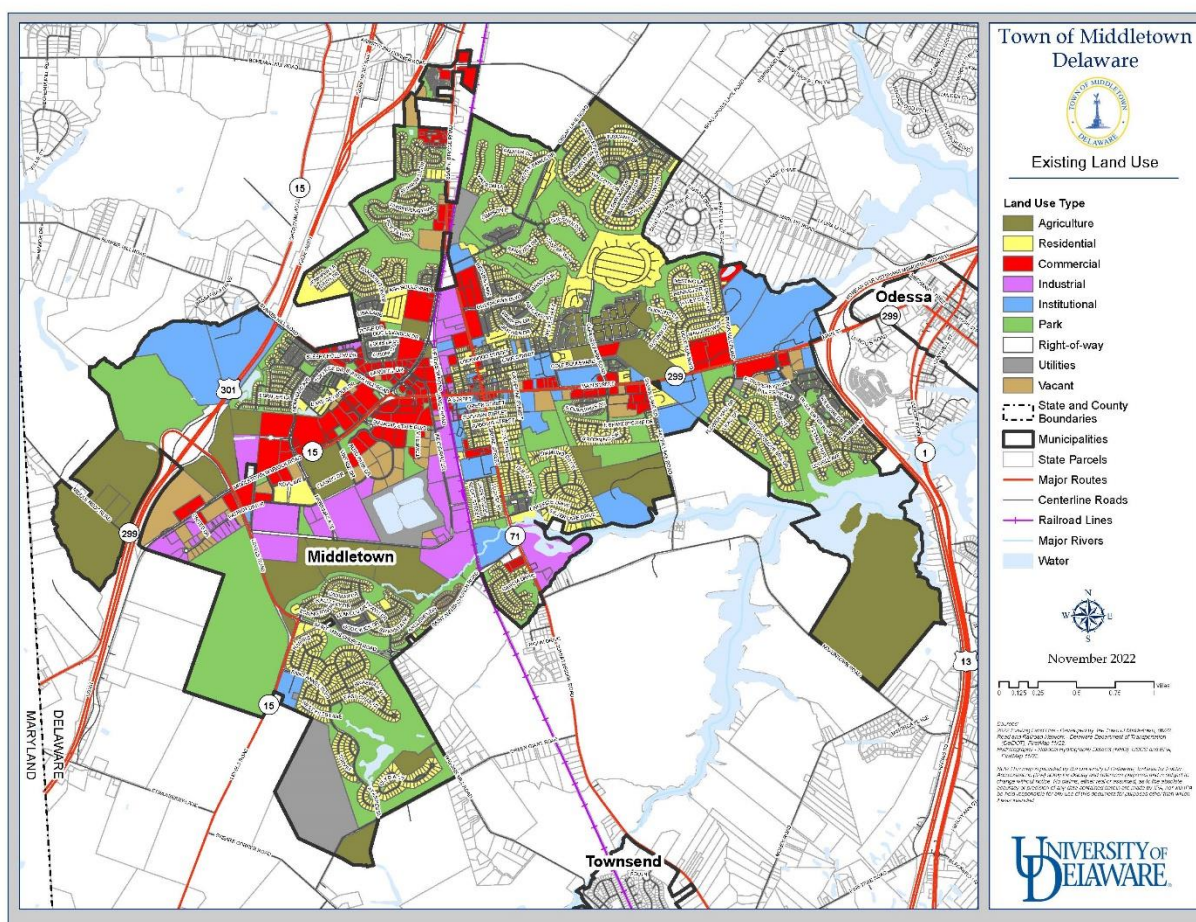
Additionally, the County completed a final draft of the Southern New Castle County Master Plan in January 2020, which the County has incorporated into its new Comprehensive Plan. The stated purpose of the Plan is to “establish a comprehensive long-term vision for land use and infrastructure in southern New Castle County (NCC) based on sound planning principles and public input.” This Plan has identified the vast majority of land bordering Middletown for “Resource and Rural Preservation” on its 2020 Future Land Use Map (located in the draft Plan on page 61), which aligns with what the updated comprehensive plan shows. The exception to this is the area to the northeast of town between Route 1 and Middletown-Warwick Road, which the County has identified for “Future Community Development.” These recommendations do conflict slightly with the desires of Middletown for future growth, and the town plans to work with New Castle County to find an acceptable path forward for both entities.

# LAND USE AND ANNEXATION

## Existing Land Use

Existing land use is a snapshot of a jurisdiction's existing development pattern. In this section, Middletown's current land-use classifications are described. The distribution of these land uses is shown in Table 3. Map 4 depicts Middletown's current land uses.

### Map 4. Existing Land Use



**Table 3. Land-Use Distribution, 2020**

Land Use	Number of Properties	Percent of Total Properties	Acreage	Percent of Total Acreage
<b>Agriculture</b>	238	2.8%	1266.3	17.7%
<b>Commercial</b>	197	2.3%	737.4	7.7%
<b>Industrial</b>	65	0.8%	449.4	6.1%
<b>Institutional</b>	59	0.7%	597.8	9.9%
<b>Park/Open Space</b>	293	3.5%	1758.6	24.4%
<b>Residential</b>	7234	86.2%	1841.4	25.5%
<b>ROW</b>	17	0.2%	52.7	0.7%
<b>Utilities</b>	27	0.3%	311.2	4.3%
<b>Vacant</b>	262	3.1%	269.1	3.7%
<b>Total</b>	8,392		7,215	

Source: IPA GIS Land Use Analysis

### *Single Family Residential*

Land improved with a single dwelling unit on a single lot is classified as Single Family Residential. This can include either attached or detached single-family dwellings on separate lots. Single Family Residential properties represent the majority of land in Middletown and can be found throughout the town. While the town is mostly built out, if the town does annex new land, then it will most likely be developed as single-family residential housing. Single-family dwellings can either be attached or detached. Middletown has a considerable number of attached dwellings. These dwellings are not considered multifamily because they are on separate lots. According to the 2019 U.S. Census ACS, approximately 53.3 percent of the residential structures in Middletown are single family detached, and 30.1 percent are single family attached.

### *Multifamily Residential*

Land improved with multiple dwellings on a single property such as apartment buildings are classified as Multifamily Residential properties. Multifamily Residential properties in Middletown include Summerton, the Reserve at Westown, the Reserve at South Ridge, and Middletown Apartments in the western portion of town along the Middletown-Warwick Road corridor, and Greenlawn Apartments, Middletown Trace Apartments, Middletown Manor Apartments, and Fairfield Commons Apartments along the central portion of town near Main Street and Route 299. Multifamily development has become more attractive in Middletown as the town has developed shopping and dining destinations and as it has become less affordable to purchase a single-family home in the area. The Reserve at South Ridge, the Reserve at Westown, and Summerton apartments are all examples of new apartment communities that have been built in recent years and all are located in the increasingly attractive destination area of Westown. Approximately 9.7 percent of housing units in Middletown are in buildings with 10 units or more,

and it is likely that Middletown will see additional multifamily development in the future through the redevelopment of properties throughout town; however, some of this potential redevelopment may be of a mixed-use variety with commercial uses included as part of the new development.

### *Commercial*

Land improved with retail, wholesale, sales and service establishments, offices, and restaurants and land improved with establishments where items are made, assembled, processed, stored, or handled are classified as Commercial. Most of Middletown's commercial areas are located along or near Middletown-Warwick Road and along Main Street/Route 299. These uses are primarily retail, restaurant, and service industry businesses. There is still a good deal of potential for new commercial development and redevelopment in both the commercial and mixed-use areas of town, especially along the eastern portion of Route 299 and the Middletown-Warwick corridor.

### *Parks, Recreation, and Open Space*

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space areas are those used for public recreation, such as Silver Lake Park; private open space and recreation areas recorded in land records; and stormwater management facilities in residential areas. Almost all the parkland in Middletown is intended for active uses rather than passive uses. Based on the public survey results and other public feedback, there is high demand in the Middletown area for additional recreational space and open space. There is a relative lack of parks within New Castle County and near Middletown. New Castle County has made plans to develop new parks in the region south of the C&D Canal as a result of residents' feedback about the lack of recreational facilities in the area.

### *Institutional*

Institutional properties are comprised of land used for social, cultural, or educational purposes, including nonprofit, social, religious, and public uses such as governmental and public safety facilities, healthcare facilities, libraries, senior centers, places of worship, and schools. These properties are often non-taxable, although if redeveloped for a different use they may be taxable in the future. Institutional properties in the Town of Middletown include the Town Hall, the library, churches, and several schools in town including Middletown High School, Appoquinimink High School, and St. Andrews School. At this time, there are no institutional properties within town that are expected to change to another use in the near future.

### *Vacant*

Vacant areas are those that have no land-use activity, including undeveloped or unimproved lots. There are few vacant properties in Middletown. This classification includes multiple properties planned to be developed along the southern portion of Middletown-Warwick Road, a few along Industrial Drive, and on the eastern end of Route 299 within the Eastown Transportation Improvement District (TID) near Route 1. Another large vacant property in the center of town is planned to be developed into townhomes next to the new library. The lack of undeveloped vacant land within the town implies that most future growth will come through infill development and the redevelopment of properties.

### *Transportation/Utilities*

Streets, railroads, and properties utilized for utility purposes are classified as Transportation/Utilities. In Middletown, most of this area is represented by the two railroad lines and their rights-of-way. Land currently utilized for transportation and utilities is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. However, Middletown is unique in that it does have two Transportation Improvement Districts that have active roadway projects and will expand roads and other transportation infrastructure in the future.

### *New Development and Development Applications*

Middletown has experienced a great deal of growth in the decade since the 2012 Comprehensive Plan. Some of the commercial projects include the opening of an Amazon distribution center along with additional distribution centers for Datwyler and Breakthru Beverage, a Christiana Care emergency care facility, new retail development on the eastern portion of town, expansion of the Westown area, and multiple new hotels within town. Single family residential developments have included Parkside, the Estates at St. Annes, Parkway at South Ridge, Spring Arbor, and Willow Grove Mill, while new multifamily developments have come at The Reserve at South Ridge, The Reserve at Westown, and Summerton Place. In terms of new and future development in town, there are many ongoing projects that are proposed. Projects that are either under construction or have been approved include over 10,000 square feet of new retail-oriented development, 75,000 square feet of new commercial space, two new hotels in the Westown area, a 280,000-square-foot industrial distribution facility, and a pharmaceutical manufacturing campus with over one million square feet of buildings.

## **Future Land Use**

Map 5 depicts Middletown's desired development pattern within the town boundary. Table 4 describes how the land uses depicted on the map were developed.

**Table 4. Middletown Future Land-Use Descriptions**

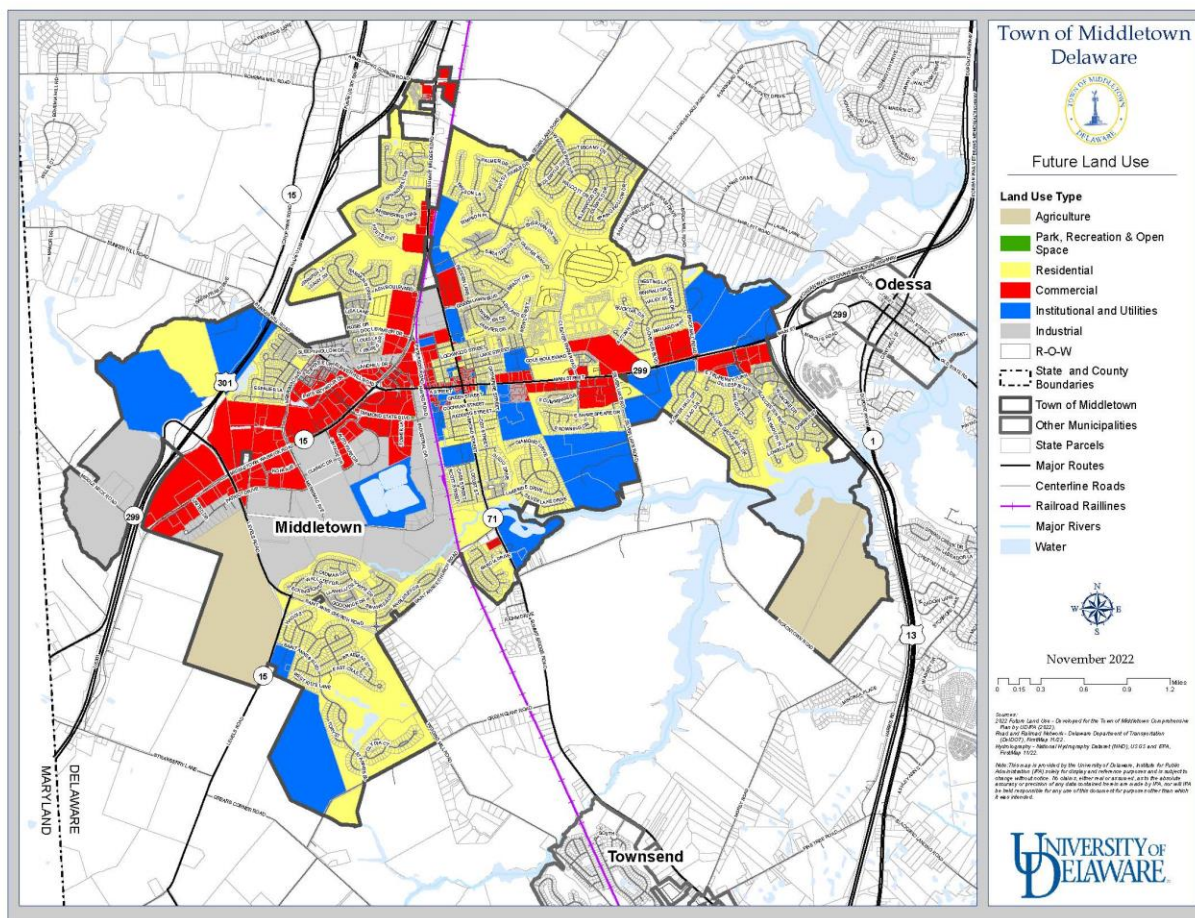
<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Residential</b>	Areas intended for development with dwellings or similar uses.
<b>Mixed Use</b>	Areas intended to allow and encourage the development with a mix of residential and commercial uses. (While there are no mixed use areas in the Future Land Use Map, there are mixed use areas in the Annexation Map.)
<b>Commercial</b>	Areas intended for commercial development such as retail, office, service, or similar uses.
<b>Industrial</b>	Areas intended for the development of light industrial uses, such as warehouses and light manufacturing.
<b>Institutional</b>	Areas suitable for, or depicting current locations of, institutional uses such as town offices, the library, or churches.
<b>Parks, Recreation &amp; Open Space</b>	Areas intended for parks, recreation, or public open space.

The town does not wish to change any of its existing land uses within its boundaries at this time. Residential communities include all residentially zoned areas, and the plan is for those areas to maintain their current use and character. Commercial areas are recommended to remain along the Middletown-Warwick Road corridor as well as the Route 299/Main Street corridor. Industrial uses are recommended to remain in areas of town where industrial uses currently exist such as along Industrial Drive. Parks, Recreation, and Open Space and Institutional uses are recommended in areas that are already used for those purposes.

### *Position on Redevelopment*

Middletown will seek opportunities to maximize the use of existing developed properties by allowing for redevelopment of those properties, with the understanding that this will likely require allowances for greater density and more flexibility in zoning and land uses at those locations.

## Map 5. Future Land Use



## Land Use and Zoning

Zoning is an important aspect of implementing the comprehensive plan. The zoning map classifies all parcels within the municipality into distinct districts or zones. A zoning ordinance specifies the types of activities (uses) that can occur in each district either as a matter of right (in all circumstances) or under certain conditions (conditional uses). It also regulates building height, lot sizes, setbacks, yards and green space, the number and sizes of signs, and space for off-street parking. The zoning map is intended to be consistent with the Future Land Use map found in the comprehensive plan.

Zoning is complemented by subdivision regulations. Subdivision refers to the process of splitting up or assembling land for development. The regulations governing this process designate utility locations, street rights-of-way, open space, and common areas. They also outline the services, such as water, sewer, gas, and electricity, and amenities that a developer must supply prior to sale of subdivided (or assembled) land.

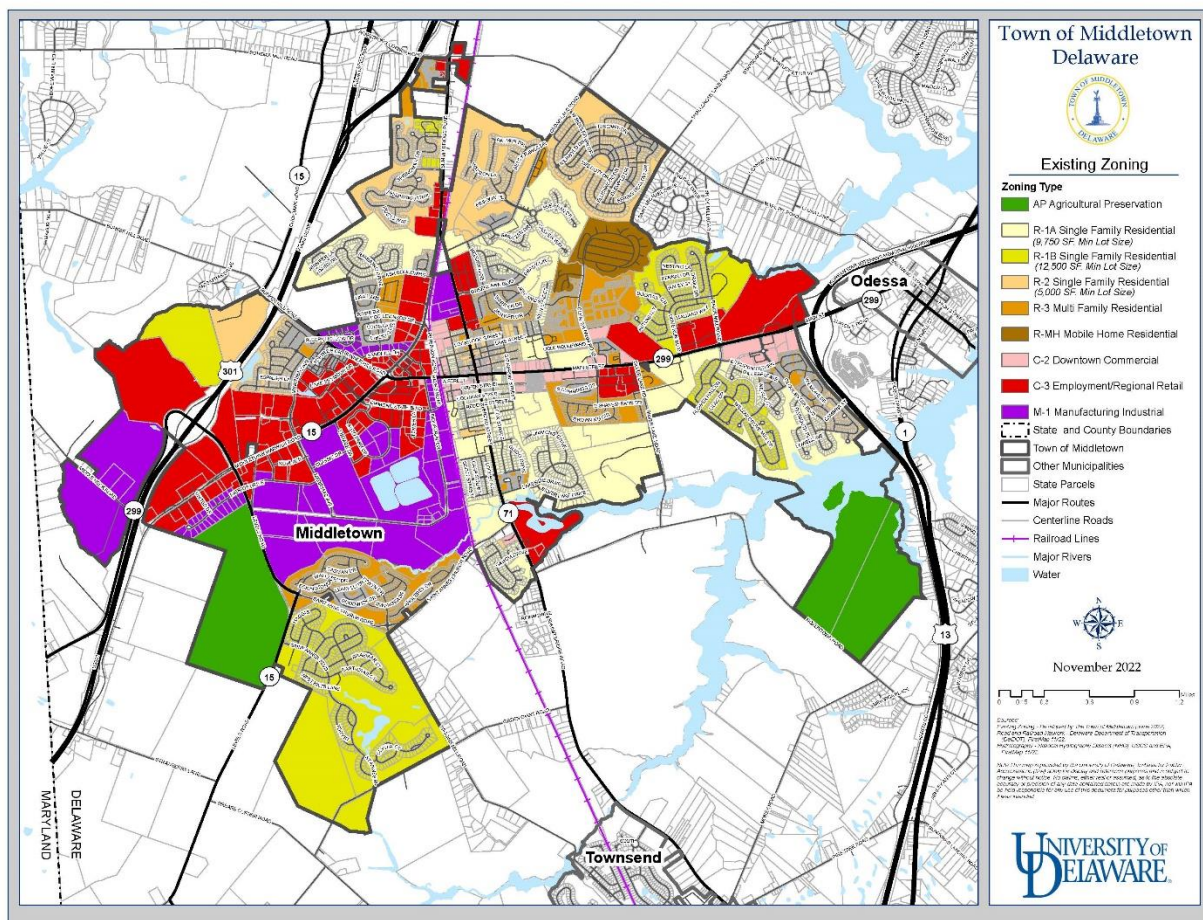
Some municipalities incorporate environmental protection or design standards in zoning ordinances and/or subdivision regulations, while others have stand-alone ordinances with cross-references to zoning, subdivision, and other applicable ordinances. Middletown has adopted the following stand-alone ordinances that are related to zoning:

- Chapter 41 – Building Construction
- Chapter 78 – Flood Damage Reduction
- Chapter 145 – Stormwater Management
- Chapter 150 – Subdivision and Land Development
- Chapter 180 – Zoning

### *Zoning Districts*

Map 6 depicts Middletown's current zoning. Table 5 summarizes the uses allowed in each zoning district.

### **Map 6. Existing Zoning, 2022**



**Table 5. Zoning Districts, 2022**

<b>Zoning District</b>	<b>Permitted Use Summary</b>
<b>AP Agricultural/Preservation</b>	Single-family detached dwellings on 5-acre parcels, agricultural uses
<b>R-1A/B Single Family Residential</b>	Single-family detached dwellings; neighborhood retail with residential apartments above
<b>R-2 One or Two Family Residential</b>	Two-family semidetached dwellings; residential conversions; nursing homes; day cares
<b>R-3 Multi-Family Residential</b>	Full range of dwelling unit types, including garden apartments, townhomes, two-family, and single-family detached
<b>R-4 Mobile Home Residential</b>	Mobile home parks
<b>C-2 Downtown Commercial</b>	Retail, service and office uses, amusement and assembly, all residential uses permitted in R-2 zone
<b>C-3 Employment/Regional Retail</b>	Regional shopping and employment uses; mixed-use development, including apartments
<b>M-1 Manufacturing Industrial</b>	Office uses, light manufacturing and industrial, wholesale sales

### *Relationship Between Land Use and Zoning*

The link between land use and zoning is important because Title 22, Section 702(c) of the Delaware Code requires that all municipalities must:

*...within 18 months of the adoption of a comprehensive development plan or revision thereof, amend its official zoning map to rezone all lands within the municipality in accordance with the uses of land provided for in the comprehensive development plan.*

Table 6 shows the relationship between the future land-use designations depicted on the future land-use map and zoning districts. This table describes how Middletown's zoning districts might match up with the land uses recommended on the future land-use map. This table is intended as a guide for the Town of Middletown Planning Commission and Town Council to consider during the rezoning process. The zoning designations in the table below are not intended to preclude the development of new zoning districts or revisions to the zoning ordinance, the subdivision ordinance, or any other land-use regulations.

**Table 6. Land Use and Zoning Link**

<b>Land-Use Designation</b>	<b>Corresponding Zoning District(s)</b>
<b>Residential</b>	R-1A, R-1B, R-2, R-3, R-MH
<b>Commercial</b>	C2, C3
<b>Industrial</b>	MI
<b>Mixed Use</b>	Any combination of R-1A, R-1B, R-2, R-3, C2, or C3 that creates a mix of dwelling types and/or mix of dwelling types and commercial uses
<b>Infrastructure/Institutional</b>	All Zoning Districts

## Annexation Areas

The circumstances regarding Middletown's areas of concern and annexations have changed since the 2012 comprehensive plan. At present, the town is close to being built out, with limited opportunities for infill or new development. Most of the land directly adjacent to the town is relatively rural and undeveloped; however, growth opportunities for the town to the north and east are very limited. With any potential future annexations, all the Office of State Planning Coordination's policies and procedures would be followed.

An important factor to consider when identifying properties for annexation is the economic feasibility of providing public services. Middletown should give high priority to areas where town services can be extended easily and economically. When considering the annexation of a developed area, Middletown also must evaluate the condition of the area's existing infrastructure. In some cases, the costs of bringing roads, street lighting, and stormwater management facilities into compliance with Middletown's standards may exceed the revenues and other benefits of annexation. Other factors include the plans and policies of other governmental entities. Close coordination and cooperation with New Castle County would be critical to any future annexation proposal.

Middletown is relatively unique in Delaware in that it has grown a great deal over the past 30 years and has two DelDOT designated TID areas. However, almost all the town's developable land has been built out, and opportunities for future expansion are relatively limited. Even redevelopment opportunities are limited due to a variety of factors such as the density of existing uses, the ability to provide parking, and the fact that the vast majority of properties in the town are residential and unlikely to ever be significantly redeveloped. Considering its position as a built-out community along with the factors mentioned above, Middletown has identified new potential annexations areas to include in this plan update. These areas are to the south and southwest of town and could be mostly characterized as undeveloped rural farmland. The Town of Middletown feels that potentially extending the town's boundaries to include these areas represents a healthy and natural growth for the town over the next 10 to 20 years. Middletown has placed other adjacent areas to the north, south, and west of town that are of

great interest within an “Area of Concern.” The Town of Middletown, however, is not interested in annexing those areas at this current time.

Middletown supports new development within the town and in areas outside of the town that are adjacent to its boundary, as long as they are in accordance with the goals and policies of this comprehensive plan.

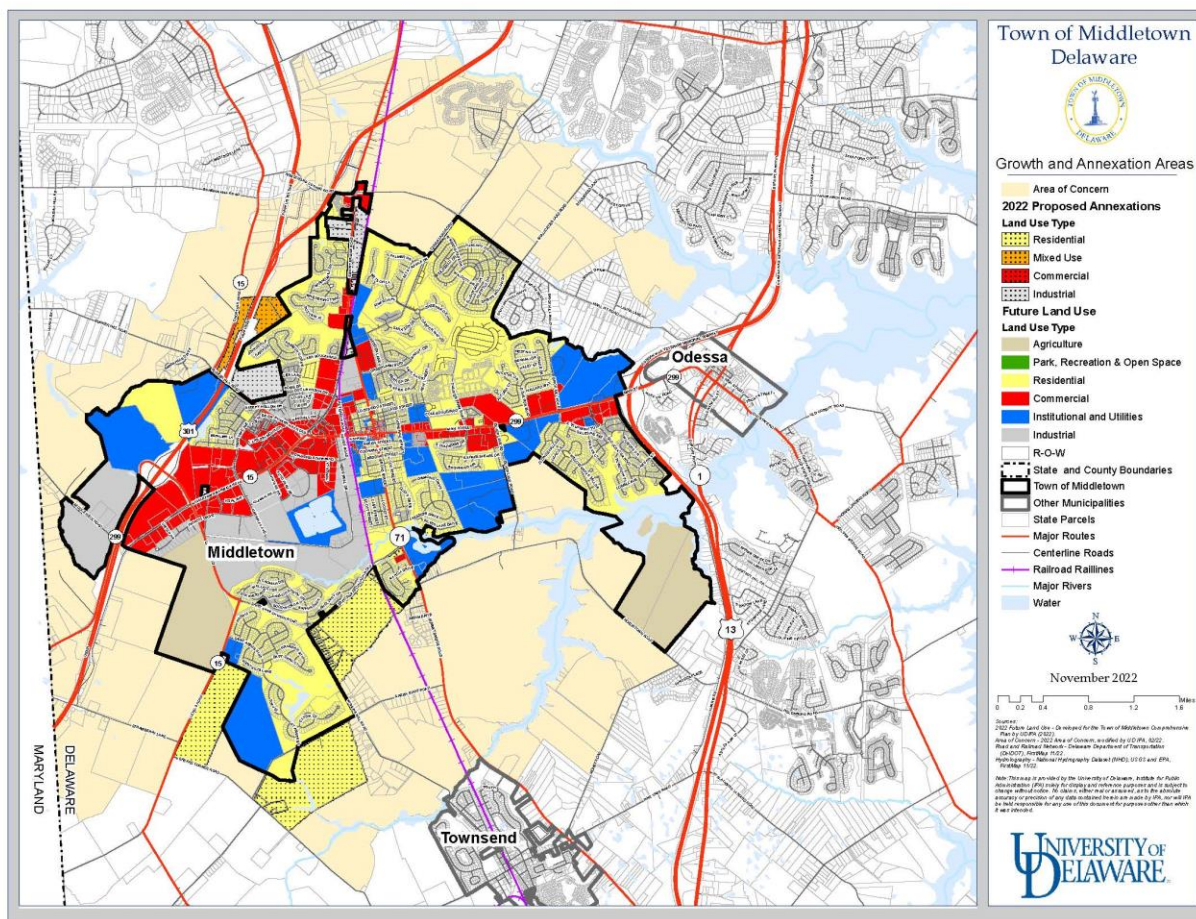
### *Position on Expansion of Boundaries*

Middletown has identified new areas that it is interested in annexing to its south and southwest. The town has also identified an “Area of Concern” to its north, south, and west.

### *Annexation Plan*

Map 7 identifies properties that may be considered for annexation in the 2022 Comprehensive Plan and their land-use designations. As the map shows, the proposed land use for each property is relatively low density residential.

## **Map 7. Annexation Area, 2022**



## Recommendations

1. Review the zoning code and subdivision code in order to direct development so that it is consistent with the town's vision and goals, particularly in the historic downtown area.
2. Build on design standards already in place by incorporating contemporary design practices and include in the zoning and subdivision code updates.
3. Continue reviewing existing land uses to identify additional areas suitable for redevelopment.
4. Promote flexible zoning and development in the historic downtown area, along the Middletown-Warwick Road corridor, and other select areas of town where a mix of uses would be beneficial.
5. Pursue a measured annexation strategy that includes consideration for areas identified in the Annexation Area Map.
6. Develop a land use and transportation corridor study along Middletown-Warwick Road in cooperation with WILMAPCO and DeIDOT in order to identify opportunities to improve pedestrian safety and encourage a more walkable environment.
7. Ensure that pedestrian safety is a priority throughout town when making land-use decisions, especially along Main Street and in the Westtown area.

# TRANSPORTATION

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This chapter provides an inventory of the town's transportation system, identifies issues with the town's transportation system, notes planned improvements to the transportation network, and recommends actions to improve the transportation system within the Middletown area.

## Transportation Trends

Since Middletown's most recent plan update in 2012, Delaware has continued to update its statewide transportation agenda. While motor-vehicle-related projects do, and will continue to, receive the overwhelming majority of investment, there has been an increasing focus on non-motorized modes such as biking and walking.

In 2009, Governor Jack Markell signed Executive Order 6—Creating a Complete Streets Policy. This order compels DeIDOT to ensure that the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians are considered whenever the state builds or does significant maintenance work to existing state-maintained roadways. Effectively, the order strengthens the standard concerning the presence of bike and pedestrian amenities to the level where their exclusion must be demonstrated to be wholly infeasible or impractical. This policy has been continued under Governor Carney and is still current in 2022.

According to DeIDOT's website, as of December 2021, DeIDOT's statewide goals include the following:

- Minimize the number of fatalities and injuries on our system.
- Build and maintain a nationally recognized system benefiting travelers and commerce.
- Provide every traveler with access and choices to our transportation system.
- Provide every customer with the best service possible.
- Minimize the environmental impact of the state's transportation system.
- Achieve financial sustainability through accuracy, transparency, and accountability.
- Develop and maintain a place where talented and motivated employees love to work and can be national leaders in transportation.

## Roads and Traffic

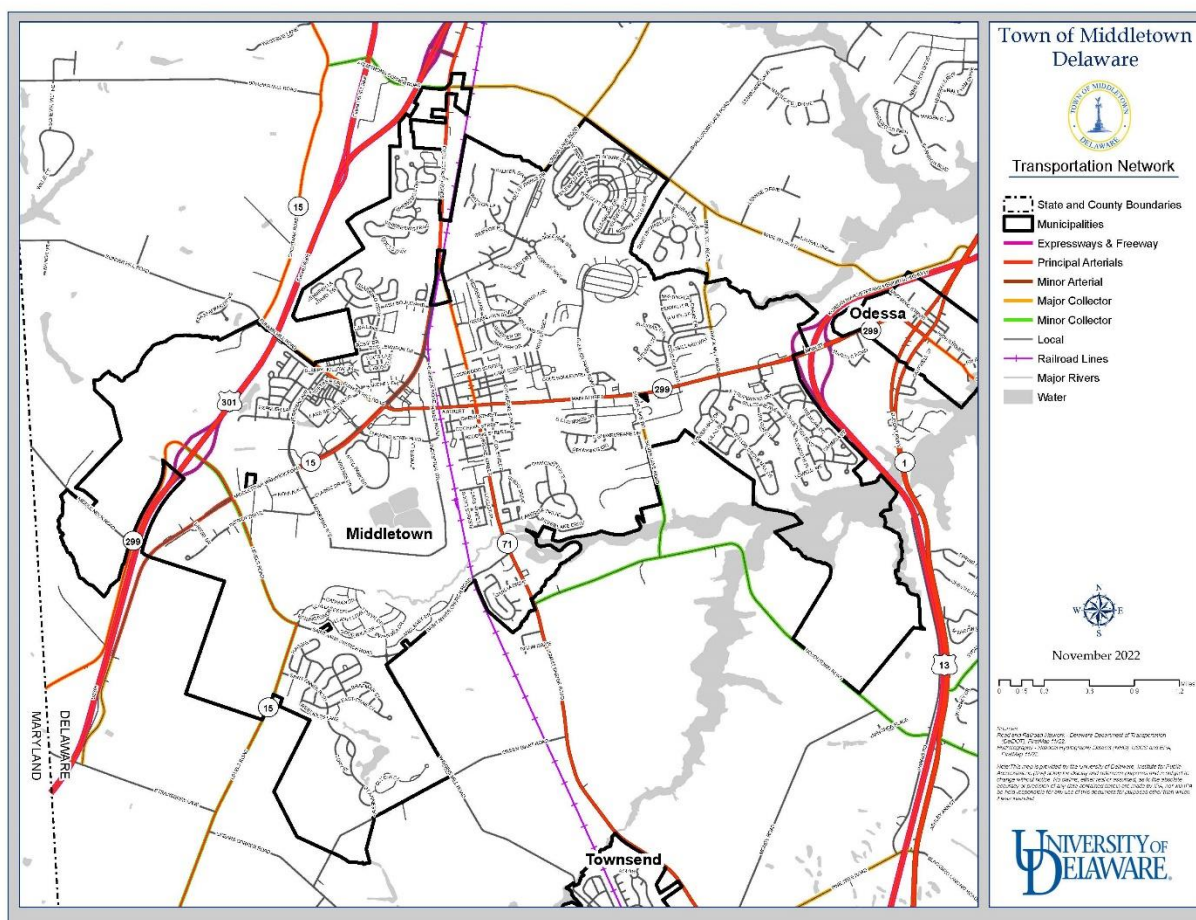
The transportation system in the Town of Middletown consists of roadways, sidewalks, and public transit through DART First State buses. Map 8 depicts major roads in the Middletown vicinity. The traffic in the Middletown area has increased over recent years as the surrounding region south of the C&D Canal continues to grow. This reflects the significant amount of development that has occurred both within and around the town in recent years. The primary point of congestion in town is in the historic part of Main Street adjacent to the railroad crossing. This is in part because there are a limited number of railroad crossings in the area and traffic is funneled to those few crossings. With 21,122 vehicle trips per day, the highest traffic volumes of any road segment in town can be found along Summit Bridge Road, just north of where Middletown-Warwick Road and North Broad Street intersect. The segment of Middletown-Warwick Road just south of this area has the second highest volume with approximately 19,318

trips per day. The number of trips on the new Route 301 highway just to the west of these two road segments receive only about 8,406 trips per day despite being a separated highway with much more capacity for traffic. On the eastern edge of town just outside of its boundary, Route 1 carries approximately 37,271 trips per day.

The growth in areas around Middletown has left some with the perception that growth within town has been excessive. However, the data show that the vast majority of growth south of the C&D canal has not occurred within Middletown, particularly in the past 10 years. The most significant issues facing Middletown in terms of vehicular traffic appear to be congestion on Main Street, a lack of parking in the historic downtown area, and a lack of east-west corridors that cross the town. Middletown would very much like to continue working with WILMAPCO, DelDOT, and other partners to evaluate additional options to address traffic congestion.

Current road improvement projects that the town is pursuing include the Eastown Transportation Improvement District (TID), an expansion of Route 299/Main Street from Route 1 to the historic downtown area, and the Green Street extension project, which will add an additional railroad crossing within town.

## Map 8. Major Roads



## Non-Automotive Travel

### *Pedestrian Mobility*

There are many pedestrians in Middletown, including children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities. Sidewalks are present and continuous throughout most of the town, including interconnections to major destinations such as schools, the Town Hall and Fire Hall, many restaurants and shops, and parks. Although there is a good system of sidewalks, some are in poor condition and some streets could use pedestrian-focused improvements. Some notable locations lack sidewalks, including New Street, Merrimac Drive, and Levels Road. Sidewalk maintenance is the responsibility of the property owner on whose property the sidewalk exists. Some of the more heavily travelled roads in town, such as Middletown-Warwick Road and Main Street, are often perceived as dangerous to navigate by pedestrians.

In September 2021, WILMAPCO hosted a Walkable Community Workshop in Middletown. Attendees walked an area focused specifically on the northern side of Main Street in the historic downtown of Middletown along North Broad Street, East Lake Street, and North Cox Street. The group then offered feedback on desired improvements in the area, which included:

- a network of mixed-use walking and biking paths in a variety of areas around town
- some specific improvements to Cox Street
- improvements to sidewalks on Broad Street, Lake Street and Catherine Street
- improved pedestrian crossings at key points along Main Street and Broad Street
- a new public park at the northeast corner of Main Street and Catharine Street
- improved signage, lighting, and aesthetics on Main Street
- more focus on improving pedestrian and bicycle friendly development patterns

A summary of the Walkable Community Workshop included some specific actions toward addressing these goals along with suggestions for funding and implementation.

Moving forward, the Town of Middletown should continue to focus on improvements to pedestrian safety by better connecting its neighborhoods and commercial areas through safer roadway design and pedestrian crossings like those that were suggested in the WILMAPCO study, particularly along Main Street and Middletown-Warwick Road. As stated previously, sidewalks run throughout Middletown including along both Main Street and Middletown-Warwick Road. However, the existing pedestrian crossings along Main Street, the roadway, and development patterns along Middletown-Warwick Road are not supportive of the type of pedestrian-friendly environment that Middletown residents would like to see. To improve pedestrian mobility and access, the Town of Middletown should look to not only fill gaps in the sidewalk network and address the historic downtown, but also look at the overall safety of the pedestrian network at key points in a more comprehensive manner throughout the entire town. The Middletown-Warwick Road corridor is most likely the area where these improvements will be both needed and difficult to implement given the current auto-oriented design of the corridor and the increasing demand for new residential uses. This new development and infill could be seen as an opportunity to retrofit the corridor as one that is more focused on the pedestrian in the future. In many cases, this may require traffic calming or additional crosswalk infrastructure.

### *Bicycle Traffic*

In response to the need and desire for improved bicycling ability throughout the state, DelDOT formed the Delaware Bike Council. DelDOT has created a map of bicycle suitability for all major roads in the state. DelDOT suggests utilizing its framework, which is called the “Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress,” for understanding the ability of residents to safely bike from place to place. The Bike Council is appointed by the Governor and meets every other month in Dover. They are tasked with improving areas throughout Delaware by making them more bicycle friendly. The Delaware Bike Council has a webpage on DelDOT’s website that includes useful information such as bicycle route maps, bicycle safety information, the Council’s meeting agendas and minutes, and additional information and resources about bicycling.

In October 2017, Governor Carney signed the Bicycle Friendly Delaware Act, which reforms the Rules of the Road regarding interactions between motorists and bicyclists. Delaware’s new rules require motorists to change lanes when passing bicyclists (when lanes are too narrow for side-by-side sharing), forbid motorists from maliciously honking at bicyclists, permit bicyclists to

safely yield at stop signs and to ride two abreast, and eliminate the requirement for bicyclists to always ride far to the right, as well as other safety improvements.

Currently, there are no specific bicycle facilities in Middletown. While bicyclists can ride safely on many municipal streets, many of the primary routes through town such as portions of Main Street, Broad Street, and most of Middletown-Warwick Road are listed as “high traffic roadways” that would be “hazardous for cyclists.” The Town of Middletown should consider working closely with partners such as WILMAPCO and DeIDOT on improving cycling conditions throughout town as much as possible.

## *Railroads*

A freight railroad line passes through the center of Middletown and was critical to its history and growth as a town in the 19th century. This rail line is the only major line extending from north to south on the Delmarva Peninsula and runs roughly parallel to Broad Street through Middletown. This rail line connects Middletown with the northeast corridor, providing transportation to statewide and regional destinations. The rail line is owned by Norfolk Southern and is currently only used to move freight. In recent years DeIDOT has worked to prioritize and promote the use of the state’s freight corridors for industrial and manufacturing uses that can attract new businesses and new jobs to the state.

Passenger rail is available approximately 17 miles north of Middletown at the Newark Train Station adjacent to the University of Delaware STAR campus, with services from SEPTA and Amtrak. Parking lots are available near the train station along with electric vehicle charging stations and bicycle parking. Middletown is also just 22 miles from the Churchman’s Crossing train station near Christiana Hospital and only 27 miles from the Wilmington train station. While passenger rail may eventually be feasible to run to Middletown, there are no significant plans to do so in the near future due to lack of demand and capacity.

## *Public Transportation*

The public transportation provided to Middletown is operated by DART First State. DART First State operates fixed-route service in New Castle County. As a growing town with over 20,000 residents, Middletown now has 38 DART bus stops, primarily along the Main Street corridor and the Middletown-Warwick Road corridor in Westtown. DART Bus Route 301 travels from Dover to Wilmington and stops at the Odessa Park and Ride on the eastern edge of Middletown. DART Route 302 travels from Dover to Newark and includes two stops in Middletown at the Amazon facility and at the North Middletown Park and Ride. DART Route 35 travels between Wilmington and Rehoboth and stops at the Odessa Park and Ride. DART Routes 37 and 47 serve Middletown with stops on the western side of town. Route 37 travels between Middletown and Wilmington with a stop at Christiana Mall, and Route 47 runs between Middletown and Wilmington primarily travelling along the Route 13 corridor before connecting back to the new Route 301 highway. In 2009, DART added service that circulates from the Westtown area to the Odessa Park and Ride on the eastern edge of town, Route 43. As an expansion of the former Middletown Shuttle service, the Route 43 service runs from the park and ride, along main street, south on Middletown-Warwick Road, then over to Industrial Drive before looping back to the park and ride via Main Street. Residents can travel around town to the following places using Bus 43:

- WalMart Supercenter, Middletown
- Middletown Village
- Bethesda United Methodist Church Park and Ride
- Middletown Crossing Shopping Center
- Odessa Park and Ride

DART Route 63 has a similar path to Route 43. This route also starts at the Odessa Park and Ride but stops at the intersection of Broad Street and Green Street, then turns north up Broad Street, before coming back south with a stop along Ramunno Drive and running along Merrimac Road and Industrial Drive, and then returns to the Odessa Park and Ride. The Odessa Park and Ride is located on the eastern edge of town next to the southbound Route 1 on-ramp heading toward Middletown. This park and ride services Routes 43, 45, 301, and 305. This park and ride includes approximately 200 parking spaces, bicycle racks, and a bus shelter.

In 2022, DART opened a new park and ride in north Middletown near Exit 5 of the U.S. Route 301 highway. This new park and ride includes Route 37 service to Wilmington, Route 302 connections to Dover, and to the Newark Regional Transit Center. The new park and ride also includes 200 parking spaces, bicycle racks, camera surveillance for safety, real-time bus arrival message boards, and an enclosed glass shelter with a bench, lighting, and cell phone charger. Park and ride lots throughout the Middletown area are located at:

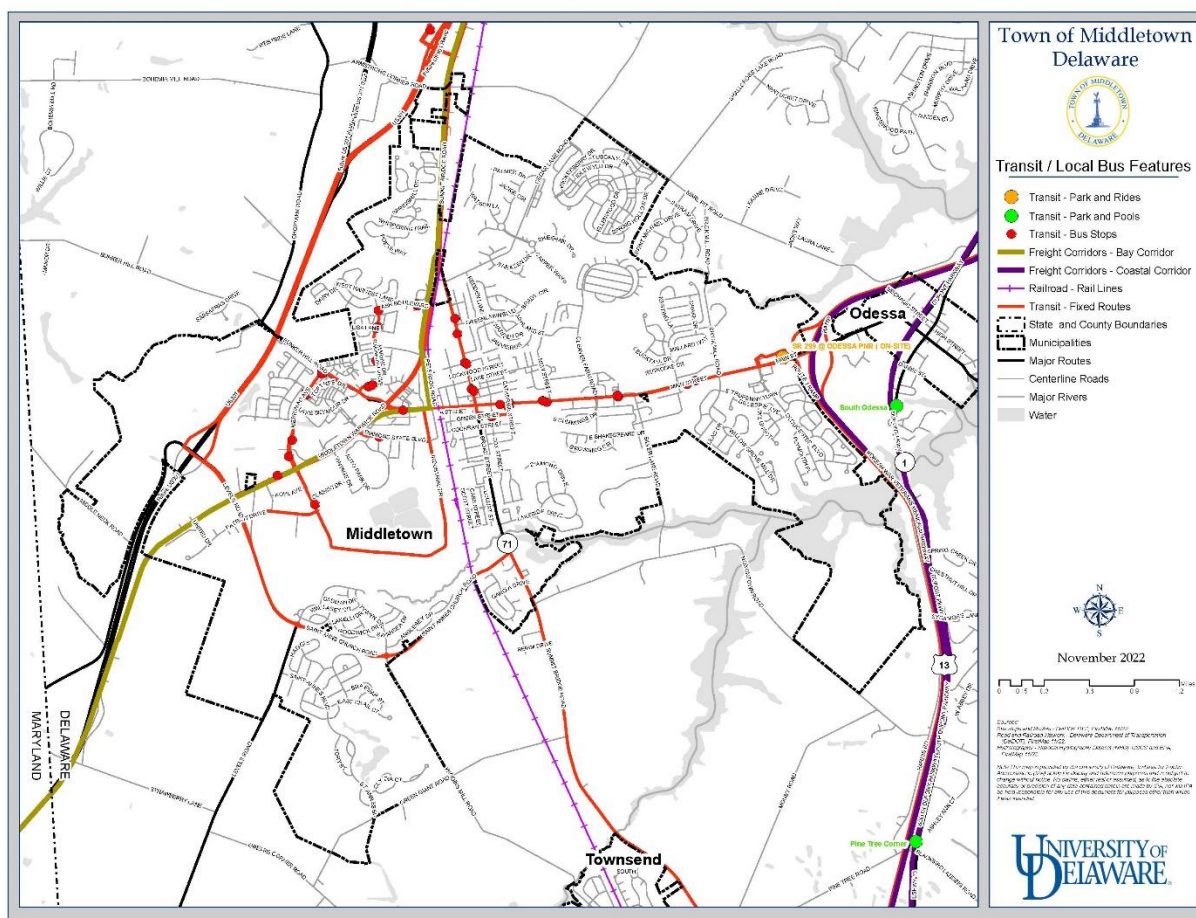
- North Middletown Park and Ride – U.S. Route 301 Exit 5 at Connector Road
- Odessa Park and Ride - DE 1 & DE 299 in Middletown

There are also two park and pool lots in the Middletown area. These lots are not serviced by DART, but are instead intended for individuals who carpool to meet on their own. These park and pool lots are located at:

- South Odessa Park and Pool – U.S. 13 at Wallace Road
- Pine Tree Corner Park and Pool – U.S. 13 and Road 25 in Townsend

DART Paratransit service provides door-to-door transportation service for those with eligible disabilities, and there are also accessible bus schedules available online. Paratransit rides need to be arranged at least one day in advance. The Senior Citizens Affordable Taxi (SCAT) service, which provides elderly or disabled persons with a 50 percent discount on taxi fares from participating companies, is also available.

## Map 9. Transit Map



### Commuting Patterns

The three tables below describe commuting patterns in Middletown, New Castle County, and the state of Delaware. Commuting patterns in Middletown vary slightly when compared to New Castle County and the state of Delaware. More residents of Middletown drive to work alone and fewer carpool, use public transit, walk to work, or work from home. The vast majority of Middletown residents commute to locations within New Castle County, which is not surprising given its locations between the major employment centers of the state in Wilmington, Newark, and Dover. Over 18 percent of Middletown workers commute to Kent County, most probably driving to Dover, which is only a half hour south of Middletown. Commuters who work in Middletown are largely from New Castle County. Most of the commuters from other areas come from Kent County; Cecil County, Maryland; or Philadelphia.

**Table 7. Means of Travel to Work, by Percent of Workers, 2019**

	Drove Alone	Carpooled	Public Transit	Walked	Other Means	Worked at Home
<b>Middletown</b>	85.9%	7.2%	0.8%	0.5%	0.0%	5.6%
<b>New Castle County</b>	77.0%	8.7%	3.3%	2.5%	1.1%	7.5%
<b>Delaware</b>	78.8%	8.6%	2.2%	2.1%	1.2%	7.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015–2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Commuting Characteristics, Table S0801.

**Table 8. Place of Employment for Middletown Residents, 2019**

	Percent of Middletown Residents
<b>New Castle County, DE</b>	61.8%
<b>Kent County, DE</b>	18.3%
<b>Cecil County, MD</b>	4.4%
<b>Sussex County, DE</b>	4.1%
<b>Kent County, MD</b>	1.5%
<b>Other Counties</b>	9.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *On the Map* 2015–2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

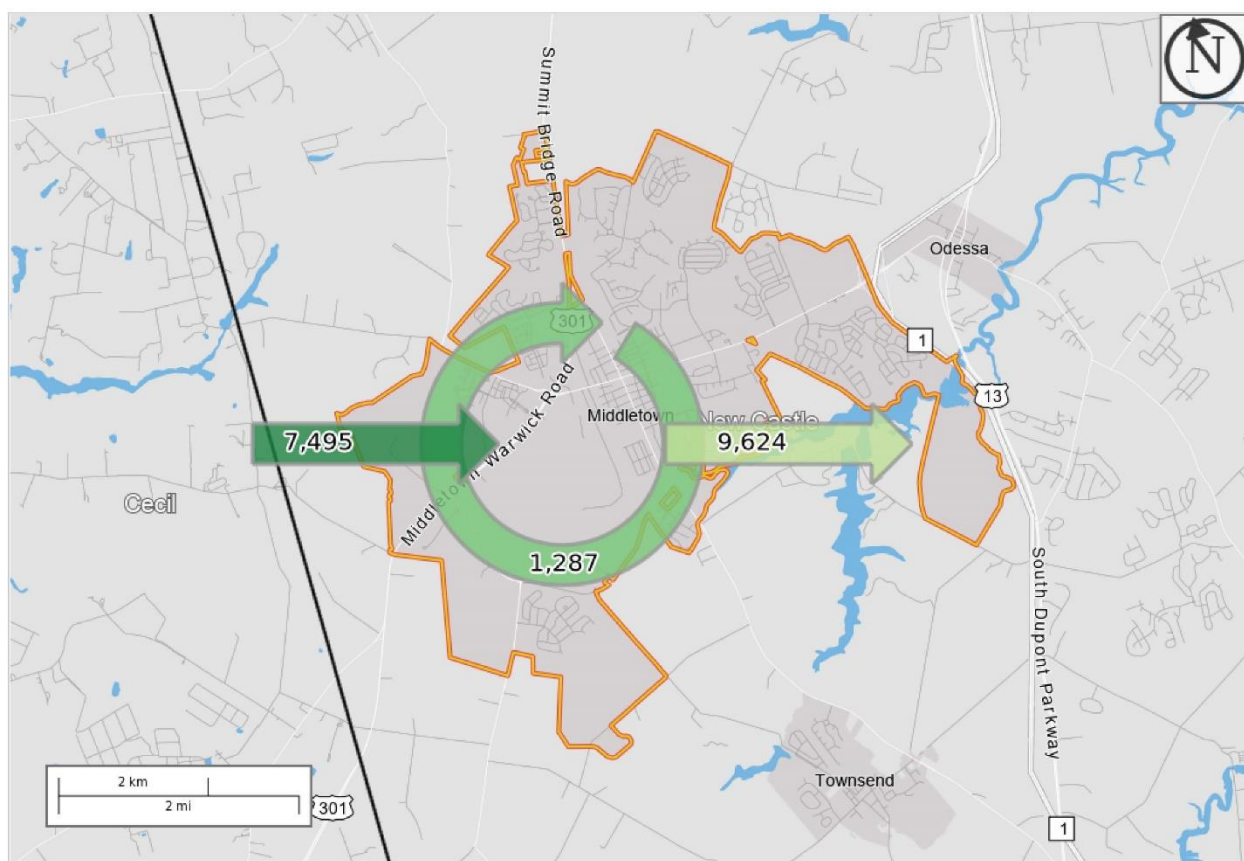
**Table 9. Place of Residence for Middletown Workers, 2019**

	Percent of Middletown Workers
<b>New Castle County, DE</b>	73.4%
<b>Kent County, DE</b>	7.1%
<b>Cecil County, MD</b>	2.9%
<b>Philadelphia County, PA</b>	2.8%
<b>Delaware County, PA</b>	1.9%
<b>Other Counties</b>	11.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *On the Map* 2015–2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

The figure below shows the employment pattern of people either commuting into Middletown or from Middletown to another location. Slightly fewer commuters come to Middletown to work every day (7,495) compared to the number of Middletown residents who leave to commute elsewhere for work (9,624). This represents an impressive number of commuters driving into Middletown given that the town is primarily residential and most major job centers are relatively far from town. A total of 1,287 residents both live and work in town, a relatively large number (approximately 5.5% of the town's population).

**Figure 7. Employment Patterns for Middletown Residents and Commuters**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *On the Map* 2015–2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

## Transportation Improvements

Traffic has been a major concern of both residents in town and the town Council for over a decade now, but the town has established two Transportation Improvement Districts (TID) to help address those issues. The primary issue with traffic in town is that there are a limited number of crossings over the railroad line, which makes east-west travel in town very difficult. Most of the transportation projects planned for Middletown are located within either the Westtown TID or the Easttown TID. However, there is one major project planned just north of town that is not within these TID area. DelDOT has plans to expand Cedar Lane from Boyd's

Corner to Marl Pit Road just north of town, with the project anticipated to begin in 2026 and be completed in 2028. The plans are to widen Cedar Lane to provide shoulders, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and the replacement of two bridges. Additionally, a roundabout will be constructed at the intersection of Cedar Lane and Boyd's Corner Road.

### *Westown TID*

A Transportation Improvement District (TID) was established as a voluntary program in Middletown, as part of the Westown Master Plan through a series of agreements with the affected land owners. This was effectively the first TID developed and implemented in the state of Delaware. Because the town, developers, and DelDOT worked together, separate Traffic Impact Studies could be consolidated into a more efficient process that avoided piece-meal roadway improvements. Under the voluntary agreement, the town oversees general planning coordination, including provisions for sewer and electrical service, and DelDOT oversees the traffic analysis, construction, and funding for roadway improvements.

Developers provide input on roadway and bicycle/pedestrian connections and transit amenities, contribute funds for the roadway improvements, and provide the required rights-of-way, utility relocations, and stormwater management facilities to support the roadway improvements. This collaboration supports complete communities planning techniques and fosters multi-modal transportation connections allowing for efficient infrastructure and a better quality of life: a community where you can learn, live, shop, work, and play.

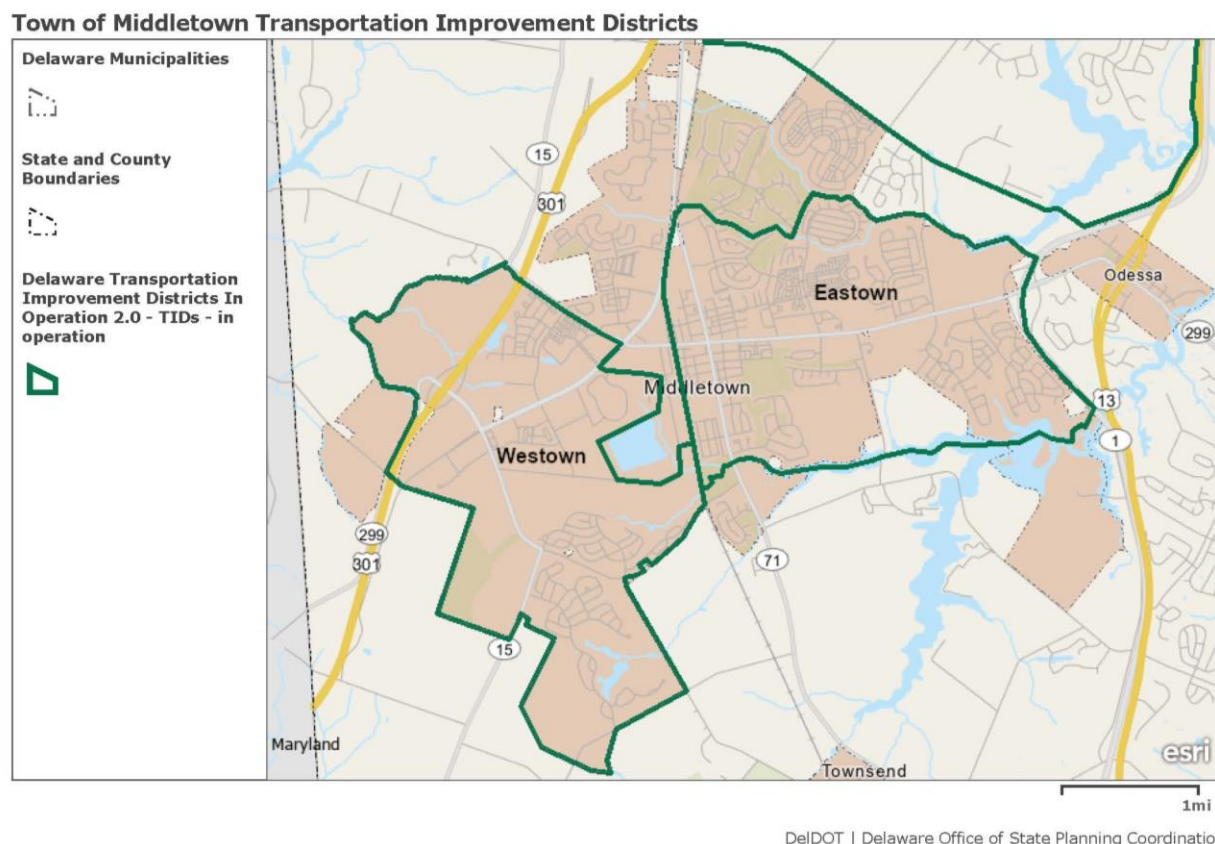
There have been many improvements made within the Westown TID since its establishment, but there are not many additional projects currently planned. DelDOT is beginning a process to update the Westown TID concept plan to determine if additional projects may be needed in the near future due to anticipated development in the area. The last update to the Westown concept plan was done in 2015 and included several improvements to Levels Road, including adding a lane that is anticipated to happen in the near future.

### *Eastown TID*

DelDOT and the Town of Middletown have established the Eastown TID by an agreement signed in January 2019, to implement the East Middletown Master Transportation Plan. Current DelDOT projects included in the Eastown TID include the widening of Route 299/Main Street. This widening project will expand Route 299 from two lanes to four lanes from Route 1 to Cleaver Farm Road and will add a center-left-turn-lane from Cleaver Farm to Catherine Street. This widening project is expected to be completed by the end of 2022. Additional projects anticipated in the future with development growth include:

- The Green Street extension from behind the Middletown Crossing Shopping Center behind the new library connecting to the current Green Street in the center of town
- The potential extension of Green Street across the railroad tracks
- The extension of Silverlake Road to the north and East Lake Road to the east

## Map 10. TID Map



### *Public Health Considerations*

In conjunction with the state's new policies focused on non-automotive transportation, many policymakers and advocates in Delaware and nationwide are promoting the link between bicycling and pedestrian mobility and public health goals. Promoting bicycle and pedestrian improvements and connectivity not only provide an alternative to driving and additional recreation opportunities, they also help to promote healthy communities in Delaware. Given the obesity crisis facing the country as well as the state, it is important for all local governments to promote policies that help to make our population healthier and more mobile.

One effort to help improve public health in the development of comprehensive plans is the Delaware Plan4Health Initiative. The Delaware Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA) and the Delaware Academy of Medicine/Delaware Public Health Association received a \$135,000 grant from APA through its Plan4Health program to combat two determinants of chronic disease—lack of physical activity and lack of access to nutritious foods. The funding for this national program has been implemented in partnership between APA and the American Public Health Association (APHA). This represents a major new collaboration between planners and public health professionals that Delaware hopes to build on in future comprehensive plans. Funding for Plan4Health was provided through an award from the Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention (CDC). This 2022 Comprehensive Plan has sought to incorporate some of the key principles of Delaware's Plan4Health, where feasible. These principles include:

1. Health Equity – Let health equity guide the planning process.
2. Transportation – Promote all transportation modes and prioritize mobility.
3. Parks and Recreation – Let community health needs guide parks and recreation planning.
4. Community Facilities – Provide facilities that help keep people healthy.
5. Food Systems – Promote a vibrant agricultural industry that focuses on rural and urban agriculture.
6. Economic Development – Emphasize strategies to alleviate poverty and improve employment opportunities while expanding healthy food retail.
7. Land Use – Create compact, walkable, mixed-use, vibrant communities.

## Recommendations

1. Consider partnering with WILMAPCO to fund a comprehensive multimodal transportation plan that identifies and prioritizes pedestrian and bicycle routes and key connections throughout town, identifies long term options to improve automobile traffic flow throughout town, and identifies options to improve or expand transit options within town.
2. Prioritize and fund projects identified in the 2020 Bicycle Route Feasibility Study completed by Duffield Associates and WILMAPCO's 2021 Walkable Communities study.
3. Consider entering into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with DeIDOT, and/or passing a Complete Streets ordinance in order to make necessary improvements for bicycle and pedestrian safety throughout town.
4. Continue discussion with Odessa and Townsend regarding trails and bikeways linking the three towns.
5. Review requirements in the zoning and subdivision ordinances to ensure that commercial and institutional sites are designed to be pedestrian and bike friendly.
6. Continue to work closely with the Middletown Main Street organization, the Downtown Development District, and WILMAPCO to improve parking options in the downtown area for both businesses and customers.
7. Continue to work with DeIDOT on getting appropriate community input for critical infrastructure projects in town, especially ongoing support for projects within the Westown and Eastown TID area.
8. Consider partnering with DeIDOT to pursue Living Lab Projects within town that can identify low-cost opportunities to pilot potential pedestrian and bicycle improvements within town.

# NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

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Middletown is located in an area of Delaware that is rich in natural resources with significant aesthetic, recreational, and economic value. The town continues to make progress in implementing policies and programs intended to strike a balance between protecting these natural resources and facilitating healthy economic-development activity. This chapter presents a summary of these natural resources and environmental policies, identifies issues of concern, and provides recommended actions for implementing sound natural-resources management policy.

## Physical Characteristics

### *Geology and Soils*

Middletown is located within the Atlantic coastal plain, a relatively flat landform stretching from northern New Jersey to southern Florida. The elevations within the town range from about 8 feet above sea level near the western end of Silver Lake to about 75 feet near the northern-most edge of town. As is typical with this landform, there are several water features within Middletown including the Appoquinimink River, Drawyer Creek, Silver Lake, and Noxontown Pond.

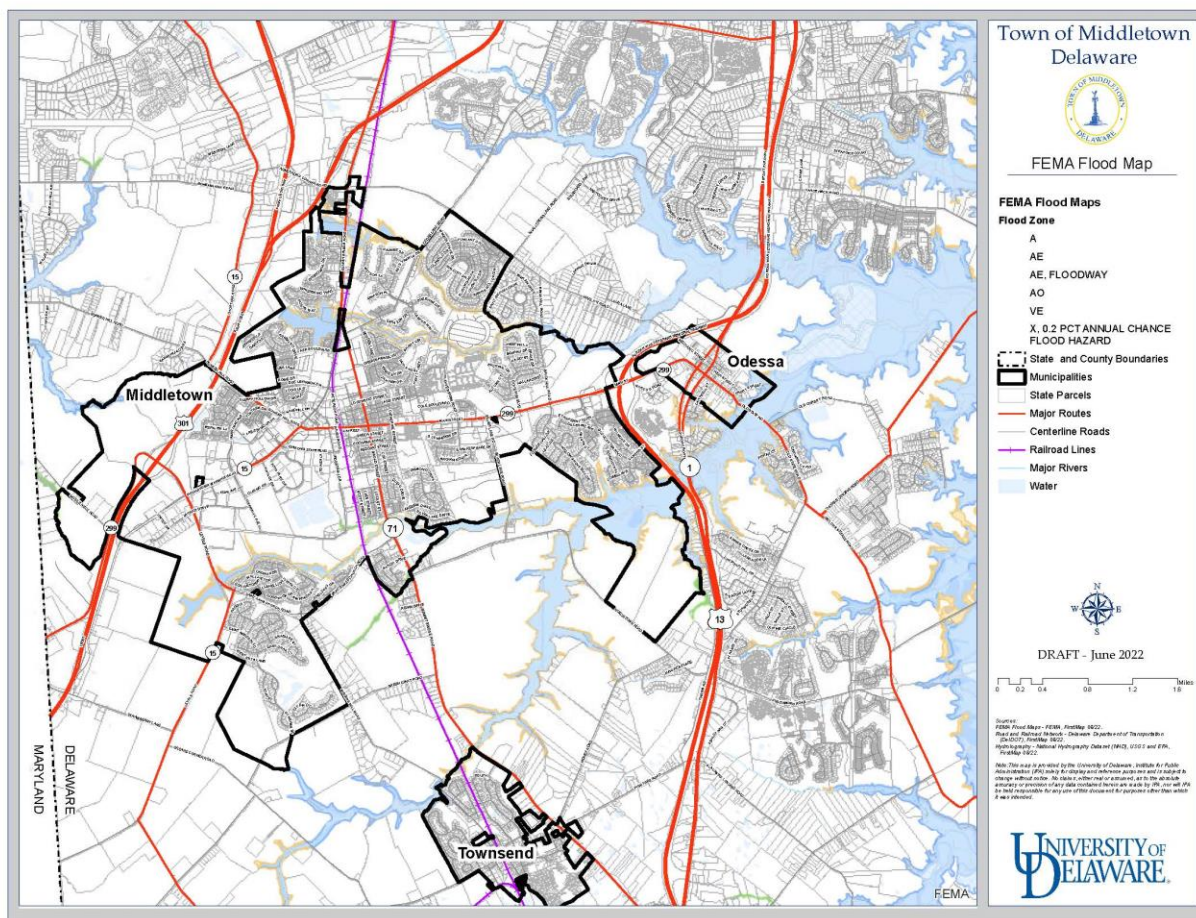
The principal soil-mapping unit in the vicinity of Middletown is the Reybold series. These soils are characterized as very well-draining and having up to a 10 percent slope. They are good soils for agricultural use and forests, although very little forest area remains on these soils. Middletown area soils can be seen in Map 12.

### *Floodplains and Flood-Hazard Areas*

Protecting flood-prone areas is vital to flood management, water quality, and property protection during intense storm events. A floodplain is the land area adjoining a stream or channel that has historically been inundated by flood waters. The term “100-year” refers to the statistical measure meaning there is a one percent chance (1/100) that a flood of this magnitude will occur in any given year, though even this can be misleading as multiple such floods can occur in any particular timeframe. The Middletown area FEMA Flood areas can be seen in Map 11.

In Middletown, the 100-year floodplain runs along the Appoquinimink River and Drawyer Creek. Compared to many towns in Delaware, Middletown’s flood-prone areas cover a much smaller geographic area. Regardless of total area, the protection of floodplains in the town are important to both minimize property damage during storm events and maintain the natural filtration of stormwater runoff.

## Map 11. FEMA Flood Map



### Wetlands

Tidal wetlands are present within Middletown's boundaries. Tidal wetlands are commonly referred to as marshes and are impacted by the tidal cycles. Tidal wetlands appear extensively along the Appoquinimink River on the southeastern end of town, and along Drawyer Creek on the northeastern end of town. There are non-tidal wetlands throughout the town, mainly in areas that drain to either Drawyer Creek or the Appoquinimink River. In addition to providing wildlife habitat, wetlands provide protection from flooding and play a vital role in protecting water quality by naturally filtering runoff on its way to water bodies.

Protection of wetlands falls under the regulatory jurisdiction of Section 404 provisions of the federal Clean Water Act. Tidal wetlands are subject to additional regulatory protection under Title 7, Chapter 66 provisions of the Delaware State Code.

## Water Resources

### *Surface Water*

Surface water includes streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds. The vast majority of Middletown lies within the Appoquinimink River Watershed and drains east to the Delaware River. Only a small portion on the western side along Route 301 drains to the Chesapeake Bay through the Sassafras and Bohemia watersheds.

### *Drinking Water*

Drinking water in Middletown for properties in town annexed after 1997 is supplied by the Artesian Water Company through an agreement with the town. Property in town from prior to 1997 is supplied water from the town's own wells. All new annexations are covered by the Artesian agreement as well. The town currently has approximately 7,500 water customer accounts, and no major capital improvements are currently planned. The town's drinking water supply is drawn from the Magothy and Upper Potomac Formation aquifers through four wells operated by the Middletown Water Department. These aquifers are confined, meaning they are substantially protected from activities on the land surface that could potentially pollute the aquifers, including septic systems, lawn chemicals, agricultural fertilizers, and road salt applied during the winter.

The most recent Water Quality report for Middletown is available on the town's website (<https://www.middletown.delaware.gov/>). It provides results of testing performed throughout the year and explains health risks associated with substances found in the tests.

## Protecting Water Resources

### *Supply—Source Water*

Drinking water in Middletown is drawn from the Magothy and Upper Potomac Formation aquifers. These aquifers are considered to be confined, since significant clay layers exist between the ground surface and the screens in the wells that are located from 285 feet to 846 feet. The clay helps insulate the aquifers from activities on the land surface that could potentially pollute the aquifers, including septic systems, lawn chemicals, agricultural fertilizers, and road salt applied during the winter. Middletown's drinking-water supply contains naturally occurring elements in trace quantities like iron, chloride, and sodium.

In 2009, Middletown council adopted its source water protection ordinance. The ordinance establishes two types of source-water-resource protection areas within the town, Class A Wellhead Protection Areas and Excellent Recharge Areas, as shown on Map 13 Water Resources. The excellent recharge potential designation means that these areas have geologic properties that provide the best ability to transmit water from the ground surface to the water table. Wellhead Protection Areas are those surface and subsurface areas surrounding a water well or supplying a public water system. Protecting these areas from contaminants is important since these areas allow for relatively rapid transmission of potential contaminants into the water table and potentially into drinking water. Protection measures typically include limiting

impervious surfaces so that precipitation is not directed away from the aquifer, and prohibiting the storage of hazardous materials.

The quality and quantity of water available in the Middletown area has been and will continue to be very important to the public health of town residents and sustainable economic growth in and around the town. This section deals primarily with water-quality issues and actions that the town can take to minimize negative impacts on water quality in the region.

### *Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)*

A total maximum daily load (TMDL) is the greatest amount of a particular pollutant that a water body can absorb each day without violating federal water-quality standards — in other words, a pollution limit.

Examples of pollutants, which can harm surface-water bodies, include nitrogen and phosphorus, bacteria, and sediments. There are two sources of these pollutants: “point” sources, such as sewage treatment plants and “nonpoint” sources, such as runoff from farms, parking lots, and golf courses.

Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) requires states to develop a list of water bodies for which current pollution-control activities are not sufficient to attain applicable water-quality standards and establish TMDLs for pollutants of concern. The first step in combatting water pollution from point and nonpoint sources is to determine acceptable pollution levels—the TMDLs. On November 1, 2006, DNREC adopted regulations establishing the TMDL for the pollutants in the Appoquinimink River watershed that are outlined in the table below.

The second step is to develop a pollution-control strategy. DNREC’s Watershed Assessment staff works with Tributary Action Teams—comprising residents of each watershed, the public, and other stakeholders—to develop this strategy. Typical strategies considered by these teams include the following:

- Eliminating point-source discharges.
- Managing fertilizer and manure applications.
- Replacing failing septic systems with environmentally safer sewage-disposal systems.
- Employing protective agricultural practices such as planting vegetative buffer strips between cropland and waterways.
- Treating residential stormwater runoff at higher levels.

**Table 10. Appoquinimink Watershed Subbasin C05 TMDLs**

<b>Pollutant</b>	<b>Waste Load Allocation for Point Sources</b>	<b>Waste Load Allocation for Nonpoint Sources</b>	<b>TMDL</b>
<b>Total Nitrogen (pounds per day)</b>	10.4	334.1	344.5
<b>Total Phosphorus (pounds per day)</b>	2.1	18.0	20.1

Sources: TMDL and Reduction from Baseline Data from Delaware Administrative Code, Title 7, Section 7425, adopted October, 2001. Point and Nonpoint data from DNREC, Appoquinimink River Watershed TMDLs, Page v, October 2001 at [https://documents.dnrec.delaware.gov/swc/wa/Documents/Xia/Appo\\_NutrientsTMDL\\_TechReport\\_2003.pdf](https://documents.dnrec.delaware.gov/swc/wa/Documents/Xia/Appo_NutrientsTMDL_TechReport_2003.pdf).

### *Brownfields*

Brownfields and other remediation projects have been identified within the town. The DNREC Remediation Section (formerly Site Investigation and Restoration Section) lists the following sites:

- DE-1483 Middletown Manor 0-17 Wood Street
- DE-11789 900 N Broad Street

The sites listed above are currently in the Brownfield program.

## **Air Quality and Climate Change**

### *Air Quality*

Air quality in Delaware is similar to other areas in the region such as Harford County, Maryland; Cumberland County, New Jersey; and Philadelphia. To determine the ambient levels of pollutants for which national standards have been established, the state of Delaware created the Delaware Air Monitoring Network. The nearest air monitoring station to Middletown is in Lums Ponds State Park.

### *Climate Change and Adaptation*

As a coastal state, the impacts of climate change are already more visible in Delaware than in other parts of the country. In the future, scientists expect that Delaware will experience more days of dangerously high heat, more frequent and more intense storms, and rising seas. While Middletown is not particularly susceptible to rising seas, the town can take steps to prepare for other likely impacts.

Heavy precipitation can lead to flooding, especially in areas with inadequate and/or older drainage infrastructure, such as in the downtown. This flooding can result in safety hazards, inaccessible roadways, delays for emergency vehicles, and property damage. Planning future infrastructure with this in mind can help mitigate potential damage.

Rising temperatures will result in a longer growing season, heat waves, and more days when it doesn't cool at night. Of particular concern are vulnerable populations living in older accommodations that may not have efficient cooling systems.

### *Energy Efficiency*

Increased energy efficiency has many benefits including less impact on the environment. The town can influence energy choices in several areas including town facilities and operations, the built environment, and by encouraging and enabling alternative transportation infrastructure.

The Town of Middletown can consider conducting an energy audit of its own facilities and operations in order to assess areas where energy efficient enhancements are available. Upgrades such as LED lighting, lighting timers, and replacing vehicles with more energy efficient models can both increase efficiency and be more cost effective for the town's taxpayers.

Within the built environment, the town can assess its ordinances to both ensure that there are not barriers to energy efficient technologies, and encourage energy-efficient design through provisions, such as solar orientation. The town's landscape ordinance and tree canopy are an important tool in the energy efficiency toolbox. The tree canopy can help to reduce heat island effect, improve air quality, and assist with drainage issues. In addition, the town can help to educate its residents about the importance of energy efficiency and available opportunities, such as the weatherization assistance program through its newsletter and website.

Finally, the town's land use and transportation planning can have a tremendous impact on energy efficiency. With gas powered vehicles being one of the largest sources of carbon emissions, ensuring that the town maintains and enhances its bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure is not only healthier for residents, but more energy efficient.

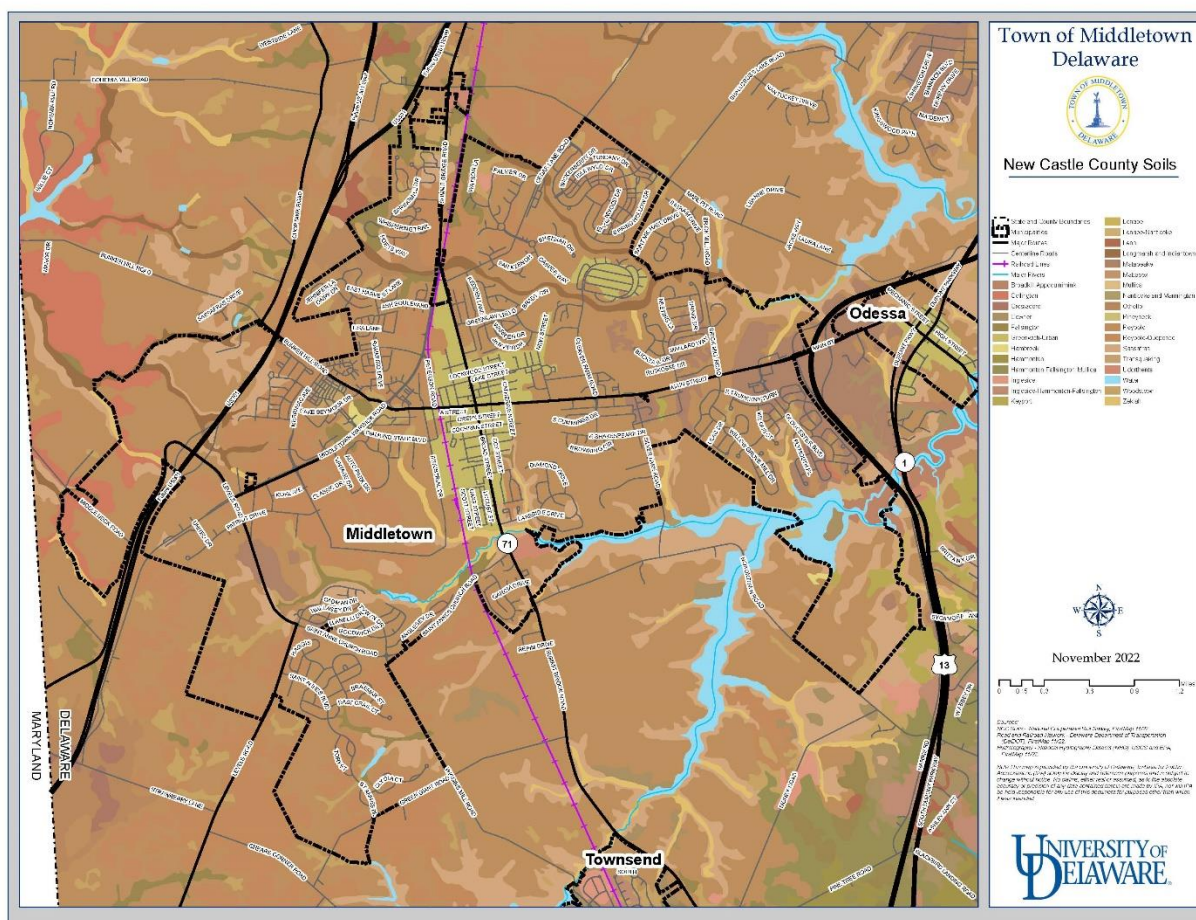
Available resources:

- **Green Energy Fund** – Grant funds and incentives are available through the DNREC Green Energy Fund, which includes several funding types through the state's major electric utilities. Grants may be available for qualifying renewable energy systems installed in Delaware by applicants whose electricity provider collects funds for the program and offers a grant program for renewable energy projects. Additional information can be found at: <https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/climate-coastal-energy/renewable/assistance/>.
- **Residential, Agricultural, Public, and Commercial Applications (Energize Delaware)** – Energize Delaware, offered through the Delaware Sustainable Energy Utility, provides low interest loans and other funding opportunities to help Delaware residents, businesses, farmers, schools, religious organizations, nonprofits, hospitals and local governments implement energy saving projects. Energy saving projects could include high-efficiency heating, cooling, ventilation, insulation, and solar. Additional information can be found at: <https://www.energizedelaware.org/>.
- **Commercial & Industrial Applications (Energy Efficiency Investment Fund)** – The Energy Efficiency Investment Fund provides grant money to Delaware businesses, local

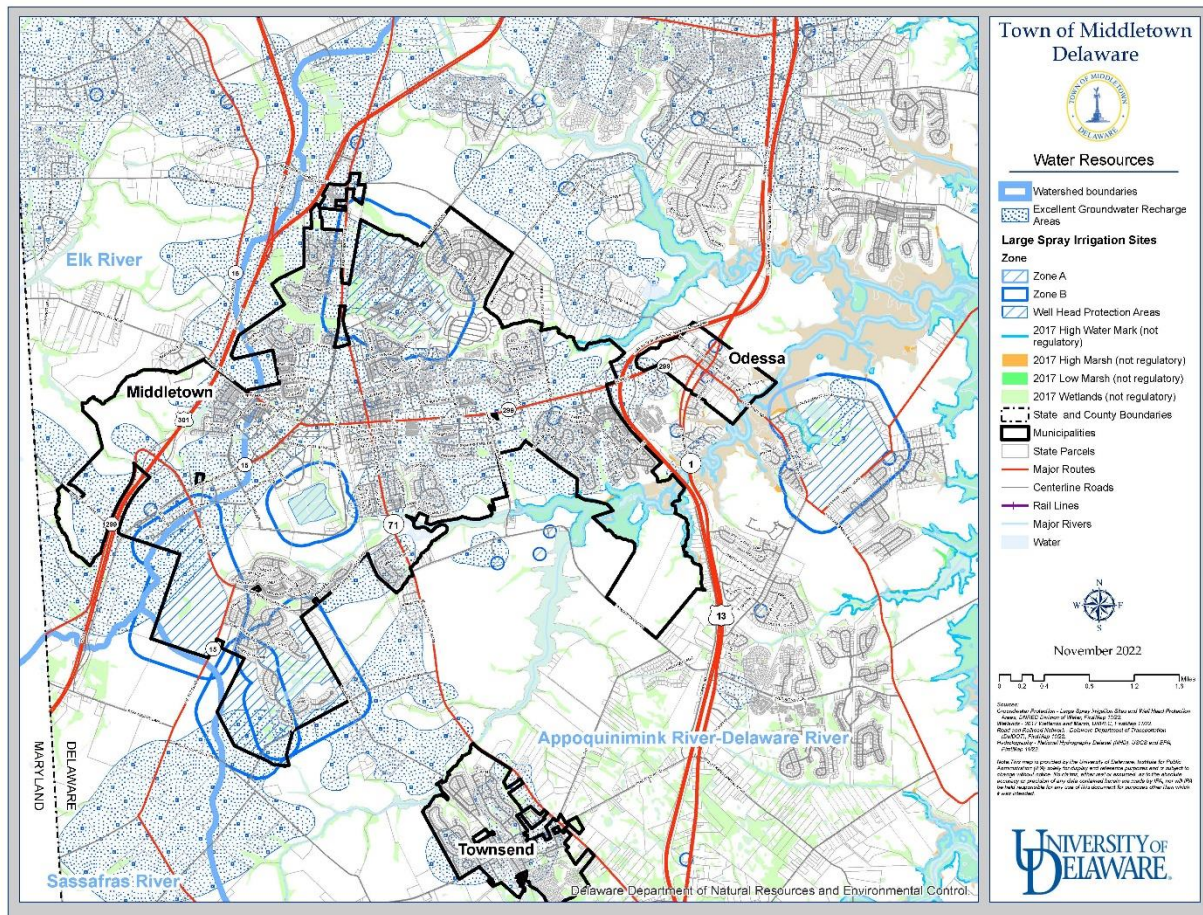
governments, and nonprofits to make facility upgrades that lower their energy use and cost. Grants are awarded for up to 30 percent of total project costs. Additional information can be found at: <https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/climate-coastal-energy/efficiency/energy-efficiency-investment-fund/>.

- **Residential Applications (“Cool Switch” Low-Impact Refrigerant Program)** – “Cool Switch” Low-Impact Refrigerant Program is a new program that provides incentives to businesses to install refrigeration systems that are less harmful to the environment. Incentives for new systems or upgrades of existing systems are offered to participating municipalities, businesses and industries. The incentive is based on the reduction in the greenhouse gas potential associated with the refrigerant used. Additional information can be found at: <https://news.delaware.gov/2020/02/24/dnrec-to-launch-refrigerant-incentive-program/>.
- **Residential Applications (Weatherization Program)** – Ensure that residents are aware of the Weatherization Assistance Program and provide information to those who are having trouble paying utility bills. Additional information can be found at: <https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/climate-coastal-energy/sustainable-communities/weatherization/>.

## Map 12. Soil Classifications



## Map 13. Water Resources



## Recommendations

1. Continue to limit development and enhance protections in sensitive natural areas such as floodplains and wetlands.
2. Consider the potential impacts of heavier and more frequent precipitation on the town's infrastructure, particularly in older areas of town, in future planning.
3. Continue to maintain compliance with mandated levels of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs).
4. Consider implementing green infrastructure and other best management practices in locations that can help alleviate localized flooding issues and improve water quality.
5. Consider working with the Urban and Community Forestry Program and consider applying to become a designated Delaware Tree Friendly Community, with a focus on increasing the town's tree canopy.

6. Continue increasing the energy efficiency of town operations and facilities through upgrades such as LED lighting, lighting timers, and replacing gas powered passenger vehicles with electric vehicles or more energy efficient models.
7. Explore installing level 2 electric vehicle charging stations on town-owned properties including parking areas and parks.
8. Continue to use the town website and newsletter to help inform residents of ways to become more energy efficient and prepare for climate impacts, such as heat waves.
9. Consider evaluating town ordinances to ensure that there are not barriers to energy efficient technologies, and encourage energy-efficient design through provisions such as solar orientation of new construction.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Economic development includes policies and practices that enhance the tax base, create and retain employment opportunities, and promote commercial activity and economic growth. Many new employment opportunities in the New Castle County area will likely be healthcare- and service-related, but finance, technology, education, legal services, and construction jobs are also a vital part of the local economy. Dover is also within a reasonable commute and government services is also a significant employer in the Middletown economy.

### Countywide Trends

The New Castle County Department of Land Use recently released a draft version of its new Comprehensive Plan titled *NCC2050*. One of the challenges facing New Castle County in the future is that the population growth of the county is expected to slow down and stabilize as 2050 nears, with an increase of both ethnically diverse and elderly populations. Populations may have different needs, especially the elderly population, which could be taken into account while identifying future areas of targeted growth and economic development. Some of the areas highlighted as future growth markets for New Castle County that might have particular interest to Middletown are the warehousing and logistics sector and the biosciences sector.

*NCC2050* outlines new goals, objectives, and strategies for approaching the economic development challenges for New Castle County. The three goals stated in the draft plan relating to economic development are listed below:

- 5. New Castle County is a strong, resilient hub of the regional economy that provides a range of jobs and services to County residents.
- 6. All residents have the ability to participate in the economy and have access to living-wage jobs. Delaware's workforce is strong and positioned for emerging industry and jobs as well as applying innovation and adaptation in traditional industries.
- 7. Farming continues to be a viable way of life and contributes to economic resiliency and healthy communities (for its provision of food access and security, its preservation of farmland, and contribution toward community character).

### Statewide Trends

#### *The Delaware Prosperity Partnership*

On his first day in office in January 2017, Governor Carney signed Executive Order 1 that set forth a plan to dissolve the Delaware Economic Development Office (DEDO) and create a public-private partnership to lead Delaware's economic development efforts. This public-private partnership was formed in September 2017 as the Delaware Prosperity Partnership (DPP). DPP was tasked with a new focus on economic development in the state by promoting innovation, supporting Delaware's entrepreneurs, and leveraging private-sector resources to create jobs and grow Delaware's economy. DPP is headed by a 19-member board of directors on which the Governor serves as a co-chair. The DPP also hired its first CEO, Kurt Foreman, in the spring of 2018 and, as of winter 2020, has a staff of 15. DPP is the official nonprofit state economic

development agency and as such leads Delaware's economic development efforts to attract, grow, and retain businesses; build a stronger entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem; and support private employers in identifying, recruiting, and developing talent in Delaware. DPP's services include working with prospects to review potential sites, cost-of-living details, and funding opportunities, including available tax credits and incentives. The four key elements of economic development on which DPP focuses include:

- Attraction – Focusing on bringing new companies to Delaware
- Expansion – Engaging and supporting existing employers
- Innovation – Convening and supporting new, emerging sectors
- Talent – Enhancing the state's talent pool and supporting employers in their workforce needs

### *The Division of Small Business*

In addition to forming DPP, the State of Delaware also created the Division of Small Business to fulfill other functions that DEDO previously covered. The Division of Small Business is located within the state's Office of Management and Budget and focuses on assisting Delaware businesses in the following areas:

- Navigating the government process
- Connecting with resource organizations
- Accessing capital

The Division of Small Business administers programs including various state incentive programs and tax credits, EDGE Grants, the Delaware on Main program (which replaced the Delaware Main Street program), and Opportunity Zones. The Division also coordinates the Delaware Economic Development Authority (DEDA). DEDA was created by the Delaware General Assembly to promote economic activity in the state of Delaware. The director of the Delaware Division of Small Business chairs DEDA and may designate officers or employees of the Division of Small Business to lawfully act on their behalf. Under Delaware Code, DEDA is authorized to issue bonds to finance the cost of any project, or part of any project, or provide other financing support to projects with approval by the Council on Development Finance (CDF). CDF is responsible for conducting a public hearing following reasonable public notice, prior to the issuance by DEDA of any bond or the provision by DEDA of any other form of financing support. DEDA staff is tasked with reviewing prospective projects to determine whether the goals and outcomes of the projects align with the purposes set forth in Delaware law, including whether they contribute to the prosperity, health, or general welfare of the citizens of Delaware. Upon successful approval of a prospective project, DEDA will adopt a resolution and execute the necessary legal agreements.

## **Economic Characteristics**

Tables 11 and 12 summarize 2019 income and poverty data for Middletown, New Castle County, the State of Delaware, and the United States. Middletown has significantly higher median household incomes and much lower rates of poverty than those of New Castle County and Delaware overall.

**Table 11. Household Annual Income, 2019**

	Middletown	New Castle County	Delaware	United States
<b>Median Income</b>	\$90,134	\$73,892	\$68,287	\$62,843

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015–2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP03.

**Table 12. Selected 2019 Income Distribution and Poverty Data**

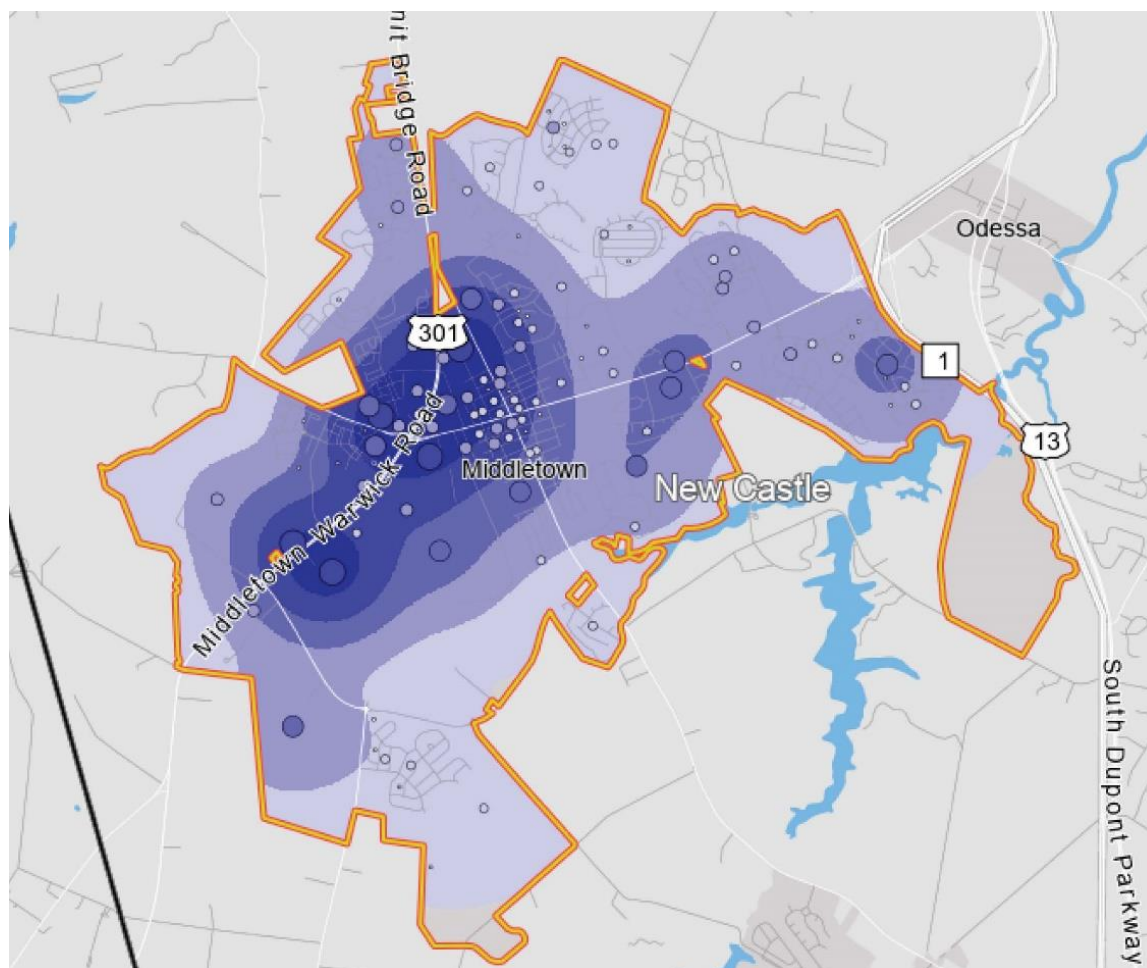
	Middletown	New Castle County	Delaware	United States
<b>Households with Annual Income under \$25,000</b>	8.6%	15.6%	16.3%	19.2%
<b>Households with Annual Income of \$100,000 or More</b>	41.3%	34.8%	31.1%	29.5%
<b>Individuals below Poverty Line</b>	6.3%	11.4%	11.8%	13.4%
<b>Individuals 65 Years and Over below Poverty Level</b>	1.7%	6.8%	6.6%	9.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015–2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

### *Area Employers*

Figure 8 shows the concentration of employers in Middletown. The figure shows that jobs in Middletown are largely concentrated around Middletown-Warwick Road on the western end of town. Most of the employment along Middletown-Warwick Road is retail or food service oriented. Traffic and parking is a concern for the growth of these businesses as they are accessed almost entirely by vehicle. Most of the employment in town is located in the C-3 and M-I zones, which are intended for large scale commercial and industrial uses. The Middletown-Warwick Road and Industrial Drive corridors are part of the Westtown area of town, which was a planned growth area with a Transportation Improvement District implemented by DeIDOT. Wilmington, Newark, and Dover are major regional employment centers, and they are all located within approximately 25 miles.

**Figure 8. Employer Concentration, 2019**



Source: U.S. Census *On the Map* website Middletown Town Employers, American Community Survey 2015–2019.

### *Employment and Unemployment*

Table 13 presents the employment status for persons in the labor force for Middletown, New Castle County, Delaware, and the United States. Middletown residents are unemployed at a higher rate than those of New Castle County, Delaware, and the United States. However, those who are employed in Middletown have much higher incomes in general than the county given the higher median household income. Employment levels in Delaware, along with New Castle County, have remained comparable to the United States as a whole over the past decade.

**Table 13. Employment Status, 2019**

Employment Status	Middletown	New Castle County	Delaware	United States
<b>Employed</b>	60.6%	61.4%	58.6%	59.6%
<b>Unemployed</b>	4.6%	3.9%	3.4%	3.4%

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2015–2019.

### *Occupations*

Table 14 shows the employment of Middletown’s residents by occupational category in both 2010 and 2019. While these occupational categories are relatively consistent between New Castle County and the rest of the state, Middletown has a slightly different employment base. Since 2010, Middletown has become more dependent on “Management, Business, Science, and Arts” jobs and has become less dependent on “Service” jobs and “Sales and Office” jobs. Ten years ago, Middletown’s occupational breakdown was very similar to that of New Castle County and the State of Delaware, but has changed significantly over time in the categories mentioned above. There was a 31 percent increase in the “Management, Business, Science, and Arts” sector, which rose from just 42 percent of occupations in Middletown in 2010 to 55 percent in 2019 and represents the largest overall employment category by far. There is more employment statewide and in New Castle County in “Service” and “Sales and Office” jobs in 2019 than there is in Middletown.

**Table 14. Occupational Breakdown, 2010 and 2019**

Occupational Category	Middletown		New Castle County		Delaware	
	2010	2019	2010	2019	2010	2019
<b>Management, Business, Science &amp; Arts</b>	42.3%	55.4%	40.8%	44.3%	36.8%	40.3%
<b>Service</b>	18.5%	11.0%	15.9%	16.7%	17.0%	17.7%
<b>Sales &amp; Office</b>	21.6%	16.4%	26.0%	21.4%	26.0%	21.7%
<b>Natural Resource, Construction &amp; Maintenance</b>	7.6%	5.6%	7.9%	7.5%	9.6%	8.9%
<b>Production, Transportation &amp; Material Moving</b>	10.1%	11.6%	9.5%	10.1%	10.6%	11.4%

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey, S2405, 2006–2010 and 2015–2019.

### *Middletown Main Street*

Middletown Main Street Inc. is a nonprofit organization committed to supporting small businesses, preserving historical charm, and advancing comprehensive community development with the goal of a thriving Downtown District in Middletown, Delaware.

Middletown Main Street is both a Main Street America affiliate and a partner in Delaware's Downtown Development District program. The board of directors, executive director, staff, volunteers, donors and partners make critical contributions to driving successful economic development projects, fundraising campaigns, business development, and community relations in the area. Middletown Main Street seeks to form cross-sector partnerships that promote economic development, housing improvements, beautification, and historic preservation in the Downtown District of Middletown, Delaware. The goal of Middletown Main Street is to be a place where families can shop, eat, and find entertainment while adults can also socialize and mingle at various eateries and gathering places.

On March 11, 2019, the Mayor and Town Council of Middletown approved the Downtown Development District Plan, and shortly thereafter, the town applied for inclusion in the State of Delaware's Downtown Development District Program. The town received designation to this program on August 19, 2019. The Downtown Development District program allows the area additional benefits from the state such as priority selection for historic tax credits, tax rebates for up to 20 percent of property investments between \$15,000 and \$25,000, bridge loans, and on-call direct assistance from the Division of Small Business. In addition to these benefits, the Town of Middletown has approved additional benefits for the area including expedited permitting, business license fee waivers, and a 75 percent waiver on impact fees. A map of the Downtown Development District area is shown below in Figure 9.



6. Improve parking access and signage in the historic Main Street area in order to support local businesses and provide a more enjoyable experience for customers.
7. Continue working with the Delaware Prosperity Partnership, relevant state agencies, potential new businesses, and investors to attract new employment uses to town and retain existing employers.

## PARKS, RECREATION, AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Town parks and recreation make an essential contribution to a healthier population and a greener town. They are integral to quality of life, providing beauty, respite, and opportunity for structured and informal play, and are an important part of the town's living experience. Community facilities also play a vital role in Middletown as they include town services like administration, police, and fire as well as local schools and health service centers.

### Local and Regional Facilities

Much of the open space in Middletown is set aside through either subdivision ordinance requirements or in locally owned and maintained parks. Many of these parks contain playground areas and amenities for active recreation, such as baseball and basketball. They also offer picnic tables, concession stands, benches, iron lampposts, and trash receptacles. These facilities and services affect the attractiveness of the town as a good place to live and do business. A full listing of these local and regional facilities is provided in Table 15.

**Table 15. Middletown Park and Recreation Facilities**

Facility	Features
<b>Duke Field</b>	Baseball fields, managed by the town
<b>Doc Levinson Park</b>	Basketball courts, playground, skateboarding area, walking trails, tennis court, pavilions, pool, soccer fields
<b>Frog Hollow</b>	18-hole public golf course and tennis facility
<b>Charles E. Price Memorial Park</b>	Walking trails, catch-and-release fishing pond, dog park, open fields, tot lot, covered pavilions with seating and grills
<b>Middletown Nature Area</b>	Walking trail
<b>Middletown Village Park</b>	Soccer fields
<b>MOT Athletic Fields</b>	Football, soccer, and baseball fields
<b>Silver Lake Park</b>	New YMCA being built on and replacing old skate park and tennis courts, basketball courts, playground, walking trails, small pavilion, pickle ball courts also being constructed

Source: Town of Middletown.

## County and State Recreational Facilities and Parks

Middletown residents also have access to New Castle County and state parks that offer a wide variety of amenities, including playgrounds, sports fields, hiking, picnicking areas, tennis courts, historical attractions, basketball courts, and even a zoo. Table 16 identifies county and state amenities in the vicinity of Middletown. The closest county park to Middletown is located north of Townsend. Once completed, Wiggins Mill Park will be the first county-operated active recreation park south of the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal. The park will be located on 193 acres northwest of Townsend at the intersection of Wiggins Mill Road and Lake Valley Drive and will include a wide variety of sports and recreation facilities. Hiking trails will also wind through the park.

There is one national wildlife refuge, and several state wildlife parks near Middletown. These include Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge near Leipsic, Blackbird State Forest to the south, Augustine and Cedar Swamp Wildlife Areas to the east, and the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal Wildlife Area to the north.

DNREC also operates the Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Trails (ORPT) program, formerly known as the Delaware Land and Water Conservation Trust Fund (DTF). This is a matching grant program assisting with public park land acquisition and outdoor recreation facility development in Delaware, and helps fund municipal and county outdoor recreation projects as well as land acquisitions. Municipal and county governments, and park districts, may apply for grant funding under the Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Trails Program. Middletown may want to consider applying for grants from this program if it decides to pursue additional parks or trails projects in the future.

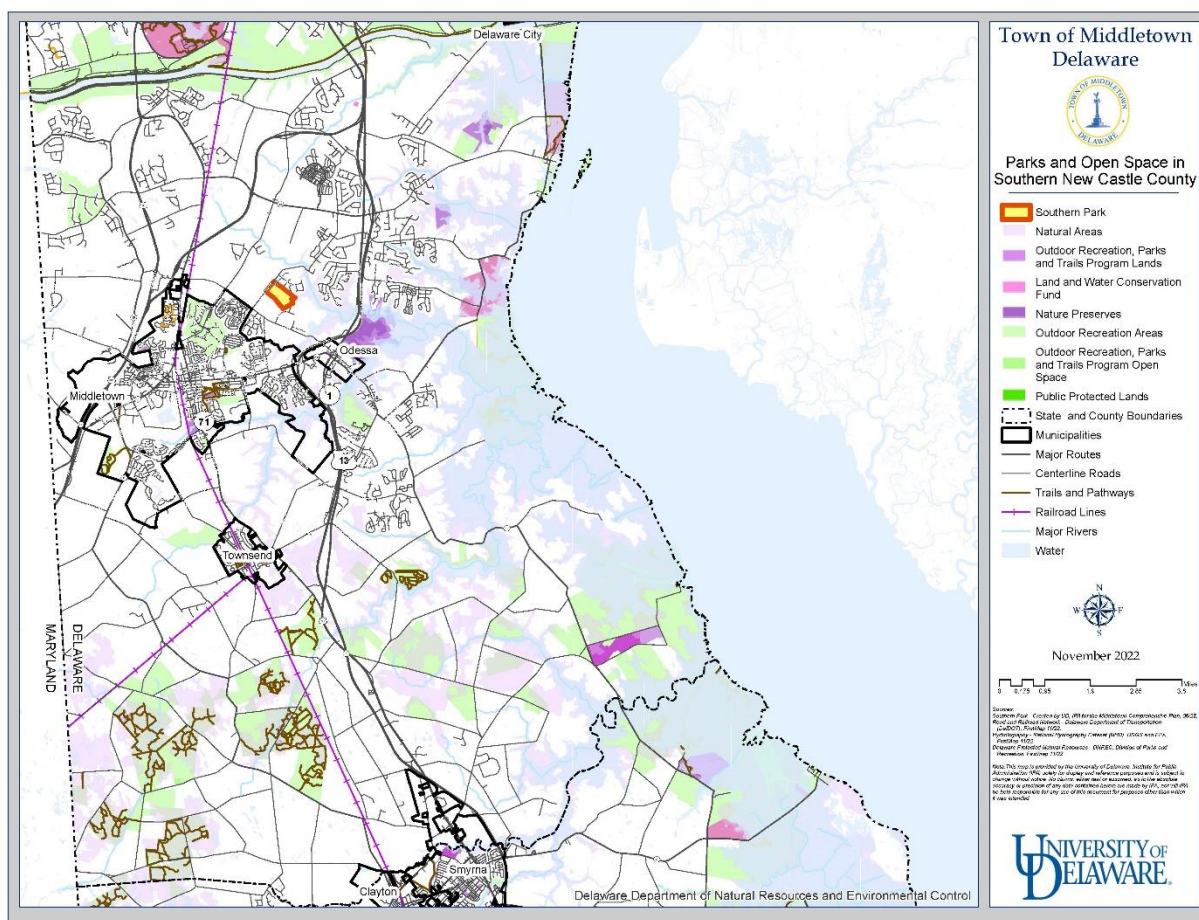
Additionally, New Castle County has plans to build a new “Southern Park” just north of town. This planned park is identified on Maps 14 and 15.

**Table 16. Surrounding Area Park & Recreation Facilities**

Facility	Location	Features
<b>Wiggins Mill Park</b>	Wiggins Mill Road and Lake Valley Drive, Townsend	193 acres; agricultural park
<b>Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge</b>	Southeast of Middletown near Leipsic off Whitehall Road	16,000 acres featuring walking trails, observation towers, and a visitor center with interactive displays
<b>Blackbird State Forest and Blackiston Wildlife Area</b>	South of Middletown between U.S. Route 13 and SR 1	10,000 acres of camping, horseback riding, hunting
<b>Augustine Wildlife Area</b>	SR 9 north of West Market Street, Port Penn	2,700-acre state wildlife refuge; hunting in season; hiking trails; wildlife watching
<b>Cedar Swamp Wildlife Area</b>	Between Delaware Bay and SR 9 at Walker School Road, Townsend	5,500-acre state wildlife area; hunting in season
<b>Chesapeake &amp; Delaware Canal Wildlife Area</b>	Frazier and Chesapeake City Roads, Bear	State wildlife refuge; greenway along C&D Canal; retrieving-dog training area for hunters; hunting in season

Source: Compiled by IPA, May 2022.

## Map 14. Regional Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Spaces





## Town Government

Middletown's governing body consists of a mayor and six council members. The council members are elected in staggered two-year terms, with the mayor and three council members elected in odd numbered years and the remaining three council members elected in even-numbered years. Elections for town officials are held on the first Monday in March in Town Hall, located at 19 West Green Street.

A Planning Commission has been established in accordance with Title 22, Section 701 of the Delaware Code. Section 702(a) charges municipal planning commissions with the task of preparing comprehensive plans. The Planning Commission also has the responsibility to review zoning change requests, propose amendments to zoning and subdivision ordinances, and make recommendations to the council on planning and development matters. The mayor, with consent of the council, appoints members to the Planning Commission. There are nine members of the Planning Commission.

The Board of Adjustment has been established according to Chapter 3, Title 22 of the Delaware Code for the task of granting or denying variances and special exceptions and hearing appeals of administrative decisions. Board of Adjustment members are appointed by the mayor with consent of the council. There are five members on the Board of Adjustment.

Along with a Town Manager, Middletown employs a chief of police, public works director, finance director, project manager, and foremen for the administration and operation of town services. These foremen oversee the electric, wastewater, maintenance, parks, billing, water, streets, and inspections departments. The electric department is charged with new hook-ups and maintenance of existing electric lines while the billing department is responsible for all electric and water meter readings and maintenance. The maintenance department is charged with the maintenance of all town-owned buildings, facilities, and equipment. Town employees number 150, including the Middletown Police Department.

## Town Facilities and Services

### *Police Protection*

The Middletown Police Department was re-established on July 2, 2007, with the approval by the Middletown Mayor and Council to move forward with a budget for hiring a police force, starting with a police chief. The new Middletown Police Department began with an initial squad of 20 officers, recruited mainly from various police departments throughout the state of Delaware and surrounding areas.

The police department comprises a four-member supervisory staff and 20 patrol officers, which include two K-9 officers and two detectives. The workforce is supported by a retired detective serving as an administrative aide to the department, who provides crime-analysis data and office management for the department. Middletown currently contracts for reverse 9-1-1 emergency communications service through Verizon.

## *Fire Protection*

Fire protection is provided by the Volunteer Hose Company of Middletown. The headquarters, Station 27, is located at 27 West Green Street. A substation, Station 1, is located at 711 Churchtown Road. The service area for the fire company covers approximately 57 square miles and includes the Town of Middletown and the surrounding areas bounded on the north by Howell School Road, on the east by a line dividing the county into eastern and western halves (just prior to U.S. Route 13), on the south by the northern boundary of the Townsend Fire District, and on the west by the Maryland state line. The Volunteer Hose Company of Middletown participates in mutual-aid agreements with surrounding fire companies. Fire equipment is dispatched through the New Castle County 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Center.

## *Medical Service*

A variety of regional and local healthcare providers serve the healthcare needs of Middletown residents.

The Middletown Medical Center was opened in 2001 and is run by Bayhealth. Located at 209 East Main Street, the Middletown Medical Center offers services including x-ray, mammography, ultrasound, lab services, EKG, PAT, and bone-density testing.

Nemours Children's Health runs a children's primary care center at Suite 201, 200 Cleaver Farm Road. ChristianaCare has a medical center on the west side of Middletown at 124 Sleepy Hollow Drive. The facility features MRI, x-ray, ultrasound, CAT scan, physical therapy, and on-site specialist doctor services.

To give southern New Castle County residents another healthcare option, the ChristianaCare facility opened a healthcare facility in 2004, equipped with imaging services, physical therapy, rehabilitation services, family medicine, and audiology. This facility is in the Springside Plaza in Glasgow, west of SR 896 on U.S. Route 40. Additionally, in 2007, ChristianaCare opened a facility in downtown Smyrna that offers family medicine, imaging services, women's health services, physical therapy, and occupational health services, among others.

The regional hospital in closest proximity to Middletown is Christiana Hospital, located approximately 20 miles north at 4755 Ogletown-Stanton Road in Newark. The hospital is easily accessible by traveling north on SR 1 from Middletown. Situated about 25 miles to the south is Kent General Hospital (a Bayhealth Medical Center), located at 640 South State Street in Dover.

A medical center operated by ChristianaCare is located at the intersection of Brick Mill Road and Route 299. This 108-acre medical campus currently includes a two-story emergency center and a medical office building. Additional plans for the expansion of this medical center include new doctor offices, specialty medical facilities, and a four-story 200-bed hospital. A helicopter-landing area will be included so trauma victims can be transported from the hospital to the Christiana Hospital in Newark.

The Encompass Health Rehabilitation Facility is also located at the eastern end of town at 706 Middletown Odessa Road #692. This 40-bed facility is an inpatient rehabilitation hospital and

uses an interdisciplinary team approach that includes physical, speech and occupational therapists, rehabilitation physicians, rehabilitation nurses, case managers, dietitians and more.

## Educational Facilities

### *Appoquinimink Consolidated School District*

**Table 17. Appoquinimink Consolidated School District Schools Serving Middletown Students**

School	Location	Grades Served	Fall Enrollment 2021
<b>Appoquinimink High School</b>	1080 Bunker Hill Rd	9-12	1,586
<b>Middletown High School</b>	1220 Silver Lake Rd	9-12	1,577
<b>Silver Lake Elementary</b>	200 E. Cochran St	1-5	578
<b>Brick Mill Elementary</b>	378 Brick Mill Rd	1-5	393
<b>Redding Middle School</b>	201 New St	6-8	660
<b>Meredith Middle School</b>	570 Tony Marchio Dr	6-8	701

Source: Delaware Department of Education, <https://reportcard.doe.k12.de.us/index.html>, accessed 6/28/2022.

### *Charter Schools and Private Schools*

School	Location	Grades Served	Fall Enrollment 2022
<b>MOT Charter</b>	1156 Levels Rd	K-12	1,314
<b>St Anne's Episcopal</b>	211 Silver Lake Rd	Pre K-8	
<b>Brick Mill Early Childhood Center</b>	360 Brick Mill Rd	Pre K & Kindergarten	

Source: School websites, accessed 6/28/2022.

## Civic and Social Services

### *Postal Service*

Middletown is served by the United States Postal Service with a Post Office building located at 298 East Main Street. Middletown's zip code is 19709.

### *Library Services*

The former Appoquinimink Library located at 651 North Broad Street was replaced by a newly constructed library in June 2020. The new \$27 million library is located at 204 East Main Street and has a multimedia production studio, a memory lab, a makerspace, meeting rooms and study rooms. Additional library services within the region can be found at the Corbit-Calloway Library in Odessa.

### *Senior Services*

The Middletown-Odessa-Townsend (MOT) Jean Birch Senior Center, Inc., is a private, nonprofit senior center located at 300 South Scott Street. The senior center provides recreation, nutrition, and outreach services to seniors throughout southern New Castle County and is the primary senior-assistance agency in the MOT area.

The senior center provides medical transportation for doctor's visits and specialist appointments in Wilmington and Dover. Other transportation services include the ability to schedule trips to the grocery store, bank, pharmacy, and other needs. The center provides educational programming about medical concerns, dietary needs, legal advice, and other subject areas. Senior employment programs, safe-driver courses, exercise classes, tax preparation, and a singles club are just some of the other services offered by the center.

**Table 18. Middletown Community Facilities**

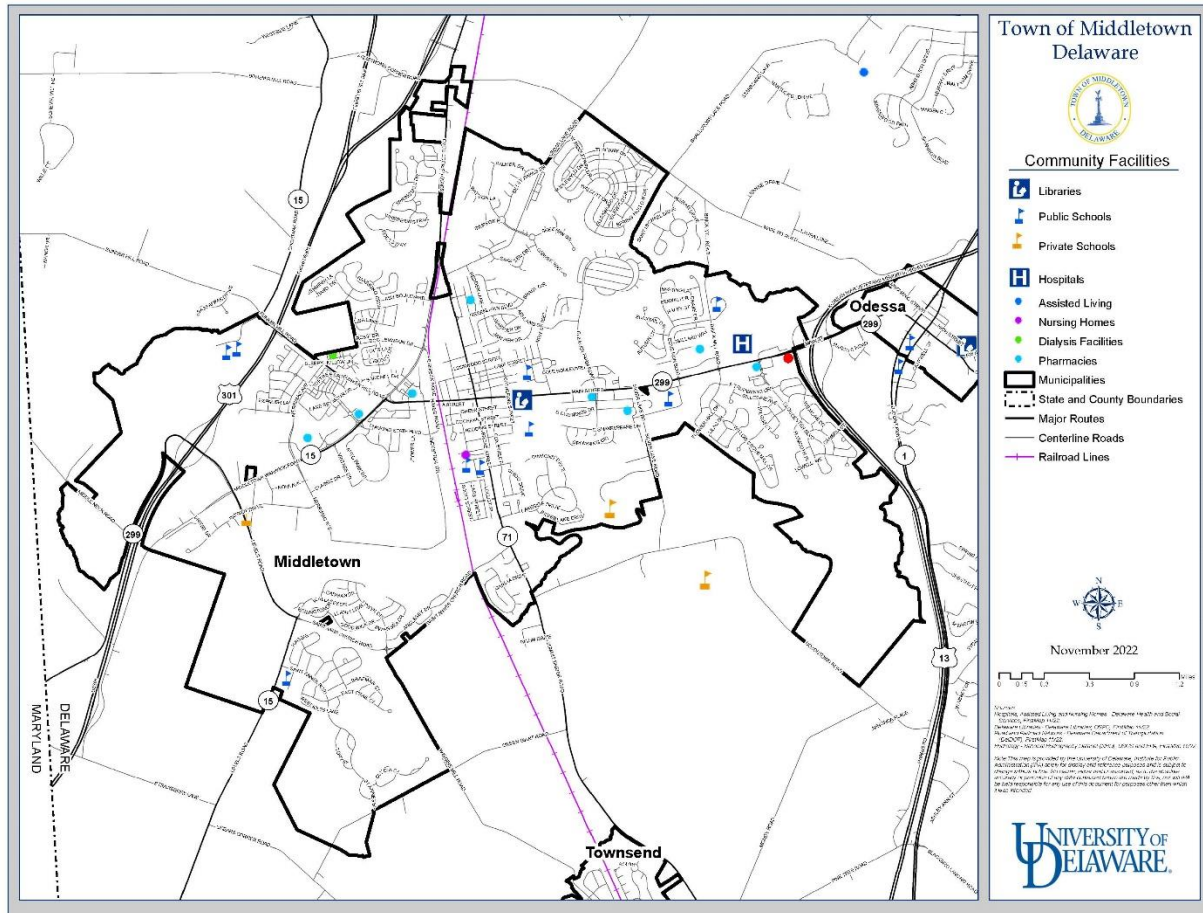
Facility	Features
Middletown Town Hall	Government Center
Middletown Memorial Fire Hall	Banquet hall and bar for rent
MOT Senior Center	Dining Room (with seating for over 100), Commercial Kitchen, Art Room, Business/Exercise Room, and Community Room  Daily activities
Appoquinimink Public Library (new)	Library and programming, multimedia production studio, a memory lab, a makerspace, meeting rooms, and study rooms

### *State Service Center*

Middletown is serviced by the Appoquinimink State Service Center located at 122 Silver Lake Road. The center offers a wide variety of public services to help people with their health and

human services needs. The center can assist the public in obtaining services provided through the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families, and Department of State, as well as many nonprofit community services groups.

## Map 16. Community Facilities



## Recommendations

1. Continue offering high quality local government services such as public works, police, and town maintenance while supporting state and county services such as public schools and the town's new public library at East Main Street and South Catherine Street.
2. Consider hiring a consultant to evaluate the town's park space to evaluate the current usage and need of Middletown residents and identify where opportunities for new parks and recreational opportunities might be made available in the near future.
3. Identify opportunities to create "pocket parks," or small areas that can be converted to active park spaces throughout town.

4. Promote Middletown's access to local and regional trail systems and identify new opportunities to expand and enhance the town's trail system.
5. Support New Castle County's efforts to create a new regional park north of Middletown's boundaries.
6. Continue to grow Middletown's partnership with New Castle County by supporting and promoting the use of the town's new public library.

## HOUSING

After the exponential growth of both housing and population from 2000 to 2010, the town's growth leveled out at 21.5 percent from 2010 to 2019. New housing has continued to be developed through infill and redevelopment around the downtown, as well as in the west end master planned area. Some of these recent developments have increased the variety of housing types in the town, bringing in new multifamily units that are able to attract a wide variety of households, including singles and empty nesters.

While there is still some vacant land that could accommodate new housing, most new housing in the future may be accommodated through potential annexation areas to the south of town. It is also likely that as the demand for housing continues to boom after the Covid-19 pandemic, pressure to redevelop some of the older commercial areas and strip centers near the core will rise providing new opportunities to take advantage of the walkability of the downtown.

### Housing Profile

Table 19 summarizes the distribution of housing unit types in Middletown and comparison areas as of the 2016–2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. The share of attached and multifamily units has risen since 2010 for both Middletown and New Castle County, while the detached housing and mobile home units have fallen. However, the town still has significantly fewer multifamily units than either the state or the county.

**Table 19. Middletown Housing Stock Composition, 2020**

	Middletown	New Castle County	Delaware
<b>1-Unit Detached</b>	47.8%	52.7%	58.5%
<b>1-Unit Attached</b>	36.1%	21.9%	15.9%
<b>2 or More Units</b>	14.2%	23.5%	17.8%
<b>Mobile Home and Other</b>	1.9%	1.9%	7.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016–2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Selected Housing Characteristics, Table DP04.

Table 20 shows the occupancy status for Middletown, New Castle County, and Delaware. The owner occupancy rate has fallen from 81.3 percent in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan to 77.4 percent in 2020 but is still notably higher than that of the state or New Castle County. The town's higher owner-occupied rate translates into a lower percentage of rentals. These lag behind the county by 10 percent and the state by 6 percent. The vacancy rate in the town is less than a third of the state rate but is comparable to New Castle County rate. The state's high vacancy rate likely reflects the proliferation of second and vacation homes in coastal communities.

**Table 20. Middletown Housing Occupancy, 2020**

	Middletown	New Castle County	Delaware
<b>Overall Occupancy</b>	94.1%	93.4%	84.6%
<b>Owner-Occupied</b>	77.4%	67.9%	71.4%
<b>Renter-Occupied</b>	22.6%	32.1%	28.6%
<b>Overall Vacancy</b>	5.9%	6.6%	15.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016–2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Selected Housing Characteristics, Table DP04.

Nearly 73 percent of dwelling units in Middletown have been built since 2000. This is in stark contrast to the county's 16.7 percent and the state's 28.2 percent, but also contributes to the higher median housing value seen in Table 22. To further demonstrate the contrast, only 8 percent of Middletown's housing stock was built prior to 1959. This same age housing accounts for 22.6 percent of the state's units and nearly 32 percent of the County's.

**Table 21. Middletown Age of Occupied Housing Units, 2020**

Year Built	Middletown	New Castle County	Delaware
<b>2014 or later</b>	13.0%	3.1%	5.4%
<b>2010 to 2013</b>	4.1%	2.5%	4.1%
<b>2000 to 2009</b>	55.7%	11.1%	18.7%
<b>1990 to 1999</b>	14.6%	13.3%	15.1%
<b>1980 to 1989</b>	2.1%	11.7%	12.6%
<b>1970 to 1979</b>	1.9%	12.1%	11.4%
<b>1960 to 1969</b>	0.7%	14.4%	10.0%
<b>1950 to 1959</b>	3.8%	14.1%	9.9%
<b>1940 to 1949</b>	2.4%	6.7%	4.5%
<b>1939 or earlier</b>	1.7%	10.9%	8.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016–2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Selected Housing Characteristics, Table DP04.

Table 22 compares the median value of owner-occupied housing units in Middletown with median values in New Castle County and Delaware. The median value of owner-occupied units in Middletown was significantly higher than both the state and the county. As mentioned above, this is partially accounted for by the age of the housing. Other factors include proximity to major highways and employment centers.

**Table 22. Median Housing Value, Owner-Occupied Housing, 2020**

Middletown	New Castle County	Delaware
\$294,800	\$266,500	\$258,300

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016–2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Selected Housing Characteristics, Table DP04.

Table 23 compares the median gross rents in Middletown with rent payments in New Castle County and Delaware. The median gross rent in Middletown in 2020 was approximately \$1,311 per month. This is slightly higher than state and county rents, which could be due to a difference in supply and the demand for housing in the current market.

**Table 23. Median Gross Rent, 2020**

Middletown	New Castle County	Delaware
\$1,311	\$1,182	\$1,150

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016–2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Selected Housing Characteristics, Table DP04.

## Housing Needs

The real estate market in Delaware is very strong in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, and Middletown is no exception. The town's newer housing stock and fewer apartment units also contributes to the higher costs to rent or own in the town. There is little vacant land remaining within the town and so future housing development will rely on the potential annexation of land (as discussed in the Land Use and Annexation chapter), infill development on smaller parcels, and potential redevelopment of older sites.

Large scale multifamily development can trigger negative reactions from nearby residents who fear a myriad of issues including increased traffic and crowded schools. In lieu of multifamily development, the town may consider expanding its housing options to include housing types that were traditionally seen in the past but do not neatly fit into current housing categories in the existing zoning. These “missing middle” housing types refer to triplexes, fourplexes, garden apartments and cottage courts that are better scaled to fit into existing neighborhoods.

While a large portion of Middletown's housing is newer, there is still a need to ensure that older housing is preserved and maintained through code enforcement, rental inspections, and rehabilitation grants and partnerships. This older stock greatly contributes to the historic character of the town and is a prime candidate for contributing to the affordability stock. In addition, older housing can be less energy efficient. Partnering and promoting programs, grants, and volunteer opportunities to assist with weatherization can help to extend the life of older housing. The Delaware State Fire Marshall also encourages home builders to consider the benefits of home sprinkler protection within dwellings. Fire protection is particularly important for older dwellings.

## Affordable Housing and Housing Rehabilitation

One benchmark for measuring affordable housing is the percentage of income that a household must pay for its housing costs. A household paying more than 30 percent of its income is considered “cost-burdened,” and thus the proportion of households who are cost burdened is an indicator that there is a lack of affordable housing in the community. According to the most recent American Community Survey data, one out of five households in Middletown pays more than 30 percent of their annual income on housing costs. This is a much lower percentage than is found in the state (49.2%) and county (46.2%). However, this should not be interpreted to mean that affordability is not an issue within the community, as the higher housing prices found in Middletown most likely lead households to settle elsewhere where older housing and more multifamily units are found.

**Table 24. Median Gross Rent as Percent of Household Income, 2020**

	Middletown	New Castle County	Delaware
<b>15% or Less</b>	26.8%	13.3%	12.9%
<b>15–19.9%</b>	12.4%	15.3%	13.7%
<b>20–24.9%</b>	22.1%	12.6%	11.8%
<b>25–29.9%</b>	15.2%	12.6%	12.5%
<b>30–34.9%</b>	5.5%	8.9%	9.4%
<b>35% or More</b>	18.1%	37.3%	39.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016–2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Selected Housing Characteristics, Table DP04.

## Position on Housing Growth

Middletown supports developing new housing, including multifamily and mixed-use housing, and redeveloping existing properties in appropriate locations while working to maintain a healthy homeownership rate through a variety of means.

## Recommendations

1. Continue to enable a variety of housing types, including multifamily units, that allow a wide range of households, including empty nesters, singles, and young families to reside in Middletown.
2. Consider revising the zoning code to allow for a greater variety of housing types and sizes in town to help address housing affordability.
3. Consider developing design guidelines for new housing and redevelopment to ensure that development is in keeping with the scale and character of existing neighborhoods.

4. Continue to grant “reasonable accommodations,” that may include Zoning Ordinance variances and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance waivers, to permit development or redevelopment of housing situations for individuals with disabilities.
5. Support programs offered through community agencies that provide supportive services to senior citizens desiring to “age-in-place” by continuing to reside in their own homes.
6. Engage with the Delaware State Housing Authority and the Diamond State Community Land Trust (DSCLT) to explore opportunities to provide appropriate housing options.
7. Consider revising the town ordinances to encourage more energy efficient and green buildings such as solar panels, LEED, Energy Star, solar orientation, stormwater management best management practices, etc.

# HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

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## Town History

In 1675, a Swede named Adam Peterson assumed warrants for the land that later became known as Middletown. The first recorded survey of the 200 acres was completed shortly thereafter in 1678. The small hamlet, located approximately 25 miles north of Dover and 25 miles south of Wilmington, was an early crossroads town and one of the few old Delaware towns not on a navigable waterway. It was around the 1750s that the name Middletown first came into use, but not due to its position between the two cities. The town's name refers to its location midway on a trade route known as the "Cart Road" between the head of the Bohemia River and the waters of the Appoquinimink Creek. Since the portage of six miles between these two bodies of water was the shortest on the peninsula, Middletown prospered from its inception.

The town's industry stemmed from the abundant agricultural resources found in its hinterlands. Its mills and granaries were located along the western side of town while residential growth initially spread eastward toward Odessa. The construction of the Delaware Railroad on Middletown's western border reversed this trend, drew development inward, and filled out the northwestern side of town.

Schools, including the Middletown Academy built in 1826, were erected as Middletown's population grew. The regionally acclaimed school, which once offered students a classical education, is the site of the former Town Hall, but now serves as the offices for the Chamber of Commerce, the Historical Society, and the Middletown Action Network. The building is now known by residents as "Old Academy" and is still owned by the Town of Middletown. Around 1834, the Pennsylvania, Baltimore, and Wilmington Railroad (PB&W) proposed to run its line through Odessa. However, the townspeople wanted no part of the noisy iron horses, so in 1855 the PB&W built a depot in Middletown. Middletown entered a new era of growth with the arrival of the railroad. The success of the railroad brought prosperity and three decades of economic and social progress. Local farmers found wealth in the peach industry that flourished throughout the Delmarva Peninsula. By the mid-19th century, Middletown had a population of 368 people. Fifty years later it was the largest village in the Hundred.

On March 4, 1861, following the granting of the town charter, an election was held for five Commissioners to serve one-year terms. The first Town Council decided the town should be bounded at one square mile. Therefore, Middletown became known as the "Diamond Town of the Diamond State." Middletown began to expand its scope of government services. By March 1866, town leaders began to consider providing street lighting. In 1873, police protection was provided for residents. The organization of the Volunteer Hose Company came 14 years later in 1897. The Volunteer Hose Company has withstood the test of time by continuing to provide firefighting services to the town. In 1893, the first Light and Water Commission was organized, making Middletown one of the first towns in the state to have electricity. Water was supplied by a water stack that stands on East Lake Street.

In 1922, a fire destroyed the Middletown Opera House. In December of the same year, the Everett Theatre opened and still stands in the historic core of the town.

Middletown was reincorporated in 1923 under the Mayor and Council system, and in 1924 the town took over the daily operations of the water system. The first Mayor was Walter S. Letherbury, who had been a commissioner for 18 years, and he served as Mayor for six years. By 1925 the firehouse needed to expand, so they purchased and remodeled the old Citizen's Bank building. Opening May 30, 1927, for service, this building is now privately owned.

The Middletown Academy was dissolved in 1928 when a new two-story school opened its doors on South Broad Street. The school was Middletown High on one side and Middletown Elementary on the other. Today this building exists as the Everett Meredith Middle School. Dr. Alfred Waters became the principal in 1940, and a new elementary and high school was erected on Lake Street in 1953. This building would later become the Louis L. Redding Middle School, named in honor of the prominent black lawyer and civil rights pioneer from Delaware. Also, in the realm of education, the historic St. Andrew's School—the setting for the 1989 Robin Williams movie *Dead Poet's Society*—was founded by Alexis Felix du Pont in 1929 and was left to be administered by the Episcopal Church School Foundation.

Also related to the religious history of the town, a schism among the Presbyterian Church members in the town led to the establishment of the Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1937. In March 1956, the Forest Men's Fellowship of Forest Presbyterian Church organized the Middletown-Odessa-Townsend (MOT) Little League.

In 1946, a fire on Valentine's Day destroyed the business block, including an apartment house on the south side of West Main Street and the Witherspoon Inn. The historic inn reopened in February 1948.

In 1982, an urban renewal initiative repaired 175–200 homes and demolished 55–75 homes north of Main Street and east of Broad Street. More recently, the new millennium has brought with it significant growth around Middletown, while trying to live up to the values outlined in *Livable Delaware*—a document signed by Governor Ruth Ann Minner in 2001 that focuses on strategies to preserve the historic value of Delaware towns. By September 2004, new development projects were being completed, like Acme food market, Brick Mill Elementary School, and the new Volunteer Fire Hose Company building on West Green Street. In 2004, a proposal was developed for a 1,100-acre mixed-use development to be called Westown. Additionally, a Walmart Supercenter was approved by the town in December 2004. The 2004 Construction Excellence Award for "Smart Growth" was also presented to the Town of Middletown by the State of Delaware Department of Administrative Services and the Delaware Contractor's Association in recognition of the town's 2.5 million-gallons-per-day wastewater-treatment plant and lagoons.

Many more improvements were added in the second half of the decade. These include the new Industrial Drive water tower and Appoquinimink Library in 2006, the reestablishment of the Middletown Police Department in 2007, and a new dog park in 2008. Additionally, Middletown Levels Road Park opened in May 2009, and DART bus route 43 began servicing the town in June 2009. All Main Street streetscape improvements were finalized in 2010, and Middletown Levels Road Park was renamed in honor of Charles E. Price in May 2011. Finally, 2011 also saw the induction of former Middletown High School great and 11-year Major League Baseball pitcher Dwayne Henry into the Delaware Sports Hall of Fame.

In the last 10 years, Middletown has continued to grow at a fast pace, particularly in terms of the commercial development that has occurred in the Westtown area. Several new shopping and dining destinations have opened in this area along Middletown-Warwick Road along with large new employers such as Amazon.com, Datwyler, Clarios, and Breakthru Beverage. While the town's residential growth has slowed dramatically compared to the previous decade, the town has still grown by over 4,000 new residents (or approximately 23%) since 2010 with new residential developments on the outskirts of town.

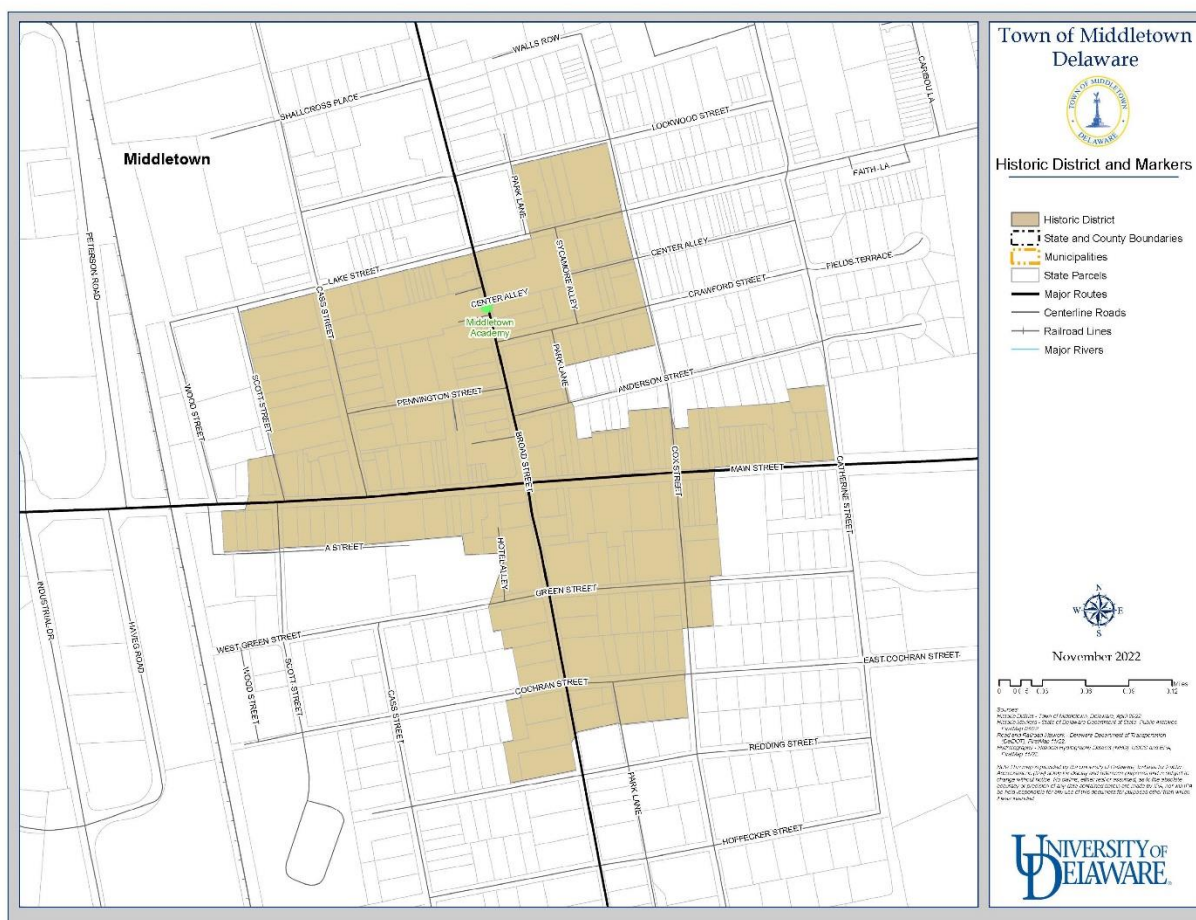
## Historic and Cultural Resources Summary

Middletown's historic and cultural resources include structures, public spaces, and institutions dating from the 18th century to the present. Many of the historic resources are described in great detail in Middletown's nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and in the Small Town Design Atlas. In 1761, David Witherspoon built a "public house," which became popular in Middletown as a stopover for travelers. Portions of the tavern remain within the walls of the present Witherspoon building, located in the center of town, which was heavily damaged in the Valentine's Day fire of 1946.

Due to its rapid growth in the second half of the 19th century as a railroad town and market center, Middletown has perhaps the best collection of Victorian architecture in Delaware. Large, distinctive Victorian houses are found along North and South Broad Streets and on North Cass Street, one block west of North Broad Street. Although displaying the Italianate and Second Empire traits of Victorian buildings, the buildings of Middletown are restrained by Delaware architectural conservatism, rooted in long-term dedication to the earlier classically inspired colonial styles.

The core of Middletown's historic resources are encompassed by its historic district, which was placed on The National Register of Historic Places in 1978. The historic district boundaries center around the Middletown crossroads established in the 17th century and it generally stretches from properties bounded by Lake Street to the north, Catherine Street to the east, Cochran Street to the south, and the railroad tracks/Peterson Road to the west. All told, the district encompasses 187 contributing buildings in the central business district and surrounding residential areas of Middletown. Residential buildings include notable examples of the late Victorian and Federal styles. Notable non-residential buildings include the Witherspoon Inn (1761), S. M. Reynolds and Company (1871), Delaware Trust Company (1918), People's National Bank (1884), and Forest Presbyterian Church (1851). Also located in the district is the separately listed Middletown Academy or Town Hall (1827).

## Map 17. Middletown National Register Historic District Map



The Middletown Historical Society was established in 1985 and was born from the grassroots fight to save a historic structure called Greenlawn in Middletown, Delaware. Since its founding in 1985, the Society has hosted house tours as well as lectures on the history of Middletown. The Middletown Historical Society also hosts the annual Olde-Tyme Peach festival, a tradition started in 1993. The Middletown Academy building located at 216 North Broad Street is now home to the Historical Society. The Academy opened its doors in October 1826 as a private academy and became part of the public school system in 1876. It is now owned by the Town of Middletown and is shared by the Middletown Historical Society and Middletown Main Street, Inc.

Middletown's notable civic and community spaces are scattered along Main and Broad Streets within the historic district, with the recent addition of a new public library at the corner of East Main Street and South Catherine Street also being located in this area. Cochran Square sits on the southwest corner of the Main and Broad Streets intersection. The former Middletown Academy on North Broad Street provides a pleasing spot of green open space with benches and shade trees enclosed by a circular drive. The Everett Theatre, opened on December 7, 1922, occupies the site where a theater and an opera house burned down. Designed in the Art Nouveau style, this 375-seat theater originally was a showplace for vaudeville acts and movies. Middletown's cultural resources include several centers of activity in the performing and visual

arts. The Gibby Center for the Arts is a community-based arts center located in a historic building (circa 1920s) adjacent to the Everett Theatre. The Gibby Center provides a venue to teach and promote studio arts. Other buildings of significance to the community include the old firehouse, the old post office on Main Street, and several churches.

The statewide historic preservation plan, *Partners in Preservation: Planning for the Future, Delaware's Historic Preservation Plan 2018–2022*, was recently updated and adopted by the state. This Plan serves as the state's policy on historic preservation and includes goals, strategies, and actions for the state to pursue on historic preservation issues. The plan emphasizes partnering to achieve common goals and connecting with other planning efforts, and Middletown expects to continue to be one of those partners. Goal 3, Strategy 2 in the Plan is "Encourage local governments to adopt pro-preservation strategies within their comprehensive land-use plans and regulations." Middletown has included elements in this comprehensive plan that align with this goal and strategy as well as others within the state's plan.

## Recommendations

1. Promote and invest in the town's historic downtown area as a unique historic resource that has been recognized on the National Register of Historic Places for over 40 years.
2. Provide an awareness of town history.
3. Provide information on and help to obtain resources about Middletown's heritage.
4. Work to identify buildings and areas within town that are eligible for historic designations.

## UTILITIES

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This section provides information about the utilities that serve Middletown residents, including water, wastewater, electricity, natural gas, telecommunications, solid waste management, and stormwater management. These services are essential to town residents and businesses, and their locations are depicted on Map 18.

### Water System

The quality and quantity of water available in the Middletown area has been and will continue to be very important to the public health of town residents and sustainable economic growth in and around the town. This section deals primarily with water-quality issues and actions that the town can take to minimize negative impacts on water quality in the region.

Middletown has recently upgraded some of its water services, and since there is little vacant land in town and expansion is expected to be limited, only incremental commercial and residential growth is expected. As a result, only moderate increases in water demand is likely during the projected time period that ends in 2032. Therefore, the water systems operating in Middletown have sufficient capacity to meet current and future demands, and no major capital improvements are planned at this time.

### Wastewater System

Currently, the Town of Middletown reports that it provides sewer service to approximately 7,500 wastewater customer accounts. The Town of Middletown Wastewater Treatment Plant capacity is being expanded from 2.5 million gallons per day (MGD) to 3.75 MGD expandable to maximum of 5.0 MGD.

Since its 2012 Comprehensive Plan was certified, the Town of Middletown has completed the following upgrades that will ensure adequate sewer capacity for the town's remaining development:

- Town has diversified its disposal capabilities to include Rapid Infiltration Basins (RIBs).
  - Town is currently analyzing remaining capacity requirements.
  - Town is in the design process for the full upgrade of the 2.5 MGD plant from a biological treatment process to an activated sludge treatment process (SRB plant).
- Treatment capacity from 2.5 MGD to 3.75 MGD expandable to maximum of 5.0 MGD.
- Planned operation of the plant is for calendar year 2023.
  - Town is designing and permitting additional RIBs to increase disposal capacity up to the 3.75 MGD treatment capacity.

## Stormwater Management Under MS4

Stormwater runoff is the rain and snow that do not soak into the soil and “runs” over paved streets, parking lots, and rooftops. The runoff gathers trash, chemicals, oils, and dirt that pollute rivers, lakes, bays, and oceans. If left untreated, polluted stormwater can make its way into Delaware’s waterways.

A Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) is a publicly owned conveyance or system of conveyances (i.e., ditches, curbs, catch basins, underground pipes, etc.) designed to collect and convey stormwater that discharges to surface waters such as rivers. In Middletown, the stormwater system is separate from the sewage collection system. Most of the town’s stormwater runoff is collected by a combination of street gutters, culverts, storm sewers, and catch basins.

The nationwide MS4 program is overseen by the EPA and regulated under the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System. This program was first introduced in 1990, addressing stormwater runoff with Phase I permits in cities and municipalities of highly urbanized areas. Phase II permits were introduced in 1999, addressing smaller communities in Census-designated Urbanized Areas and some non-governmental stormwater systems. DNREC is the permitting agency for the MS4 program in Delaware.

Middletown has a phase two permit and is no longer a co-permittee with New Castle County and DelDOT. For towns, counties, and agencies such as Middletown holding an MS4 permit, the management of stormwater under an MS4 permit includes various strategies, such as:

- Development and implementation of programs to control stormwater runoff.
- Implementation and maintenance of best management practices (BMPs).
- Creation of a Pollution Minimization Plan.
- Permittees satisfying the six Minimum Control Measures.

Incorporated towns, such as Middletown, maintain the MS4 and oversee maintenance of BMPs within their respective jurisdictions. As part of the planning for future infrastructure upgrades, Middletown should consider projects that map stormwater infrastructure and/or conduct preliminary designs for improving the inadequate stormwater facilities highlighted in this document. Grants are available from DNREC that can assist the town to address the stormwater concerns.

## Electricity

Middletown currently provides electric service to approximately 10,000 customers. The town continues to be a member of the Delaware Municipal Electric Corporation (DEMEC). Through this corporation, the town, along with seven other municipalities, negotiates the purchase of electricity for its customers. During the past decade, the town made the following upgrades to the system.

Recent upgrades to existing substations include:

- Expanded Industrial Drive substation with two additional 100 MVA transformers.

- Capacity increased from 50 MVA with 50 MVA backup to 150 MVA with 150 MVA backup.
- Completion of full expansion in first quarter 2023. First 100 MVA transformer should be operational in first quarter 2022.

Other improvements include an upgrade of all the meters to an Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) system. Development to the south and southwest of current town limits will require an analysis of the town's system. The town also continues to work with Delmarva to have a second 138 kV transmission line constructed. Delmarva is currently processing plans and proposals through PJM.

During the term of the next comprehensive plan (after 2022), the town is planning for the location and construction of an additional substation site on the western side of town.

- Plan is for roughly 2 acres and capacity of 100 MVA with 100 MVA of backup.
- Exact size will depend on planned development.

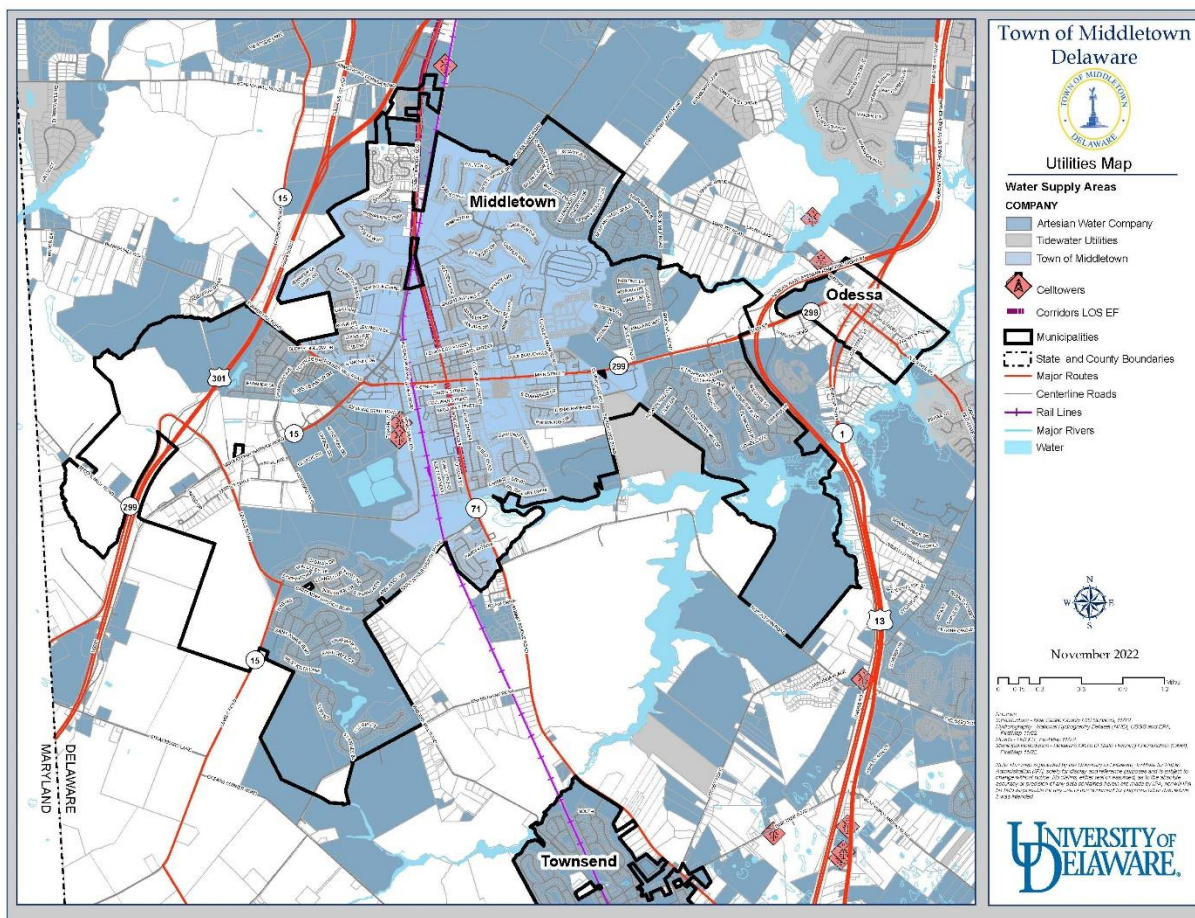
## **Telecommunications**

Middletown is currently served by multiple telecommunications providers, which offer satellite, wireless, DSL, and cable Internet and television service to consumers. Community anchor institutions such as the local schools, community centers, and libraries offer high-speed Internet, multimedia, and computer availability to Middletown residents.

## **Solid Waste Management**

The town contracts with Trash Tech, Inc., to provide trash collection and recycling services to residences and commercial establishments in Middletown. Trash is collected on Tuesday and Wednesday of each week. Recyclables are collected on Thursdays and Fridays. Yard waste is collected on Mondays.

## Map 18. Utilities



## Recommendations

1. Ensure a high-quality level of municipal services.
2. Maintain a supply of safe, reliable drinking water for all town residents.
3. Manage all stormwater with consideration of both public and environmental safety.
4. Regularly monitor the level of service provided by private utility companies and vendors.
5. Collaborate with other levels of government to enhance services provided to town residents.

# IMPLEMENTATION AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

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## Post-Plan Requirements

This section summarizes the provisions of the Delaware Code that must be complied with following adoption of this 2022 Comprehensive Plan.

- Section 702(c) – Adopt comprehensive rezoning within 18 months after adopting this plan.
- Section 702(e) – Within five years following adoption, review this plan to determine if its provisions are still relevant.
- Section 702(f) – Submit annual reports to OSPC each July 1.

## Vision for the Town's Future

“The Town of Middletown will work to maintain its historic core and small-town atmosphere while seeking opportunities to continue to strategically grow and expand. Middletown plans to do this by maintaining a close connection to its community’s needs and desires and seeking to continue addressing those needs and desires through measured growth, infrastructure investments, and economic strength.”

## Goals of the Plan

1. Improve the safe and efficient flow of vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians throughout town.
2. Maintain the quality of life in town by focusing on the public health, safety, and recreational opportunities of current and future residents.
3. Continue growing Middletown’s economy by expanding employment and business opportunities in the town and the region.
4. Maintain the integrity of Middletown’s historic core and small town atmosphere.
5. Ensure that natural resources are protected for the health and enjoyment of existing and future residents of Middletown and the surrounding region.

## Recommendations

This section summarizes the recommended actions that Middletown should consider to achieve the goals or solve the problems identified in this 2022 Comprehensive Plan. Some of these can be accomplished entirely by the Town of Middletown, while others involve working with, seeking assistance from, or relying on neighboring jurisdictions, the county, or state.

### *Community Character and Design Recommendations*

1. Maintain the character and design of the historic center of town and utilize it as a model for new infill development throughout town.
2. Encourage the redevelopment of underutilized locations for their highest and best use in the town.
3. Ensure that new developments are designed to accommodate a pedestrian-friendly environment while connecting to and complementing surrounding neighborhoods.
4. Continue to make investments in the construction of bicycle and pedestrian pathways and improve bicycle and pedestrian connectivity throughout the town.
5. Encourage “complete street” policies for Middletown-Warwick Road, with a focus on improving the safety of the corridor for all modes of travel.

### *Land-Use and Annexation Recommendations*

1. Review the zoning code and subdivision code in order to direct development so that it is consistent with the town’s vision and goals, particularly in the historic downtown area.
2. Build on design standards already in place by incorporating contemporary design practices and include in the zoning and subdivision code updates.
3. Continue reviewing existing land uses to identify additional areas suitable for redevelopment.
4. Promote flexible zoning and development in the historic downtown area, along the Middletown-Warwick Road corridor, and other select areas of town where a mix of uses would be beneficial.
5. Pursue a measured annexation strategy that includes consideration for areas identified in the Annexation Area Map.
6. Develop a land use and transportation corridor study along Middletown-Warwick Road in cooperation with WILMAPCO and DeIDOT in order to identify opportunities to improve pedestrian safety and encourage a more walkable environment.
7. Ensure that pedestrian safety is a priority throughout town when making land-use decisions, especially along Main Street and in the Westtown area.

### *Transportation Recommendations*

1. Consider partnering with WILMAPCO to fund a comprehensive multimodal transportation plan that identifies and prioritizes pedestrian and bicycle routes and key connections throughout town, identifies long term options to improve automobile traffic flow throughout town, and identifies options to improve or expand transit options within town.

2. Prioritize and fund projects identified in the 2020 Bicycle Route Feasibility Study completed by Duffield Associates and WILMAPCO's 2021 Walkable Communities study.
3. Consider entering into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with DelDOT, and/or passing a Complete Streets ordinance in order to make necessary improvements for bicycle and pedestrian safety throughout town.
4. Continue discussion with Odessa and Townsend regarding trails and bikeways linking the three towns.
5. Review requirements in the zoning and subdivision ordinances to ensure that commercial and institutional sites are designed to be pedestrian and bike friendly.
6. Continue to work closely with the Middletown Main Street organization, the Downtown Development District, and WILMAPCO to improve parking options in the downtown area for both businesses and customers.
7. Continue to work with DelDOT on getting appropriate community input for critical infrastructure projects in town, especially ongoing support for projects within the Westtown and Eastown TID area.
8. Consider partnering with DelDOT to pursue Living Lab Projects within town that can identify low-cost opportunities to pilot potential pedestrian and bicycle improvements within town.

### *Natural Resources and Environment Recommendations*

1. Continue to limit development and enhance protections in sensitive natural areas such as floodplains and wetlands.
2. Consider the potential impacts of heavier and more frequent precipitation on the town's infrastructure, particularly in older areas of town, in future planning.
3. Continue to maintain compliance with mandated levels of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs).
4. Consider implementing green infrastructure and other best management practices in locations that can help alleviate localized flooding issues and improve water quality.
5. Consider working with the Urban and Community Forestry Program and consider applying to become a designated Delaware Tree Friendly Community, with a focus on increasing the town's tree canopy.
6. Continue increasing the energy efficiency of town operations and facilities through upgrades such as LED lighting, lighting timers, and replacing gas powered passenger vehicles with electric vehicles or more energy efficient models.
7. Explore installing level 2 electric vehicle charging stations on town-owned properties including parking areas and parks.
8. Continue to use the town website and newsletter to help inform residents of ways to become more energy efficient and prepare for climate impacts, such as heat waves.

9. Consider evaluating town ordinances to ensure that there are not barriers to energy efficient technologies, and encourage energy-efficient design through provisions such as solar orientation of new construction.

### *Economic Development Recommendations*

1. Continue to cultivate a business-friendly regulatory environment and an accessible and inviting atmosphere for businesses in town.
2. Continue collaborating with the Middletown Main Street program, the Downtown Development District program, and the Middletown Chamber of Commerce to encourage the renovation and redevelopment of underutilized and infill locations.
3. Consider collaborating with the Middletown Chamber of Commerce to put together a market area study to identify specific business opportunities that can further improve and expand business opportunities in the Middletown.
4. Consider working with the local business community to improve and revise the town's signage standards and requirements for commercial businesses.
5. Continue to support and promote the Middletown Main Street program and the Downtown Development District in order to continue strengthening the historic downtown.
6. Improve parking access and signage in the historic Main Street area in order to support local businesses and provide a more enjoyable experience for customers.
7. Continue working with the Delaware Prosperity Partnership, relevant state agencies, as well as potential new businesses, and investors to attract new employment uses to town and retain existing employers.

### *Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities Recommendations*

1. Continue offering high quality local government services such as public works, police, and town maintenance while supporting state and county services such as public schools and the town's new public library at East Main Street and South Catherine Street.
2. Consider hiring a consultant to evaluate the town's park space to evaluate the current usage and need of Middletown residents and identify where opportunities for new parks and recreational opportunities might be made available in the near future.
3. Identify opportunities to create "pocket parks," or small areas that can be converted to active park spaces throughout town.
4. Promote Middletown's access to local and regional trail systems and identify new opportunities to expand and enhance the town's trail system.
5. Support New Castle County's efforts to create a new regional park north of Middletown's boundaries.
6. Continue to grow Middletown's partnership with New Castle County by supporting and promoting the use of the town's new public library.

### *Housing Recommendations*

1. Continue to enable a variety of housing types, including multifamily units, that allow a wide range of households, including empty nesters, singles, and young families to reside in Middletown.
2. Consider revising the zoning code to allow for a greater variety of housing types and sizes in town to help address housing affordability.
3. Consider developing design guidelines for new housing and redevelopment to ensure that development is in keeping with the scale and character of existing neighborhoods.
4. Continue to grant “reasonable accommodations,” that may include Zoning Ordinance variances and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance waivers, to permit development or redevelopment of housing situations for individuals with disabilities.
5. Support programs offered through community agencies that provide supportive services to senior citizens desiring to “age-in-place” by continuing to reside in their own homes.
6. Engage with the Delaware State Housing Authority and the Diamond State Community Land Trust (DSCLT) to explore opportunities to provide appropriate housing options.
7. Consider revising the town ordinances to encourage more energy efficient and green buildings such as solar panels, LEED, Energy Star, solar orientation, stormwater best management practices, etc.

### *Historic and Cultural Resources Recommendations*

1. Promote and invest in the town’s historic downtown area as a unique historic resource that has been recognized on the National Register of Historic Places for over 40 years.
2. Provide an awareness of town history.
3. Provide information on and help to obtain resources about Middletown’s heritage.
4. Work to identify buildings and areas within town that are eligible for historic designations.

### *Utilities Recommendations*

1. Ensure a high-quality level of municipal services.
2. Maintain a supply of safe, reliable drinking water for all town residents.
3. Manage all stormwater with consideration of both public and environmental safety.
4. Regularly monitor the level of service provided by private utility companies and vendors.
5. Collaborate with other levels of government to enhance services provided to town residents.

## Continuing Intergovernmental Coordination

An important aspect of continuing intergovernmental coordination is maintaining awareness of, and respecting, the plans and policies of other jurisdictions. This 2022 Comprehensive Plan recommends that the plans and policies of the state, county, and the other jurisdictions in the surrounding area be factored into land-use decisions.

Intergovernmental coordination also means working with other governmental departments and agencies, and there are a number of ways to maintain ongoing communications. This 2022 Comprehensive Plan recommends that Middletown consider the following.

1. Notify affected jurisdictions and agencies of proposed development-related actions in Middletown.
2. Request information on, and opportunities to provide input into, proposed actions of governments and quasi-governments that affect Middletown.
3. Keep the town website updated with Town Council and Planning Commission agendas for others to access.
4. Request comment from affected jurisdictions and agencies on proposed development-related actions in Middletown that are of interest to them.
5. Attend meetings of other agencies and jurisdictions when necessary.
6. Ask other agencies and jurisdictions to send agendas and request the opportunity to review and comment on proposed actions in and nearby Middletown.

## APPENDIX A. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

### Demographic Characteristics

According to data from U.S. Census estimates from the American Community Survey 2015–2019, Middletown’s population became more diverse between 1990 and 2019, going from a town with a white population of 76.4 percent in 1990 to 63.6 percent in 2019. Middletown has also become significantly older over the past 10 years, with 13.6 percent of residents over the age of 60 in 2010 increasing to 24.3 percent in 2019. Middletown continues to have a higher education level than both New Castle County and the state of Delaware as well, with a lower percentage of residents without a high school diploma and a higher percentage with a bachelor’s degree or higher.

#### *Households*

Table 25 summarizes household characteristics for Middletown, New Castle County, and Delaware. A household is any occupied housing unit comprising all of those people living in the unit. Middletown has a significantly higher household size compared to the county and state, and the town has a large amount of families living in large single family homes with relatively high incomes.

**Table 25. Household and Family Characteristics, 2019**

	Middletown	New Castle County	Delaware
<b>Total Population</b>	21,692	556,165	957,248
<b>Total Households</b>	7,709	211,592	363,322
<b>Average Household Size</b>	2.80	2.56	2.52

Source: U.S. Census 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1101.

#### *Racial Composition, Hispanic or Latino Origin*

Tables 26 and 27 compare Middletown’s 2019 racial characteristics to those of the state and county and summarize Middletown’s racial composition from 1990 to 2019. Between 1990 and 2019, demographic changes in Middletown resulted in a higher percentage of African Americans and other races. Table 28 indicates that Middletown’s Hispanic or Latino population is also increasing.

**Table 26. Racial Composition of Middletown, New Castle County, and State, 2019**

	Middletown	New Castle County	Delaware
<b>White (reporting only one race)</b>	63.6%	64.2%	68.8%
<b>Black or African American (reporting one race)</b>	27.2%	25.2%	22.2%
<b>Other (reporting two or more races)</b>	2.9%	2.6%	2.8%
<b>Totals</b>	21,692	556,165	957,248

Source: U.S. Census 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05.

**Table 27. Middletown's Racial Composition, 1990–2019**

	1990	2000	2010	2019
<b>White (reporting one race)</b>	76.4%	74.4%	61.9%	63.6%
<b>Black or African American (reporting one race)</b>	22.7%	21.3%	28.4%	27.2%
<b>Other (reporting two or more races)</b>	1.0%	1.9%	3.2%	2.9%
<b>Totals</b>	3,834	6,161	18,871	23,192

Source: U.S. Census 1990, 2000, 2010 Summary File 1 and U.S. Census 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05.

**Table 28. Middletown Population Reporting Hispanic or Latino Origin, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2019**

	1990	2000	2010	2019
<b>Hispanic or Latino (of any race)</b>	2.7%	5.3%	7.4%	9.6%
<b>Not Hispanic or Latino</b>	97.3%	94.7%	92.6%	90.4%
<b>Total Population</b>	3,834	6,161	18,871	21,692

Source: U.S. Census 1990, 2000, and 2010 Summary File 1, U.S. Census 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05.

### *Age Distribution*

As Table 29 indicates, Middletown's age distribution is similar to that of New Castle County and the state of Delaware. Middletown has a larger population of residents between the ages of 5 to 19 compared to the New Castle County and the state of Delaware, and a smaller population aged 20 to 59 years of age.

**Table 29. Age Distribution, 2019**

	Middletown		New Castle County		Delaware	
<b>Under 5 Years</b>	1,145	5.3%	32,329	5.8%	54,830	5.7%
<b>5 to 19 Years</b>	5,346	24.6%	104,521	18.8%	173,874	18.2%
<b>20 to 59 Years</b>	9,919	45.7%	299,359	53.8%	489,460	51.1%
<b>60 Years &amp; Over</b>	5,282	24.3%	119,956	21.6%	239,084	25.0%
<b>Totals</b>	21,692		556,165		957,248	
<b>Median Age</b>	39.2		38.4		40.6	

Source: U.S. Census 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05.

Tables 30 shows that age distribution in Middletown changed significantly from 2010 to 2019, with a growing proportion of the town that is 60 years and over. All other age brackets decreased as a percentage of the overall town population, with ages 20 to 59 declining the most.

**Table 30. Middletown Age Distribution Change, 2010 to 2019**

	2010		2019		Change	
<b>Under 5 Years</b>	1,585	8.4%	1,145	5.3%	-440	-3.1%
<b>5 to 19 Years</b>	4,734	25.1%	5,346	24.6%	+612	-0.5%
<b>20 to 59 Years</b>	9,994	53.0%	9,919	45.7%	-75	-7.3%
<b>60 Years and Over</b>	2,558	13.6%	5,282	24.3%	+2,724	+10.7%
<b>Totals</b>	18,871		21,692		2,821	

Source: U.S. Census 2010, Summary File 1, U.S. Census 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05.

## Education

Table 31 compares Middletown's educational attainment for the population aged 25 years or over with that of the county and state. As the table shows, Middletown has a higher percentage of high school graduates than both New Castle County and Delaware and a higher percentage of residents with a Bachelor's degree or greater.

**Table 31. Educational Attainment for Population Over 25, 2019**

	Middletown	New Castle County	Delaware
<b>Not High School (HS) Graduates</b>	5.4%	8.5%	9.7%
<b>Graduated HS, No College Degree</b>	44.0%	47.3%	48.8%
<b>Associate's Degree</b>	10.7%	7.4%	8.3%
<b>Bachelor's Degree or Greater</b>	39.9%	36.8%	33.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015–2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

## APPENDIX B. PRELIMINARY LAND USE SERVICE (PLUS) COMMENTS AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL RESPONSES

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**STATE OF DELAWARE  
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF STATE PLANNING COORDINATION**

August 22, 2022

Sean O'Neill  
Institute for Public Administration  
Biden School of Public Policy & Administration  
University of Delaware  
180 Graham Hall  
Newark, DE 19716

RE: 2022-07-14 Middletown Comprehensive Plan Update review

Dear Mr. O'Neill:

Thank you for meeting with State agency planners on June 27, 2022 to discuss the proposed Middletown draft comprehensive plan update.

Please note that changes to the plan, other than those suggested in this letter, could result in additional comments from the State. Additionally, these comments reflect only issues that are the responsibility of the agencies represented at the meeting.

***Certification Comments:*** These comments must be addressed in order for our office to consider the plan amendment consistent with the terms of your certification and the requirements of Title 22, § 702 of the Del. Code.

- The OSPC has reviewed the draft 2022 plan and found no certification issues. The elements required for all communities, as well as the additional elements for communities with populations above 2,000, have been met.

***Recommendations:*** Our office strongly recommends that the Town consider these recommendations from the various State agencies as you review your plan for final approval.

**Office of State Planning Coordination – Contact: 302-739-3090**

- Overall, the Town of Middletown has put together a solid plan with clear goals and recommendations to maintain and enhance the characteristics and services that the residents value and rely upon.

122 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. South – Haslet Armory · Third Floor · Dover, DE 19901  
Phone (302)739-3090 · Fax (302) 739-5661 · [www.stateplanning.delaware.gov](http://www.stateplanning.delaware.gov)

- Positions on required elements are clearly stated and supported by data and analysis within the text.
- Compiling all recommendations from throughout the plan into one section at the end of the document is helpful to reviewers and the public and will provides an easy reference of the Town's priorities.
- References to the 2012 New Castle County Comprehensive Plan should be updated to reflect the recently adopted 2022 plan. The County provided detailed comments on the Middletown draft plan which are attached to this letter. Interagency Coordination requires municipalities to consider and address comments as well as those from state agencies.

This office has also received the following comments from State agencies:

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) – Contact: Carlton Hall 302-739-5685

- The Delaware SHPO recommends that the Comprehensive Plan's discussion of the Town of Middletown's history and, specifically, its historic places be expanded to encompass all of the area within the Town's boundaries.
- The Town of Middletown has a Historic District listed in the National Register of Historic Places. A major benefit of listing is that the properties become eligible for financial incentives in the form of federal and state historic preservation tax credits and occasional grants. These incentives can be coordinated with other programs, such as the Downtown Development District program to revitalize the downtown area.
- The draft plan mentions these assets and includes general goals for historic preservation within the "historic core." However, our office strongly recommends that the Town adopt more specific measures to encourage preservation of historic properties, not only within the National Register-listed Historic District, but within the entirety of the Town's municipal boundaries.
- Further, we advise that the plan specifically consider impacts on historic resources, including archaeological sites, in the proposal of future land use changes and annexations, particularly the extensive potential "Areas of Concern" noted on Map 7. There are numerous historic buildings and archaeological sites within these areas. In recent years, there has been a significant loss of historic properties in and around Middletown (e.g., Summerton) and others are currently threatened (e.g., The Maples – see PLUS 2022-07-08). Before further expansions

are considered, the Town should adopt more rigorous protections and incentives to retain historic properties in these areas.

- The statewide historic preservation plan, Partners in Preservation: *Planning for the Future, Delaware's Historic Preservation Plan 2018-2022*, serves as the state's policy on historic preservation. The plan emphasizes partnering to achieve common goals and connecting with other planning efforts. We encourage the Town to consider how the goals, strategies and actions outlined in the Plan may support and be coordinated with their local planning efforts, and inform the Comprehensive Plan. See: <https://history.delaware.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/179/2019/02/2018-2022DelawareSHPOPlan.pdf>
- If there are any questions, inquiries, or concerns, feel free to contact the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office for assistance at 302-736-7400.

Department of Transportation – Contact: Stephen Bayer 302-760-4834

- DelDOT congratulates the town on a well written comprehensive plan. If at any time, now or in the future, the Town requires assistance on the transportation element of its plan please feel free to contact the Department. We can be a resource for any data or review the Town may need.

DART First State– Contact Jared Kauffman 302-576-6062

- There are 38 DART bus stops within the town boundaries.
- DART provides fixed-route bus service, not shuttle service.
- Route 43 does not serve Odessa. Instead, it ends at the Odessa Park & Ride, which also serves the Routes 63 and 301, as well as the seasonal Route 305.
- The Route 45 was discontinued in the February 2021 service change.
- Generally, describe the service frequencies, days of service, and connections possible for the routes serving Middletown, which are the Routes 37, 43, 47, 63, 301, 302, and 305.
- Describe the Odessa Park and Ride facility.
- The South Odessa Park & Pool and Pine Tree Corner Park & Pool are not served by DART, nor are within DART's service area.

- Paratransit service is provided for those with eligible disabilities, not necessarily for the elderly.
- If data are available, please describe transit riders from the Town, like demographics and travel behaviors, and their needs.
- Please describe the Town's vision for enhanced transit services in the transit description and in the recommendations.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control – Contact: Beth Krumrine 302-735-3480

**Disclaimer Clause:** Staff from the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) reviewed the draft comprehensive plan submitted for PLUS review. The absence of comments regarding specific resources does not indicate that there are not additional constraints or environmental issues, nor does it indicate DNREC support of a particular plan element. For more information or clarification, officials are encouraged to reach out to Beth Krumrine at (302) 735-3480 or [Beth.Krumrine@delaware.gov](mailto:Beth.Krumrine@delaware.gov), or the programmatic contact information provided in each section below.

Constructive comments are provided below for the Town of Middletown's consideration.

### **Outdoor Recreation Grant Programs**

The DNREC Division of Parks and Recreation has identified projects within the Town of Middletown that received funding from programs through which certain limitations on land use have been obligated. These programs and corresponding projects are detailed below for your reference.

DNREC reviewers recommend adding a description about the state program, Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Trails (ORPT) program, which now helps fund municipal and county outdoor recreation projects and land acquisitions. Delaware's ORPT Program is a matching grant program that assists with public parkland acquisition and outdoor recreation facility development. The ORPT Program was established in June 1986 with annual deposits from real estate transfer tax to grow the Trust. Trust-generated income is used to fund the ORPT Program. Funding is available through this competitive grant program on an annual basis for projects such as park land acquisition, planning and design of parks or trails, and outdoor recreation facility construction.

The following parks/projects, located within the Town of Middletown, have been identified by DNREC as having received funding through the LWCF and ORPT Programs. The Town has assumed responsibility for continued operation and

maintenance of the areas and should be aware that these lands may have been dedicated for a public outdoor recreational use in perpetuity.

Project No.	Type	Year Project Approved	Park Name
01-004	Dev	2001	Middletown Village Park
00-002	Dev	2000	Duke Park
98-006GW	Dev	1998	Middletown Nature Area
97-006GW	Dev	1997	Middletown Nature Area and South Cox St Park
96-003	Dev	1996	Silver Lake Park

For more information, please contact the DNREC Division of Parks and Recreation, Planning, Preservation, and Development Section at (302)739-9215 or visit <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/lwcf/index.htm> and <https://de.gov/ORPT>.

### Natural Areas

Map 7 (Future Annexation) shows the Middletown Natural Area as Residential for the future land use. Map 6 (Existing Zoning) specifically shows this parcel as R-1A, Single Family Residential. Encourage permanent protection of such lands through the Natural Areas Preservation Program with the DNREC Division of Parks and Recreation, Office of Nature Preserves. The program allows public and private landowners to protect their land in perpetuity by dedicating their land within the boundaries of Natural Areas as a Nature Preserve, the highest level of protection within the State. Dedication may occur as a Conservation Easement, donation of land, or outright sale of land. For more information, please contact the DNREC Division of Parks and Recreation, Office of Nature Preserves at (302)739-9039 or visit <https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/parks/natural-areas/>.

### Annexation Areas

Map 7 (Future Annexation) shows parcel 1302200001 as Industrial for the future land use. DNREC reviewers have expressed concern over the rezoning of this parcel to Industrial given its proximity to residential areas. An Industrial zoning may result in nearby residents being subjected to noise and/or air pollution from the parcel, depending on the specific uses allowed on the parcel.

### Recycling

Recycling is mentioned on pages 71 and 91. According to Delaware Code [7 Del. C §6053(1)(a)], the waste hauler must provide information on recycling as well as disposal (<https://delcode.delaware.gov/title7/c060/sc03/index.shtml>). Include information on current capacity, and if current needs are being met for both recycling and

trash services. Address future capacity needs and consider addressing waste reduction strategies in the draft comprehensive plan.

For information about the Delaware Recycles program, please contact the Division of Waste and Hazardous Substances at (302) 739-9403 or visit <https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/waste-hazardous/recycling/>.

### **Natural Resources and Environment Recommendations (pages 95-96)**

- Page 95 includes a recommendation on limiting development and enhancing protection in sensitive natural areas; no proposed mechanism is identified. It would be useful to address how Middletown proposes to protect natural habitats, sensitive lands, and native species. One mechanism could be to promote the Natural Areas Preservation Program, where landowners are able to voluntarily dedicate their land within Natural Area boundaries as a Nature Preserve, the highest level of protection within the State. For more information about Natural Areas and Nature Preserves, please contact the DNREC Division of Parks and Recreation, Office of Nature Preserves at (302) 739-9039 or visit <https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/parks/natural-areas/>.
- Page 95 indicates that Middletown will replace gas powered passenger vehicles with electric vehicles or more energy efficient models. Include next steps in the recommendations, which would be for Middletown to conduct an assessment for a phased conversion of its passenger and heavy-duty fleets to electric vehicles and charging infrastructure for those vehicles on Middletown property. Also consider upgrading landscaping equipment to electric. For more information about electric vehicles and associated funding, please contact the DNREC Division of Climate, Coastal and Energy's Clean Transportation Program Office at (302) 735-3480 or visit <https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/climate-coastal-energy/clean-transportation/>.
- Page 53 says that the Town of Middletown can consider conducting an energy audit of its own facilities and operations in order to assess areas where energy efficient enhancements are available. Include this as a recommendation on pages 95-96.
- Page 53 says that the town can assess its ordinances to both ensure that there are not barriers to energy efficient technologies, and encourage energy-efficient design through provisions, such as solar orientation. Include this as a recommendation on pages 95-96.
- Page 95 includes a recommendation on upgrading to LED lighting. Contact the DNREC Division of Climate, Coastal and Energy's Efficient and Renewable Energy Section at (302) 735-3480 or visit <https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/climate-coastal-energy/efficient-renewable/> to further discuss funding opportunities. As referenced on page 54 of the draft

comprehensive plan, energy efficiency upgrades may be eligible for funding through the Energy Efficiency Investment Fund (EEIF).

- Page 54 includes information on the Weatherization Assistance Program. Include an action item on pages 95-96 on how this information can be distributed to residents who are having trouble paying utility bills. Additional information can be found at: <https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/climate-coastal-energy/sustainablecommunities/weatherization/>.
- Page 95 explores the possibility of implementing tree planting projects through the Urban and Community Forestry Program. The Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program typically becomes available each spring. More information can be found at <https://agriculture.delaware.gov/forest-service/urban-and-community/>. For a list of resources and helpful tree planting tips, please also visit the Tree for Every Delawarean Initiative at [de.gov/tedi](https://de.gov/tedi).

### **Wetland and Riparian Buffers**

It is recommended to address riparian buffers in its own section. Riparian buffers improve water quality, reduce the impacts from flooding, and provide for wildlife habitat and connectivity of ecologically sensitive areas. On pages 95-96, it is recommended to include an action on developing of a local ordinance to require a 100-foot riparian buffer around all wetlands, waterbodies, and waterways for all new development, where practicable. Buffer zones should be planted exclusively with native trees and plants. Native plants are well-suited to our climate and require limited maintenance. They also provide an increasingly important role in the survival of native birds and beneficial insects whose habitat is shrinking due to development and climate change.

For more information on wetlands and riparian buffers, please contact the DNREC Watershed Assessment Section at (302) 739-9939 or visit <https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/watershed-stewardship/assessment/>.

### **Mature Forest**

Map 7 shows Parcel 1400600004 as a proposed Annexation Area under Residential. The forested portion of this parcel is likely mature forest and has contained some degree of forest cover since 1937. As such, this area has the potential for rare, threatened, or endangered species that rely on this type of habitat. It is recommended to include a recommendation on pages 95-96 to develop a local ordinance that requires a forest assessment prior to development, and protect areas confirmed to exhibit mature forest.

### **Coordination with DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife, Species Conservation and Research Program**

Habitat within the Town supports species of greatest conservation need, such as the federally listed bog turtle (*Glyptemys muhlenbergii*) and key wildlife habitats, such as freshwater wetlands. The Town should require applicants of land use projects to contact the Species Conservation and Research Program to determine if their project activities will impact a species or habitat of conservation concern.

For more information on species of conservation concern, please contact the DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife, Environmental Review Program at (302) 735-3600 or visit <https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/fish-wildlife/conservation/reviews/>.

Department of Agriculture - Contact: Milton Melendez 302-739-4811

The Delaware Department of Agriculture welcomes the opportunity to provide recommendations for this municipal comprehensive plan. The Agriculture/Food System complex is the state's largest industry and its most significant land use.

As an economic force the agriculture/food system provides more jobs and impacts in the state's economy than any other sector. In addition to the direct economic impacts throughout the state, agriculture and forestry provide billions of dollars in environmental services to the citizens of Delaware in the form of air and water cleansing, weather moderation, carbon sequestration, outdoor recreation, wildlife habitat, scenic vistas – and the list goes on. These services are largely uncompensated and represent a significant contribution to the quality of life and the health of Delaware's citizens and visitors.

Agriculture and forestry are the state's most important land uses. The majority of the state's private lands are farms. Farms and forests dominate the landscape. This fact alone dictates that these land uses must be a crucial part of the future land use planning in every comprehensive plan. Over three-quarters of the private open space in Delaware is in farms. The maintenance of these land uses is crucial to our future quality of life and the orderly and pleasing development of the state. In addition, the State of Delaware is investing millions of taxpayer dollars in the permanent preservation of these lands and all the attendant benefits they provide. Every comprehensive land use plan should account for these factors in balancing future development, preservation of farmland and forest, and the enhancement of the economic activities associated with our working lands.

Undoubtedly future generations will judge our effectiveness at land use planning by what they see around them. Like Delawareans today they will expect us to balance growth and development with the preservation and enhancement of agriculture and forestry.

The following proposed steps provides municipal governments with directives that can be implemented to maximize the preservation and longevity of agriculture in your surrounding areas.

## AGRICULTURE

- 1) Identify areas within the municipality where agriculture is considered the highest priority land use
- 2) Encourage the protection of prime agricultural land
- 3) Discourage development activities and capital projects incompatible with modern agriculture
- 4) Encourage separation of residential and agricultural areas through the zoning and subdivision process (this includes significant buffering and setback requirements for lands adjacent to agricultural operations)
- 5) Encourage, support, and maintain existing and proposed agricultural support enterprises and ag-related businesses
- 6) Encourage the development of local markets for locally grown foods
- 7) Encourage agricultural use protections and strong right-to-farm policies in agricultural areas
- 8) Establish and support financial incentives that encourage and allow landowners to remain in agriculture
- 9) Promote policies that maintain and foster economic viability within the agricultural sector

## DENSITY AND EFFICIENT LAND DEVELOPMENT

- 1) Encourage maximum use of existing and planned infrastructure
- 2) Designate infill areas & project number of units to be constructed in those areas
- 3) Discourage development patterns that promote inefficient use of land (i.e., discourage developments where lots frequently exceed minimum lot size requirements).
- 4) In conjunction with population projections, project acres of residential land needed for a given time period and discourage consumption of land in excess of that need with allowance for reasonable market competition
- 5) Direct growth toward existing population centers.

Delaware State Housing Authority – Contact Karen Horton 302-739-4263

According to Title 22, Section 702 Del C., municipalities with population greater than 2,000 persons, must include policies, statements, goals, and planning components to define the community's strategy for providing affordable housing for current and future residents. DSHA has no certification concerns.

**Suggestions**

- The Town of Middletown developed a thoughtful Comprehensive Plan that considers the tremendous population growth experienced over the past 20 years and provides a thorough demographic and housing analysis. They identified relevant housing needs and challenges and developed appropriate strategies for the future. DSHA supports their housing position which seeks to provide a mix of housing choices, including multifamily and mixed-use housing, and redevelop existing properties in appropriate locations.
- DSHA supports all of the recommendations – several of which would expand housing options to include housing types that were traditionally seen in the past but do not neatly fit into current housing categories in the existing zoning. These “missing middle” housing types refer to triplexes, fourplexes, garden apartments and cottage courts that are better scaled to fit into existing neighborhoods and Middletown's historic downtown.
- DSHA strongly supports the development of design guidelines to ensure that development is in keeping with the scale and character of existing neighborhoods. The implementation of these strategies will create a desirable quality community where all families can thrive.

Delaware State Fire Marshal – Contact John Rudd 302-323-5365

- Although not a requirement of the Delaware State Fire Prevention Regulations, the Office of the State Fire Marshal encourages home builders to consider the benefits of home sprinkler protection in dwellings.
- The Office of the State Fire Marshal reminds home builders that they are obligated to comply with requirements of Subchapter III of Chapter 36 of Title 6 of the Delaware Code which can be found at the following website:  
<http://delcode.delaware.gov/title6/c036/sc03/index.shtml>

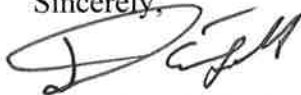
***Approval Procedures:***

1. Once all edits, changes and corrections have been made to the plan, please submit the completed document (text and maps) to our office for review. **Your PLUS response letter should accompany this submission.** Also include documentation about the public review process.

2. Our office will require a maximum of 20 working days to complete this review.
  - a. If our review determines that the revisions have adequately addressed all certification items, we will forward you a letter to this effect.
  - b. If there are outstanding items we will document them in a letter and ask the town to resubmit the plan once the items are addressed. Once all items are addressed, we will send you the letter as described above.
3. Once you receive our letter stating that all certification items have been addressed, the Planning Commission and Council should adopt the plan pending State certification. We strongly recommend that your Council adopt the plan by ordinance. The ordinance should be written so that the plan will go into effect upon receipt of the certification letter from the Governor.
4. Send our office a copy of the adopted plan along with the ordinance (or other documentation) that formally adopts your plan. We will forward these materials to the Governor for his consideration.
5. At his discretion, the Governor will issue a certification letter to your city.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this project. If you have any questions, please contact me at 302-739-3090.

Sincerely,



David L. Edgell, AICP  
Director, Office of State Planning Coordination

CC:



**Department of Land Use**

August 10, 2022

David Edgell, AICP  
Director  
Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination  
122 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. South  
Dover, DE 19901

Mr. Edgell:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comments regarding the proposed 2022 Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Middletown.

The New Castle County Department of Land Use has the following comments/concerns:

**A. Public Engagement**

On pages 2-7, the plan indicates IPA staff began meeting with Town of Middletown Staff and the Town Council in May 2021. It is also indicated that these meetings were open to the public. In addition, a Public Information Session occurred on March 29, 2022. With regards to the public process as a whole, it is unclear how many meetings there were, what was the format, or topics explored, etc.

The Department suggests providing a detailed outline of the public engagement process including the number of meetings, dates, meeting topics, number of attendees, etc. This could be achieved in the form of an appendix.

**B. New Castle County Planning Efforts**

On pages 20-21, the plan acknowledges that New Castle County is in the process of completing its 2022 Comprehensive Plan Update (NCC2050). The plan makes reference to the current 2012 New Castle County Comprehensive Plan in regard to unincorporated areas bordering the Town of Middletown (two strategies – strategies 4 and 5 of Chapter 11, Objective 1) as well as within incorporated areas (Chapter 3, Objective 3). Now that NCC2050 is adopted, we recommend removing references to the 2012 Plan and instead reference the Intergovernmental Coordination Element of NCC2050 and any relevant goals, objectives, and strategies.

**C. Annexation Areas & Future Land Use Map**

1. On page 31, the plan states that when considering potential annexation areas Middletown should strongly consider the presence of public services and infrastructure as well as the feasibility of providing public services and infrastructure to a potential annexation area. The plan also notes that the plans and policies of other governmental entities should be considered and underscores the necessity of close coordination with New Castle County.

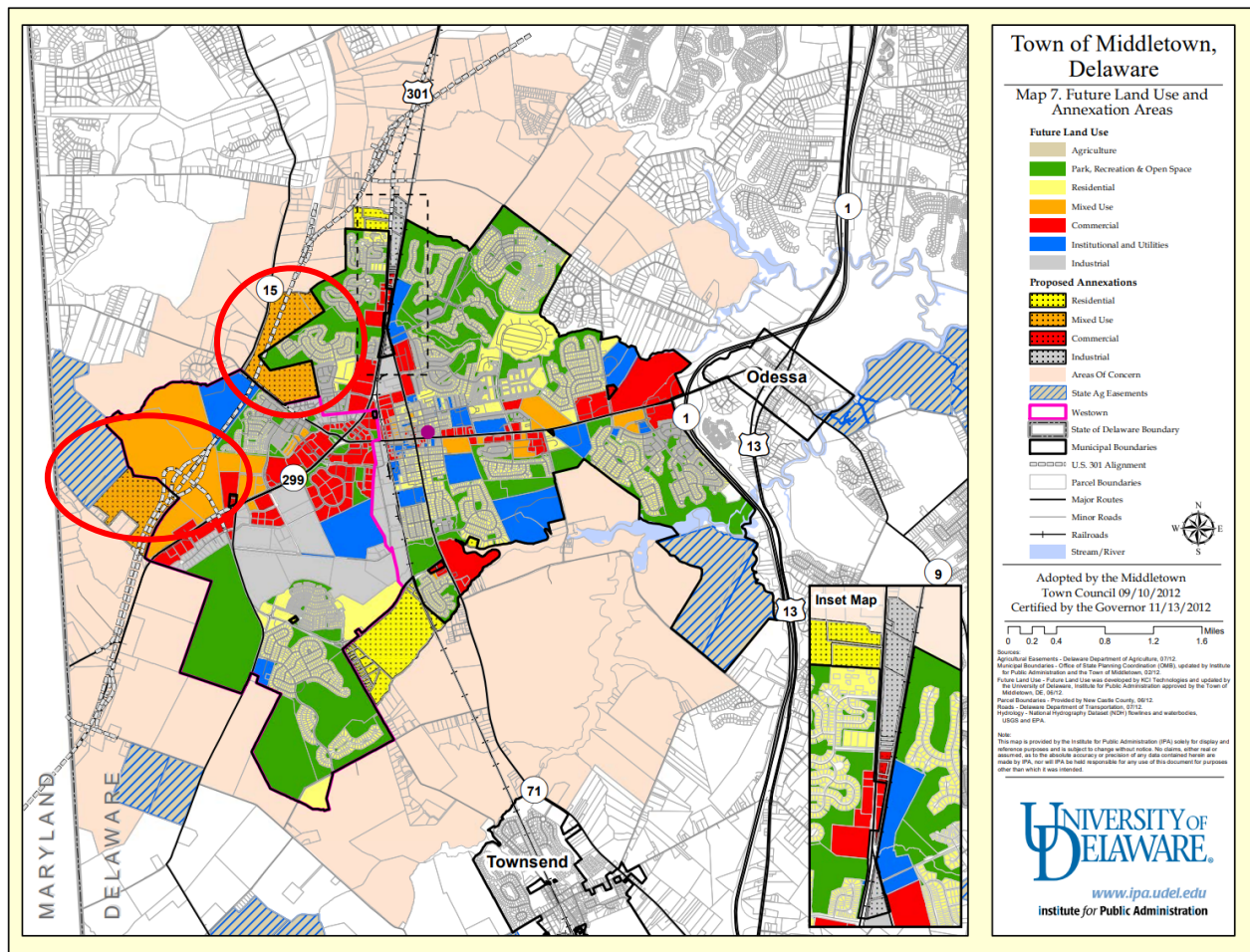
The Department agrees with this approach for evaluating potential annexation areas and appreciates the stated intentions to coordinate closely with New Castle County. Likewise, the stated importance of considering public

services and infrastructure is consistent with NCC2050 Policy Priority 1, Planned Growth - direct development to planned growth areas with infrastructure and limit it outside of these areas, promoting preservation.

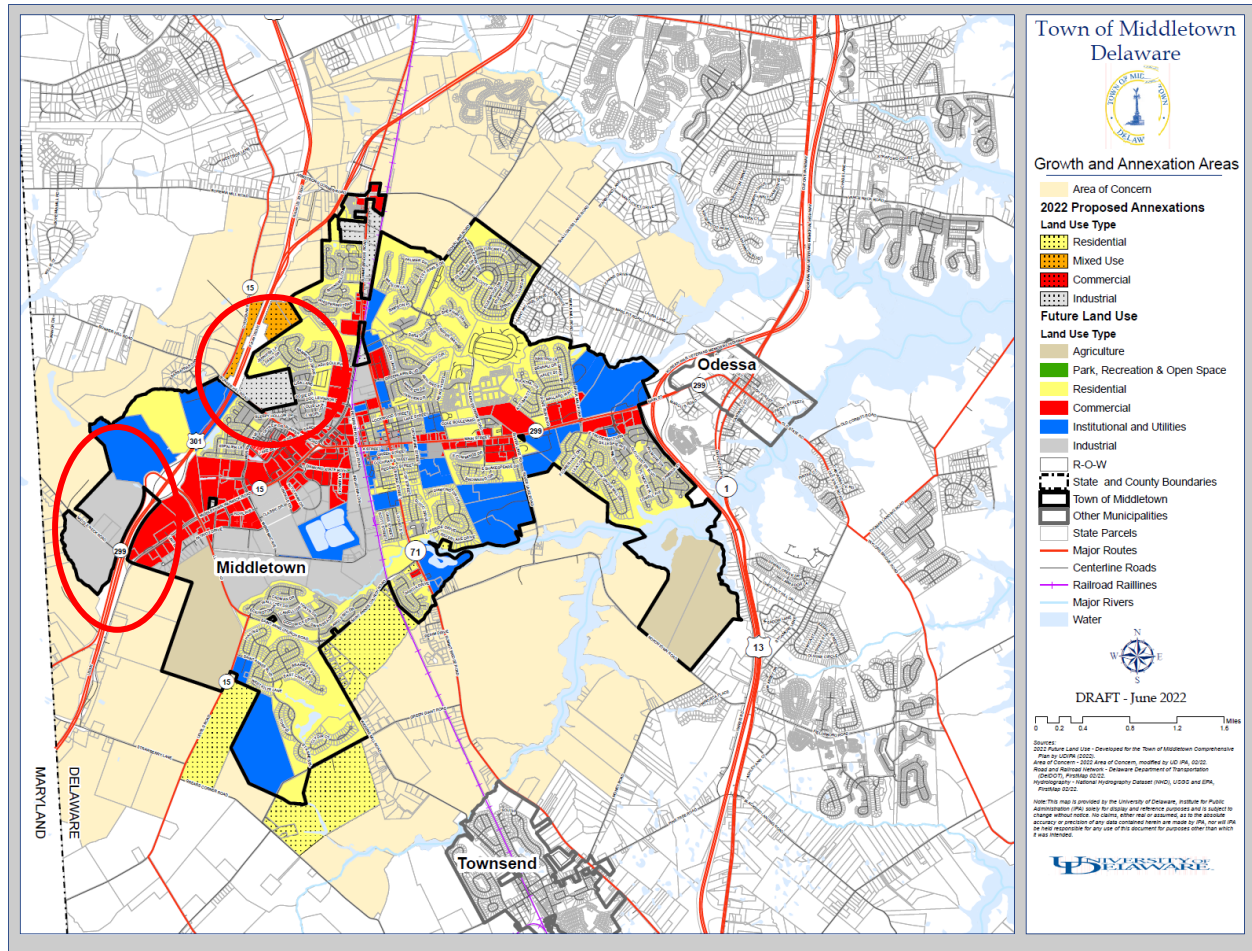
- On page 32 Map 7. Annexation Area, 2022 identifies properties which are identified to be considered for annexation in the 2022 Comprehensive Plan and their land-use designations. The plan states that the proposed land use for each potentially annexed property is relatively low density residential.

The Department suggests, to provide clarity, identifying the total acreage of land proposed to be annexed broken down by land use category.

- With regards to the Map 5. Future Land Use and Map 7 Annexation Area, the Department has some concerns regarding potential incompatible land uses near each other. The proposed annexation area shown below from the 2012 Comprehensive Plan contains two areas that are designated as the “Mixed Use.”



In the proposed Future Land Use Map and Annexation Area Map, there are new areas shown to be “Industrial.” These areas appear to border existing residential areas, rural/undeveloped areas, or mixed use areas. The Department is concerned about the potential negative impacts of industrial uses in such close proximity to residential and rural/undeveloped areas.



Going forward we would welcome the opportunity to initiate a cooperative joint planning process with the Town of Middletown (and other municipalities in the County) and look forward to further discussions with you.

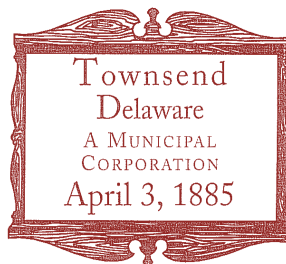
Sincerely,

*Richard E. Hall*

Richard E. Hall, AICP  
General Manager

CC: Antoni Sekowski, Assistant General Manager, NCC Dept. of Land Use  
Matthew Rogers, Acting Comprehensive Planning Manager, NCC Dept. of Land Use  
Dawn Thompson, Acting Comprehensive Planning Manager, NCC Dept. of Land Use  
Mayor Kenneth L. Branner, Jr., Mayor, Town of Middletown  
Morris Deputy, Town Manager, Town of Middletown  
Tim Deschepper, Town Planner, Town of Middletown  
Tricia Ardent, Office of State Planning Coordination

Scott Lobdell, Mayor  
Edgar Dugan, Councilman  
Joshua Mertz, Councilman  
Eschalla Clarke, Councilwoman  
Sheryl Rojas, Councilwoman



Antonina Tantillo, Town Manager  
Jennifer Helms, Financial Officer  
Staci Guillotte, Administrative Assistant  
Edwin Van-Otoo, Town Engineer  
Fred Townsend, III, Town Attorney

July 26, 2022

The Mayor and Council of the Town of Middletown  
19 West Green St.  
Middletown, DE 19709

RE: Middletown Draft Comprehensive Plan

Dear Mayor and Town Council,

The Town of Townsend's ("Townsend") letter dated July 21, 2022, regarding the Middletown Draft Comprehensive Plan ("Draft Plan"), noted that Townsend had two concerns, one of which being:

The area identified as "2022 Proposed Annexation" to the South of the Town of Middletown and to the North of the Town of Townsend has been identified for "industrial" Zoning. The Town of Townsend would like to note possible future concerns with this zoning, as the Town of Townsend proposed zoning for the surrounding areas, would be residential. The Middletown identified Industrial areas are noted on both the Town of Middletown and the Town of Townsend Comprehensive Plan maps below; circled in red and blue.

Shortly thereafter, we received an updated Town of Middletown ("Middletown") Growth and Annexation Plan ("Growth Plan"). After reviewing the Growth Plan, the Town no longer has concerns with the area identified as "2022 Proposed Annexation," which is located to the South of Middletown and to the North of Townsend, being identified for "industrial" zoning, as this has now been changed to "residential" zoning.

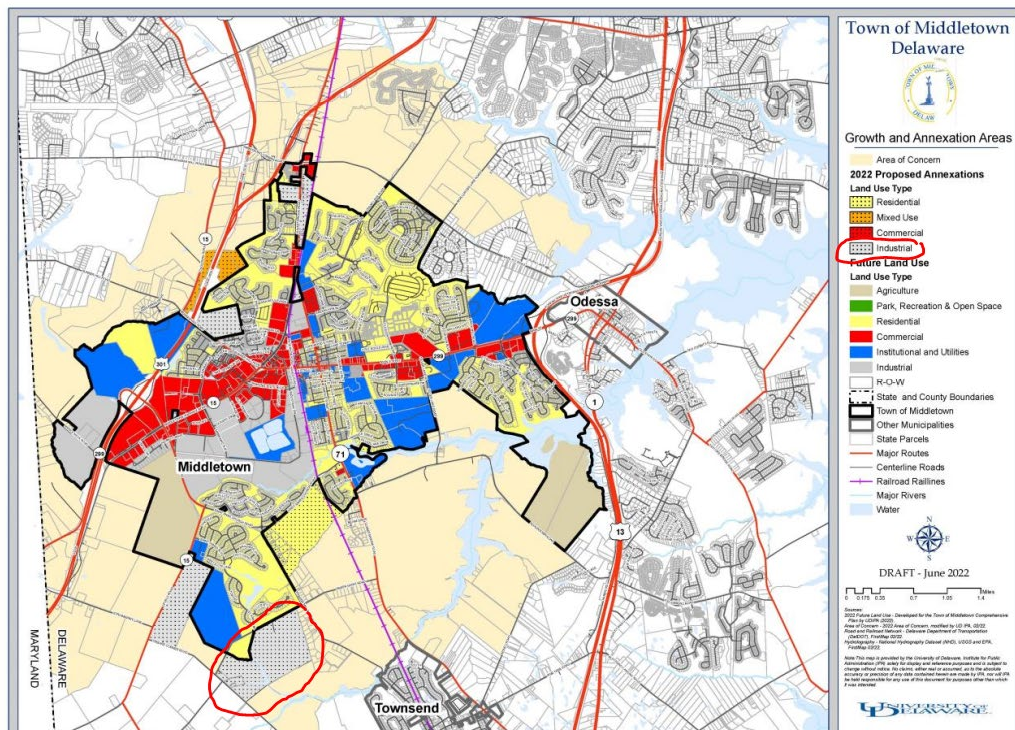
We thank you for update and revisions, we have no further comments on the Draft Plan.

Sincerely,

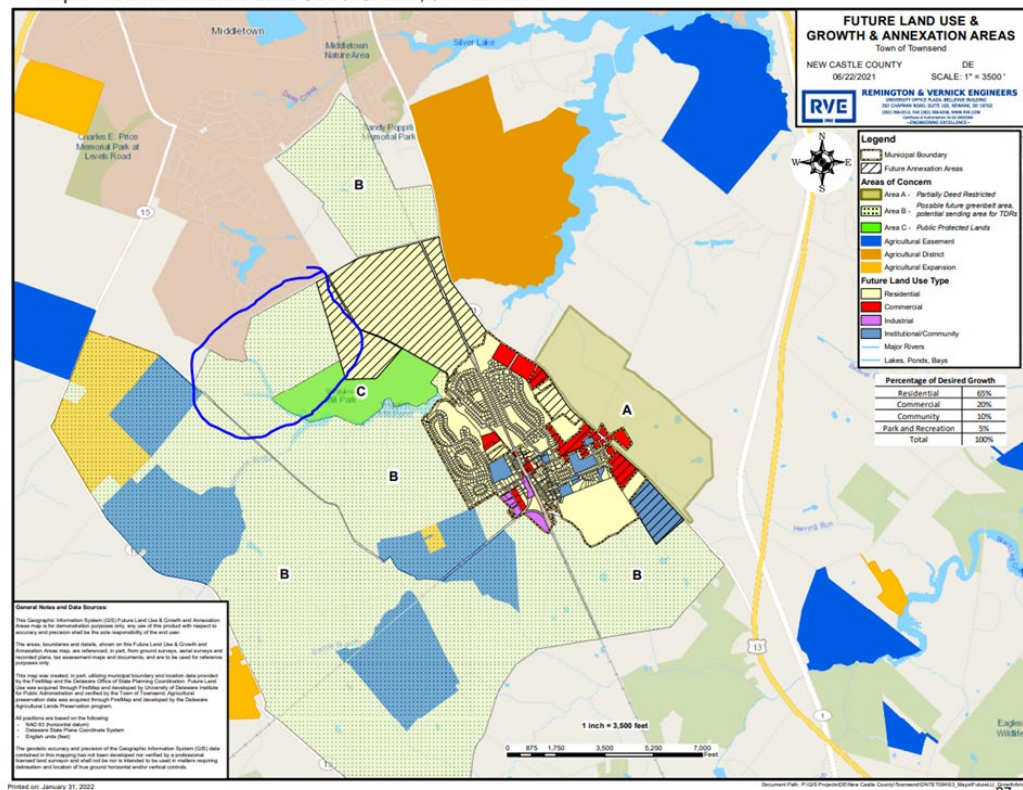
*Antonina Tantillo*

Antonina Tantillo, MPA  
Town Manager. Town of Townsend

## Town of Middletown Comprehensive Plan Map 7. Annexation Area, 2022



## Town of Townsend Comprehensive Plan:



**Town of Middletown Comprehensive Plan  
Growth and Annexation Map- Revised 7/22/22**

