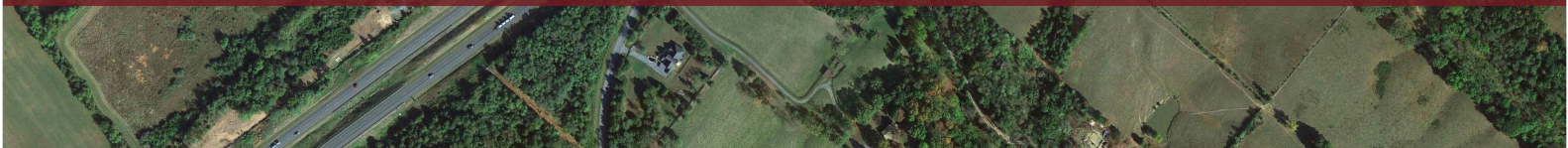


**DRAFT Middletown
Comprehensive Plan
2026 - 2046
April 14th, 2026**



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Acknowledgments

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+ all of the Town's dedicated employees

Prepared by Summit Design & Engineering, Inc.

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What is a Comprehensive Plan?

The Comprehensive Plan is a policy document that provides long-range guidance for the Town's future. The Plan will be used in decision-making about land use, transportation, and a variety of other "comprehensive" topics related to the public's interest in the built environment. Through following the Plan, the Town can continue to strive for a high quality of life in the community over the next twenty years (through to 2046).

It has been almost two decades since the previous Middletown Comprehensive Plan 2038 was adopted in 2012 and reviewed and updated in 2017 and 2018. Think back to everything that has happened in the previous years, how perceptions have shifted, how technology has changed, how the housing market has fluctuated, and more. There are many complex challenges and opportunities facing communities across Virginia, now is the time to begin planning for good outcomes in the future.

This Plan is the result of community input and feedback, local elected and appointed officials commentary, and consultant recommendations to achieve a common vision for Middletown. This Plan will shape development, plan for improvements, and set expectations. However, the Plan is not set in stone once adopted. The Code of Virginia directs the Planning Commission to review the document every five years to determine if it is in need of updating, making it a "living" document that is subject to change over time, depending on shifts, new trends or changes in the community's goals and strategies.

How is a Comprehensive Plan Used?

Local Government

The Town's Staff, Planning Commission, and Town Council use the Plan for recommendations on land use applications. The Plan also details planned infrastructure and public facility improvements.



Community

The community can read the Town's vision and ideas for the future. When giving public comment on land use applications, they can read the document to better understand the context.



Developers & Builders

The Plan outlines the Town's goals and expectations of new development. This guidance helps streamline expectations, feedback, and negotiations.



Business Owners & Non-profit Organizations

Identify locations to expand, start, or relocate their business to Middletown. Non-profits can find potential opportunities to collaborate and seek grant funding for new projects in the Town.



Legal Authority

The Code of Virginia outlines the legal authority and the requirement that all localities prepare, recommend, and adopt a Comprehensive Plan (Chapter 22, Article 3: §15.2-2223 through §15.2-2232). The statute also states that the comprehensive plan “shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare of the inhabitants, including the elderly and persons with disabilities.”

Updates, Progress, and Previous Plans

The Comprehensive Plan is a living document, meaning it can be actively changed or amended to meet the Town’s needs. The Code of Virginia requires that the Planning Commission review the adopted plan and determine if any changes are needed. At the review, it is advised to evaluate how the existing plan is being implemented and if the stated goals are being met. The Planning Commission may determine that no changes are needed and no further action is required, or they may determine that specific amendments are needed, or that the entire plan needs to be rewritten.

To show ongoing implementation is being achieved, Middletown’s Town staff should report annually to the Town Council and the Planning Commission about the Plan’s progress. This can also provide a designated time to capture any points of clarification or changes that need to be made to improve the Plan or ensure consistency with local ordinances.

Once this Comprehensive Plan is adopted by the Town Council, it will supersede the previous plan. Previous plans should be archived in order to track the trajectory of various trends and understand how the Town came make to certain decisions over time in its growth and development.

Relationship to Other Plans, Policies, and Ordinances

The Comprehensive Plan is a long-range, visioning and policy document that works in conjunction with other Town documents and regulations to shape the built environment. The Plan is focused primarily on physical aspects of town development and is related but not redundant to any strategic plans. The Capital Improvement Plan may be found on the Town’s website at middletownva.gov/strategic-planning

Capital Improvement Plan

Priorities, goals, and specific projects mentioned in the Comprehensive Plan should be included in future versions of or amendments to the Town’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Virginia State Code Section 15.2-2239 requires that local planning commissions may, and at the direction of the governing body shall, prepare and revise annually a capital improvement program based on the adopted Comprehensive Plan. The CIP should include the commission’s recommendations as well as cost of facilities and means of financing them and is one of the primary vehicles for implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances

A locality’s Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances are the most significant and powerful vehicle for implementing the Future Land Use map in the Comprehensive Plan. The Future Land Use map (located on page 123 of this document) shows the general character desired for various parts of town in the future, and is implemented by changes to the Zoning Ordinance or Official Zoning Map, dictating how property may be developed. Over time, this changes the character of the built environment to that envisioned by the Comprehensive Plan.

Planning Context

Existing Conditions Report

The Comprehensive Plan is based on both empirical data and the community's vision. The planning process begins with an "Existing Conditions Report" to collect and analyze data to understand where Middletown is today, or the community's "planning context." Understanding where and how people live, what major employers are in the area, what the environment looks like, or how the transportation system is functioning, gives the community a common foundation for thinking about their vision for the future. Topical data that has been analyzed is found across this plan's chapters that discuss the community's housing conditions, economic conditions, transportation systems, environmental conditions, local community facilities, and the use of land.

People tend to have subjective understandings of their own community based on their individual experiences. While it is important to understand different perspectives, it is also important to examine objective data. This process helps ensure that all community stakeholders are starting from a common understanding of the Town's conditions at the beginning of the planning process. Once this is established, the community can work collaboratively to address its needs. This data helps identify potential issues in the Town and with drafting recommendations to improve conditions. The data has also been used to draft the Comprehensive Plan's vision alongside information from public engagement.

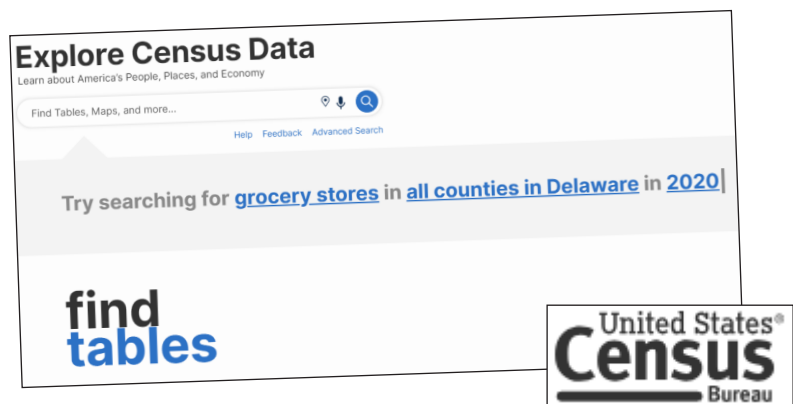
Where did the data come from?

Most of the data comes from the 2023 American Community Survey (5 year estimates), released on December 12, 2024, by the United States Census Bureau. This data was the latest and most available at the time. However, this document also utilizes other data, such as Decennial Census counts, Virginia Employment Commission, and ESRI Business Analyst. All of these sources are widely used and as accurate as possible to give communities a picture of their existing conditions.

Figure 1. Census Website

New data is already available!

Visit data.census.gov to explore any topic you are curious about.



Middletown is located in the northern Shenandoah Valley along the route of the historic “Great Wagon Road.” Established and chartered as “Senseneey Town” in 1796, making it one of the oldest Towns in both Virginia and the United States. It was officially incorporated as Middletown in 1878 by an act of the General Assembly.

The Town’s land area is approximately 494.77 acres. The Town and its surroundings, mostly to the west, are the site of the Battles of Cedar Creek & Belle Grove. The National Park Service maintains the land to interpret its history and preserve its condition. The Town is located between Strasburg and Stephens City, with Winchester not much further to the northeast.

Middletown continues to develop today with new neighborhoods and commercial spaces, mostly in relation to the highway exit. However, there are many existing businesses and residential units in historic buildings through the core of the Town. Just outside the Town boundaries, there are many active farms that lend themselves to the visual character of the area.

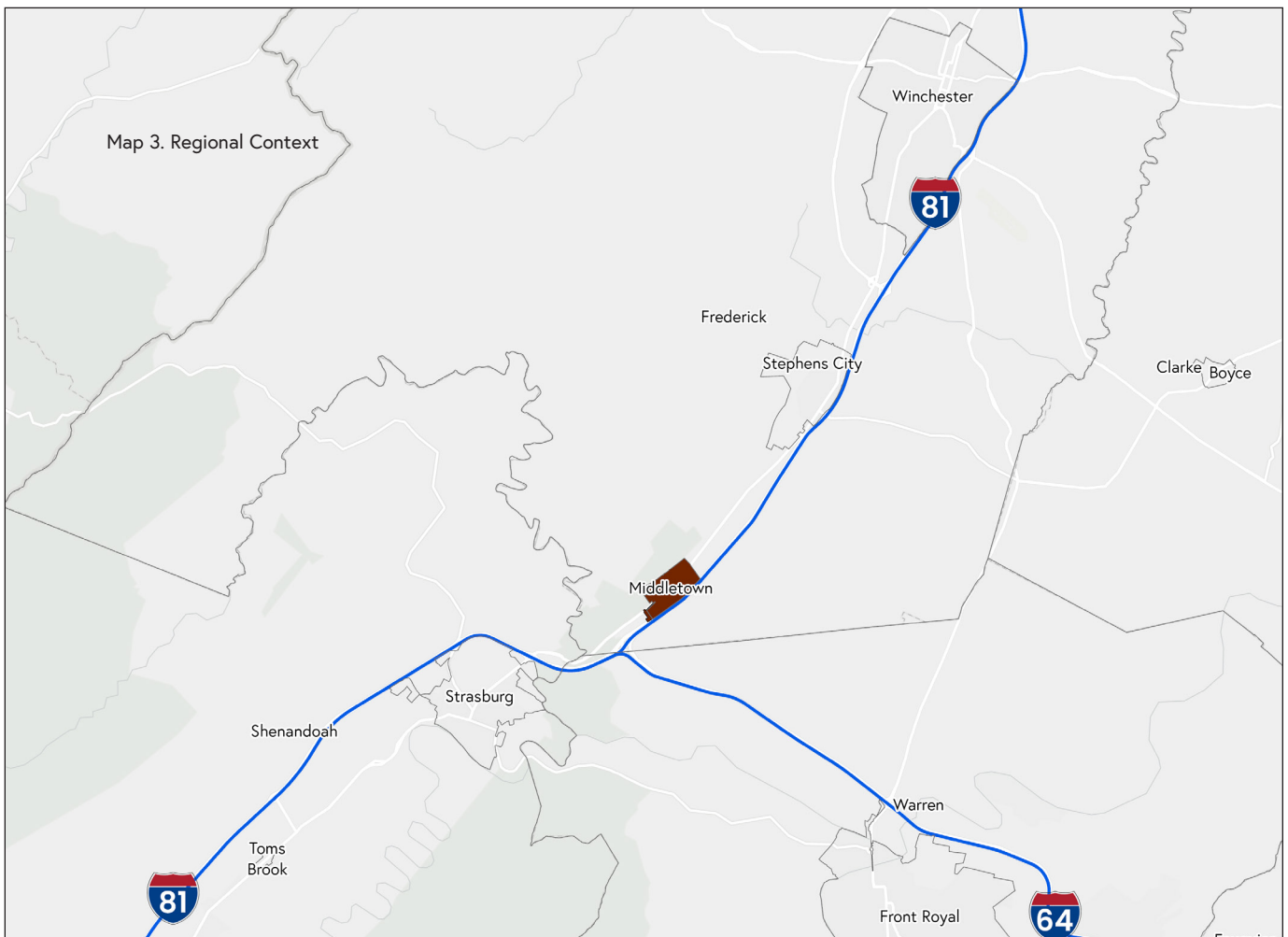
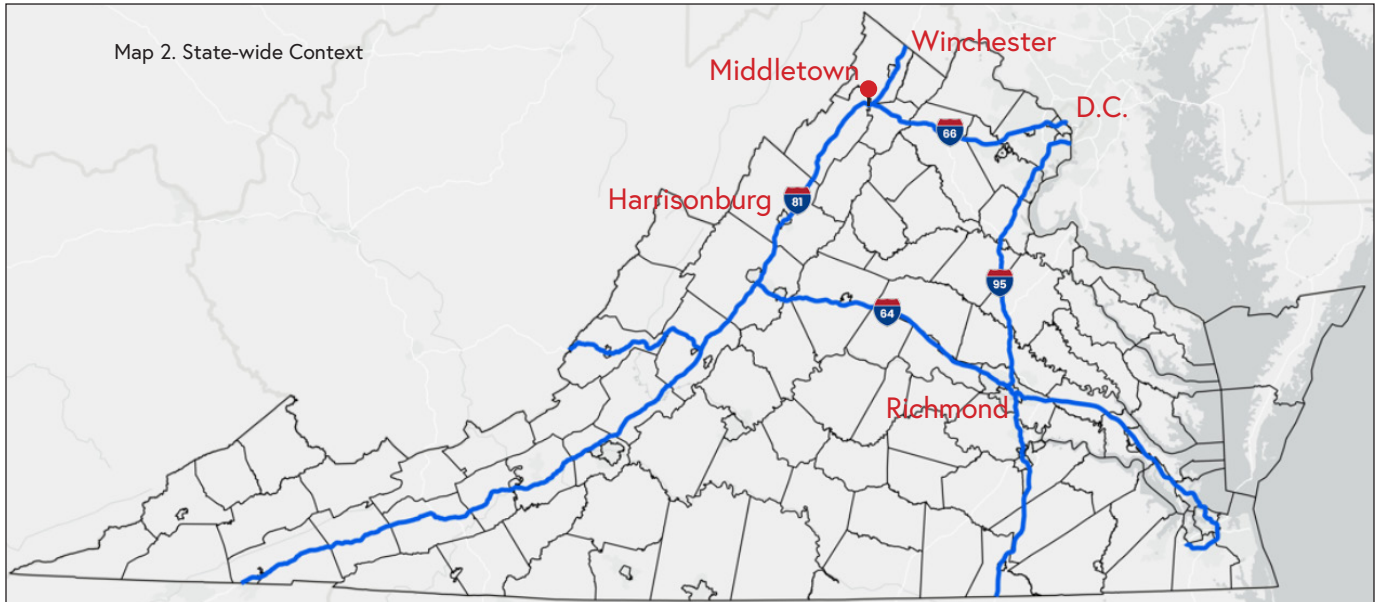
Two major roads bisect the Town. State Route 11, which runs North to South, and Interstate 81, which also runs North to South, parallel to Route 11. State Route 627, or Reliance Road, provides access to the southwest parallel to nearby Interstate 66.

Map 1. Middletown Overview



Regional Context

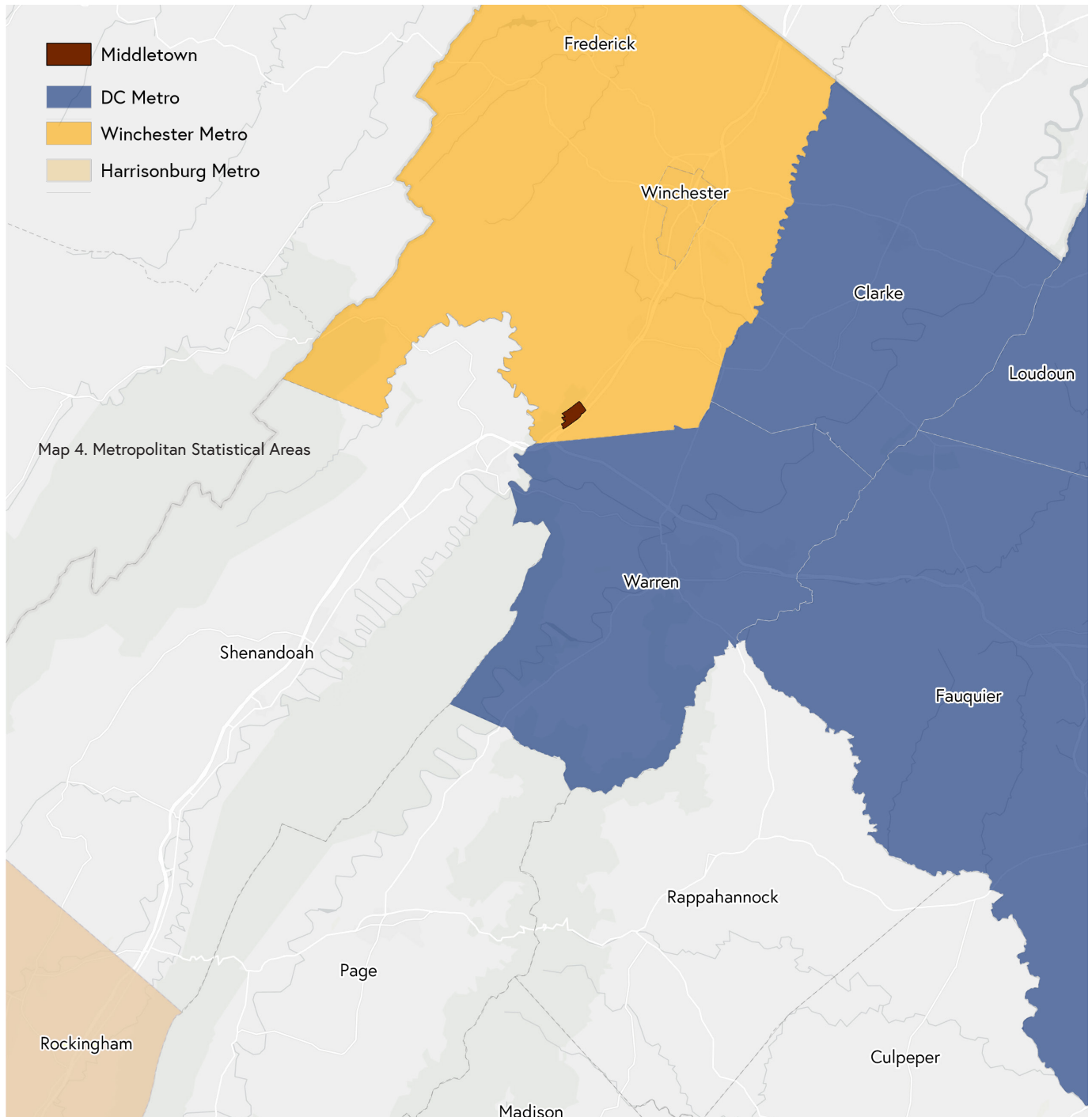
Middletown is located in the Shenandoah Valley in Northwestern Virginia. As shown on the following maps, the Town is about 80 miles from Washington, D.C. and 58 miles from Harrisonburg, and just 15 miles south of Winchester. Regionally, it is approximately the midpoint between the Stephens City and Strasburg.



Surrounding Metro Areas

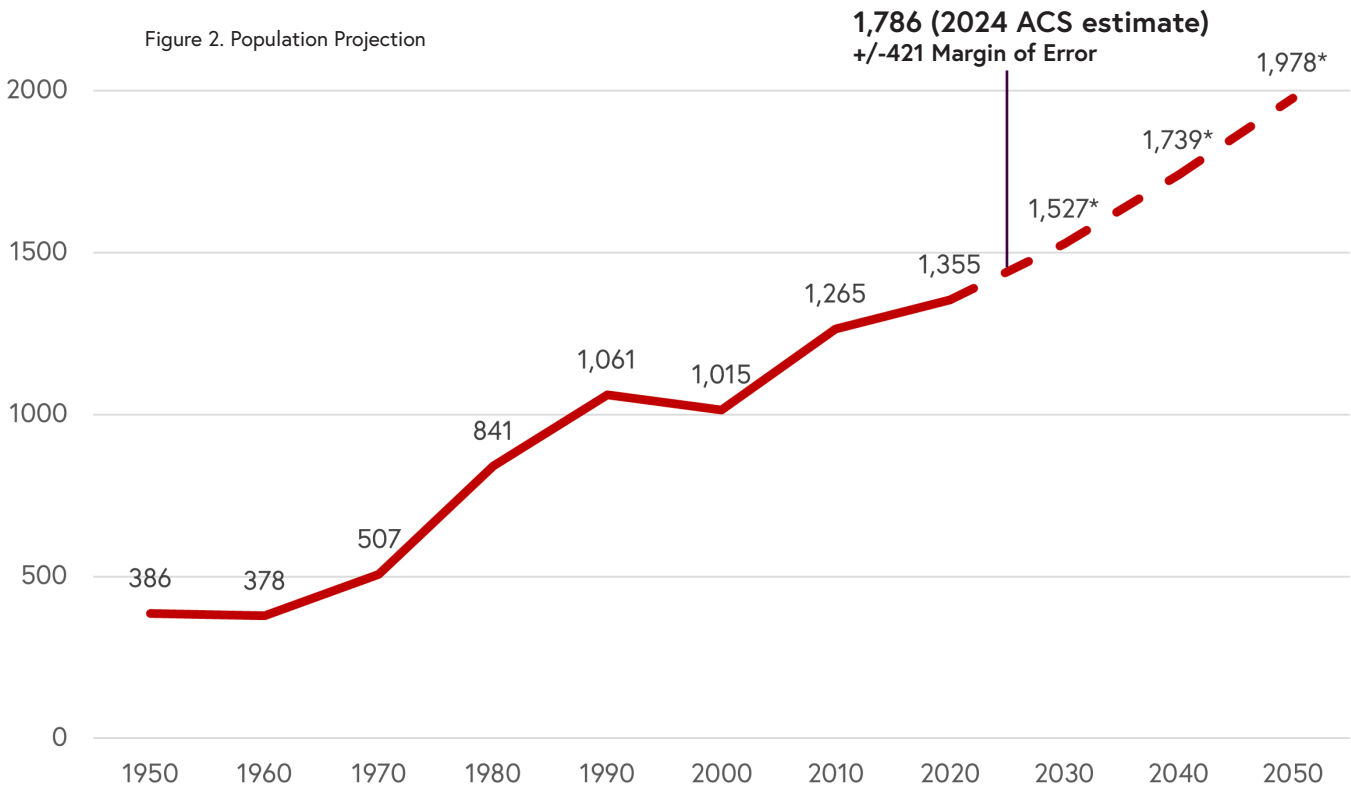
Metropolitan statistical areas (MSA) are the definition of a region, used by the US Census Bureau. An MSA consists of a core area that serves as a “population nucleus” and surrounding areas that have a “high degree of economic and social integration” with that core. MSAs are delineated, in part, through commuting patterns.

Middletown is located within the MSAs of the City of Winchester and located just outside the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV MSA. This is Virginia’s highest density area of economic activity and population, where growth has generally “sprawled” its way further and further into the countryside. This is important to note for planning purposes, as within the comprehensive plan’s horizon the Town will face even further potential growth pressure than has occurred already. However, with careful planning the Town can manage this pressure so that it is to the benefit of the Town and its existing community.



Demographics

Figure 2. Population Projection



Source: 1900- 2020 Decennial Census, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service

Population

The total population of Middletown is estimated to be 1,786 people as of the 2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. The U.S. Census Bureau releases the American Community Survey (ACS) every year as a long form survey comparing 1 year results with sets of 5 years. This plan utilized the most recently available data at the time (2023 ACS 5-Year), however it is important to note that Middletown recently had subdivisions completed that added to the population during the time of the survey taking place which may have increased the total. The more accurate, but now outdated count in the 2020 Census is estimated at 1,355. The graph above shows the Town's population increase since the 1950s. Notably, the population has been growing in almost every decade. The latest available estimate from the U.S. Census Bureau is already higher than the projected population over the next few decades. Middletown's population is too small to receive a projection from the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for demographics.

The same percentage of increase of surrounding Frederick County was utilized to give a snapshot of what growth in Middletown could look like in the future. While this could change based on many different factors, it is showing a trend that already appears to be occurring in Middletown as new subdivisions are finished developing. Across Virginia, many small towns are struggling with the impacts of population loss. Middletown is fortunate to see steady growth which creates many new opportunities.

It is important to plan for infrastructure and land use patterns that accommodates the needs of current and future residents. Growth projections attempt to give an idea of what may happen in the future, but its important to note that growth could drastically exceed or fail to meet the forecasted numbers.

See the Appendix B section for the full Existing Conditions Report!

Public Input

Public Participation

The Plan includes as much input from Middletown residents and local stakeholder as possible within the planning process. All people who live, work, or regularly visit Middletown were invited to provide their opinions, experiences, and vision for the Town. When combined with demographic data and existing conditions analysis, the input forms the foundation for the plan. Engaging the community is an important part of determining what the Town's collective vision is for the future, as well as what current needs should be addressed. The community gave input through: *The Public Survey, Planning Commission Kick Off (April 14th, 2025), July 4th Celebration (July 4th, 2025),* and stakeholder interviews with local staff, officials, community members, and business owners. The full results and summaries of these meetings are summarized in the Appendix at the end of the plan. With both quantitative data and the qualitative responses gathered, Middletown's plan for the future is fully reflective of where the Town is, and where it wants to go.



When was the Public Survey Conducted?

The survey was conducted using ESRI's Survey123 application. It was open to anyone interested in providing public feedback to the Town, whether they live, work, or own a business. The survey was launched on April 11th, 2025 and remained open until July 10th, 2025.

During the survey's four month period, 92 residents and neighbors submitted survey responses.

Surveys help elected and appointed officials, the Town's staff, and the public to understand their community goals and make informed decisions for future growth, infrastructure, and other needs. The responses from this survey have been used by the Town to inform and develop the Comprehensive Plan, accounting for the needs and desires of residents, neighbors, and visitors alike.

Please see the full Public Participation Summary in the Appendix of this document. The recommendations in this plan are in direct response to these and other stakeholder responses and priorities, taking care to preserve what people love about Middletown while proactively addressing concerns for the future.



See the Appendix A section for the full input summary!

Middletown will be a dynamic, thriving, and high quality place to live at all stages of life.

Creativity and fiscal responsibility will be utilized to address the challenges of the present and future. Middletown will protect its historic landscapes, architectural heritage, and battlefield setting as foundational elements of its identity and long-term prosperity.

The Town will be a place where charm is evident, and the community is proud of their home.

Vision

Overview

The Vision Statement is a key piece of the Comprehensive Plan that sets the tone and direction of the document. The message identifies the higher level aspirations that the Town is looking to achieve. The statement is intended to be clear and based on the consensus, goals, and needs expressed through the community engagement process. The report is available through the Public Participation Summary document on the Town's Comprehensive Plan page (middletownva.gov/comprehensive-plan/) and in the Appendix section. The comments have provided invaluable insight into what the community finds as important.

These sentences capture the community's future vision of Middletown. The statement emphasizes Middletown's pursuit of greater vibrancy for its residents of all ages, the pursuit of prosperity through creative and responsible management of its resources to address challenges, and the desire to be a charming place where people are proud to say they are from. As a vision, the words acknowledge the potential for growth to occur, but seek to guide it while preserving the landscape to Middletown's benefit.

The phrase "small town charm" comes up often when discussing why people enjoy living in Middletown. When people are asked to elaborate, the response is usually centered on the sociable nature of the community. People are happy to know their neighbors and support local businesses in Town. Whether a big community, or small community, the phrase is often used. The vision statement seeks to take charm further into an actionable picture of what the future could be for Middletown.

Big Ideas

The vision is followed on the next pages by the Plan's "Big Ideas." These help explain where different topics that the Plan covers come together to address an issue. For example, when read separately the Land Use and Transportation objectives may appear to focus on different issues, however, together they are working on an overall goal of "weaving the activity centers together." The "Big Ideas" are:

1. Connect Middletown - This idea seeks to improve Middletown's ability to safely move through the community by other modes of transportation besides the automobile, such as walking or riding a bike locally. It also includes reaching further away destinations by providing safe connections to where there is regional bus service.

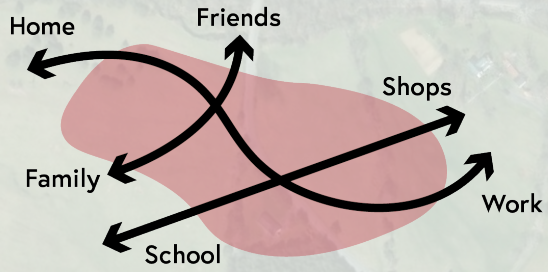
2. Prepare Main Street for the Future - This idea is for improving sidewalk infrastructure and changing zoning regulations along Main Street to allow for development and redevelopment of properties along Route 11/Main Street through the center of Middletown. Growth along Main Street will create more opportunities locally for employment, use of services, or enjoyment of the Town itself.

3. Practice Placemaking - As Middletown thinks about how to improve its public spaces, practicing placemaking can encourage greater creativity that invites all different kinds of users to a space. Temporary uses like pop-up markets, a beer garden, or other flexible partnerships, can spur greater interest from visitors and provide more activities in Town for the local community.

These ideas are explained in greater detail throughout the next section of the Plan.

1. Connect Middletown

Figure 3. Connections Diagram



Map 5. Big Ideas

2. Prepare Main Street for the Future



Figure 5. Placemaking Between Buildings

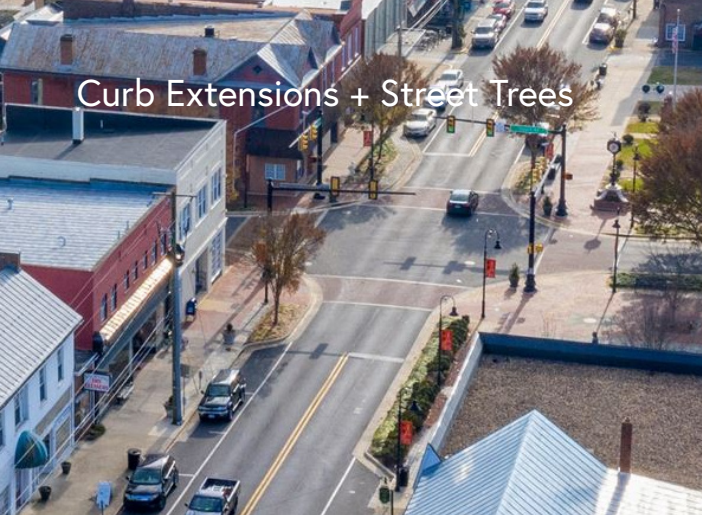
3. Practice Placemaking



1. Connect Middletown

The Town will be connected; to itself, to the region, and beyond! Middletown will pursue "Vision Zero" policies that provide extensive traffic calming and bicycle or pedestrian infrastructure to allow the local community to safely get around. This could start first with temporary interventions, such as paint, plastic, and cones, before growing into more permanent infrastructure. Particular attention will be given to Main Street, in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Transportation, to provide solutions that allow community members to cross safely at multiple points. Although the main non-highway transportation thoroughfare for the region, it is also the heart of Middletown's community. Through traffic must be respectful that their convenience does not endanger the Town's safety. Consistent materials and a generous width (ideally 6 feet wherever possible) of sidewalk should be pursued on both the north and south sides of Main Street, to both the northeastern and southwestern extents of Middletown. The highest priority cross-town connections will connect Middletown's Park and Town Hall to its neighborhoods, eventually connecting the entire Town's jurisdiction with a safe network. Another key connection to be established is a multi-modal trail to Laurel Ridge, where connections to the regional bus system can be made, allowing for less car dependent commutes to ease local traffic congestion. The local development standards will be amended to include bicycle parking required with development, and publicly owned facilities will also provide bicycle parking with standardized designs in convenient locations to promote usage.





Curb Extensions + Street Trees



New Sidewalks



Roundabout



Speed Table with Crosswalk



Protected Bike Lane



HAWK Pedestrian Signal

The Town will remain supportive and collaborative with any future regional multi-modal projects that connect the community to its neighboring Towns throughout the Shenandoah Valley. While these efforts are focused on modes of transportation aside from the automobile, they benefit local drivers as well by relieving congestion and improving safety on the roads. As Middletown plans to grow in a way conducive to quality of life in the future, the requirements to provide car parking spaces will prevent the possibility of new businesses opening or historic properties from being reused if they are not amended. The success of local businesses will create new demands from local and regional traffic, and if everyone decides to drive it could create potentially disastrous traffic congestion! At the same time, older members of the community remember the days when local goods and services could be purchased right on Main Street, rather than at the big box store miles away. While times have changed, and trips for various needs will always need to be made, the rules underlying Middletown should allow it to develop successfully to the benefit of the local community!

2. Preparing Main Street for the Future

Middletown's Main Street is full of potential to fulfill the community's needs and aspirations for the future. Today, successful businesses can be found along the street, some occupying historic buildings. Connecting these businesses to the community with safe infrastructure is one piece of the puzzle, however, ordinance changes that allow for flexibility in use, density, and proximity of structures, can help bring Main Street even more life. Increasing goods and services available will provide more opportunities for employment as well as the opportunity to keep money circulating in the community, while cutting down the number of trips to other destinations. Reforms to local ordinances will also assist the re-use of historic structures. Part of the reason that many structures likely have yet to be renovated and re-utilized for new purposes is due to issues with zoning regulations, such as parking requirements. If a new business establishes a new use or expands its footprint from the building, then it must provide a certain amount of parking spaces based on its square footage. This is a problem, because historic buildings were built often entirely on the parcel's edges leaving no room for parking spaces. In most communities, street parking or other public parking facilities serve this need, allowing people to visit the community by parking once and walking to multiple destinations. The parking requirements eat up valuable land on the property and can make potential business financially unfeasible, allowing the property to sit underutilized and deteriorate over time. If the historic buildings that comprise main streets across Virginia are the beloved hearts of communities, why would we want to make building structures in the same form illegal?

Figure 6. Main Street in the Future (Concept)



The history of land use and the design of structures has generally followed the technology that supported the movement of people. Main Street follows the historic "Great Wagon Road" that brought settlers deeper into the country's "frontier" at the time, the railroad came around through the 1800s and declined in the 1900s, bicycles appeared briefly and were extremely popular in the early 1900s, and then automobiles began to grow in use. With the advent of the highway system and numerous other technological advancements, development began to take a more spread-out form that prompted towns to begin to "sprawl out," annexing land as needed to develop further. However, the benefits of modern life also come with the increased demand and burden on infrastructure for energy, transportation, natural resources, wastewater treatment, and internet access. The demand for these services caused communities to continually look outside their boundaries for available land for new businesses and residential units.

However, if we look at development as a "linear progression" of growth, we ignore that there are exponentially increasing costs and challenges. New roads, water, sewer systems and the extension of these systems are very expensive to maintain, presumably forever. Locating new stores in a distance too far to walk without sidewalk infrastructure will mean that everyone must drive, if everyone must drive then buildings must need larger parking lots and there will be more traffic. Collectively, we have taken the activities that used to bring life to main street and spread them out further and further in search of an equilibrium that is unobtainable by the pattern of development.

Sprawling subdivisions in Arizona



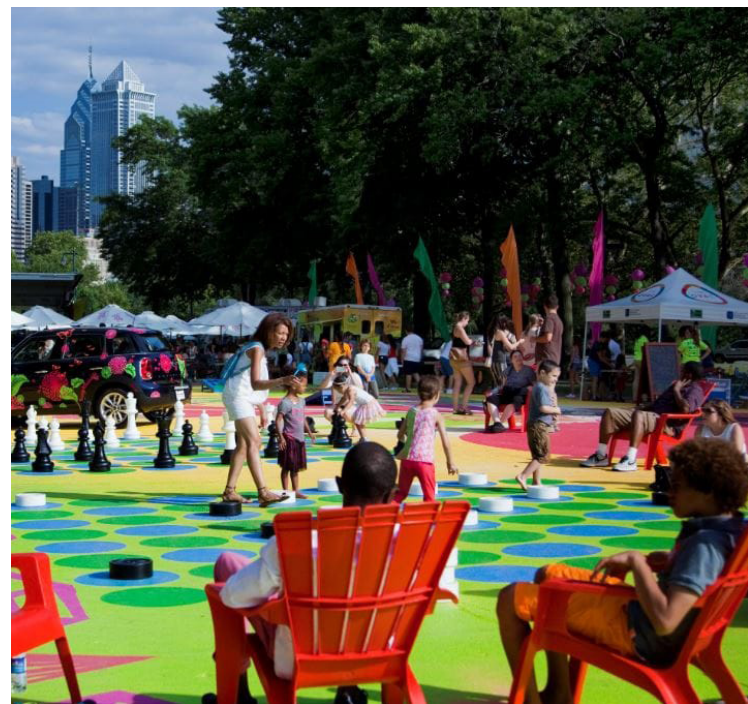
Galena, Iowa's Vibrant Main Street



For example, large big box stores or similar national chains may provide a large tax value to the community. Yet when adjusted per acre, their value is far less than a slice of the local businesses downtown. When we consider the cost of providing utilities in an inefficient, more spread-out system, we can see that it is the lower value businesses and homes in more dense or compact areas subsidizing the maintenance of the utilities for the other areas. When we recognize how much shared value is built by having a vibrant and thriving main street and creating new opportunities for businesses, we can build towards a better future with less mounting costs for future generations. Communities often have seen these increasing costs generationally and decided to "kick the can," allowing new spread-out growth to increase the immediate income from new taxes while disregarding the long-term costs. This plan seeks to return that focus to building a successful main street, in line with what Middletown has expressed a desire for.

3. Practice Placemaking

Placemaking is the process of strengthening the connection between a place and the spaces they share in their community. The act of placemaking builds shared value by creating spaces that serve as the foundation for building memories and spending time with one another that in turn, creates the activities and culture that a place itself is known for. Activities that already take place in Middletown, such as the Fourth of July Parade bring many visitors to the community from the surrounding area, as well as locals who live within the Town itself. This is a great example of something that brings the community together and helps everyone identify specifically with the Town itself. This happens also when they grab a local coffee or have dinner in Town at a restaurant or spend time at the park. Strengthening the quality of everyday life experiences in Middletown helps build a stronger community. Placemaking involves many different disciplines, such as urban design, transportation engineering, and land use planning, but fundamentally it is a collaborative effort where the community itself is invited to participate in its own evolution and betterment. What if the joy experienced during parades could be found almost every day, or there were more restaurants and shops, or new activities to do in the park?

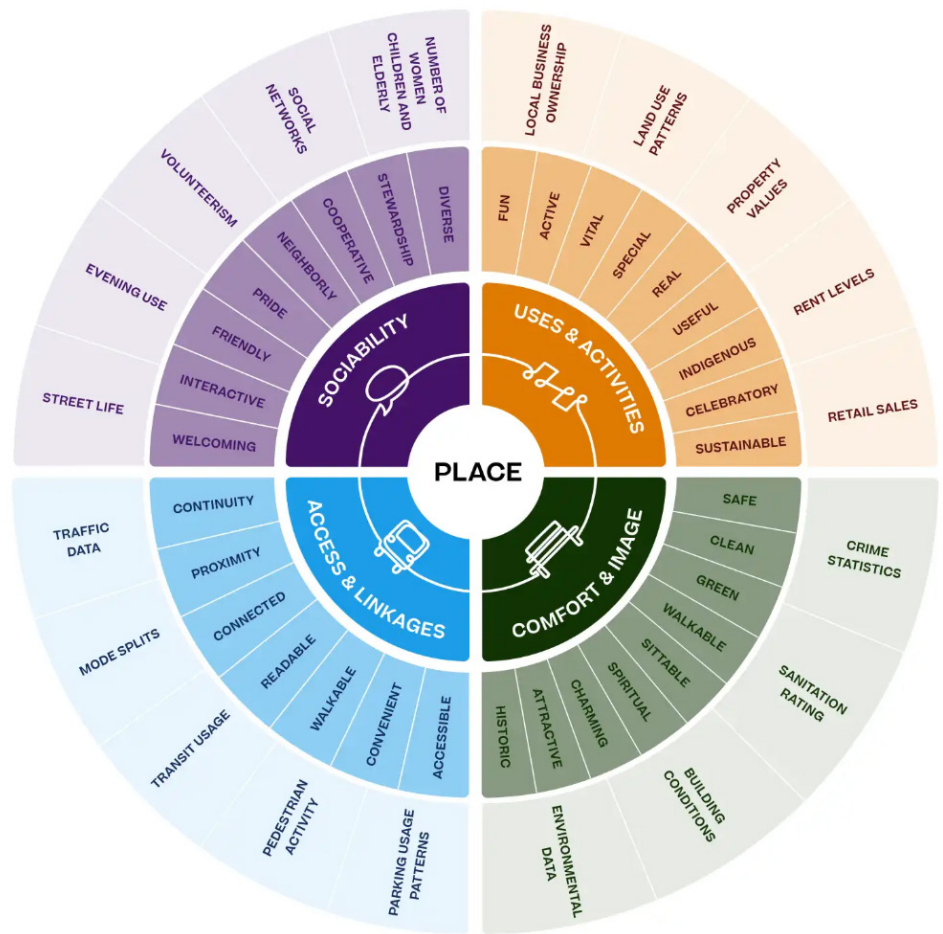


This Comprehensive Plan is in many ways focused on the health of Main Street, as much work can be done creating the infrastructure that supports firmly maintaining Middletown's place. However, placemaking can extend into neighborhood traffic calming efforts and the local park. It can be new furniture for places to stop and sit, it can be new banners on pedestrian scale streetlights, it can be new street trees, or it can be new events or temporary pop-ups. Encouraging creative flexibility and community input and participation will allow for new ideas to be generated as Middletown grows and improves.

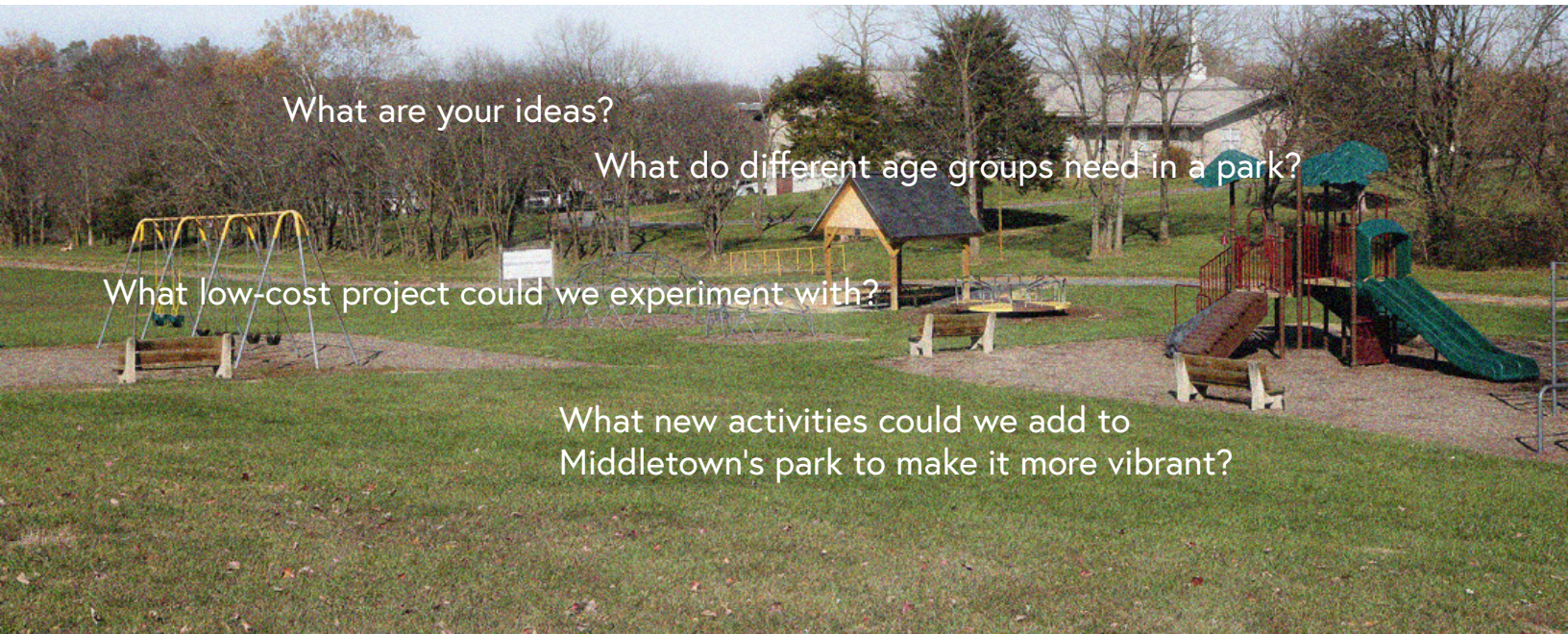
Figure 7. Elements of Placemaking

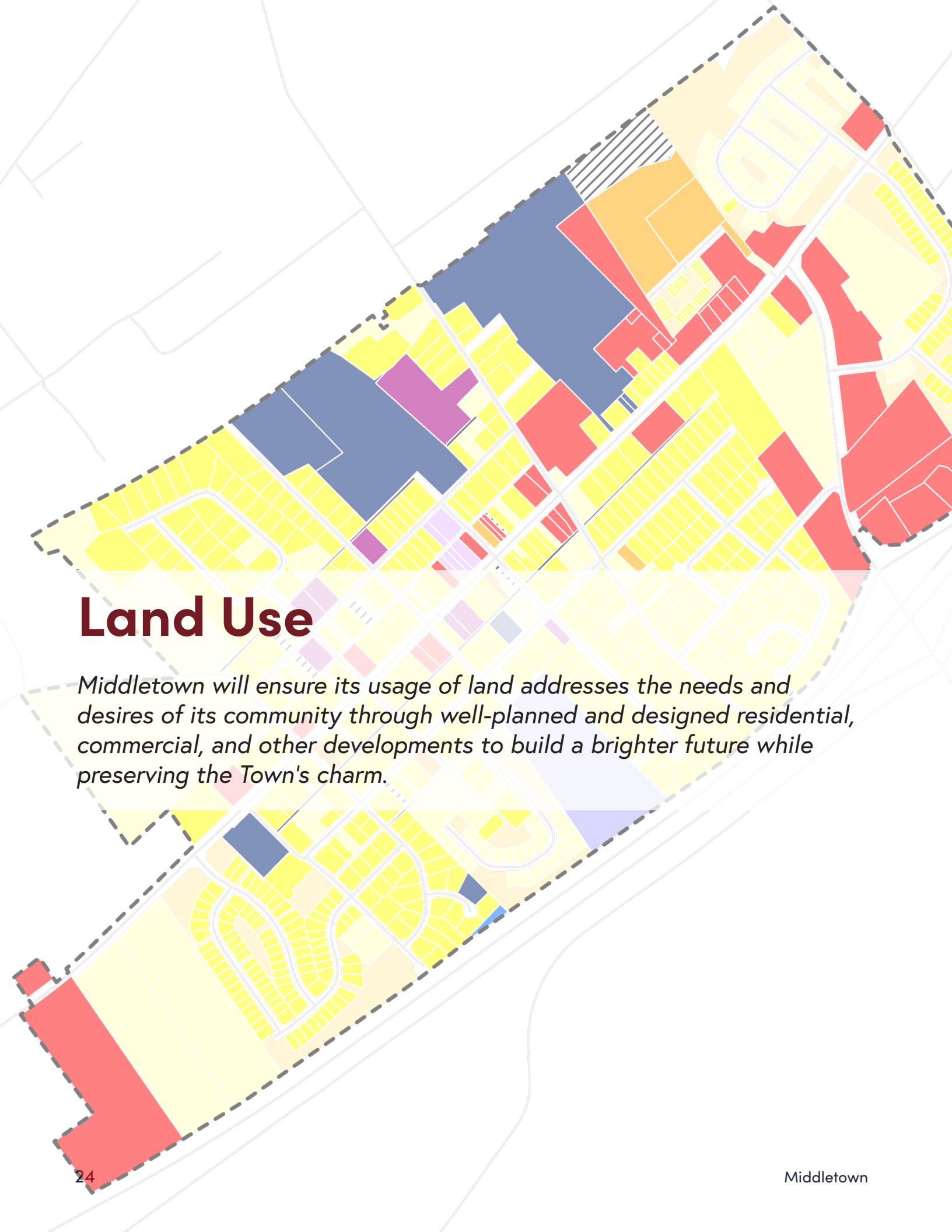
What Makes a Great Place?

Project
for Public
Spaces



The non-profit Project for Public Spaces is dedicated to creating and sustaining public places that build communities. For decades, they have advocated, educated, and shared ideas for helping communities improve themselves with more agility. The graphic above shows the factors that contribute to the feeling of a "great place." Is it sociable, does the community engage in its management? Are there active or passive activities you can participate in there? Is it benefiting neighboring businesses? Does it appear to be comfortable, colorful, and attractive? Is the place accessible by varying modes of transportation? Is it convenient to go there? At the scale of Middletown, or down to the neighborhood level, finding places where the Town can "intervene" and help facilitate placemaking will go a long way towards affordably improving quality of life in Town.





Land Use

Middletown will ensure its usage of land addresses the needs and desires of its community through well-planned and designed residential, commercial, and other developments to build a brighter future while preserving the Town's charm.

Overview

Like many neighboring Shenandoah Valley communities, Middletown has experienced rapid residential growth and the addition of many new residents. This growth has led to some challenges such as maintaining the perception of historical identity, ensuring that residents can safely walk or bicycle to destinations, and maintaining community cohesion. However, the addition of many new residents and homes presents new opportunities for Middletown to foster growth that boosts the local economy and brings vibrancy to main street to serve the community at large.

Middletown's Main Street still houses some of the oldest vestiges of the Old Wagon Road, capturing the essence of what travel was once like along the historic route. However, changes in transportation and practices over time have led to a Main Street that lacks the dense, cohesive, and street-serving commercial and residential uses that were once ubiquitous in Middletown. Buildings such as the Wayside Inn or the old Wayside Theater help provide context as to what much of Main Street may have looked like at one time. The Town can enable this type of development once again, through permissive zoning and thoughtful placemaking, helping to make Middletown a more inviting place and building upon its existing charm.

Outside of Main Street, in Middletown's neighborhoods, residential land uses may change to accommodate changing lifestyles. For example, as residents age-in-place it may be necessary to build a small accessory dwelling to accommodate aging parents or grandparents, or younger members of the community looking to get their start. Multifamily apartments in the town may need to rebuild and part of that redevelopment may be to thoughtfully and incrementally add unit capacity. By ensuring that residential units continue to be added over time, Middletown can ensure that housing costs remain relatively affordable and that the youth of Middletown can find places to live when they're ready. The Town can also house those who want to live and work in Middletown, building Main Street's capacity to be a true center of economy activity in the region.

Figure 8. The Wayside Theatre

The Wayside Theatre was once an important community theater, once featuring rising actors and actresses.

How can we bring similar uses back to Main Street?



Points of Interest

Community facilities in Middletown include government buildings, emergency resources, and the community park. These facilities are funded wholly or in-part by tax dollars, and they are accessible to the community at-large or otherwise provide essential services for life in Middletown. On the map to the right, there are also some important “Tourism” venues identified, such as the National Park Visitors Center and the War Memorial. These are some of the places that Middletown builds its community and quality of life, hence their inclusion alongside typical public community facilities.

Other services included in the map include veterinary services and educational facilities. These are privately owned businesses that provide services to Middletown residents and visitors. These resources are unique and make the Town a more desirable place to visit or reside within, particularly for those who are in need of, or provide these types of services.



Middletown Town Hall

Map 7. Points of Interest

- Education
- Government
- Medical
- Park
- Tourism



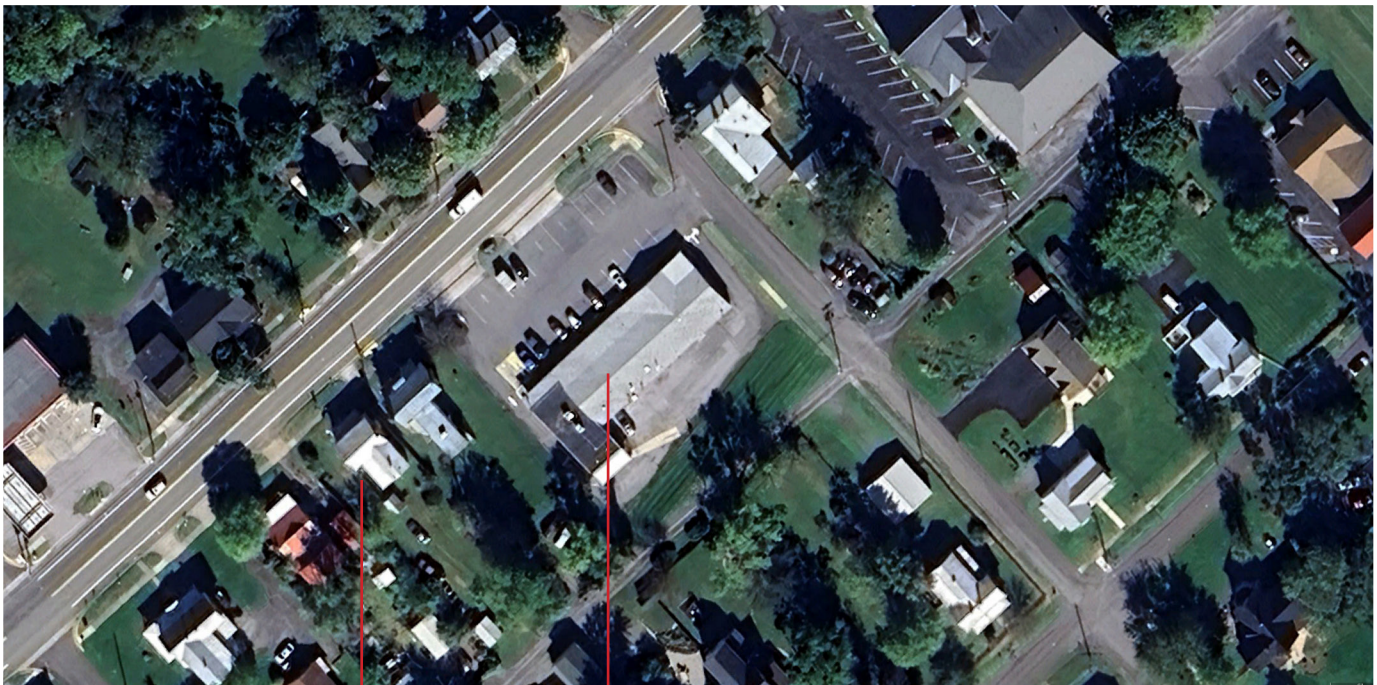
Existing Zoning

Zoning regulations are laws that determine how land can be used in certain areas, as well as requirements for the form of development. Middletown's Zoning Ordinance outlines zoning districts, each of which has its own regulations for uses, structures, landscaping buffer areas, setbacks, or other requirements.

The majority of Middletown is currently zoned R-1 for low density residential. There are several areas with MTND (Middletown Traditional Neighborhood Design - R-4) zoning for general residential uses, including housing, civic and open space, and certain businesses at a higher density. There are several areas along Main Street and on major corridors that are zoned for business (B-1 or B-2).

As Middletown recommends changes in land use through the Comprehensive Planning process, updating the Zoning Ordinance is an essential step in implementing these changes. Most Zoning Ordinances throughout Virginia and the United States are full of outdated requirements from past decades that sought to put extensive controls on where development could go and what requirements it needed to follow. Historically, those controls were often designed to segregate higher income from lower income areas or white residential areas from black residential areas. Beloved shops or restaurants in historic buildings could not be built today under current Zoning Regulations, due to parking requirements for instance. If the most loved parts of Middletown were built in the past and are seen as the safest places to walk around and enjoy your time, why would a community want to make building in the same way illegal? This is the type of question the comprehensive plan looks to address in its goals.

Figure 9. Effects of Zoning Regulations



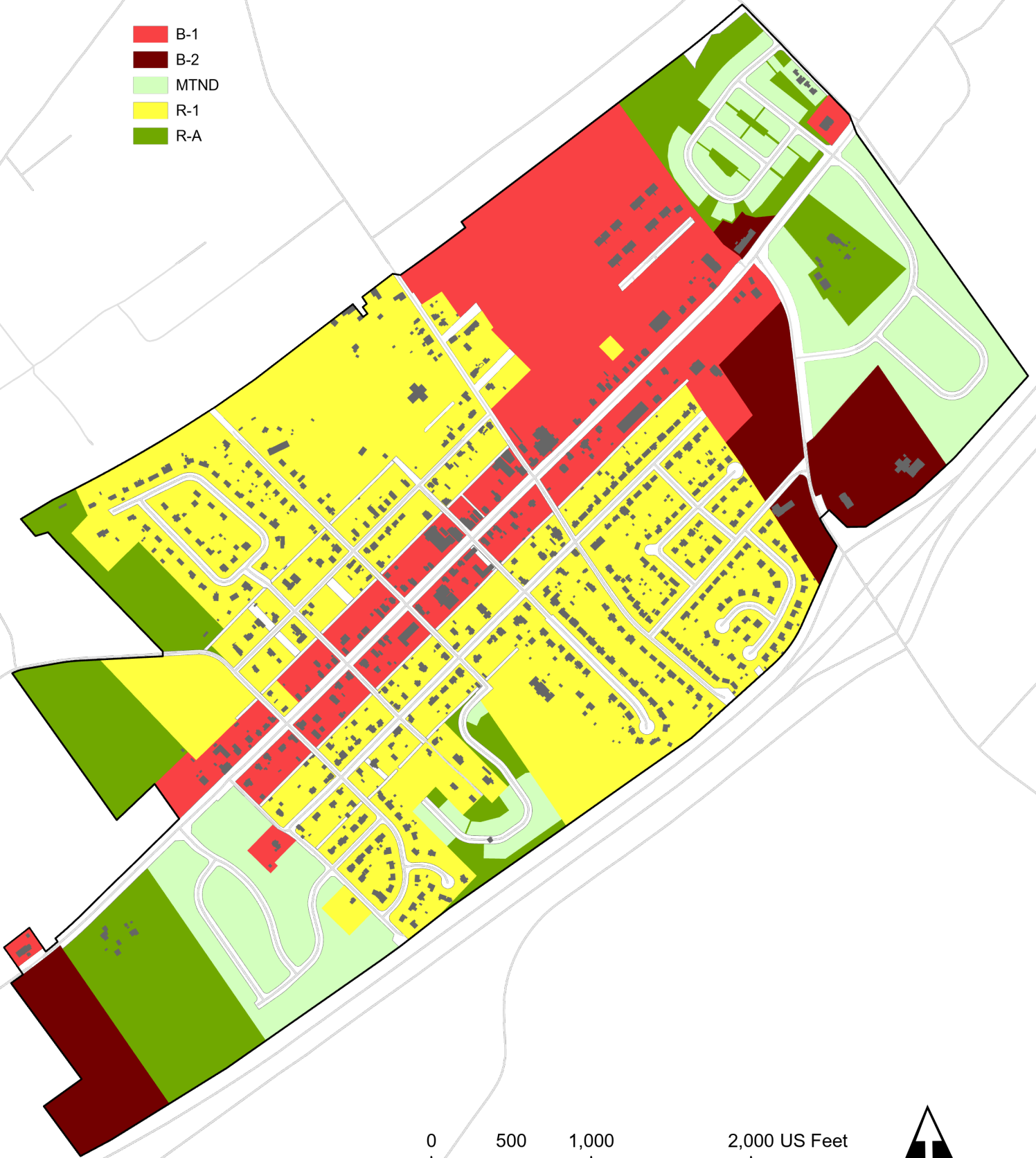
Historic residential properties that predate the Zoning Ordinance.

Post Office built to the Zoning Ordinance regulations.

What if every historic structure became a parking lot with a building set-back from the road?

Map 8. Zoning Map

- B-1
- B-2
- MTND
- R-1
- R-A



0 500 1,000 2,000 US Feet



Existing Land Use

It is important to understand how Middletown’s land is currently being used to ensure that it is efficient and productive. Efficiency and productive generally means that in areas where growth and development is planned, it is occurring as expected. A hypothetical example of inefficient land use would be if a historic commercial building along Main Street was replaced with a self-storage business. Self-storage businesses, while useful, are often “passive” meaning that they do not have a lot of people coming in or out of them like a restaurant does, meaning it is “inefficient” use of the land in that location along Main Street.

An important aspect of land use planning is ensuring consistency of uses, particularly when related to zoning. For example, many single family homes are located within the B-1 Commercial Zoning District, which is permitted according to the Middletown Zoning Ordinance but is generally not the intent of a business district. A mix of uses is to be expected in a historic town, as towns such as Middletown were founded prior to the advent of zoning. To embrace Middletown’s past, a strategy may be to reform zoning in the Town to account for the mix of uses and encourage new infill development that adds to Middletown’s historic charm.



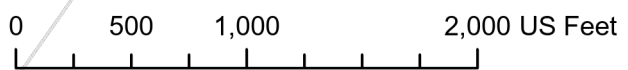
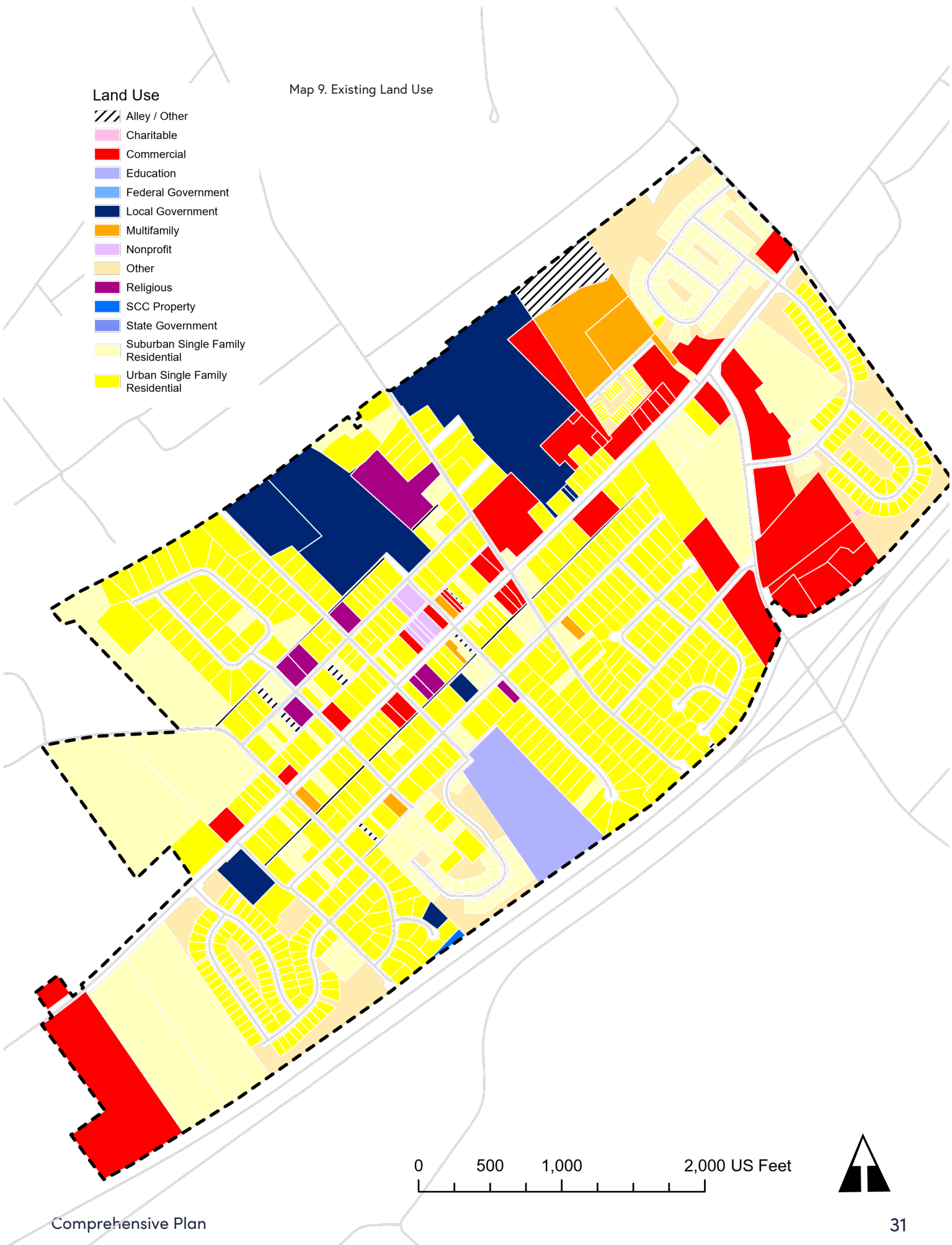
Figure 10. Existing Land Use

Land Use Type	Acres (Approximate)	Percentage of Total
Suburban Single Family	102.53	23.5%
Urban Single Family	69.6	15.8%
Commercial	53.37	12.1%
Local Government	38.91	8.8%
Education	11.04	2.5%
Multifamily	9.2	2.1%
Religious	5.21	1.2%

Map 9. Existing Land Use

Land Use

-  Alley / Other
-  Charitable
-  Commercial
-  Education
-  Federal Government
-  Local Government
-  Multifamily
-  Nonprofit
-  Other
-  Religious
-  SCC Property
-  State Government
-  Suburban Single Family Residential
-  Urban Single Family Residential



Goal 1: Amend the Town’s land use regulations to support diverse types of businesses.

Objective 1.1 Amend the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that its districts reflect the desired uses and built form expressed by the Comprehensive Plan.

Goal 2: Ensure that development is of high quality architectural design that contributes to its surroundings on Main Street.

Objective 2.1 Develop and adopt design guidelines that promote high quality design of storefronts and shared community areas in new developments within the Main Street Corridor.

Goal 3: Improve the Reliance Road & Main Street Corridor through walkable design and a greater mix of uses.

Objective 3.1 Amend the Highway Business (B-2) district to reform all requirements that create un-walkable site designs.

Objective 3.2 Collaborate with the Virginia Department of Transportation to develop a bicycle and pedestrian network and assess new land uses for their ability to make the Main Street area more walkable.

Goal 4: Preserve the history of the area while enhancing the character of the Main Street center of activity to create more social and economic opportunities.

Objective 4.1 Amend the Central Business (B-1) district requirements to allow for a mix of residential and commercial development that enhances the walkability and use of the Main Street area.

Objective 4.2 Identify underutilized or vacant properties that present redevelopment opportunities with a focus on Main Street.

Goal 5: Preserve land when possible to add to the Town’s conserved open space areas.

Objective 5.1 Continue to consider purchasing land when available to add to the Town’s inventory of conserved open space.

Middletown's historic
St. Thomas Episcopal
Church (1830s)





Mobility

Middletown residents and visitors of all ages and abilities will be able to move around the Town safely, comfortably, and conveniently using their mode of choice.

See the Appendix section for the Existing Conditions data relevant to Mobility.



Overview

Historically, Middletown's Main Street was alive with ambling horses, carts and wagons, pedestrians, and eventually the bicycle. The bicycle enjoyed a short window of history in the late 1800s and early 1900s, in which its ongoing adoption brought new freedom, speed, and distances one could reach without having to care for a horse. This was particularly liberating for women, who could achieve new independence over their own movement they previously were not able to enjoy. However, during this time the car was also invented and by the early 1900s, vehicles such as Ford's Model T began to appear. The more affordable these vehicles got, the more they were rapidly adopted. Before traffic rules, this created many conflict points in streets where pedestrians and horses still moved freely where they pleased, moving in an improvised manner as needed. After much lobbying, the automotive industry was successful in having legislation for traffic laws passed as well as funds devoted towards improving roads with pavement that would help improve the market for automobiles. As planning and engineering advanced with this infrastructure, accommodations for pedestrians or bicyclists fell entirely to the wayside for nearly a century. Today, communities are looking to make a change and improve conditions for all road users to boost safety, reduce congestion, improve local economic development, and general enjoyment of moving through one's Town.

The way Middletown moves around right now is overwhelmingly automobile oriented. Like other communities, many residents are commuting from the Town to 20-25 minutes away by predominantly driving alone. It could be a long time before employment within Middletown begins to outpace employment outside of the community, however, the community has expressed a clear preference through the survey and community engagement for safer conditions to walk and bicycle through the community.

Safer routes to the local park, or to nearby Laurel Ridge Community College where there is access to the regional bus network, could be "game changers" for the Town. If selected to receive funding for a larger transformation of the sidewalks along Main Street, there could be many new opportunities for redevelopment that provide accessible goods and services through transportation modes besides automobiles. Over time as new projects come into Middletown and bring Main Street to life, there will be the need for new formal on-street parking spaces or publicly owned lots off-main street to accommodate visitors. However, this would be a sign of success that the community is seeing new growth and securing its future.

After new buildings, sidewalks, and traffic calming at intersections have transformed the feeling of Main Street, issues like traffic congestion after an incident on I-81 can begin to resolve themselves in ways that are more orderly and calm rather than the current situation. The quality of life for Town residents will not be sacrificed for moving vehicles quickly through the community, as past trends and standards for engineering roads generally lend themselves to. The overall "mobility system" will trend towards multi-modal choice and new connections that enhance walking within the Town or connecting on to further destinations via improvements in local transit systems.

Goal 1: Expand public transportation in Middletown and connect to regional transportation networks to improve transportation options for residents.

Objective 1.1 Coordinate with ShenGO to improve routes to Middletown.

Objective 1.2 Connect multi-modal transportation routes to the Laurel Ridge Community College campus.

Goal 2: Enhance pedestrian safety and comfort throughout the Town in collaboration with VDOT.

Objective 2.1 Utilize traffic calming devices throughout the community to ensure safety.

Objective 2.2 Ensure that mobility-impaired community members are protected and able to access all sidewalk facilities throughout the community.

Objective 2.3 Strengthen the streetscape connections by installing pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalks, crosswalks, pathways, and trails where such infrastructure is missing.

Objective 2.4 Increase the amount of street furniture throughout the Town, including benches, trash cans, and other amenities to allow for resting while traveling between destinations.

Goal 3: Improve bicycle and multimodal safety and comfort throughout the Town.

Objective 3.1 Coordinate with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to install bike infrastructure along key connectors within Middletown.

Objective 3.2 Consider hosting community cycling days where certain routes are closed to traffic and residents and visitors ride their bikes along a course.



This image from another community illustrates how the buildings, pedestrian infrastructure, traffic lights, crosswalks, and street parking all come together to create a "main street" feeling.

Over time, Middletown can work towards a vibrant main street environment.



Economic Development

Middletown will create an attractive and supportive environment for new and existing business establishments to provide opportunities for employment as well as convenient access to goods and services for the community.

See the Appendix for an overview of Existing Conditions data relevant to Economic Development.

Overview

This plan orients economic development to focus on Main Street. In recent decades, economic development has typically focused on business recruitment and landing “big wins” for employment in the community. While this is an important effort to improve the local economy, often the building blocks of small or locally owned businesses has been a secondary effort. While some growth of larger businesses is encourage, particularly along Reliance Road, the redevelopment and reuse of properties along Main Street is most important to developing the economy.

Today, Middletown’s local economy requires many trips outside of the community. Following changes to land use and transportation policy and ordinances, it is desired that in the future many of the local businesses people remember once existing within the community can have a space to return. Similarly, communities have made great strides in improving the local economy by making it easier to “adaptively re-use” an old structure, like a home, for a new purpose, such as a great cafe or restaurant.

The biggest push in the near future that can help Middletown pursue grants and organize its efforts to build a strong main street, is to create a Main Street Organization. Virginia Main Street is the Commonwealth’s affiliate of the National Main Street Center, that has been promoting the revitalization of downtown “main street” districts since 1985. Today, the department is part of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development and encourages the organization and increasing levels of involvement in creating a local organization.

Once participation and ongoing commitment in the “main street approach” is established, there are many grants that Middletown will be eligible for. These funds can help pay for various studies and designs for needs found in the community. For instance, this plan calls for new sidewalks down the entire length of Middletown’s main street. The funding for planning and designing a project like this begins to pick up feasibility and interest with having organizations like “Middletown Main Street” advocating and applying for it.

Over time, the commercial activity in the community will ideally gravitate towards the center of the community where it can benefit the Town and visitors, catching people’s eye as they pass through on Route 11. Local businesses can help provide local jobs, and local services can make it easier to live in Town. This will ensure that Middletown has a long future ahead of itself as an economically viable community.

Virginia Main Street funds projects to spur revitalization!

120 N. Chestnut S, Marion

This vacant 1960s era building received funding to explore buildout options, eventually becoming a local brewery!



Tappahannock’s DAW Theatre, a historic 1930s venue that received funding for feasibility studies.



409 Fifth St, Lynchburg. Renovated a historic building to be leased to a new business



Figure 11. VMS Funded Projects

Goal 1: Retain and attract new businesses to meet the needs of the current and future community.

Objective 1.1 Develop an economic development strategy that identifies target businesses by type and long-term economic goals.

Objective 1.2 Attract additional grocery options.

Goal 2: Encourage physical improvement or construction of new spaces for businesses.

Objective 2.1 Encourage the development of additional leasable spaces for restaurants and retail, especially on Main Street.

Goal 3: The Town will effectively coordinate economic efforts to maximize economic development.

Objective 3.1 Review relevant ordinances, regulations, and policies for consistency and in support of economic development.

Objective 3.2 Collaborate with surrounding towns, Frederick County, and other economic development organizations on strategies for layering business attraction, retention, and expansion.

Goal 4: Leverage Middletown's proximity to Cedar Creek & Belle Grove to increase heritage tourism and visitor spending in the Main Street district.

Objective 4.1 Develop placemaking along Main Street.

Objective 4.2 Partner with historic organizations

Objective 4.3 Coordinate with regional tourism organizations.

Objective 4.4 Further develop Town events to boost tourism in Middletown.

Goal 5: Establish a Virginia Main Street Program.

Objective 5.1 Seek to become eligible to become a Virginia Main Street Community.

Objective 5.2 Expand Virginia Main Street participation.

Objective 5.3 Become an Advancing Main Street Community (Tier 3).



Wayside Inn
LARRICK'S
TAVERN
Built 1742

WAYSIDE
INN
RESTAURANT

A 16
ENGAGEMENT OF
MIDDLETOWN
HERE STONEWALL JACKSON, ON
MAY 24, 1862, ATTACKED BANKS
RETREATING FROM STRASBURG
AND FORCED HIM TO DIVIDE
HIS ARMY.

Middletown's historic Wayside Inn on Main Street



Public Services, Utilities + Infrastructure

The Town will continue to provide exceptional services and continue to upgrade utility and infrastructure system capacity within the Town's limits.

Overview

Middletown provides many different services to its residents. This includes municipal water, sewage treatment, police protection, and parks and recreational facilities. Frederick County provides schools, libraries, solid waste disposal, courts, social services, and other parks and recreational facilities. Both localities collaborate for volunteer fire and rescue services.

Maintaining utility infrastructure and services is a costly and ongoing challenge for every community. Replacing aging systems and investing in future upgrades must be balanced with the Town's budget, available grants, and future plans. The Comprehensive Plan seeks to address these challenges by keeping the Town consistently engaged with opportunities to improve water services and address issues such as storm water drainage.

As of February of 2025, Middletown has invested about \$8 million into significant upgrades at the Town's wastewater treatment plant. These upgrades included increased capacity by 200,000 gallons per day, as well as updated technologies that are more efficient and repair easily.

To ensure that Middletown remains fiscally sustainable and is able to continue to deliver high-quality services, there are additional steps that the Town should take. By proactively investing in preventative maintenance and minor repairs, the Town can prevent future service disruptions and unaccounted for costs. Additionally, investing in the built environment can improve municipal systems by directing stormwater and improving drainage.



Figure 12. Middletown's Wastewater Plant

Critical investments in Middletown's infrastructure help maintain a high quality of services for all residents.



Goal 1: Enhance Town services through the built environment.

Objective 1.1 Maintain public safety.

Objective 1.2 Ensure that all local government facilities are well maintained, efficient, and functionally appropriate to meet all requirements.

Goal 2: Provide high quality water, sewer, and stormwater services.

Objective 2.1 Continue to provide high quality public water service.

Objective 2.2 Continue to provide dependable, environmentally sound, sanitary sewer service.

Objective 2.3 Continue to improve the quality of stormwater runoff in and around the Town.

Goal 3: Ensure the Town's resources are strategically planned.

Objective 3.1 Continue to annually revise, adopt, and maintain a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP),

Objective 3.2 Ensure that revenues adequately support current and future service and infrastructure needs.

Goal 4: Increase staff in Town departments as needed.

Objective 4.1 Collaborate with Town supervisors to determine where additional staff is necessary.



Church Street in Middletown's historic neighborhoods.



Housing

Middletown will seek to maintain affordability as a high quality place to live.

See the Appendix section for the Existing Conditions data relevant to Housing.

Overview

Housing quality and diversity by type is integral to the health of every community. Housing affordability is a recurrent issue within nearly every town, city, and county throughout the United States, and this issue is often due to a lack of diversity in housing types and housing sizes. Diversity of housing is reflected by having a multitude of options when it comes to rental apartments or homes in terms of size and location, and a multitude of options for home buyers in terms of size and type. Without a diversity of housing options, long time residents may have difficulty “aging in place,” or new families might find it hard to afford a house in the community.

Middletown has many housing strengths, as it has multifamily mixed into single-family neighborhoods, as well as older, smaller homes that are relatively affordable when they go up for sale. However, there are some weaknesses that the Town should consider to ensure that Middletown remains affordable. The Town has a high proportion of residents who are considered to be housing cost-burdened, or paying more than 30% of their monthly income towards housing costs. It is also important to consider the benefits of permissively allowing accessory dwelling units, allowing residents to age in place and/or provide a place to live for family members.

Many of Middletown’s multifamily apartment buildings were built several decades ago, which may lead to their replacement in the coming years. To address this fact, the Conservation Community future land use class was created, which recommends that future development on multifamily parcels remain multifamily but and integrate open space with public parks through thoughtfully designed trail networks and native landscaping.

To support existing businesses and encourage new commercial development, Middletown needs to grow inwards and support infill development. By supporting infill along Main Street, it will help to foster a cohesive, small downtown like those seen in towns like Culpeper, Leesburg, or Strasburg.

Figure 13. Regional Communities

Nearby towns are looking to offer diverse types of housing to better support their local economy and allow residents to age in place!



Goal 1: Create a strategy to maintain affordability in Middletown over time.

Objective 1.1 Identify opportunities for appropriate in-fill housing development.

Goal 2: Preserve and support housing where it currently exists.

Objective 2.1 Ensure Middletown's housing stock ages gracefully and sustainably.

Objective 2.2 Eliminate substandard housing through code enforcement where necessary.



Church Street in Middletown's historic neighborhoods.

Recreation & Environment

The Town will continue to invest in park upgrades and recreation facilities. Creative and diverse programming will continue to foster community engagement and encourage use of local parks. Environmental quality will be protected for future generations to enjoy.

See the Appendix section for the Existing Conditions data relevant to Recreation and the Environment.



Overview

Middletown's Community Park is a great place for local residents to meet, exercise, have a picnic, or for children to play. However, outside of local events, there is plenty of space for opportunities the expand the use of the park for different age groups. Perhaps new equipment for older residents to stay active and exercise is implemented, or perhaps there's new ball courts for teenagers. Middletown has rich culture and history and there are many ways to celebrate. It is recommended that the Town continue to host and partner with local organizations to promote gatherings and community events.

As new parks and recreational opportunities arise, ensuring that local ecosystems continue to thrive is also important. Thoughtful landscaping incorporating native species and wildflowers is encouraged wherever landscaping is to be implemented. Connecting parks and open spaces through trail networks and active transportation via bike lanes is encouraged wherever possible to expand available areas for recreation. Purchase and installation of light-pollution sensitive street lights and park lighting is strongly recommended to retain Middletown's visibility of the night sky.

Getting the community out in nature and making careful planning decisions to protect environmental quality can ensure that future generations of the Town and its visitors will enjoy a healthy environment to live in. Over time, this ethic towards conservation can be shared from generation to generation, inviting more people to participate in making Middletown a more active and vibrant place.

Figure 14. Middletown in the News

Did you hear?

In March 2025, Middletown announced it received funding for a second consecutive year of tree planting in the park and throughout the Town!

More trees coming to Middletown via grant

By Tabitha Reeves For The Northern
Virginia Daily Mar 11, 2025

MIDDLETOWN — For the second consecutive year, Middletown has landed a grant to fund the planting of native trees around town.

Part of a broader effort to revitalize Main Street, the \$6,500 Virginia Trees for Clean Water grant will plant approximately 28 to 32 trees that benefit the local ecosystem, according to a town media release.

“The community will greatly benefit from the shade, cooling, and other ecosystem services that trees provide,” states Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) District Forester Matt Wolanski. “The diverse selection of species we’ve chosen should thrive in this environment, and the native varieties will create excellent habitats for local wildlife.”

Source: The Northern Virginia Daily

Goal 1: Middletown will enhance public health and quality of life in the community through community programming, parks and open space, recreation facilities, and pedestrian and bicycle improvements.

Objective 1.1 Improve active connections throughout the Town and beyond through trails and bicycle lanes.

Objective 1.2 Develop equitable active recreational improvements for all ages and abilities.

Objective 1.3 Foster partnerships with organizations for use of shared facilities.

Objective 1.4 Support local organizations in their efforts to provide cultural events and programs.

Goal 2: Protect and conserve ecosystems while increasing the tree canopy and promoting native flora, while controlling for invasive species.

Objective 2.1 Increase tree canopy and maintain living trees.

Objective 2.2 Control for invasive species.

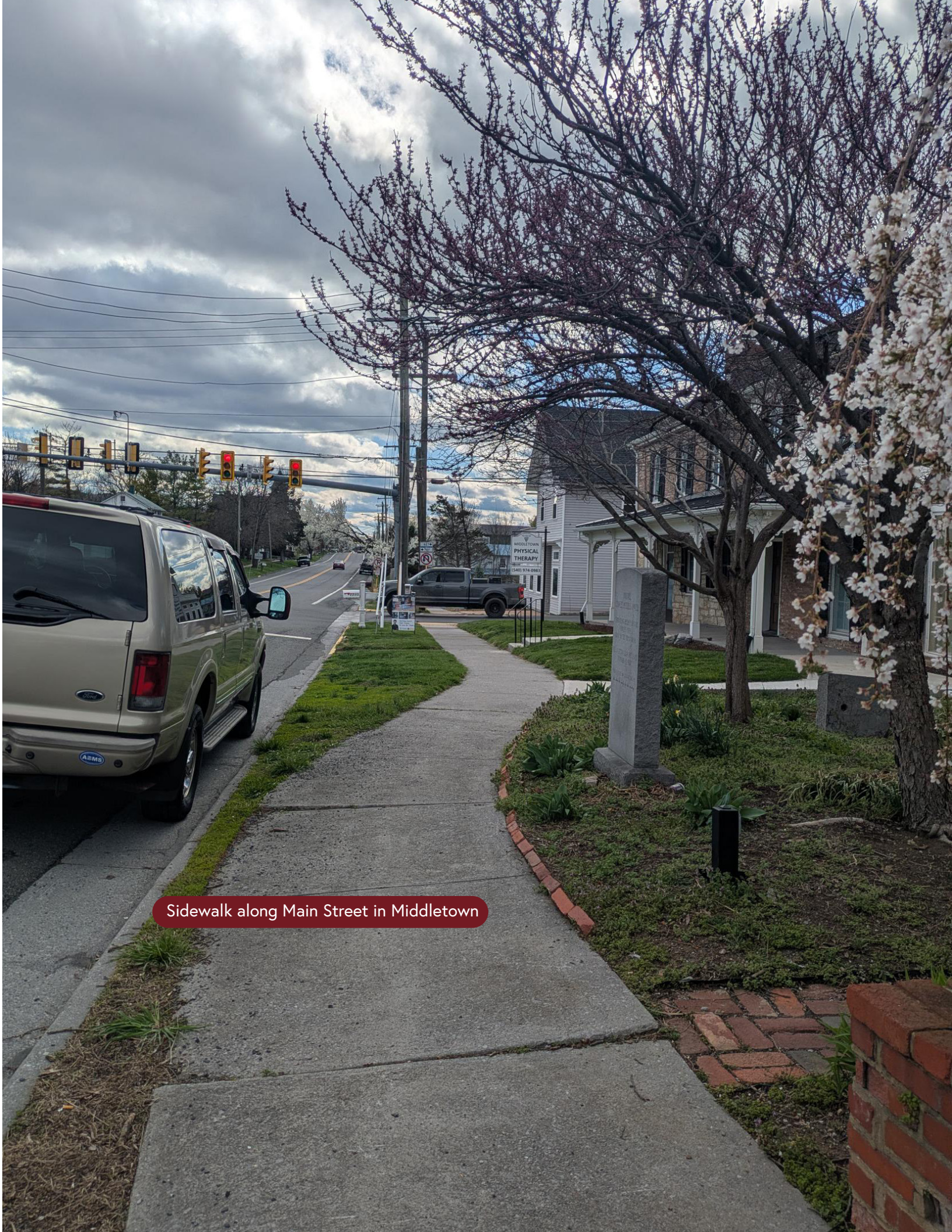
Objective 2.3 Enhance the Town's aesthetic character through preservation of natural features through landscaping and tree plantings in all developments.

Objective 2.4 Protect and conserve wetlands in Middletown.

Objective 2.5 Determine prominent nesting locations for birds and other important wildlife.

Goal : Reduce light pollution and set "dark sky" policies.

Objective 5.1 Encourage the use of outdoor lighting that is shielded, low-glare, or low-wattage.

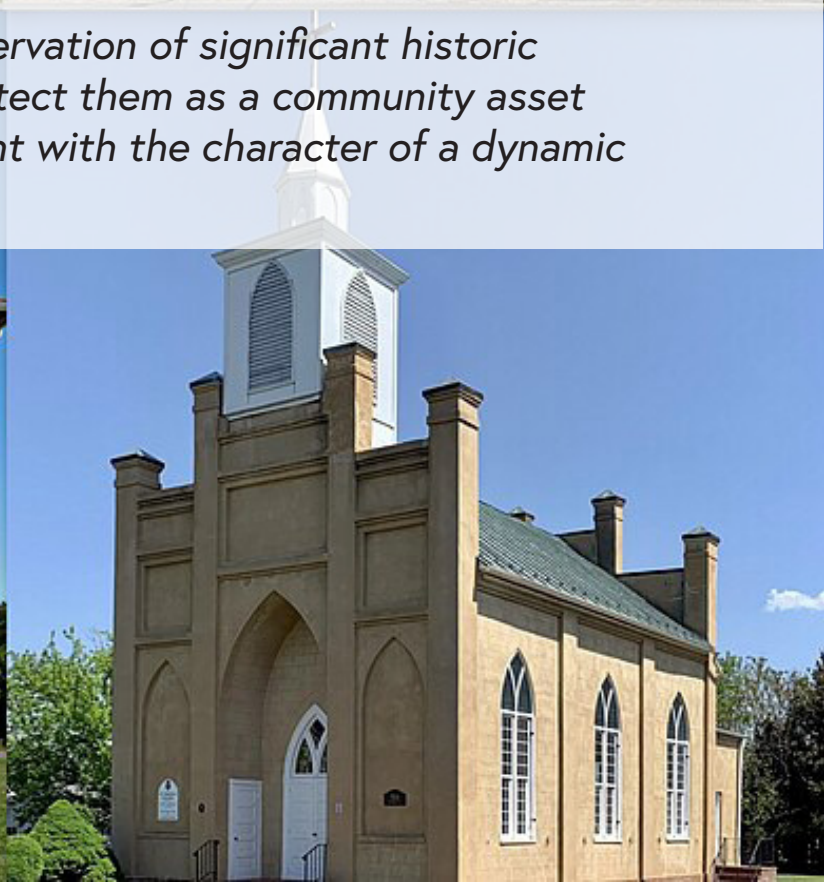
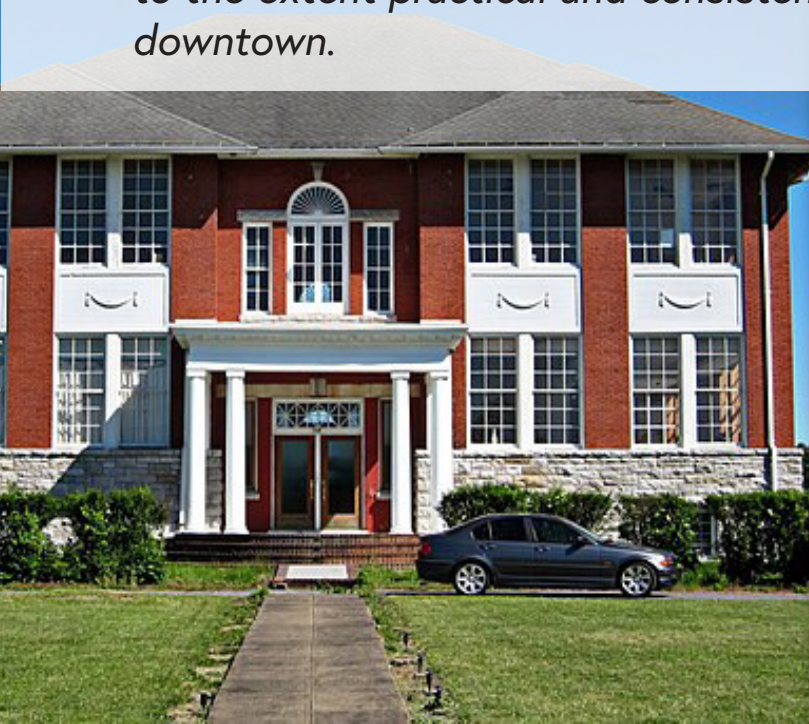


Sidewalk along Main Street in Middletown



Historical + Architectural Resources

Middletown will encourage the preservation of significant historic properties and consider ways to protect them as a community asset to the extent practical and consistent with the character of a dynamic downtown.



Overview

Middletown is one of Virginia's oldest Towns, and home to many architecturally significant structures. When the application was first filed for Historic District status in 2003, there were 234 contributing properties including residential buildings, specialty shops, a former theater, churches, the Town Hall, and many other historic buildings. There is much protected land around Middletown, particularly as part of the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park. However, within the Town, privately held land has often seen structures fall into disrepair and eventually be demolished. To preserve the historical built environment, the Town obtained historic district status, however, the district itself is not tied to any ordinance or guidelines regulating how these structures can be redeveloped or demolished.

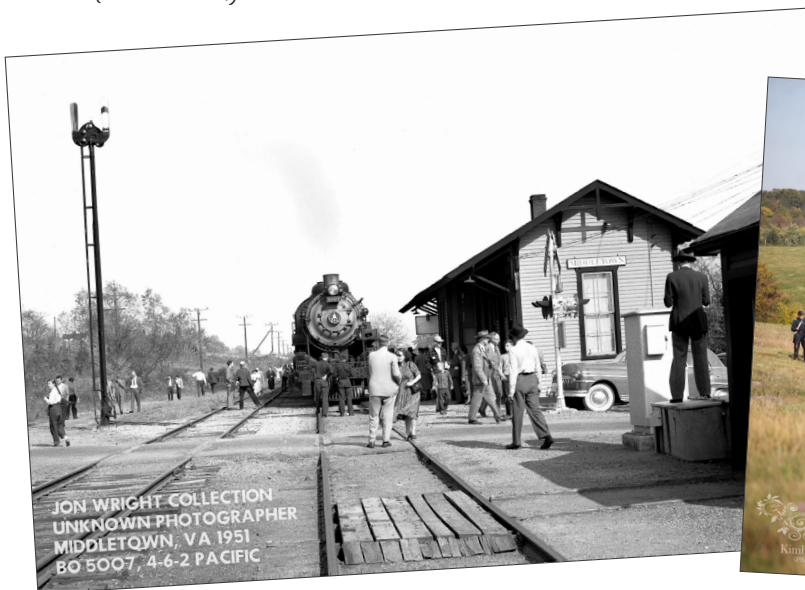
While the debate over private property rights versus historical preservation has often been a difficult conversation in many communities, this plan seeks to provide a solution for future ordinance changes. By focusing on protecting the existing structures as "Structures of Significance" and mapping them, there can be clearer guidelines for local decision-makers to follow on whether or not a historical resource should be allowed to be demolished or preserved. There can also be additional time to find a buyer for the property, potentially saving the structure. Structures not contributing within the district could not be held to the same architectural and design standards, and the ordinance can be more flexible while encouraging new development to bring Main Street back to life. Additional ordinance changes may include promoting and allowing the adaptive re-use of residential structures into new commercial uses along Main Street.

Middletown is a deeply historic place and new advancements should utilize its history and development to provide opportunities for the community to thrive, just as previous generations did before. The goals in this section encourage proactive storytelling, new growth reflective of traditional growth patterns, and the ongoing upkeep of Middletown's historic built environment.

Figure 15. Middletown History

Middletown is for History Lovers!

B&O Railroad, 1951



Large re-enactment at Cedar Creek & Belle Grove



Historic District

The Middletown Historic District was registered to the National Register of Historic Places in 2003. The location is primarily focused along Main Street (U.S. Rt. 11) with properties located along Church Street, Senseney Avenue, as well as First, Third, Fourth, and Sixth Streets. According to the National Register nomination, there are 233 contributing buildings that are primarily Greek revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, or Bungalow/Craftsman. The nomination notes that resources include more than a dozen buildings that incorporate late-eighteenth century log construction.

Middletown's rich history began along the Great Wagon Road, later called the Valley Pike, and now known as U.S. Route 11. The Town was officially established by the Virginia General Assembly in 1794 and chartered by Frederick County in 1796. During the Civil War, Middletown was a prosperous trading center for the Shenandoah Valley, known as the "breadbasket of the Confederacy." Military activity was present in and around the town, culminating into the Battle of Cedar Creek in October of 1864, resulting in a strategic Union victory. After the war, residents of Middletown petitioned the Virginia General Assembly for incorporation in 1882, becoming an incorporated town with a mayor and council.



The Wayside Inn



Map 10. Historic District



Data Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources
Comprehensive Plan

0 500 1,000 2,000 US Feet

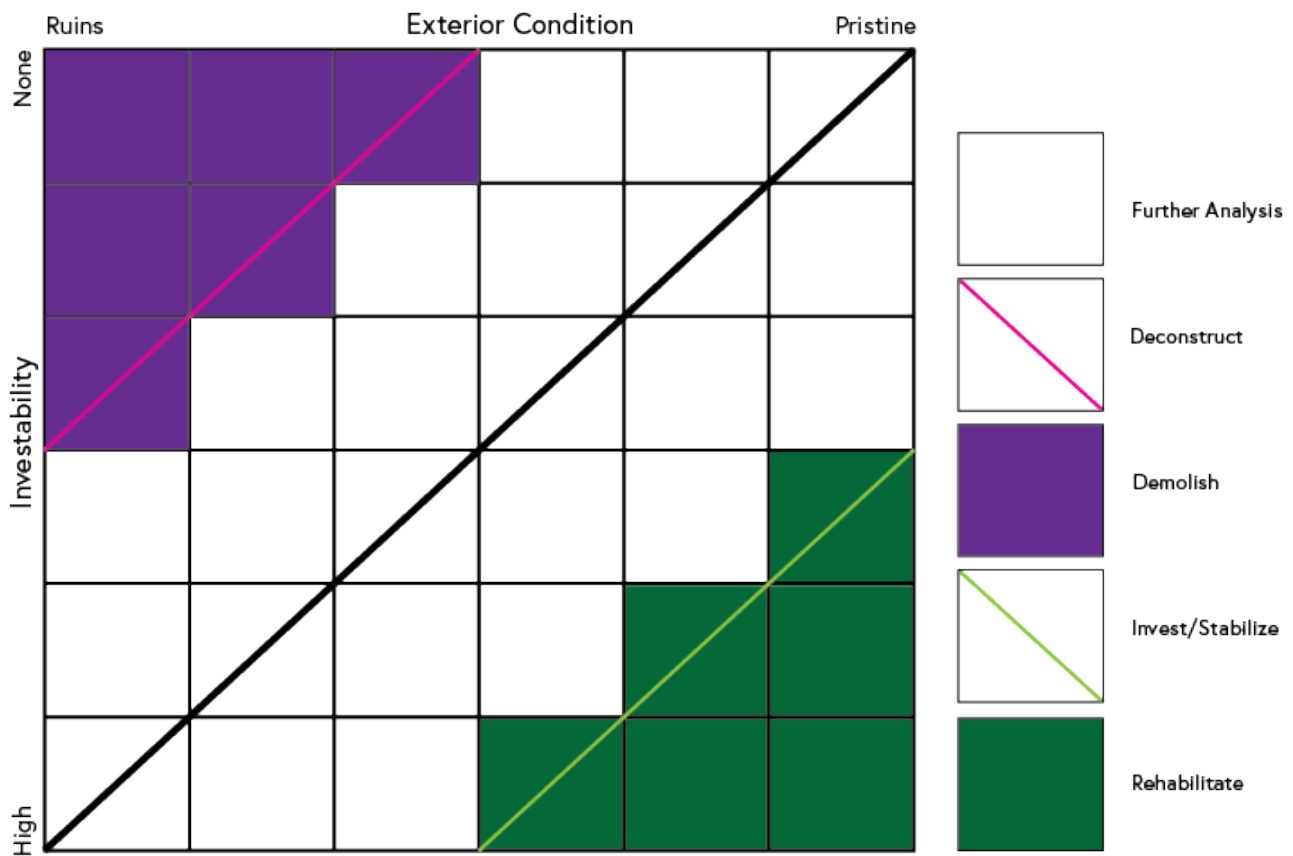


Decision Matrix

Localities across the Commonwealth and the United States contend with the balance of historic preservation and new, sustainable growth. To enable informed decision making, some localities adopt a 'decision matrix' model, which formalizes how to make a decision regarding older structures.

A decision matrix is shown below, which has two opposing sides: rehabilitation or demolition. The decision matrix accounts for the financial obligation that comes with historic rehabilitation by acknowledging that not all structures can be saved. The worse the exterior condition is for a structure, the less feasible it is to invest capital into rehabilitation. However, the matrix acknowledges that there are circumstances that will require further analysis. For example, culturally or historically significant structures may be significantly damaged but have high "investability," such as a structure that could be a draw for tourists or significantly contributes to the cultural identity of a place.

Figure 16. Historic Property Decision Matrix



Goal 1: Celebrate Middletown's history.

Objective 1.1 Partner with historic organizations and societies to craft events for Middletown.

Goal 2: Preserve Middletown's historic urban fabric and rural landscape.

Objective 2.1 Partner with the National Park Service, Cedar Creek & Belle Grove National Historical Park, preservation organizations, and private property owners to preserve culturally, historically, and architecturally significant buildings, sites, structures, neighborhoods, cemeteries, viewsheds, and landscapes that contribute to Middletown's cultural identity.

Goal 3: Foster programs that encourage the maintenance, renovation, and re-use of historic structures.

Objective 3.1 Identify state administered or other grants and connect property owners with state architectural historians.



Fiscal Sustainability

Middletown will continue to make sound decisions that protect the long term sustainability of its budget.



Overview

Ensuring the fiscal sustainability of any small town is essential. Budgeting, prioritizing critical projects, and seeking grants are all just part of a larger effort to ensure that Middletown continues to balance its budget and maintain a high quality of life year after year. Keeping that momentum is key, and often requires extra thought towards the usage of land and resources to ensure that the Town can continue to provide exceptional services. It is also important to align all of the Town's departments towards a common vision. Developing a strategic plan in partnership with Town employees identifies issues and concerns while planning a unified effort to address these issues.

Part of achieving a fiscally sustainable Town includes creating a service area boundary that defines the extent of water and sewer services that can be provided without fiscally constraining the town by continually extending the system. The more that water and sewer is provided to homes and businesses outside of Middletown, the more cost that the Town must incur to keep those services running by maintaining the infrastructure indefinitely.

In building fiscal sustainability, it is also possible to add to public trust via programs like participatory budgeting. Participatory budgeting is a program that gives residents the ability to vote on how their tax dollars are spent on specific projects, often used for capital improvement projects. These projects help to provide insight into how spending projects are prioritized as well as the amount of investment required for specific projects.

Figure 17. Town-Owned Property

Recently purchased properties by the Town could be excellent opportunities to receive feedback from residents on new uses for the space!



Fiscal Sustainability

Goal 1: Create an annual Strategic Plan and update as needed.

Objective 1.1 Identify strategic management objectives that guide decision making goals and objectives.

Objective 1.2 Ensure public participation for community-based and publicly accessible community investments.

Objective 1.3 Study land use and transportation infrastructure to ensure that the Town remains fiscally sustainable.



1872

Future Land Use

What is "Future Land Use?"

Future Land Use categories are visionary descriptions of how areas of Middletown should look and feel in the future. However, they are used for guidance rather than legal regulations on what a landowner can or cannot do with their property. They allow the community to describe how they'd like to see an area develop in the future to meet community needs. As projects are undertaken, such as new zoning ordinance updates, streetscape improvements, or other recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan, the future land use categories can be referred to for the desired outcomes of new development. The Future Land Use categories are also used by decision-makers, planners, and developers, when applying for rezonings or conditional use permits. Planners will review the Comprehensive Plan to see if the proposed project adheres to what the Town is envisioning in the future. Over time, the Future Land Use Map acts as an important tool through which the Comprehensive Plan is implemented. These categories do not necessarily line up with existing land use, or specific zoning districts, but rather describe where the Town wants to guide future trends. The Plan creates a scenario that will allow for a high quality of life in the Town by balancing infrastructure, environmental, social, or economic needs with future growth.

Categories and Descriptions

Each future land use category will feature a description with the following elements:

Intent:

A brief description of the "intent" of the future land use category.

Development Style:

Description of how development shall look and feel in the area in the future. This will include a description of how ground floor elements of buildings should address the street, particularly in commercial or mixed-use developments, elements of how the community is expected to move around the area, and the overall "intensity" of lot sizes and general heights of buildings.

Primary and Secondary Uses:

Primary uses are described as the predominant land uses that are desirable in the future of the area, as well as secondary supporting uses that can sometimes be found in the area in the future.

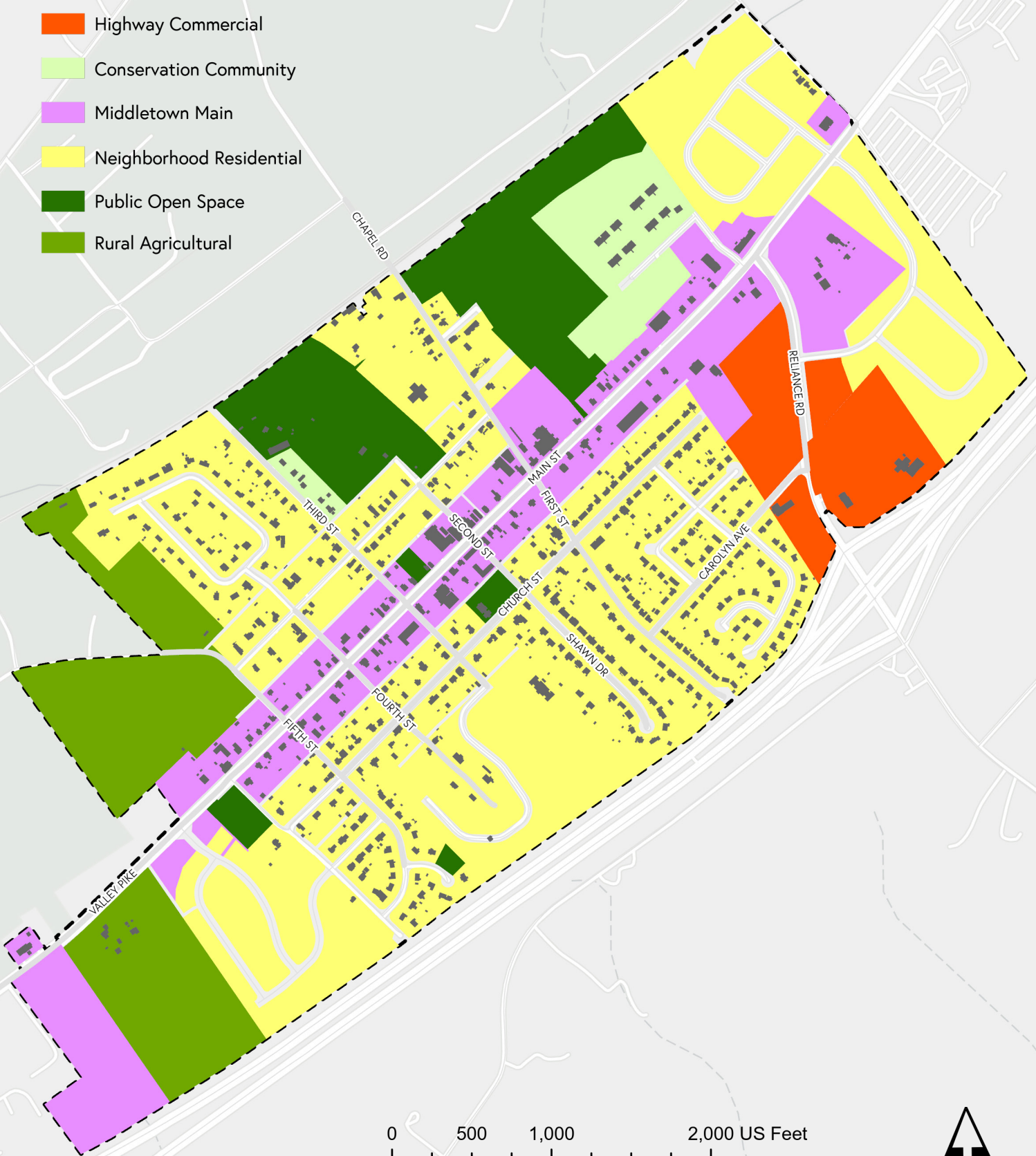
Public Spaces:

Public Spaces describe the types of public parks, community facilities, and other public spaces would be most desirable for each future land use area.

Map 11. Future Land Use

Future Land Use

- Highway Commercial
- Conservation Community
- Middletown Main
- Neighborhood Residential
- Public Open Space
- Rural Agricultural



Neighborhood Residential & Rural Agricultural

Intent:

The Neighborhood Residential future land use designation is for primarily residential use with mixed housing types as existing in the area. The Rural Agricultural district is intended for agricultural use and to preserve large, open parcels of land, tree cover, scenic views, sensitive environmental areas, and prime agricultural and locally significant soils.

Development Style:

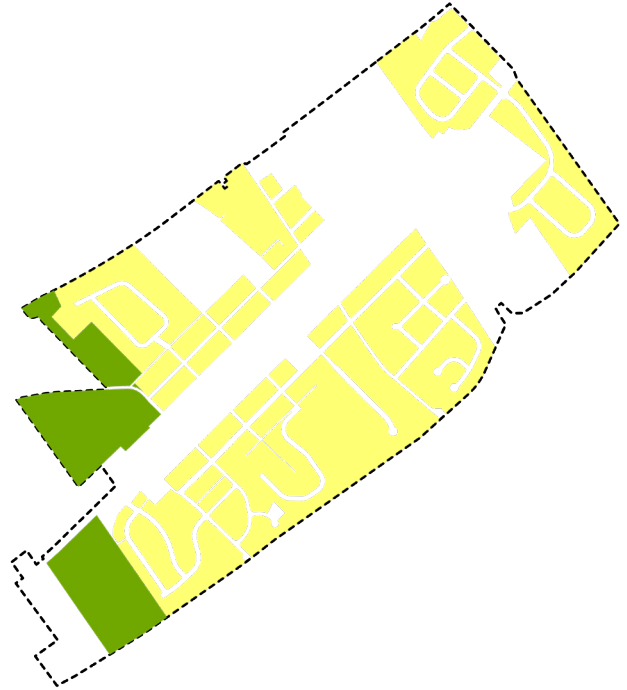
The Neighborhood Residential future land use category includes and encourages infill of diverse types of housing units. New infill development is expected to occur incrementally through redevelopment of the existing stock. Buildings should also feature street-oriented facades, windows, and entrances. Front setbacks should allow small gardens, porches, or stoops to promote interaction with the sidewalk and privacy. The Rural Agricultural district includes low density residential lots or agricultural/rural economic uses.

Primary and Secondary Uses:

Primarily residential uses are expected in neighborhood areas. Secondary uses may include low impact home-based businesses that support local employment. The Rural Agricultural district includes low density residential lots or agricultural/rural economic uses.

Public Spaces:

Neighborhood Residential districts should feature public open spaces within a five-to-ten-minute walk of residential units. Public open spaces should include ball parks and courts, pools or water recreation areas, trails, running tracks, playgrounds, community centers, and other public open spaces. Trails and greenways should be considered as ways for residents to bike, jog, run, walk, or roll to their destinations such as workplaces, commercial uses, parks, or other amenities.





Middletown Main Street

Intent:

The Middletown Main Street category covers the existing area of Middletown along Route 11/Main Street. Development in this area is intended to reflect the diversity of historic architectural features present in the Town and incorporate the diversity of uses that bring Main Street to life.

This category allows for more flexible use of land across the area. Adaptive reuse and rehabilitation and renovation of existing historic buildings should be encouraged with particular attention to how the buildings address the streetscape. Infill and redeveloped properties are encouraged to have a mix of commercial and residential uses on the same property or within the same building. Commercial parcels with surplus parking areas should be considered for the development of accessory commercial or dwelling units. The category seeks to enhance the existing walkable, historic Main Street and provide greater access and development opportunities at the heart of the community to enliven it.

Development Style:

Buildings should range from 2-4 stories, with ground floors and entrances addressing the streetscape, regardless of use, with features such as windows and door openings. Depending on the context, front porches, elevated ground floors, or other features found throughout the area can be utilized to either provide privacy for residential uses or provide for innovative or architectural flexibility. Housing consisting of apartment units above retail, restaurant, or office uses, facing the sidewalk and street will provide greater housing and employment opportunities for residents of Middletown. Additionally, other diverse types of housing may be developed, in keeping with the historic diversity of types found throughout the downtown district.

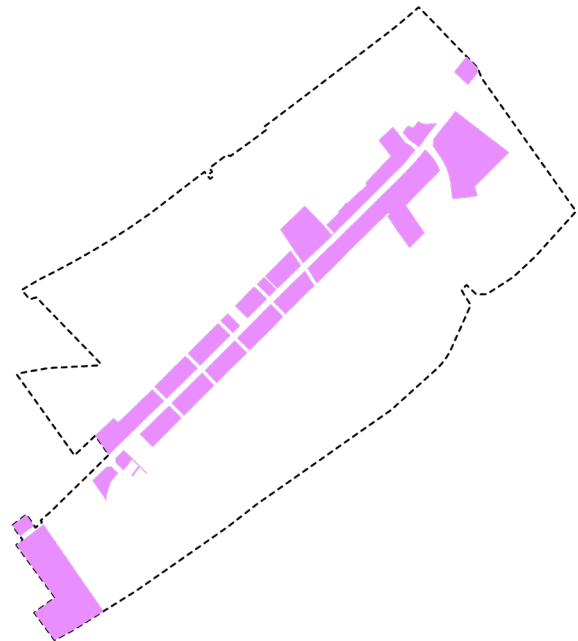
Primary and Secondary Uses:

Mixed Commercial and Residential Structures. Secondary uses may include accessory commercial or residential dwelling unit structures.

Public Spaces:

Public spaces along Main Street should be compact and accessible.

Pocket parks should be designated within a block or two of homes, apartments, and businesses when possible. These parks should consist of seating in the form of benches, picnic tables, or other architectural components that allow and encourage sitting. Landscaping is encouraged to provide natural elements to space, ideally with native flowers, trees, or grasses that support pollinators, birds, or other wildlife and contribute shade and cooling to the streetscape. Plazas and courtyards provide a more built environment that encourages interaction.





Public Open Space

Intent:

Public Open Spaces are those lands that Middletown has acquired and made available to the public, and future opportunities for parks and open space. These include the existing community park, the Veteran's Memorial, and several other pieces of land that can improve access to parks and recreation for residents and visitors of Middletown. The existing parks serve very specific uses, but it is recommended that the Town inventory existing resources, speak with residents, and develop a long-term parks plan to utilize public properties to the highest possible ability.

Development Style:

Parks and public open spaces serve to provide outdoor recreational opportunities for residents and for visitors alike. Thus, it's important to balance the needs of a variety of age groups when it comes to spending time outside. Oftentimes, parks serve as playgrounds and ball courts for children and families, which is a necessary and important type of park for communities. However, nature trails, museums, bird-watching infrastructure, skate-parks, and other park styles can ensure that all age groups feel welcomed in their community and that they have adequate activities to engage in outside. These types of uses should be explored in a future parks plan that asks residents what their specific desires are for a public open space.

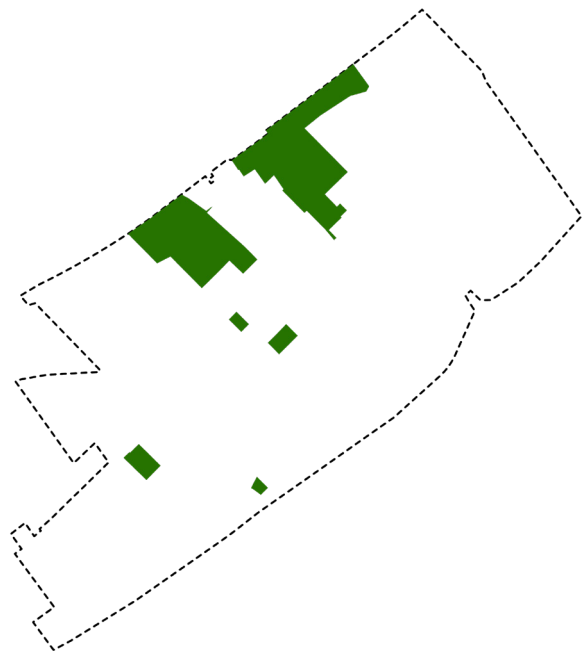
This plan recommends that Middletown explore investing in and developing a courtyard plaza area along Main Street upon a recently acquired plot of land to act as a gathering place for residents and a central focus point for Middletown. The courtyard could be used in day-to-day life as a seating area, a market square, and an outdoor meeting area. For the many events that Middletown hosts throughout

the year, the courtyard would serve as a gathering place for people to congregate and participate in event festivities.

Primary and Secondary Uses:

Primarily, public open spaces should remain as open spaces that are accessible to all, with considerations towards ensuring that individuals of all age groups can easily access and enjoy these spaces.

Secondarily, public open spaces should be considered as tourism devices activated through the well-planned events that occur yearly within Middletown's existing parks.





Conservation Community

Intent:

The intent of the Conservation Community district is to preserve Middletown's existing multifamily land uses and integrate these communities with neighboring wetland areas through a conservation-minded redevelopment. These apartment communities should be connected to adjacent natural areas via trails and footpaths to provide direct access to nature.

Development Style:

Existing walk-up style apartments in Middletown have parking in front of the building with stairs leading to each unit, with limited landscaping and open areas for residents. These buildings are three stories, with at least six units per building, providing needed multifamily housing options for the Middletown area.

When these buildings are redeveloped, a greater height should be permitted, of at least five stories, with community supporting uses located in the bottom floor, such as office, gym, or community center uses. Apartment sizes should vary, from efficiency or studio style, up to 3-bedroom units. The land currently used for walkups could easily support a greater density of units while also providing a low-impact connection to town-owned parcels where the Meadow Brook stream fosters a wooded, natural space.

Primary and Secondary Uses:

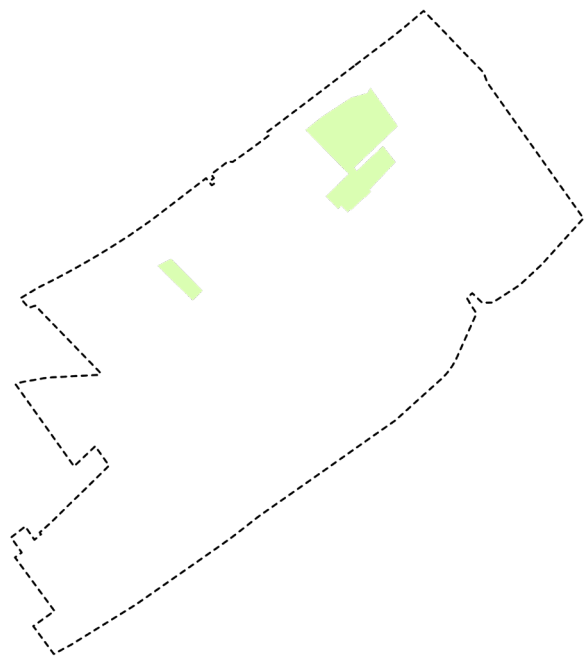
The primary use of land within the Conservation Community District should be for higher-density residential use.

The secondary use of land should be well-landscaped common areas that connect to public conservation lands. These areas should include native vegetation, foot paths, and seating areas for residents. Where appropriate, nature-supporting infrastructure such as bird houses and other low-impact infrastructure should be thoughtfully planned.

Other uses may include community-supporting uses such as community gyms, community centers, or coworking spaces. These should be located on ground floors with apartment units located above.

Public Spaces:

Active and passive park spaces should be planned in conjunction with the development, including amenities such as community gardens, dog runs, play areas, or others that are available for community residents.





Highway Commercial / Employment

Intent:

The Highway Commercial / Employment category is designated for land immediately located near the Interstate 81 entrance and exit. This is expected to remain commercial uses that primarily serve the community and visitors traveling on the highway. As changes in the ordinance are adopted, better design, inter-connection, landscaping, and increased uses per parcel may be possible. Residential uses are discouraged from this area.

Development Style:

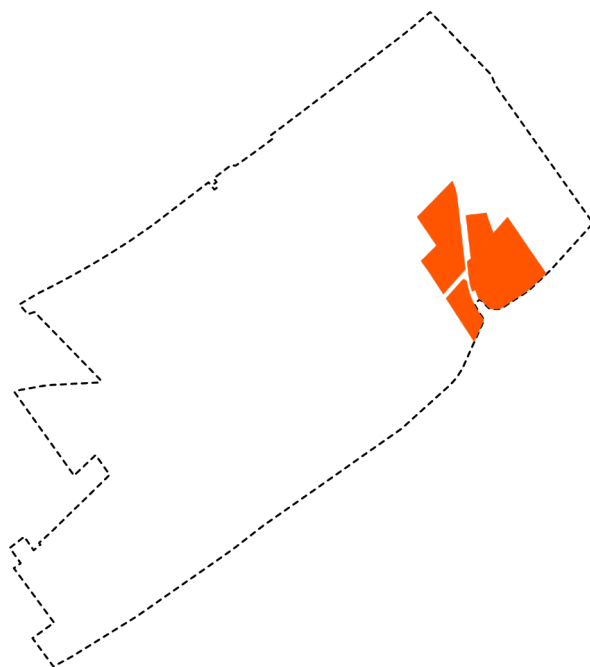
New development includes multiple uses on properties with inter-parcel connections allowing for access or parking a single time to access multiple uses. Pedestrians and bicycles may still pass safely through the area or access services; however, the primary means of access is expected to remain automobiles with businesses oriented towards serving travelers along the highway. Buildings should utilize high quality materials and allow for safe pedestrian bypass or access to the site.

Primary and Secondary Uses:

Primarily highway-oriented commercial uses.
Secondary uses: Supportive auto-oriented local commercial uses.

Public Spaces:

The auto-oriented nature of the highway commercial future land use category does not directly support the addition of public open spaces. However, new and existing businesses should be encouraged to enliven the district with well-designed landscaping such as shade trees and native flora to foster a greater sense of place. Restaurants and eating establishments should have well-maintained patios or courtyards for patrons.





Implementation Table

Land Use			
Goals	Objective	Actions	Expected Completion
1. Amend the Town's land use regulations to support diverse types of businesses.	2.1 Amend the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that its districts reflect the desired uses and built form expressed by the Comprehensive Plan.	1.1.1 Allow for more diverse uses of land, encouraging vertical and horizontal "mixed uses" on properties on Main Street."	FY2026
		1.1.2. Encourage infill of vacant and underdeveloped parcels of land with commercial and residential sapces.	
		1.1.3 Explore amending parking requirements from Middletown's Ordinance	
2. Ensure that development is of high quality architectural design that contributes to its surroundings on Main Street.	2.1 Develop and adopt design guidelines that promote high quality design of storefronts and shared community areas in new developments within the Main Street Corridor.	2.1.1 Develop incentives or research and help advertise the use of grants and tax credits to assist in funding the redevelopment of historic properties.	FY2027
3. Improve the Reliance Road & Main Street Corridor through walkable design and a greater mix of uses.	3.1 Amend the Highway Business (B-2) district to reform all requirements that create un-walkable site designs.	3.1.1 Revise the "intent" of the district to better reflect tis changing character into another important center of activity for Middletown. The district name could be changed to reflect a more "mixed-use" character.	FY2026
		3.1.2 Revise geometric requirements to reflect more walkable, "main street" style street designs.	
		3.1.3 Encourage the redevelopment of excess parking areas into new active uses.	
		3.1.4 Ensure that all related development standards are conducive to the ability to walk or bicycle safely and comfortably through the community.	
		3.1.5 Encourage parking to be located in ways that do not inhibit pedestrian or alternative transportation access to use.	
		3.1.6 Add specific guidance on landscaping for the Highway Business (B-2) district as placemaking and buffering between uses.	

Goals	Objective	Actions	Expected Completion
3. continued	3.2 Collaborate with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to develop a bicycle and pedestrian network and assess new land uses for their ability to make the Main Street area more walkable.	3.2.1 Conduct further studies to ensure that residents have a safe walking or cycling route to amenities such as the Laurel Ridge Community College, historic sites, or commercial retail, particularly crossing busy intersections such as Valley Pike and Reliance Road.	Ongoing
4. Preserve the history of the area while enhancing the character of the Main Street center of activity to create more social and economic opportunities.	4.1 Amend the Central Business (B-1) district requirements to allow for a mix of residential and commercial development that enhances the walkability and use of the Main Street area.	4.1.1 Revise geometric requirements to reflect more walkable, "main street" style site designs.	FY2026
		4.1.2 Consider removing off-street parking requirements in this district. Public parking supply adequately accommodates needs, and new public facilities can be constructed if necessary.	
	4.2 Identify underutilized or vacant properties that present redevelopment opportunities with a focus on Main Street.	4.2.1 Develop incentives or research and help advertise the use of grants and tax credits to assist in funding the redevelopment of underutilized or vacant properties.	Ongoing
	5. Preserve land when possible to add to the Town's conserved open space areas.	5.1 Explore setting a target goal of 10% of the Town's total land area for preservation (51 acres).	Ongoing
Mobility			
1. Expand public transportation in Middletown.	1.1 Coordinate with ShenGO to improve routes to Middletown.	1.1.1 Pursue increasing the frequency of bus headways and location of pickups with partner agencies and localities.	Ongoing
		1.1.2 Establish permanent bus shelters with seating and other amenities at bus stops located near Middletown.	
	1.2 Connect multi-modal transportation routes to the Laurel Ridge Community College campus.	1.2.1 Coordinate with VDOT and regional bicycle and pedestrian advocacy groups to connect Middletown to the future regional trails.	Ongoing

Mobility (continued)			
Goals	Objectives	Actions	Expected Completion
2. Enhance pedestrian safety and comfort throughout the Town in collaboration with VDOT.	2.2 Ensure that mobility-impaired community members are protected and able to access all sidewalk facilities throughout the community.	2.2.1 Ensure the sidewalks and trails are wide enough to accommodate strollers, weheel chairs, or other mobility devices and are free of obstructions such as signage and utility poles.	Ongoing
		2.2.2 Ensure that all new sidewalks and sidewalk repairs meet ADA accessibility standards.	
	2.2 Ensure that mobility-impaired community members are protected and able to access all sidewalk facilities throughout the community.	2.2.1 Ensure the sidewalks and trails are wide enough to accommodate strollers, weheel chairs, or other mobility devices and are free of obstructions such as signage and utility poles.	
		2.3 Strengthen the streetscape connections by installing pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalks, crosswalks, pathways, and trails where such infrastructure is missing.	2.3.1 Develop Town-wide public realm standards in partnership with VDOT to include shade trees, bike parking, signage, public art, screened parking, street furniture, pedestrian-level lighting, and other elements in the public right-of-way that enhance walkability.
	2.3.2 Update and maintain the sidewalk inventory.		Ongoing
	2.3.3 Set aside funding in the Capital Improvements Plan		
	2.3.4 Implement continuous sidewalks throughout key pedestrian areas in the Town. Sidewalks should continue the same grade with cars having to pass "over the sidewalk" rather than a curb cut stepping down for the pedestrian.		
	2.3.5 Implement deferred maintenance budgets in capital improvement budgets to make repairs to pedestrian infrastructure when damage occurs.		
2.4 Increase the amount of street furniture throughout the Town, including benches, trash cans, and other amenities to allow for resting while traveling between destinations.		Ongoing	
3. Improve bicycle and multimodal safety and comfort throughout the Town.	4.1 Coordinate with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to install bike infrastructure along key connectors within Middletown.	4.1.1 Determine which roads would be the most feasible to develop bicycle lanes along.	Ongoing
		4.1.2 Seek out public engagement on the locations and types of bicycle lanes throughout the town.	
		4.1.3 Install bicycle racks on sidewalks that promote Middletown and allow cyclists to safely secure their bikes.	

Economic Development			
Goals	Objectives	Actions	Expected Completion
1. Retain and attract new businesses to meet the needs of the current and future community.	1.1 Develop an economic development strategy that identifies target businesses by type and long-term economic goals.	1.1.1 Support the Town's economic development strategy with an incentive program to attract desired businesses, this could include tax incentives, reduced utility hook-up fees, expedited permitting, or others.	Ongoing
		1.1.2 Seek grants from state agencies such as the Department of Housing and Community Development to support local business retention and development.	Ongoing
		1.1.3 Research rural development grants offered to towns such as Middletown through federal agencies such as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).	Ongoing
		1.1.4 Work with local businesses and entrepreneurs to draft long-term goals to establish a Main Street community within Middletown.	FY2027
	1.2 Attract additional grocery options.	1.2.1 Work with local farmers to develop a seasonal farmers market within an accessible Town location such as the public park.	FY2028
		1.2.2 Consider a public/private partnership to develop a permanent cooperative on Main Street for farmers to sell their goods to Middletown residents and visitors.	Ongoing
		1.2.3 Permit the vending of produce and other goods from "mobile farmers markets" in parking lots or on Town owned property to further increase grocery access.	FY2026
2. Encourage physical improvement or construction of new spaces for businesses.	2.1 Encourage the development of additional leasable spaces for restaurants and retail, especially on Main Street.	2.1.1 Utilized incentives and regulations to encourage owners to bring substandard commercial rental space up to standard.	Ongoing
		2.1.2 Encourage additional small footprint leasable spaces for new businesses at rents compatible with the scale of their business.	Ongoing

Economic Development (continued)

Goals	Objectives	Actions	Expected Completion
3. The Town will effectively coordinate economic efforts to maximize economic development.	3.1 Review relevant ordinances, regulations, and policies for consistency and in support of economic development.	3.1.1 Research best practices established by other localities for economic development policy.	Ongoing
	3.2 Collaborate with surrounding towns, Frederick County, and other economic development organizations on strategies for layering business attraction, retention, and expansion.		Ongoing
4. Leverage Middletown's proximity to Cedar Creek & Belle Grove to increase heritage tourism and visitor spending in the Main Street district.	4.1 Develop placemaking along Main Street.	4.1.1 Establish unified placemaking standards for Main Street via landscaping and street amenities.	FY2028
	4.2 Partner with historic organizations	4.2.1 Partner with organizations associated with battlefields or other historic sites to develop tourism offerings such as historic tours or events.	Ongoing
		4.2.2 Support existing historic programming through promotion, street closures, and other means.	
	4.3 Coordinate with regional tourism organizations.	4.3.1 Increase involvement with tourism and economic development organizations within Frederick County and Winchester to promote Middletown.	
		4.3.2 Partner with private organizations such as battlefield trusts or regional tourism agencies to promote Middletown.	
	4.4 Further develop Town events to boost tourism in Middletown.	4.4.1 Partner with restaurants along Main Street to create a Middletown restaurant week for residents and visitors to dine along Main Street.	
		4.4.2 Develop historic walking or cycling tours in partnership with historic organizations to provide opportunities for residents and visitors to learn the rich history of Middletown.	
		4.4.3 Continue to host seasonal events for a variety of groups or organizations while also making event planning accessible for other organizations.	

Economic Development (continued)				
Goals	Objectives	Actions	Expected Completion	
5. Establish a Virginia Main Street Program	5.1 Seek to become eligible to become a Virginia Main Street Community.	5.1.1 Town Council should adopt a resolution noting support and authorization for the establishment of a Main Street organization.	FY2027	
		5.1.2 Seek recognition from Virginia Main Street as a Tier 1 Exploring Main Street community.		
		5.1.3 The organization will participate in Virginia Main Street (VMS) trainings and coordinate with the VMS program administrator at least once a year.		
	5.2 Expand Virginia Main Street Participation.	5.2.1 As resources are available, build upon existing Main Street program to pursue Tier 2 Mobilizing Main Street status.	5.2.2 Establish a formal 501(c)(3) non-profit to coordinate Main Street efforts in Middletown.	FY2029
			5.2.3 Provide financial support for the organization and utilize collaboration to further develop a Main Street economic development strategy.	
			5.2.4 Pursue grants as they become available.	
			5.2.5 Provide financial support for the organization and utilize collaboration to further develop a Main Street economic development strategy.	
	5.3 Become an Advancing Main Street Community (Tier 3).	5.3.1 Partner with established Main Street non-profit organization to hire a part-time executive director to manage Main Street efforts.	5.3.2 Continue to support the Main Street organization.	FY2030 or beyond
			5.3.3 Provide financial support for the organization and utilize collaboration to further develop a Main Street economic development strategy.	
Public Services, Utilities + Infrastructure				
1. Enhance Town services through the built environment.	1.1 Maintain public safety.	1.1.1 In cooperation with federal, state, other local law enforcement and emergency preparedness agencies, ensure that emergency operation plans are kept up-to-date and that lines of communication remain open.	Ongoing	
		1.1.2 Encourage new development that takes public safety into consideration and use code enforcement measures to ensure that properties continue to be maintained.		
		1.1.3 Foster safe environments and communities through active and well-designed places that have high visibility and lots of activity, discouraging negative social behavior.		
	1.2 Ensure that all local government facilities are well maintained, efficient, and functionally appropriate to meet all requirements.	1.2.3 Establish and contribute to a deferred maintenance fund to use for infrastructure that has deteriorated and requires maintenance within a short time frame.	Ongoing	
		1.2.2 Pave alleyway entrances to make a smoother transition for vehicles and pedestrians while also reducing gravel run-off.		

Public Services, Utilities + Infrastructure (continued)				
Goals	Objectives	Actions	Expected Completion	
2. Provide high quality water, sewer, and stormwater services.	2.1 Continue to provide high quality public water service.	2.1.1 Maintain the existing water system by emphasizing repair, protection, system reliability, water quality, and water loss reduction.	Ongoing	
		2.1.2 Continue to add water supply, treatment, distribution, and storage capacity as growth requires.		
		2.1.3 Identify future expansion need for public water.		
		2.1.4 Replace aging water valves to ensure water quality and flow.		
	2.2 Continue to provide dependable, environmentally sound, sanitary sewer service.	2.2.1 Continue the Town's wastewater system repair and maintenance programs that emphasize repair, preventative action, and reliability.	Ongoing	
		2.2.2 Continue the Town's abatement program addressing infiltration and inflow to the wastewater collection system.		
		2.2.3 Identify future expansion needs for sewer.		
	2.3 Continue to improve the quality of stormwater runoff in and around the Town.	2.3.1 Develop and implement a public education and outreach program regarding the impacts of stormwater discharges on streams.	Ongoing	
		2.3.2 Detect and eliminate illicit discharges into the stormwater system.		
		2.3.3 Use sustainable design principles and concepts for Town facilities.		
	3. Ensure that the Town's resources are strategically planned.	3.1 Continue to annually revise, adopt, and maintain a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)	3.1.1 Balance the 5-Year CIP as required by the Code of Virginia.	Ongoing
			3.1.2 Update the CIP annually as part of the budget process.	
3.1.3 Identify the one-time funding sources such as grants, donations, and in-kind sources to develop capital amenities.				
3.1.4 Identify CIP items that equitably serve residents while limiting impacts to Town resources.				
3.2 Ensure that revenues adequately support current and future service, and infrastructure needs.		3.2.1 Review previous capital improvement spending and determine what gaps may exist or what projects have not received funding in recent years.		
		3.2.2 Put aside funding for each capital improvement budget towards deferred maintenance budgeting.		
4. Increase staff in Town departments as needed.	4.1 Collaborate with Town supervisors to determine where additional staff is necessary.	4.1.1 Advertise and hire for new roles as needed.	Ongoing	

Housing			
Goals	Objectives	Actions	Expected Completion
1. Create a strategy to maintain affordability in Middletown over time, such as ensuring the mix of types remains at or near the current percentage of mix by type.	1.1 Identify opportunities for appropriate in-fill housing development.	1.1.1 Collaborate with entities such as Virginia Housing or other state agencies or non-profit organizations to develop housing in Middletown where feasible.	Ongoing
		1.1.2 Participate in regional housing efforts through partnerships with the Planning District Commission, Frederick County, and neighboring localities.	
		1.1.3 In accordance with §15.2-2223.5 of the Code of Virginia, Middletown will look for strategies to promote manufactured housing as a source of affordable housing.	
2. Preserve and support housing where it currently exists.	2.1 Ensure Middletown's housing stock ages gracefully and sustainably.	2.1.1 Monitor state and federal grant releases annually to determine Middletown's eligibility for preservation and rehabilitation grants.	Ongoing
		2.1.2 Consider funding grants for neighborhoods to improve their facades.	
		2.1.3 Utilize proactive code enforcement to encourage owners to maintain their buildings and prevent decay.	
	2.2 Eliminate substandard housing through code enforcement where necessary.	2.2.1 All substandard units should either be brought up to standard by rehabilitation or removed from the housing stock.	
		2.2.2 Assist owners with applying for rehabilitation grants or other programs to prevent code violations whenever possible.	
Recreation & Environment			
1. Middletown will enhance public health and quality of life in the community through community programming, parks and open space, recreation facilities, and pedestrian and bicycle improvements.	1.1 Improve active connections throughout the Town and beyond through trails and bicycle lanes.	1.1.1 Conceptualize greenways or shared-use paths to safely connect residents to amenities such as businesses along Main Street, the Laurel Ridge Community College, or the Belle Grove Plantation.	Ongoing
		1.1.2 Promote active recreational groups through Town communications and foster events that encourage usage of pedestrian and bicycle improvements.	
	1.2 Develop equitable active recreational improvements for all ages and abilities.	1.2.1 Inventory park resources and infrastructure to determine accessibility for residents of all ages and abilities.	
		1.2.2 Foster welcoming environments in parks and recreation facilities for a diverse population through safety enhancements such as lighting and paved pathways.	
	1.3 Foster partnerships with organizations for use of shared facilities.	1.3.1 Partner with outside organizations to develop shared recreational facilities that benefit residents through enhanced programming.	
		1.3.2 Build upon established relationships to seamlessly permit programmatic and cultural usage of Town recreational facilities.	

Recreation & Environment (continued)			
Goals	Objectives	Actions	Expected Completion
1. (continued)	4.1 Support local organizations in their efforts to provide cultural events and programs.	2.1.1 Provide opportunities for local organizations to utilize Town resources and facilities for cultural events.	Ongoing
		2.1.2 Promote local organizations activities and events through Town communciations to foster greater social cohesion and usage of recreational facilities.	
2. Protect and conserve ecosystems while increasing the tree canopy and promoting native flora, while controlling for invasive species.	3.1 Increase tree canopy and maintain living trees.	3.1.1 Adopt an ordinance prioritizing the planting and replacement of native trees during the development process.	Ongoing
		3.1.2 Consider an ordinance which would provide for the maintenance of the natural vegetative cover and prevent excessive erosion.	
		3.1.3 Develop a list of recommended native landscaping trees and shrubs.	
	3.2 Control for invasive species.	3.2.1 Seek to collaborate with volunteers and community members for invasive/non-native species removal. Continue to pursue Virginia Department of Forestry grants to remove species such as the Bradford Pear.	Ongoing
		3.2.2 Review the Code of Virignia to determine what ordinances the Town can adopt to reduce invasive species plantings within Middletown.	
	3.3 Enhance the Town's aesthetic character through preservation of natural features through landscaping and tree plantings in all developments.	3.3.1 Continue requiring landscaping plans to be submitted as a part of the site plan review process and special use permits.	Ongoing
		3.3.2 Consider increasing the tree canopy requirements as part of submitted landscaping plans for new development.	
	3.4 Determine prominent nesting locations for birds and other important wildlife.	4.1.1 Collaborate with local conservation groups to locate bird and wildlife populations, and develop measures to preserve and protect wildlife.	Ongoing
	3.5 Protect and conserve wetlands in Middletown.	4.2.1 Identify wetlands throughout the Town and determine what threats to wildlife, water, and air quality may be present for each.	Ongoing
		4.2.3 Collaborate with conservation groups, schools, and community orgnaizations to schedule cleanup events for wetlands and streams that have trash, junk, or for invasive species removal.	

Recreation & Environment (continued)			
Goals	Objectives	Actions	Expected Completion
3. Reduce light pollution and set "dark sky" policies.	5.1 Encourage the use of outdoor lighting that is shielded, low-glare, or low-wattage.	5.1.1 Develop guiding recommendations for business owners and homeowners to utilize low-impact lighting whenever possible to reduce light pollution.	FY2027
		5.1.2 Develop or improve existing outdoor lighting ordinances. Consider incorporating Virginia IDA, Illuminating Engineering Society (IES) or Smart Outdoor Lighting Alliance guidelines.	
		5.1.3 Partner with VDOT to upgrade streetlights.	Ongoing
Historical + Architectural Resources			
1. Celebrate Middletown's history.	1.1 Partner with historic organizations and societies to craft events for Middletown.	1.1.1 Further develop partnerships with historic organizations to develop events that celebrate Middletown's history.	Ongoing
		1.1.2 Create a historic walking or cycling tour for visitors to experience the many historical sights and buildings in Middletown and in the surrounding area.	
2. Preserve Middletown's historic urban fabric and rural landscape.	1.2 Partner with the National Park Service, Cedar Creek & Belle Grove National Historical Park, preservation organizations, and private property owners to preserve culturally, historically, and architecturally significant buildings, sites, structures, neighborhoods, cemeteries, viewsheds, and landscapes that contribute to Middletown's cultural identity.	2.1.1 Identify contributing structures to the National Registry Historic District for Middletown and adjust the historic district ordinance to prevent demolition of these structures.	FY2026
3. Foster programs that encourage the maintenance, renovation, and re-use of historic structures.	3.1 Identify state administered grants or other and connect property owners with state architectural historians.	3.1.1 Support property owners in rehabilitation efforts whenever feasible, such as waiving permit costs or support a facade improvement program.	Ongoing
Fiscal Sustainability			
1. Create an annual Strategic Plan and update as needed.	1.1 Identify strategic management objectives that guide decision making goals and objectives.	1.1.1 Work with relevant Town departments to develop strategic plan goals and objectives.	FY2027
		1.1.2 Encourage participation from Town employees and elected officials to craft meaningful goals and objectives for the Strategic Plan.	FY2027
	1.2 Ensure public participation for community-based and publicly accessible community investments.	1.2.1 Develop a community engagement strategy that maximizes public participation.	Ongoing
		1.2.2 Observe public usage of Town infrastructure such as sidewalks, parks, and community facilities to determine what hidden improvements may be needed.	Ongoing

Fiscal Sustainability (Continued)

Goals	Objectives	Actions	Expected Completion
1. (continued)	1.3 Study land use and transportation infrastructure to ensure that the Town remains fiscally sustainable.	2.1.1 Establish a defined "Service area" to limit the distance of where Town Services will be extended to.	FY2027

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Appendix A

Public Participation

Summary

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Public Participation Summary

What is the public participation summary?

The Public Participation Summary reflects the work conducted in the early stages of the Comprehensive Planning process to engage the Middletown community. Engaging the community is an important part of determining what the Town's collective vision is for the future, as well as what current needs should be addressed. The activities and events thus far have included: The Public Survey, Middletown Comprehensive Plan Kick Off, Middletown 4th of July, and Other Interviews and Meetings. The results of these meetings are summarized in this document and will be utilized alongside the Existing Conditions Report to draft the Vision, Goals, Objectives, and Strategies that make up the core of the Comprehensive Plan. With both quantitative data and the qualitative responses gathered, Middletown's plan for the future will be fully reflective of where the Town is and where it wants to go!

The results of each of these events are summarized herein. However, this summary does not represent all of, or the end of the community engagement process. The Comprehensive Plan is advertised on the Town's social media channels and website. The Middletown community's input and attendance is requested on every document and event that will be released or scheduled in the near future.

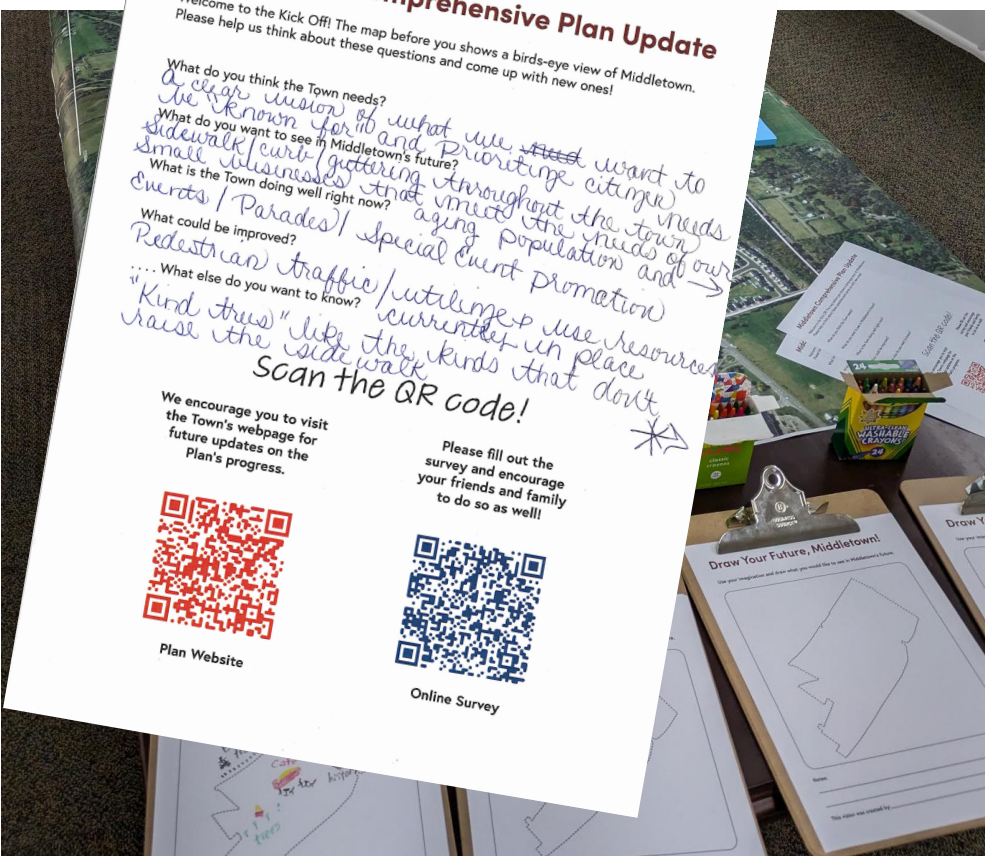
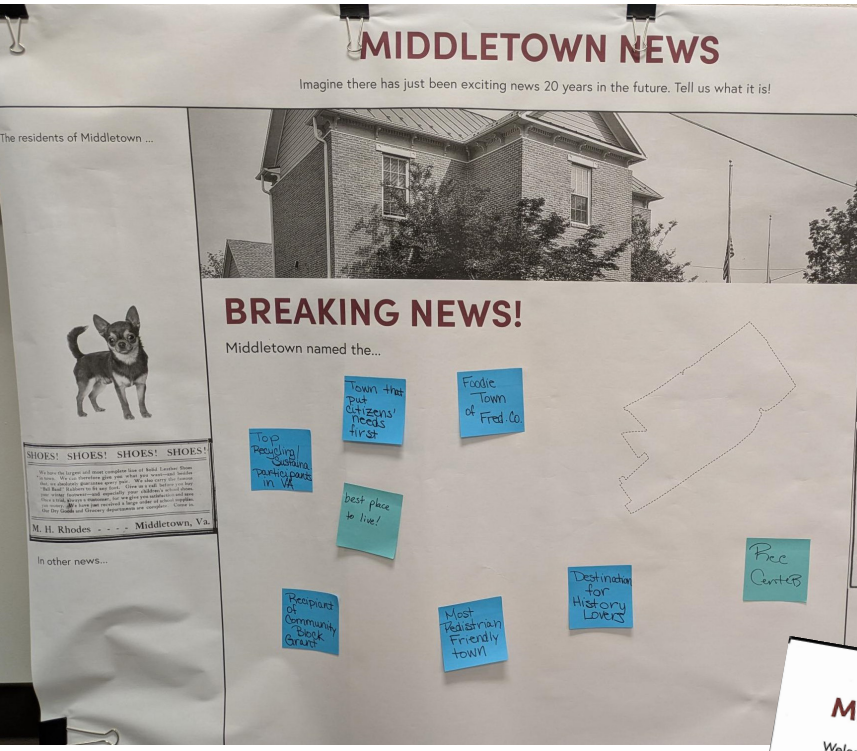
How is this data used?

This data will be used to identify issues in the community and inform the drafting of recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan document. It will also be used to help draft a vision for the Comprehensive Plan alongside the existing conditions. These recommendations, once adopted will guide local elected and appointed officials as well as the Town's staff in their work on maintaining and improving the quality of life.



Kickoff Event

The Middletown Comprehensive Plan kicked off with a public engagement event that was hosted at the Middletown Town Hall on April 14th, 2025. The event had approximately a dozen members of the public in addition to Town leaders and staff, and had different stations for residents to participate in and provide their input and feedback. The planning team heard from respondents the desire for more safe, walkable streets, as well as retail and destinations along Main Street. Attendees also stated that parks and recreation were important to them and that accessing bus transit was difficult.

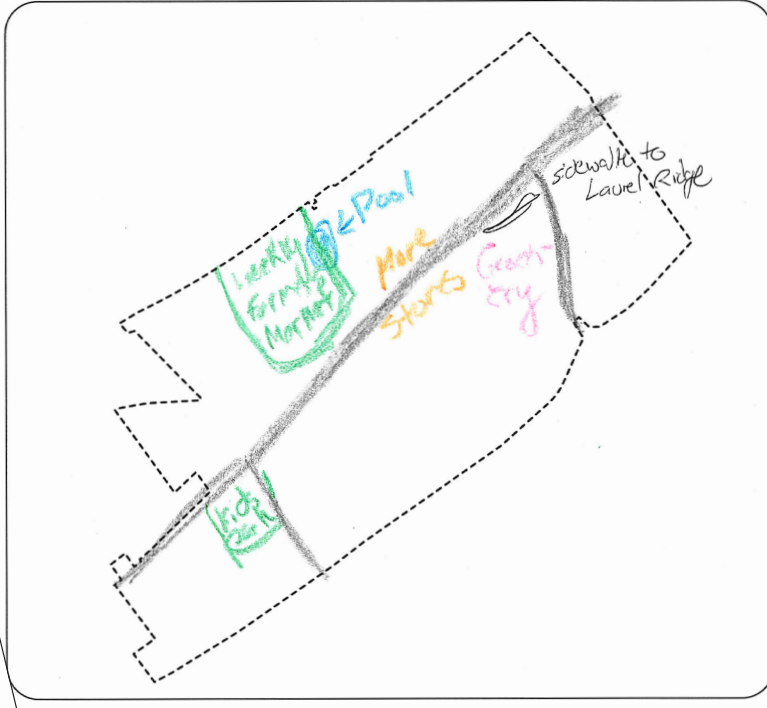


No Signal
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Participants were given the chance to "Draw the Future," offering another method besides leaving sticky note comments to emphasize different aspects of improvement or change that community members thought were necessary. Ideas such as a new park for children, a pool, groceries, connections to Laurel Ridge, and new businesses with sidewalk infrastructure emerged and were useful for further discussion.

Draw Your Future, Middletown!

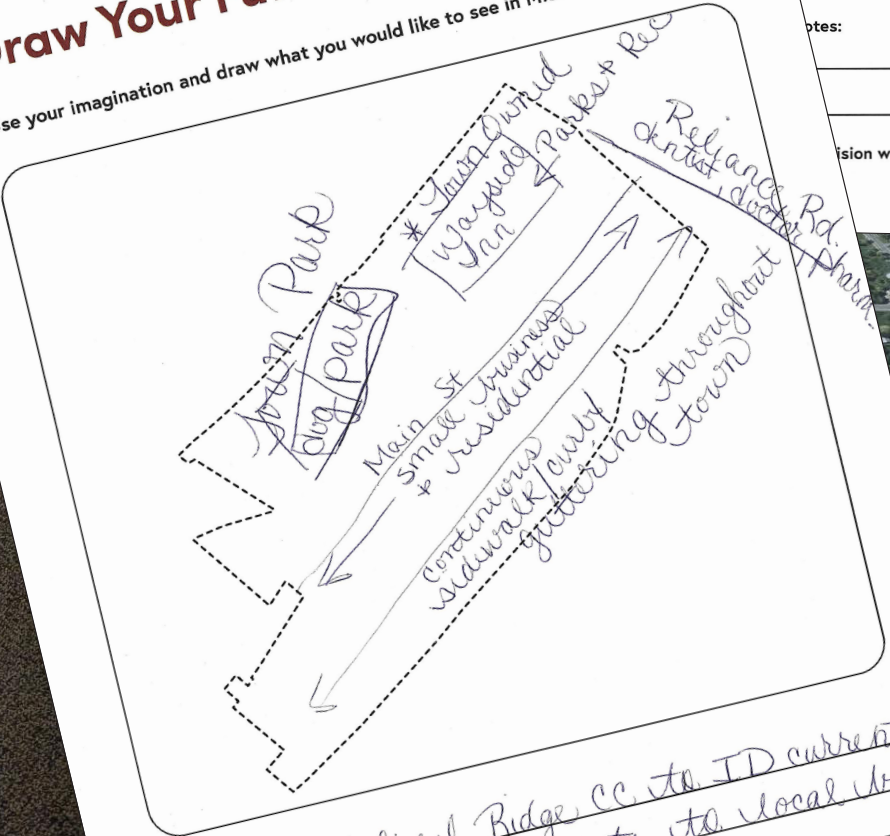
Use your imagination and draw what you would like to see in Middletown's future.



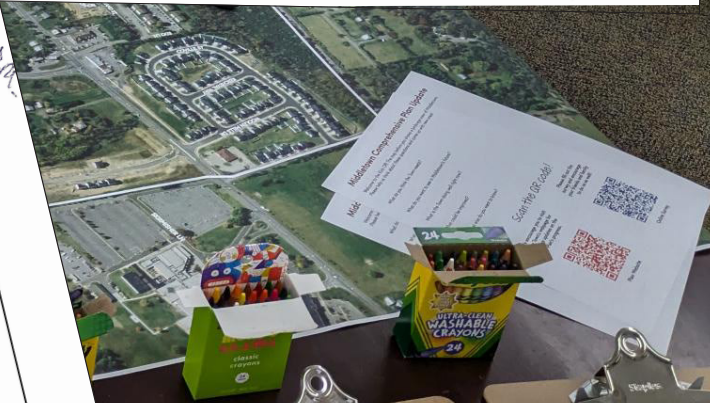
Notes:
This vision was created by: _____ -wey

Draw Your Future, Middletown!

Use your imagination and draw what you would like to see in Middletown's future.



Notes:
Work us/Laurel Ridge CC. to ID current programs that translate to local business
This vision was created by: _____
SBDC create programming to help citizens start small businesses in town



July 4th Celebration

To promote the Middletown Comprehensive Plan survey, members of the Middletown Planning Commission acted as “Plan Ambassadors,” encouraging residents and visitors to submit responses to the Comprehensive Plan survey, greatly increasing the number of responses received at Middletown’s largest community event. The event brought around 10,000 visitors to Middletown. Bookmarks advertising the plan were handed out and after the event the survey gained approximately 20 responses.



Welcome to
MIDDLETOWN
VIRGINIA
EST. 1794

**Comprehensive
Plan Update**

What's your idea to
improve Middletown?

Are you interested
in your community's
future?

Want to learn more?

**We want to
HEAR
from you!**



Stakeholder Interviews

The planning team conducted seven interviews with a variety of stakeholders with ties to Middletown. These included a representative from the National Parks Service, a former Town council member, the mayor of an adjacent town/representative for the Laurel Ridge Community College, the president of the region's model railroad association, regional economic development coordinators, all members of the Middletown Events Planning Committee, as well the owner of Steel Dog, incorporated Below is a summary of what we heard from stakeholders:

Preservation of Historic Character and Community Identity

A recurring theme across interviews is the desire to preserve Middletown's historic charm and small-town feel. Stakeholders, including representatives from the National Park Service and local residents, emphasized the importance of maintaining architectural integrity, protecting historic districts, and resisting generic development that could erode the town's unique identity. The concept of "quaintness" was frequently mentioned, with concerns about developments like data centers and fast-food chains threatening the town's visual and cultural landscape. There is strong support for land preservation and thoughtful zoning to ensure that growth aligns with Middletown's historical and aesthetic values.



Economic Development and Revitalization of Main Street

Many interviewees expressed a vision for a vibrant, walkable Main Street filled with anchor businesses, cultural venues, and retail opportunities. There is a shared belief that Middletown could become a destination town, similar to Strasburg or Front Royal, by investing in beautification, attracting small businesses, and leveraging its historical assets. The lack of a grocery store, limited dining options, and vacant storefronts were cited as barriers to economic vitality. Suggestions included acquiring and revitalizing the Wayside Inn, creating a concert venue, and establishing a farmers market to draw both residents and tourists.

Infrastructure and Public Services Needs

Infrastructure challenges were a common concern, particularly related to traffic flow, pedestrian safety, and public amenities. Interviewees highlighted the need for improved sidewalks, crosswalks, and traffic studies to address congestion and safety issues, especially with increased development. There were calls for enhanced public services such as recycling programs, transportation options for elderly and low-income residents, and community meeting spaces. The park was frequently mentioned as a central asset that could be further developed to support events, recreation, and tourism.



Community Engagement and Governance

The importance of strong leadership and community engagement was emphasized throughout the interviews. Mayor Charles received praise for his dedication and visibility, but there were also calls for more staff support. Interviewees stressed the need for town officials to be more present and responsive to community needs. There was also interest in establishing roles like a town beautification coordinator, a main street coordinator, or a parks and recreation director to help implement community-driven initiatives and promote Middletown.

Partnerships and Regional Inspiration

Several stakeholders pointed to successful models in neighboring towns such as Strasburg, Woodstock, and Rappahannock County as inspiration for Middletown's future. These communities were recognized for their strategic zoning, vibrant downtowns, and effective use of grants and partnerships. There is a desire to strengthen relationships with institutions like Laurel Ridge Community College and local organizations to foster collaboration and shared investment in Middletown's development. The interviews reflect a collective aspiration to build on Middletown's strengths while learning from regional peers to create a thriving, inclusive, and historically grounded community.

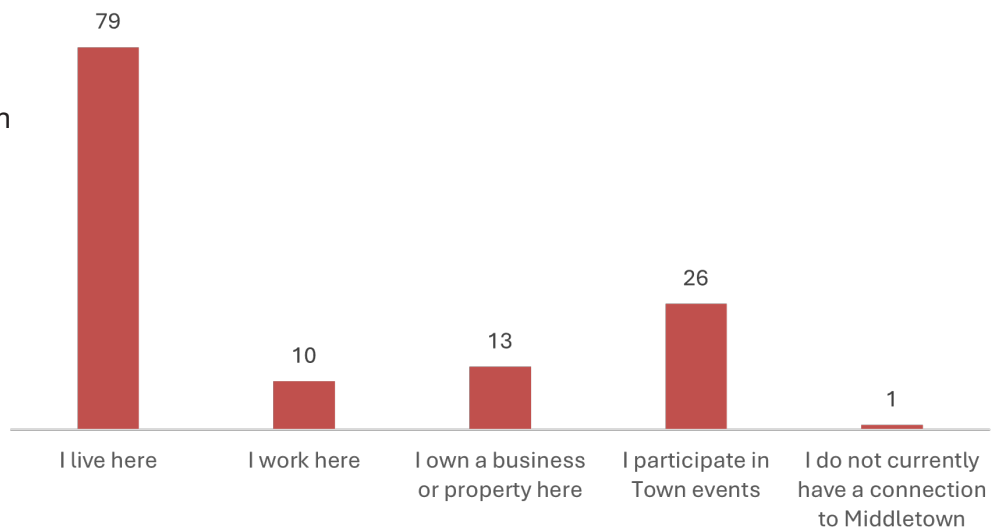


Public Survey Results

The survey was hosted on Summit Design & Engineering’s ESRI Online Survey123 platform. The survey was posted on Middletown’s website and social media pages, and was open from April 11th until July 10th, 2025. During the survey’s response period, 92 residents and neighbors submitted survey responses. Surveys such as these help elected and appointed officials, the Town’s staff, and the public to understand their community goals and make informed decisions for future growth, infrastructure, and other needs. The responses from this survey will be used by the Town of Middletown to inform and develop the Comprehensive Plan, accounting for the needs and desires of residents, neighbors, and visitors alike.

What is your connection to Middletown?

A majority of respondents indicated that they lived within Middletown, accounting for about 85% of respondents. Thirteen business or property owners answered the survey, and about 28% of respondents indicated that they participate in Town events.



What are Middletown's strengths?

Residents overwhelmingly appreciate the town’s small-town charm, strong sense of community, and historical character. Many respondents highlighted Middletown’s peaceful atmosphere, friendly neighbors, and family-oriented environment. The town’s leadership—especially the mayor and town council—received praise for being engaged, approachable, and committed to preserving the town’s identity. Community events such as parades, tree lighting ceremonies, and the 4th of July celebrations were frequently mentioned as key contributors to the town’s welcoming and unified spirit. The presence of local businesses, walkability, and scenic beauty also stood out as valued features.

Additionally, respondents emphasized Middletown’s historic significance and efforts toward land preservation. The proximity to major highways like I-81 and Route 66 was seen as a logistical advantage, making the town accessible while still maintaining its rural and tranquil feel. Many noted the importance of preserving historic sites and structures, such as the battlefield and Belle Grove National Historic Park, which contribute to the town’s identity and tourism appeal. The town’s cleanliness, safety, and inclusive community events were also cited as strengths that make Middletown a desirable place to live and raise a family. Overall, the responses reflect a deep appreciation for Middletown’s character, leadership, and community spirit.

What are the challenges of living or working in Middletown?

A significant number of participants expressed concern about rapid development and overgrowth, particularly the increase in housing developments and gas stations. Many felt that this growth threatens the town's small-town charm and historic character. Traffic congestion—especially around the I-81 interchange and Reliance Road—was frequently mentioned, along with worries about safety due to increased truck traffic and poor visibility at intersections. Several respondents also noted the lack of essential services, such as grocery stores, banks, and diverse dining options, which forces residents to travel to neighboring towns for basic needs.

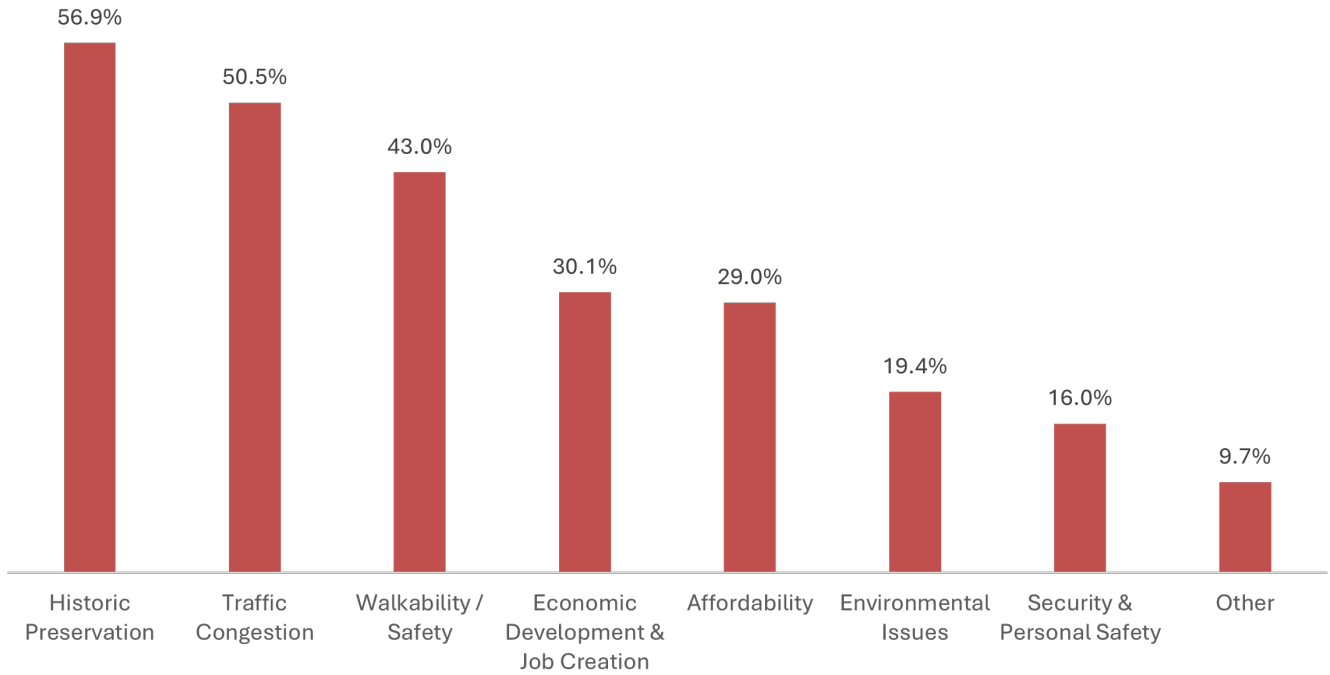
Another major concern was walkability and pedestrian infrastructure. Many residents pointed out the absence or poor condition of sidewalks, limited pedestrian crossings, and inadequate street lighting, which make walking or biking around town difficult and unsafe. There were also mentions of insufficient law enforcement presence, neglected properties, and a perceived lack of strategic planning by local government. Some respondents expressed frustration with the town leadership, citing a lack of transparency and vision for sustainable growth. Overall, while residents value Middletown's community spirit and historic roots, they are increasingly worried about how unchecked development and infrastructure gaps could erode the qualities that make the town special.

On a scale of 1 to 5, rank the quality of life in Middletown.



A majority of respondents indicated that they lived within Middletown, accounting for about 85% of respondents. Thirteen business or property owners answered the survey, and about 28% of respondents indicated that they participate in Town events.

What do you think are the most important issues facing Middletown?



Most respondents stated that historic preservation was the most important issue facing Middletown, representing about 57% of responses. About half of responses stated that traffic congestion was a significant issue and 43% of respondents stated that walkability and safety were the most important issues for Middletown.

Other issues identified

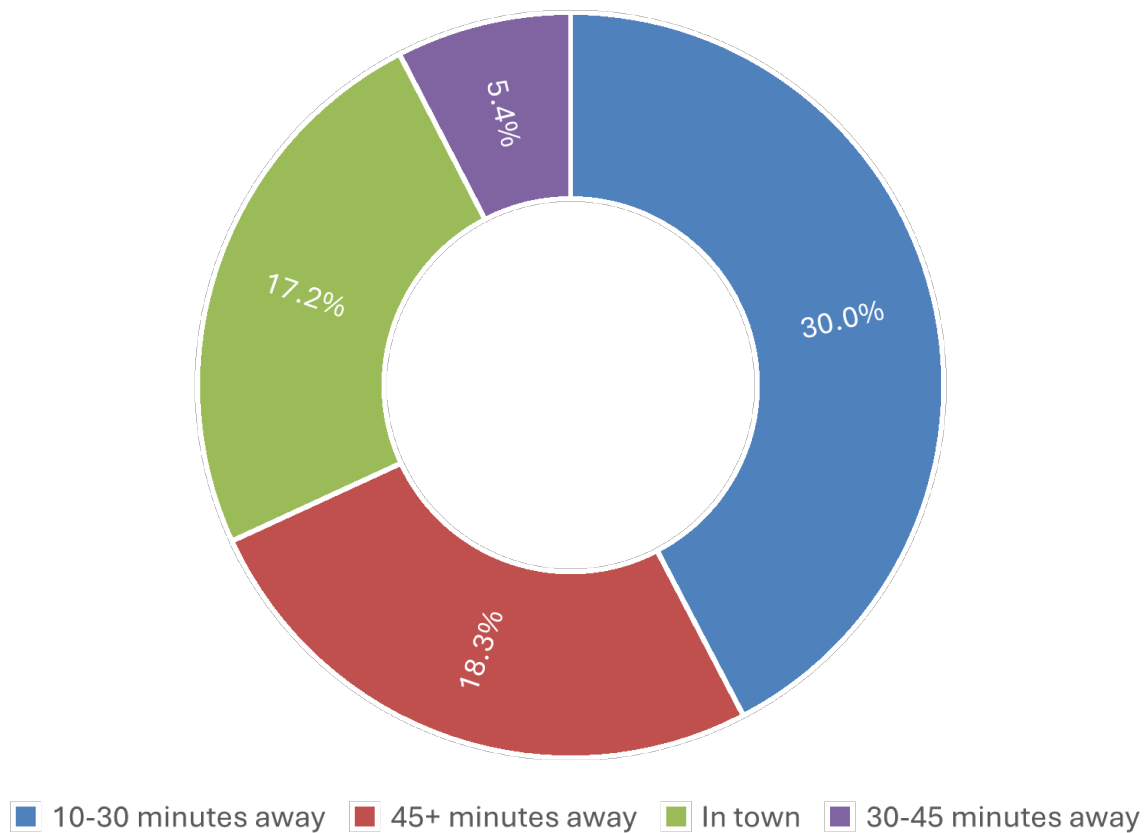
This question had an open response option for respondents who had identified a different issue in Middletown. Nine respondents answered this question, several noting that development pressures were their primary concern. Another issue identified was, “Cultural and entertainment venues like the Wayside theater and the Irish Isle.” Along Main Street, some other issues that were communicated were drivers speeding, and keeping small-town feel. Also, one respondent expressed frustration towards commercial development such as new gas stations in the area.

What three words do you hope will describe Middletown in 2050?



When asked to think what three words came to mind when thinking of what Middletown will be like in 2050, respondents had many of the same descriptors used for what they think of Middletown currently. Eighteen respondents answered that they wished for Middletown to remain historic, and fourteen stated that they want Middletown to stay small. Nine respondents each stated they want Middletown to remain friendly and safe in 2050.

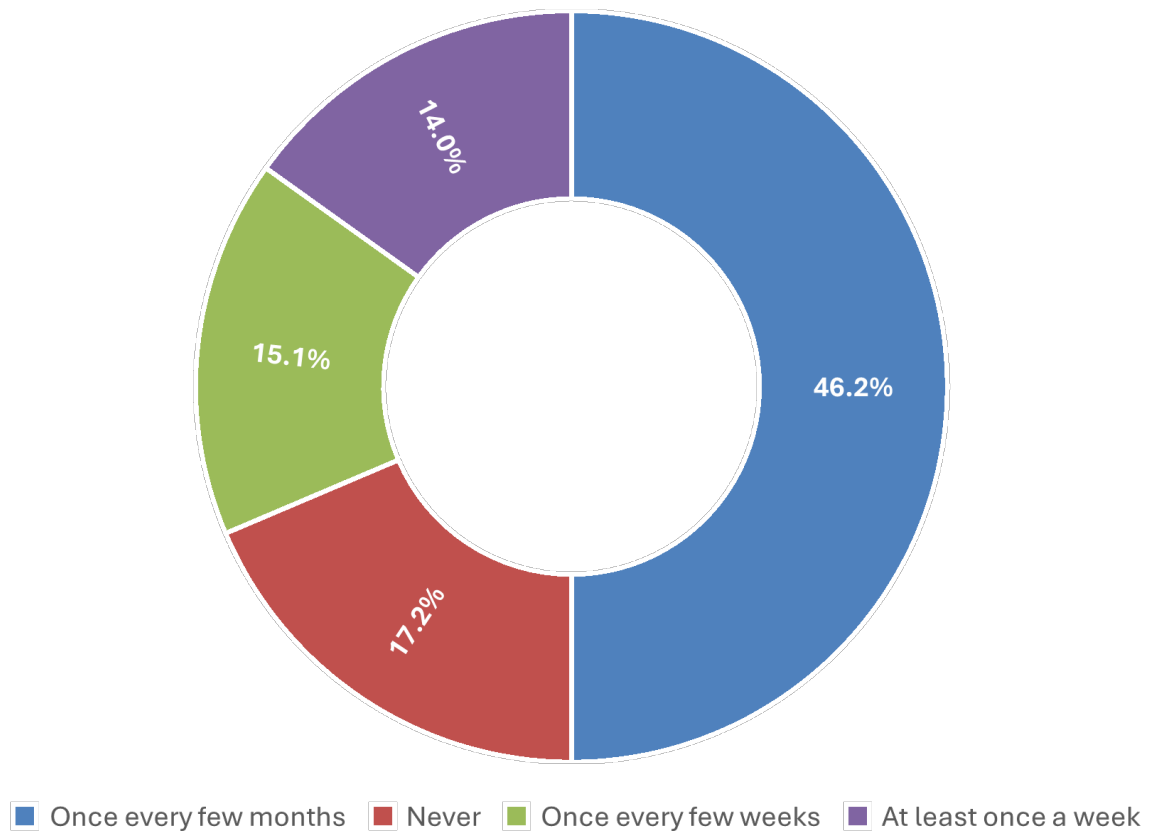
If you are employed, where do you work?



Most respondents stated that they work within 10 to 30 minutes of Middletown. An additional 17% of respondents reported that they work within the town.

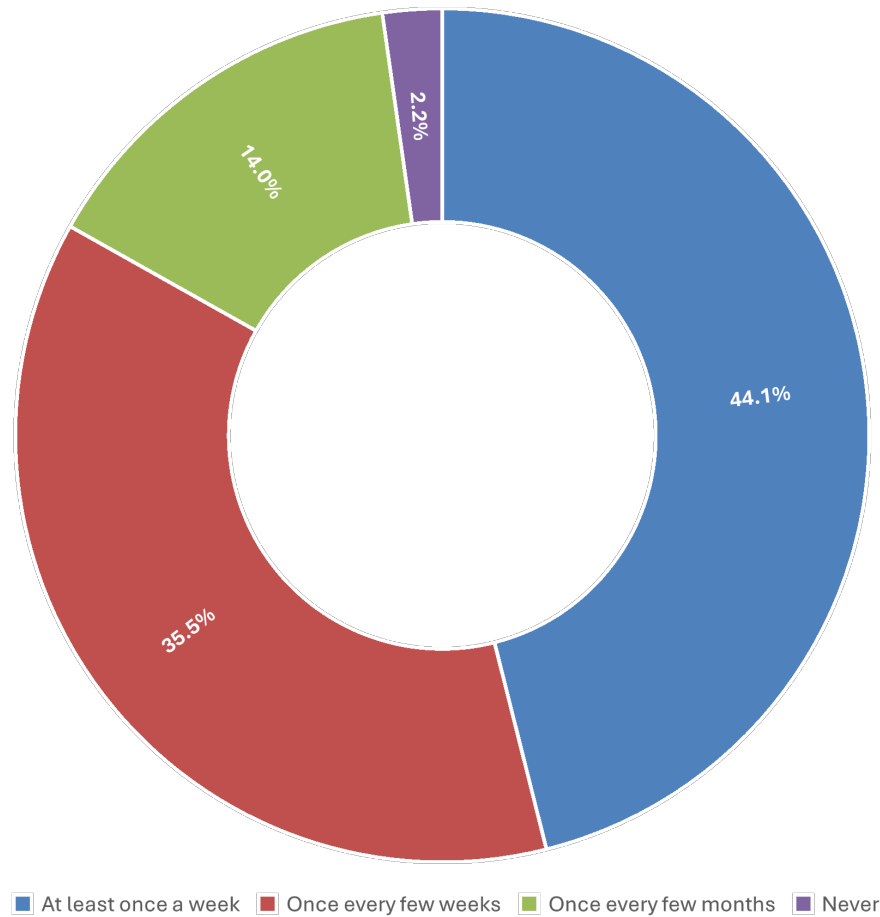
Over 20% of respondents indicated that they work at least a half hour away from Middletown, with over 18% working more than 45 minutes away.

How often do you visit Middletown Community Park?



Nearly half of all respondents reported visiting the Middletown Community Park at least once every few months. Almost 30% of respondents visit the park at least once a month, with 15% visiting once every few weeks and 14% visiting once a week. However, 17% of respondents stated that they never visit the park.

How often do you visit restaurants, retail, or services located along Main Street?



Main Street sees many visits from Middletown residents, with 44% of survey responses stating that they visit restaurants, retail, or services on Main Street at least once a week. An additional 35% of respondents reported visiting Main Street at least once every few weeks. Approximately 14% of respondents visit every few months and only 2 respondents stated that they do not visit Main Street.

What is an area that is important to you?

Survey respondents were asked to provide a location on a map that is important to them on a personal level. This is described as a place with a cherished memory associated with it or a place that the respondent loves visiting. It could also be a place that needs improvement, such as an unsafe intersection, a broken sidewalk, or a missed opportunity for improvement.

"We have room for more diverse business that could make Middletown more unique!"

"I would love a bike trail down to Cedar Creek!"

"Please add a crosswalk here, it feels unsafe when we are trying to cross to get ice cream!"

"We would love to walk down to the park with our kids, but we live on the other side and can't cross safely!"

Legend

● Survey Response

Twenty three respondents placed points on or directly next to Main Street in Middletown, representing the largest geographic concentration of survey responses. Respondents stated that Main Street is the heart of Middletown and it's important for its walkability, charm, and local businesses. Many respondents pointed towards historical assets such as Wayside Inn and Cedar Creek Battlefield as historic landmarks that should be preserved for tourism and community pride.

Several respondents placed points at the intersection of Reliance Road and Main Street, or along Reliance Road, expressing concern towards traffic and safety. Suggestions to improve these areas included traffic lights and better visibility.

In addition to historic and traffic-related points, many residents marked parks, neighborhoods, and local businesses as central to their daily lives and community experience. The town park was frequently mentioned as a valued space for families, with requests for enhancements like dog parks, crosswalks, and better lighting. Some respondents shared personal stories tied to specific locations, such as childhood memories or scenic views from their homes. Overall, the map comments reflect a deep connection to Middletown's physical spaces and a desire to maintain its character while improving safety and accessibility.

Are there other areas that are important to you?

Respondents were given another location to highlight if they had more than one location that was important to them.

Many residents spoke about how important the Town's park is to them, as well as the businesses located along Main Street. There were also specific call outs to the memorial park and the Wayside Inn as important destinations for Middletown.

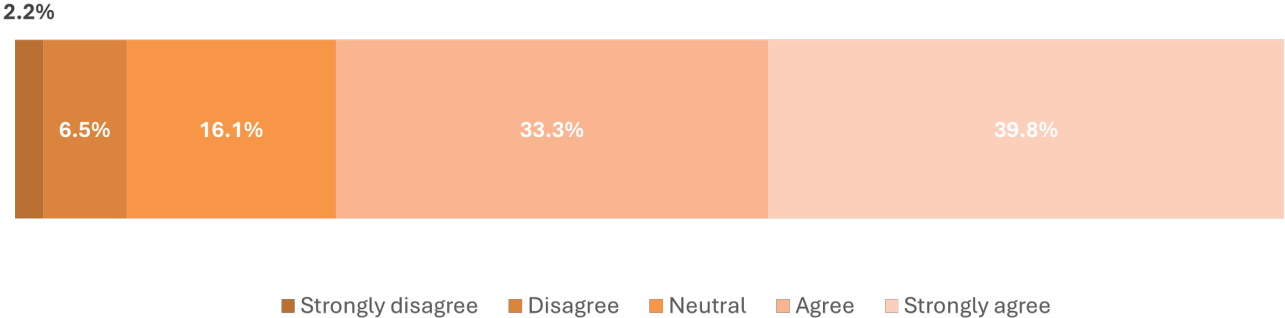
Additionally, many other respondents spoke about safety issues around Reliance Road, as well as the entrance and exit onto Interstate 81. Some specific guidance from respondents stated the difficulty of making a left turn after getting off Interstate 81 Northbound and the low visibility due to the bridge.

One thoughtful comment was suggesting adding an emergency red light for the fire department to use when responding to an emergency, allowing a safer exit. Another respondent requested a safe bike trail along Route 11 towards Cedar Creek for additional bike riding opportunities.

Likert Scale

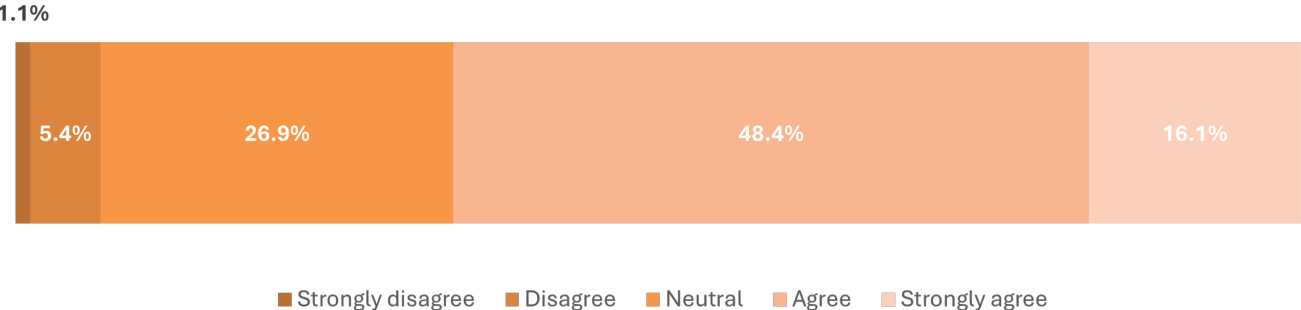
A Likert scale is a question that provides a statement and asks whether that statement aligns with how the respondent thinks about a particular topic. This type of question is useful when planning for the future to understand public sentiment towards a variety of topics and can help guide decision-making.

I can see myself living in Middletown in the future.



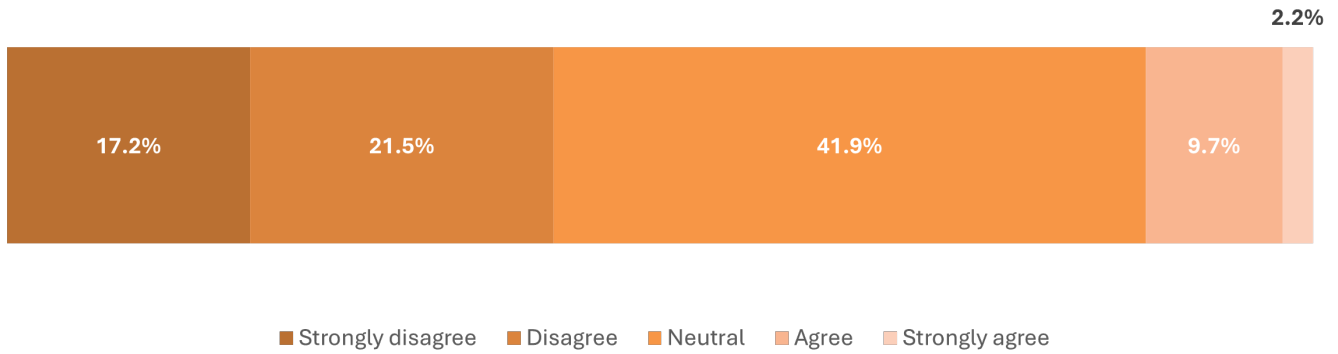
Nearly 40% of respondents stated that they strongly agreed that they could see themselves living in Middletown in the future, whereas 33% of respondents stated that they agree. Only 2 respondents stated they strongly disagree and 6 said they disagree.

I feel like I am a part of the community.



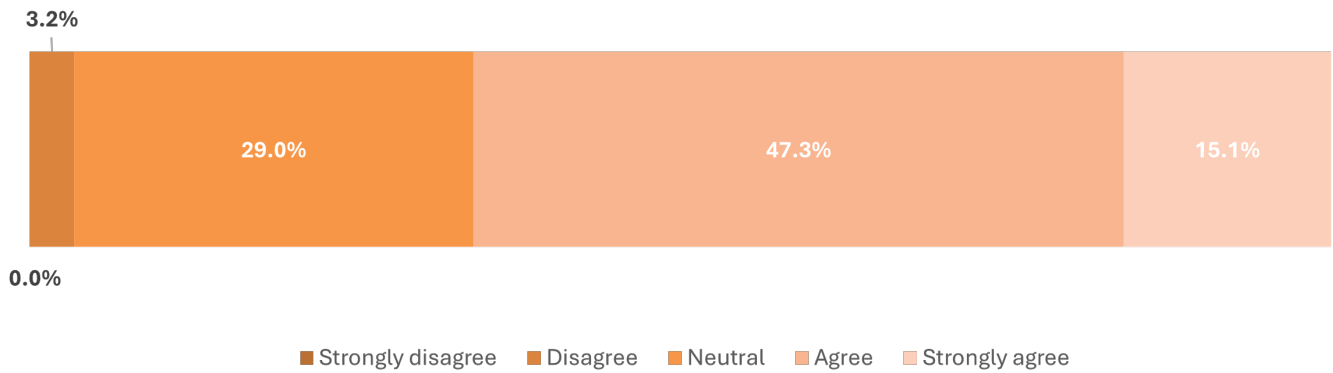
More respondents felt in agreement with the statement, "I feel like I am a part of the community." However there were 25 respondents who said they felt neutral to the statement, representing the second largest group of responses for this statement.

I can find a good paying job in Middletown.



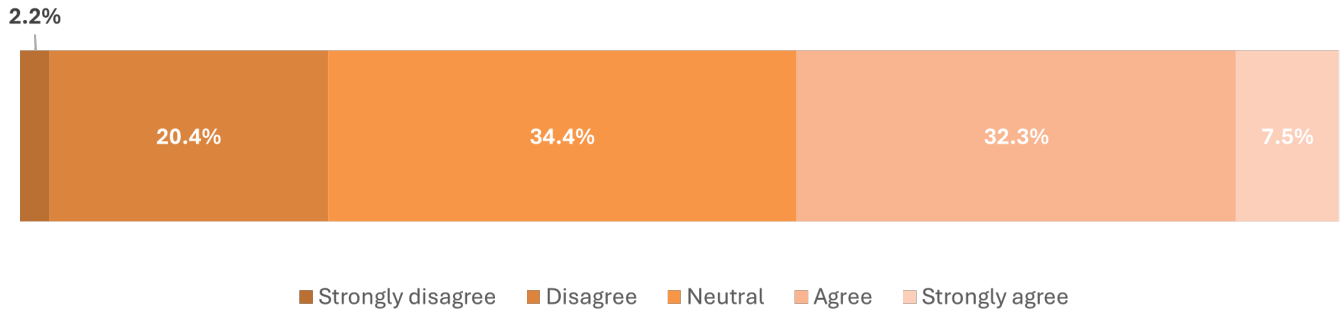
Most respondents characterized the statement, "I can find a good paying job in Middletown," as neutral for their experience. Further, a little over 20% of respondents said they disagree with the statement and 17% stated that they strongly disagree with the statement.

I can afford to live in Middletown.



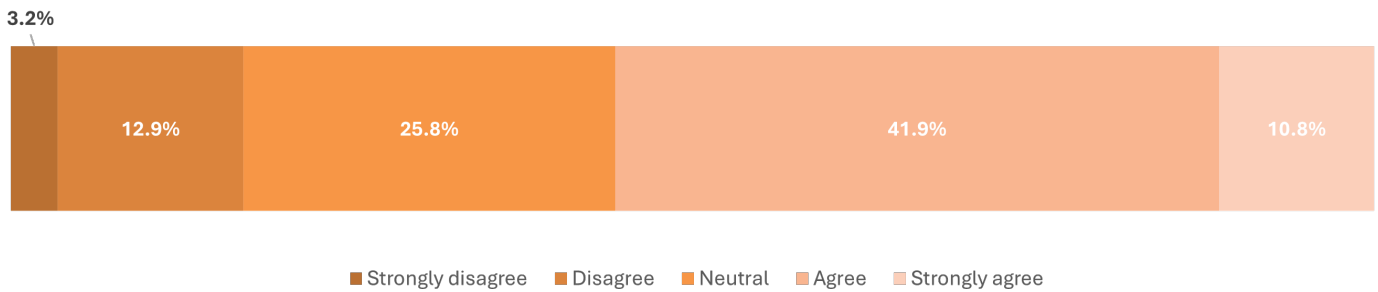
Nearly 50% of respondents agree that they can afford to live in Middletown, with nearly 30% feeling neutral towards the statement.

There are lots of fun things to do in Middletown.



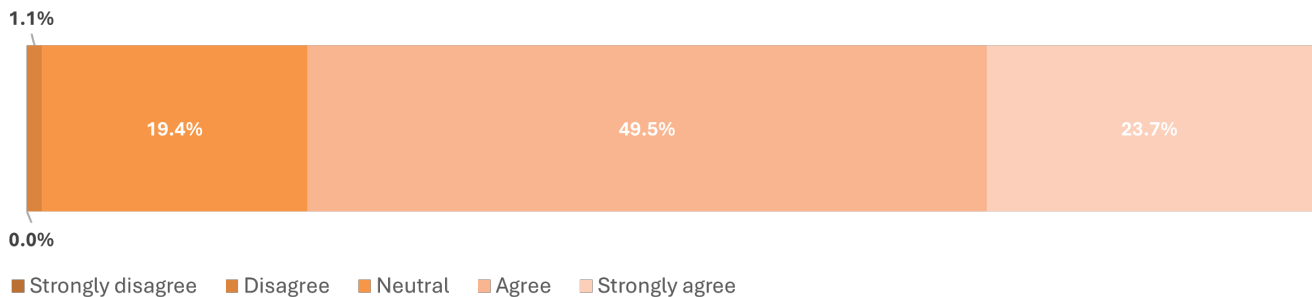
A majority of respondents were neutral to the statement, "There are lots of fun things to do in Middletown," but 32% were in agreement. There were 19 respondents who said they disagree with the statement, accounting for slightly more than 20% of respondents.

Our community park is well equipped and accessible.



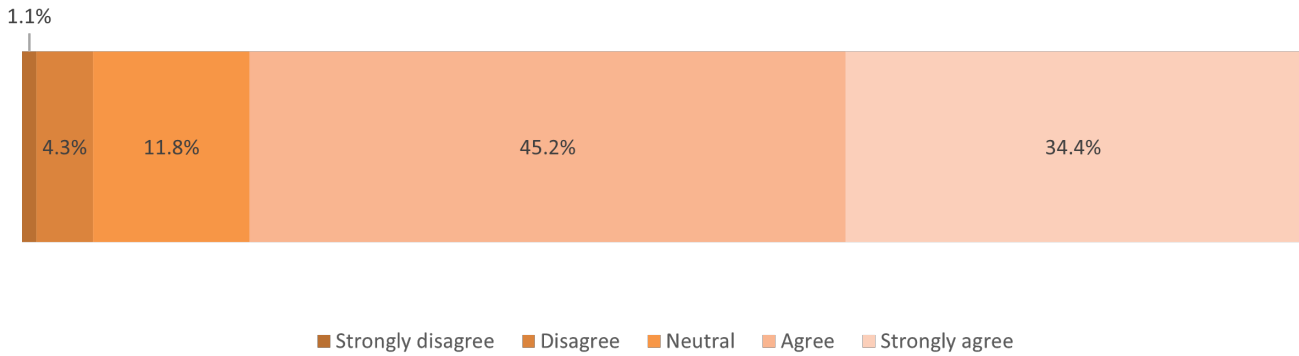
Nearly 42% of respondents stated that they agreed that the community park is well equipped and accessible. Slightly more than 25% of respondents were neutral towards the statement and 12 were in disagreement.

I feel safe visiting Middletown's community park.



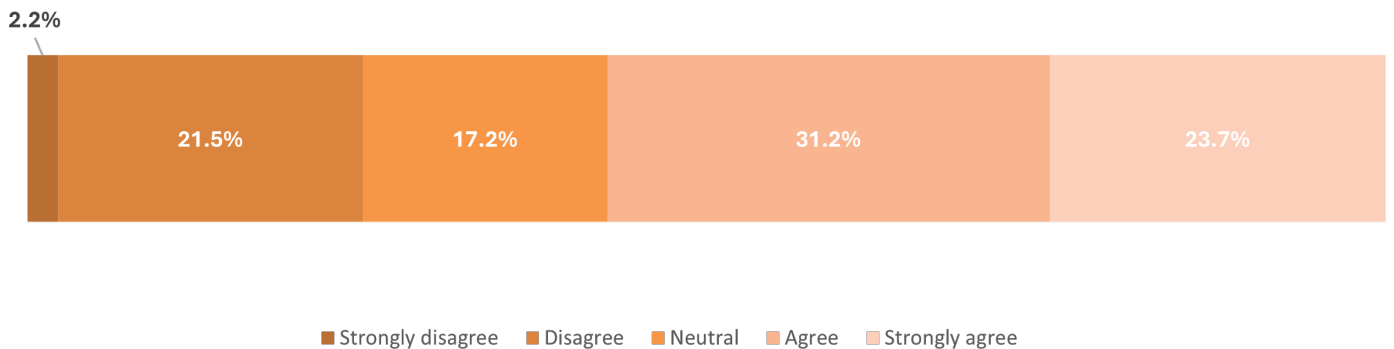
Approximately 50% of respondents agreed that they felt safe visiting Middletown's community park, with only 1 respondent in disagreement towards the statement. A further 23% of respondents were in strong agreement, and 8 respondents were neutral.

Our local event and activity programming makes me feel a part of the community.



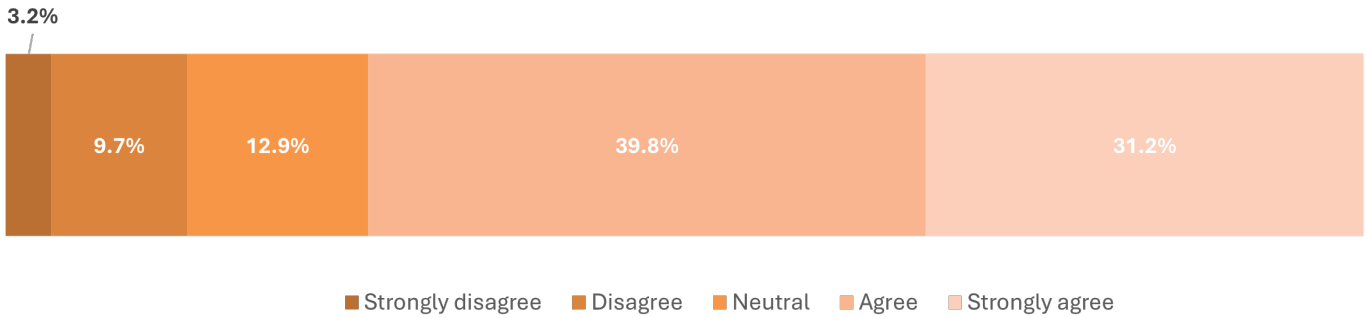
Most respondents agreed that local events and activities made them feel a part of the community, encompassing 45% agreement, and 34% strongly agreeing. However, four respondents disagreed, and one strongly disagreed, with 11 neutral on the subject.

I can walk or bike around Middletown safely and conveniently for my daily needs without fear of vehicular crashes.



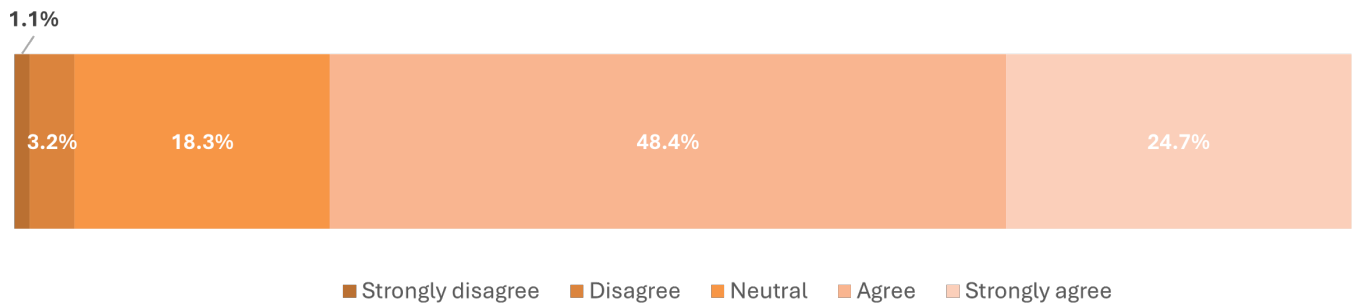
When it came to walking or biking, there was a lot more variety towards responses. The majority of responses were marked in agreement, accounting for 31% of responses, a further 23% strongly agreed with the statement. Despite this, there were 20 respondents who disagreed, accounting for 21% of all responses.

I can drive around Middletown safely and conveniently for my daily needs without fear of vehicular crashes.



Middletown residents felt much more comfortable driving around town. Nearly 40% of respondents agreed that they could drive around town safely, and 31% strongly agreed with the statement. Only 9 were in disagreement, and 3 strongly disagreed.

Local government and/or County services are provided efficiently and effectively.

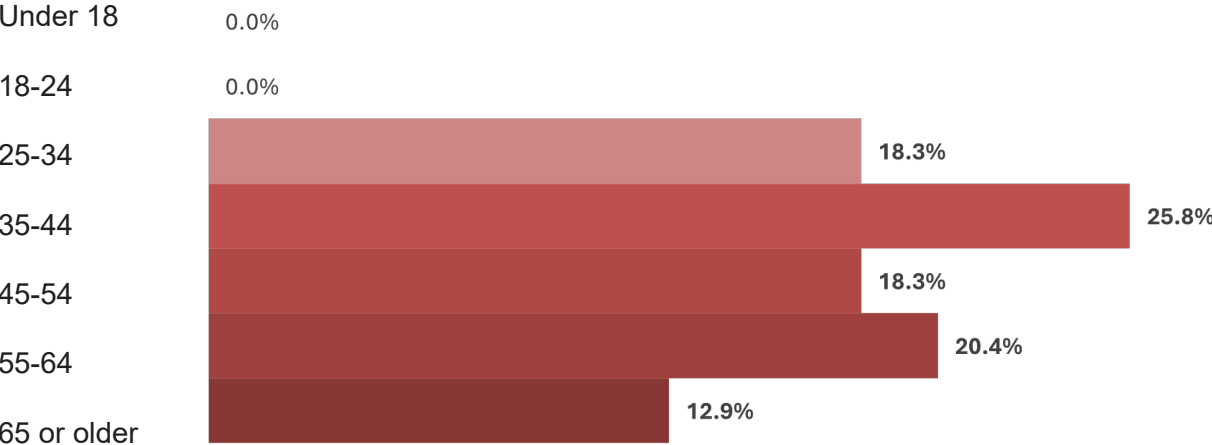


Nearly half of respondents agreed that local and/or County services are provided efficiently and effectively, with an additional 24% strongly in agreement. Only 3 respondents disagreed and one strongly disagreed, with 17 indicating neutrality towards the statement.

Respondent Demographics

Demographics are asked as optional questions for participants to list information about themselves. The information provided by respondents helps to understand who is answering the survey and who the survey might be missing - allowing for policy makers and staff to perform future, targeted engagement.

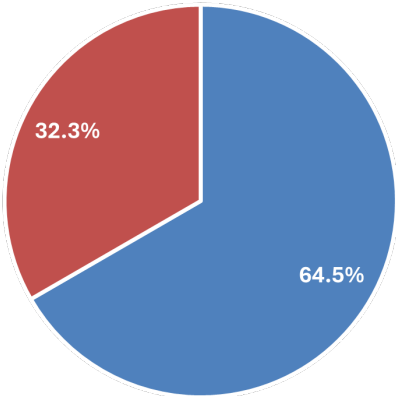
What is your age group?



A majority of respondents were within the 35-44 age group, accounting for approximately 26% of all responses. An additional 20% of respondents indicated that they were within the 55-64 age group. Notably, there were a considerable number of participants between the ages of 25-34 but none younger than 25.

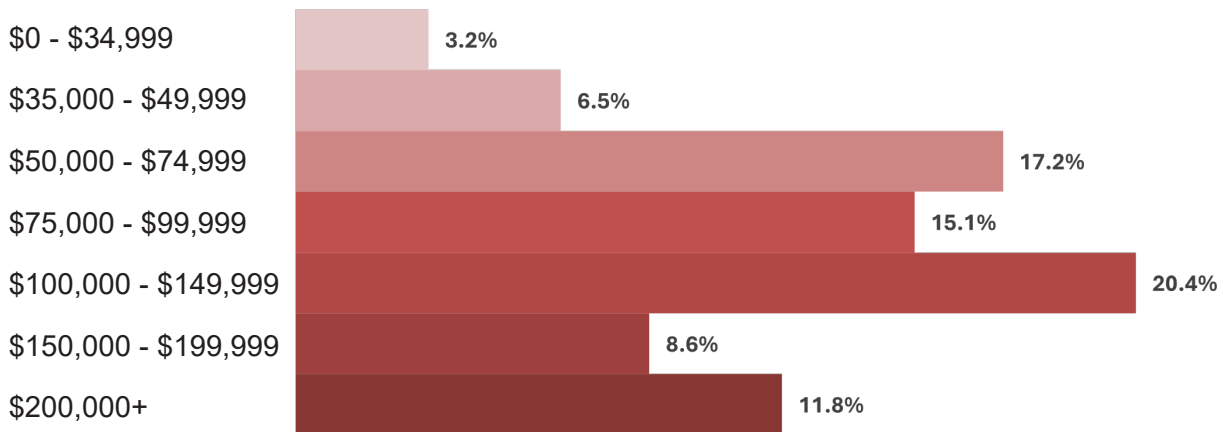
An overwhelming majority of participants identified as Female, accounting for 64% of all participants.

What gender do you identify as?



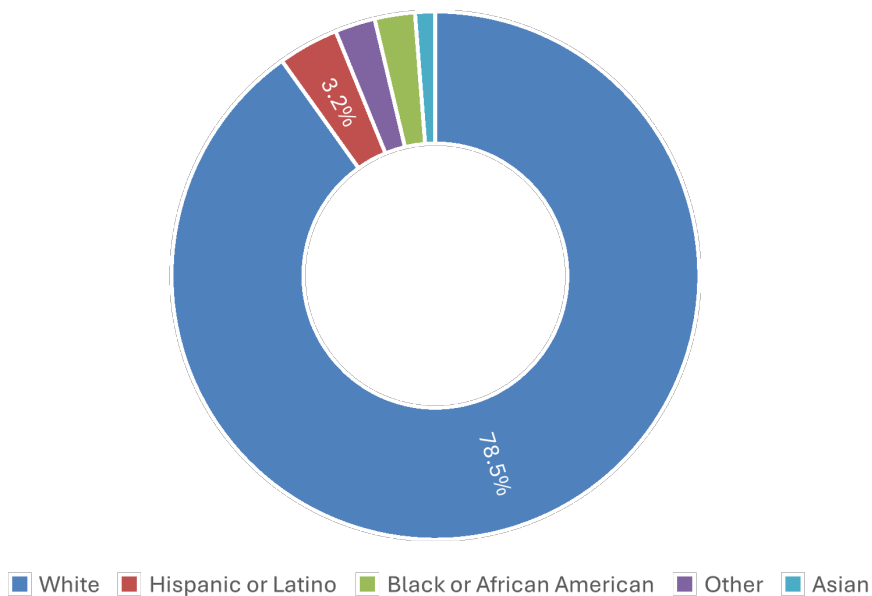
Female Male

What is your income group?



Most respondents reported that their income group was between \$100,000 and \$149,999, accounting for 20% of all responses. Approximately 17% of all respondents stated that their income was between \$50,000 and \$74,999, and few respondents reported salaries less than \$50,000.

What race or ethnicity do you identify as?



An overwhelming majority of respondents identified as White, encompassing 78% of all respondents. However, there were three respondents who reported as Hispanic or Latino, two Black or African American, two Other, and one Asian.

Appendix B

Existing Conditions

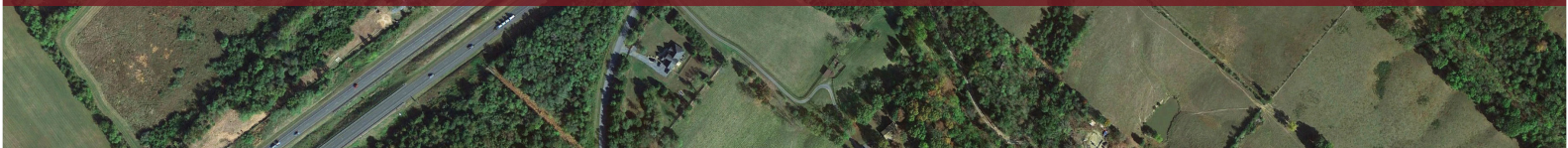
Report

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Middletown Existing Conditions

April 24, 2025



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Economy.....	16
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Environment	30
Built Environment.....	34

Introduction

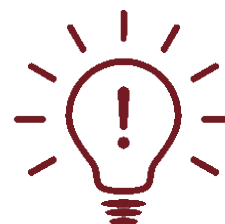
What's an Existing Conditions Report?

The Comprehensive Plan is based on both empirical data and the community's vision. The planning process starts with an "Existing Conditions Report" to collect and analyze data to understand Middletown as it is today. Understanding where and how people live, what major employers are in the area, what the environment looks like, or how the transportation system is functioning, gives the community a common foundation for thinking about their vision for the future. The Report is arranged in small "chapters" that discuss the community's geography, demographics, housing conditions, economic conditions, transportation systems, environmental conditions, local community facilities, and the use of land.



Why do we need an Existing Conditions Report?

People tend to have subjective understandings of their own community based on their individual experiences. While it is important to understand different perspectives, it is also important to examine objective data. This process helps ensure that all community stakeholders are starting from a common understanding of the Town's conditions at the beginning of the planning process. Once this is established, the community can work collaboratively to address its needs. This data also assists the planning team with identifying potential issues in the Town and drafting recommendations to improve conditions.



How is this data used?

This data will be used to identify issues in the community and inform the drafting of recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan document. It will also be used to help draft a vision for the Comprehensive Plan alongside the public engagement. These recommendations, once adopted will guide local elected and appointed officials as well as the Town's staff in their work on maintaining and improving the quality of life.



Where did the data come from?

Most of the data comes from the 2023 American Community Survey (5 year estimates), released on December 12, 2024, by the United States Census Bureau, however this document also utilizes other data, such as Decennial Census counts, Virginia Employment Commission, and Esri Business Analyst. These sources are widely used to give communities an accurate picture of their existing conditions.



Geography

Middletown is located in the northern Shenandoah Valley along the route of the historic “Great Wagon Road.” Established and chartered in 1796, making it one of the oldest Towns in both Virginia and the United States.

The Town’s land area is approximately 494.77 acres. The Town and its surroundings, mostly to the west, are the site of the Battles of Cedar Creek & Belle Grove. The National Park Service maintains the land to interpret its history and preserve its condition. The Town is located between Strasburg and Stephens City, with Winchester not much further to the northeast.

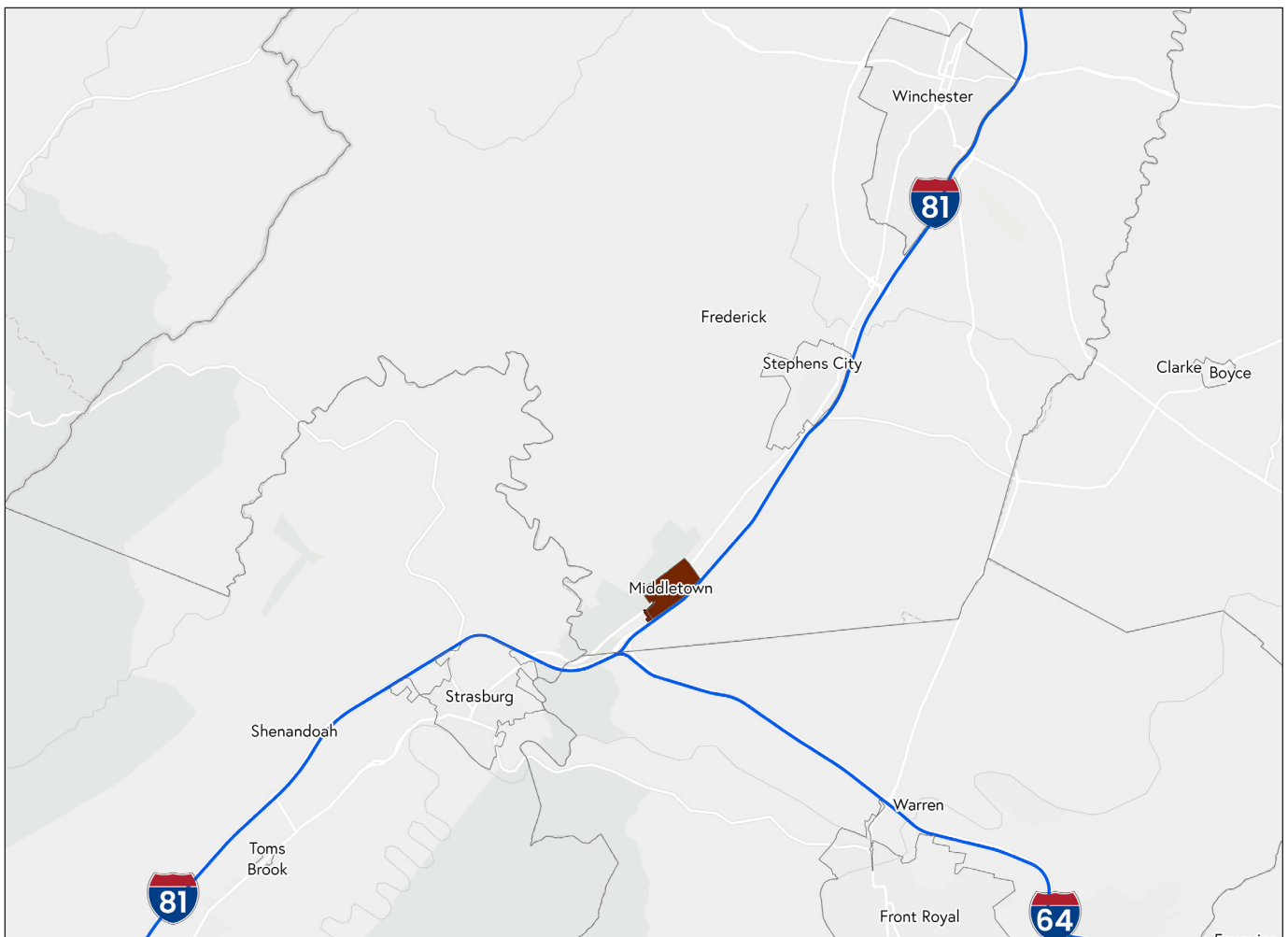
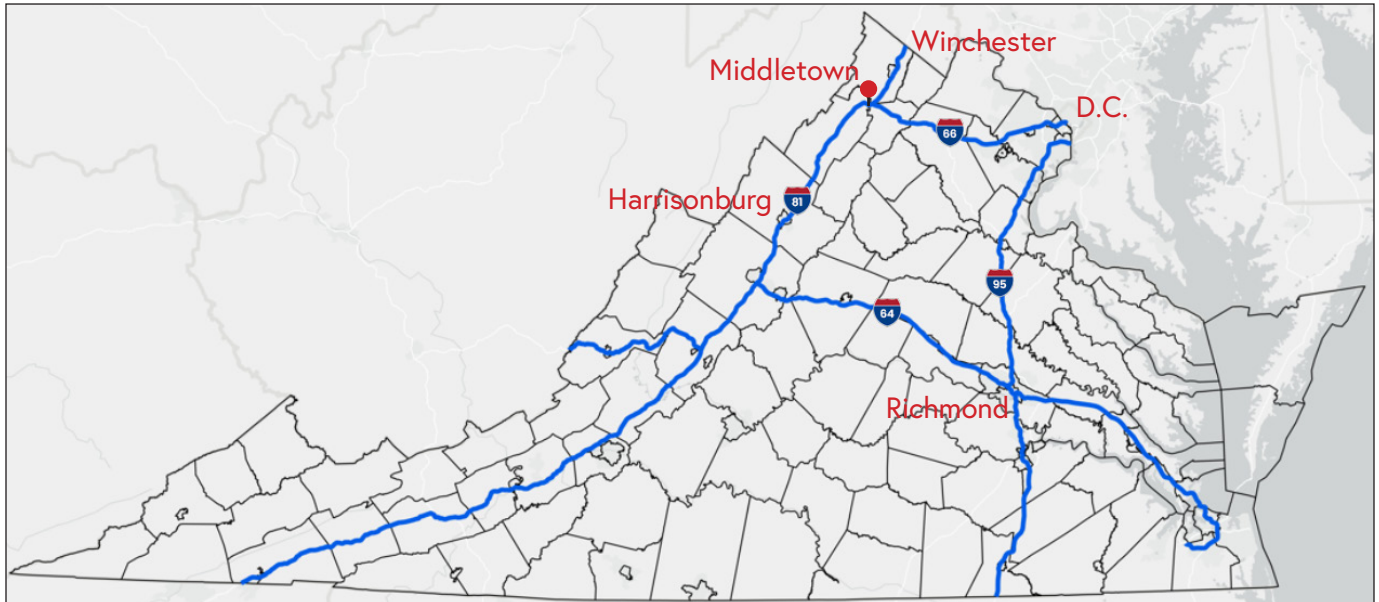
Middletown continues to develop today with new neighborhoods and commercial spaces, mostly in relation to the highway exit. However, there are many existing businesses and residential units in historic buildings through the core of the Town. Just outside the Town boundaries, there are many active farms that lend themselves to the visual character of the area.

Two major roads bisect the Town. State Route 11, which runs North to South, and Interstate 81, which also runs North to South, parallel to Route 11. State Route 627, or Reliance Road, provides access to the southwest parallel to nearby Interstate 66.



Regional Context

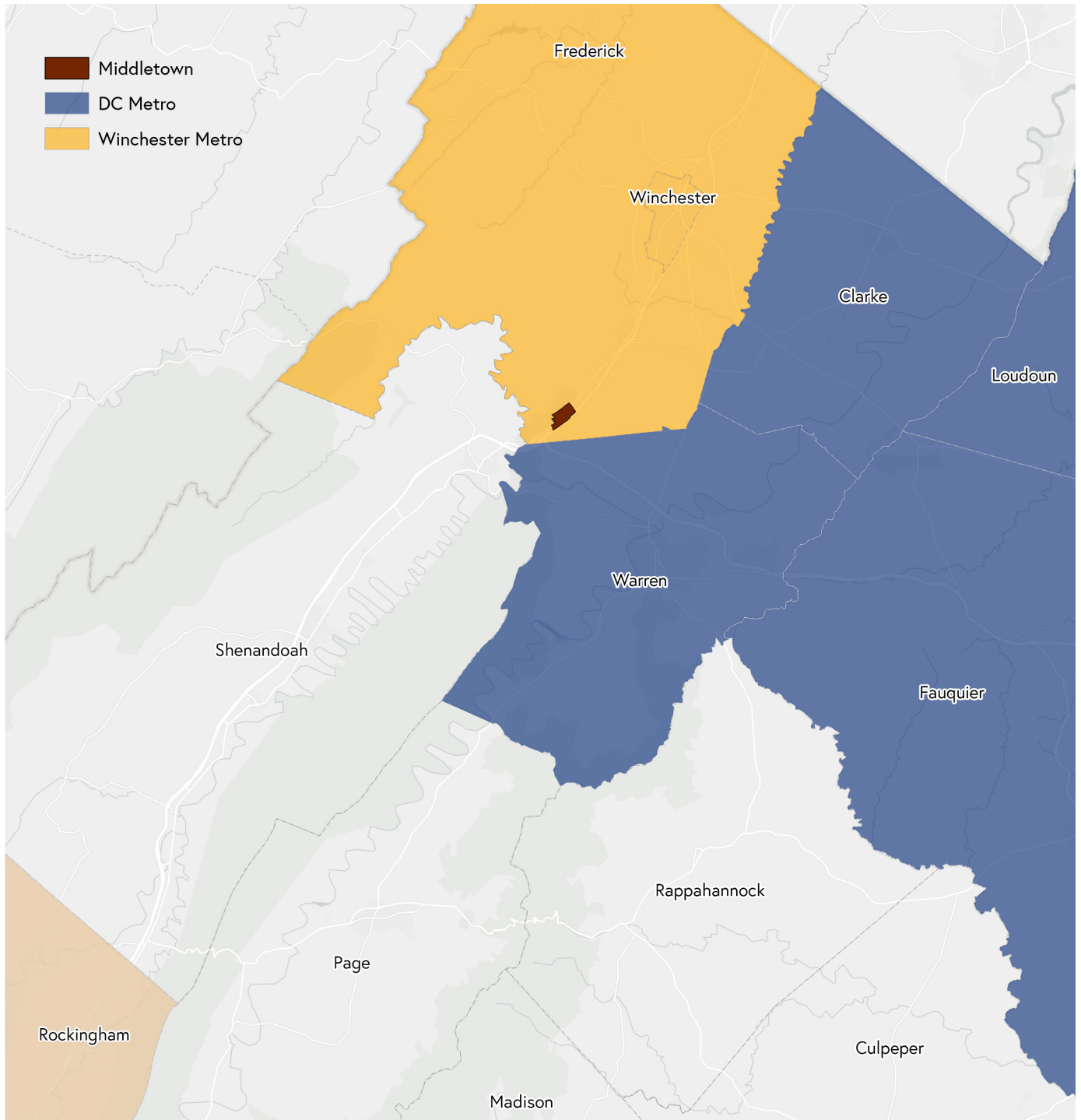
Middletown is located in the Shenandoah Valley in Northwestern Virginia. As shown on the following maps, the Town is about 80 miles from Washington, D.C. and 58 miles from Harrisonburg, and just 15 miles south of Winchester. Regionally, it is approximately the midpoint between the Stephens City and Strasburg.



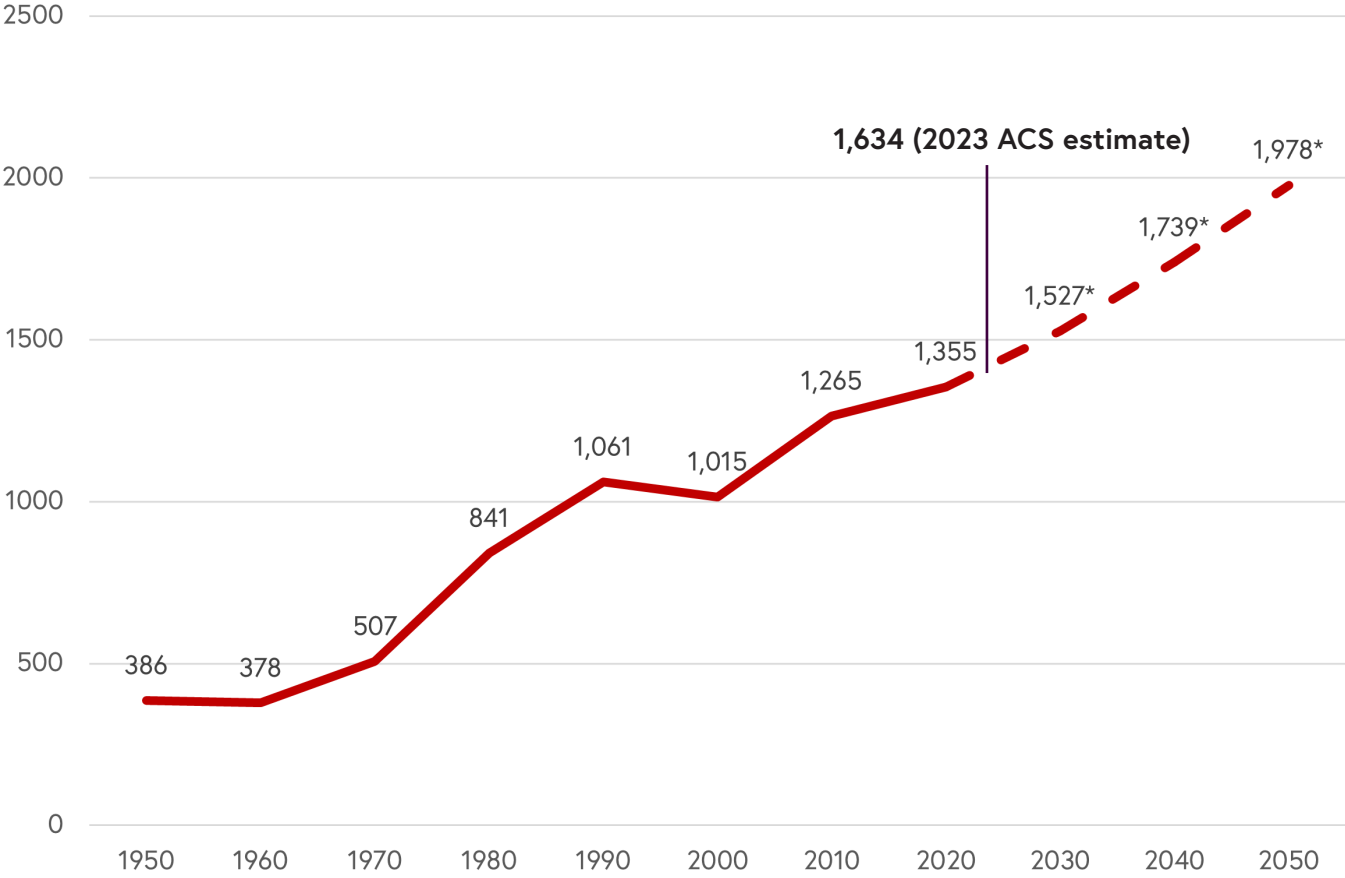
Surrounding Metro Areas

Metropolitan statistical areas (MSA) are the definition of a region, used by the US Census Bureau. An MSA consists of a core area that serves as a “population nucleus” and surrounding areas that have a “high degree of economic and social integration” with that core. MSAs are delineated, in part, through commuting patterns.

Middletown is located within the MSAs of the City of Winchester and located just outside the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV MSA. This is Virginia’s highest density area of economic activity and population, where growth has generally “sprawled” its way further and further into the countryside. This is important to note for planning purposes, as within the comprehensive plan’s horizon the Town will face even further potential growth pressure than has occurred already. However, with careful planning the Town can manage this pressure so that it is to the benefit of the Town and its existing community.



Demographics



Source: 1900- 2020 Decennial Census, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service

Population

The total population of Middletown is estimated to be 1,634 people as of the 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. The more accurate, but now outdated count in the 2020 Census is estimated at 1,355. The graph above shows the Town’s population increase since the 1950s. Notably, the population has been growing in almost every decade. The latest available estimate from the U.S. Census Bureau is already higher than the projected population over the next few decades. Middletown’s population is too small to receive a projection from the University of Virginia’s Weldon Cooper Center for demographics.

The same percentage of increase of surrounding Frederick County was utilized to give a snapshot of what growth in Middletown could look like in the future. While this could change based on many different factors, it is showing a trend that already appears to be occurring in Middletown as new subdivisions are finished developing. Across Virginia, many small towns are struggling with the impacts of population loss. Middletown is fortunate to see steady growth which creates many new opportunities.

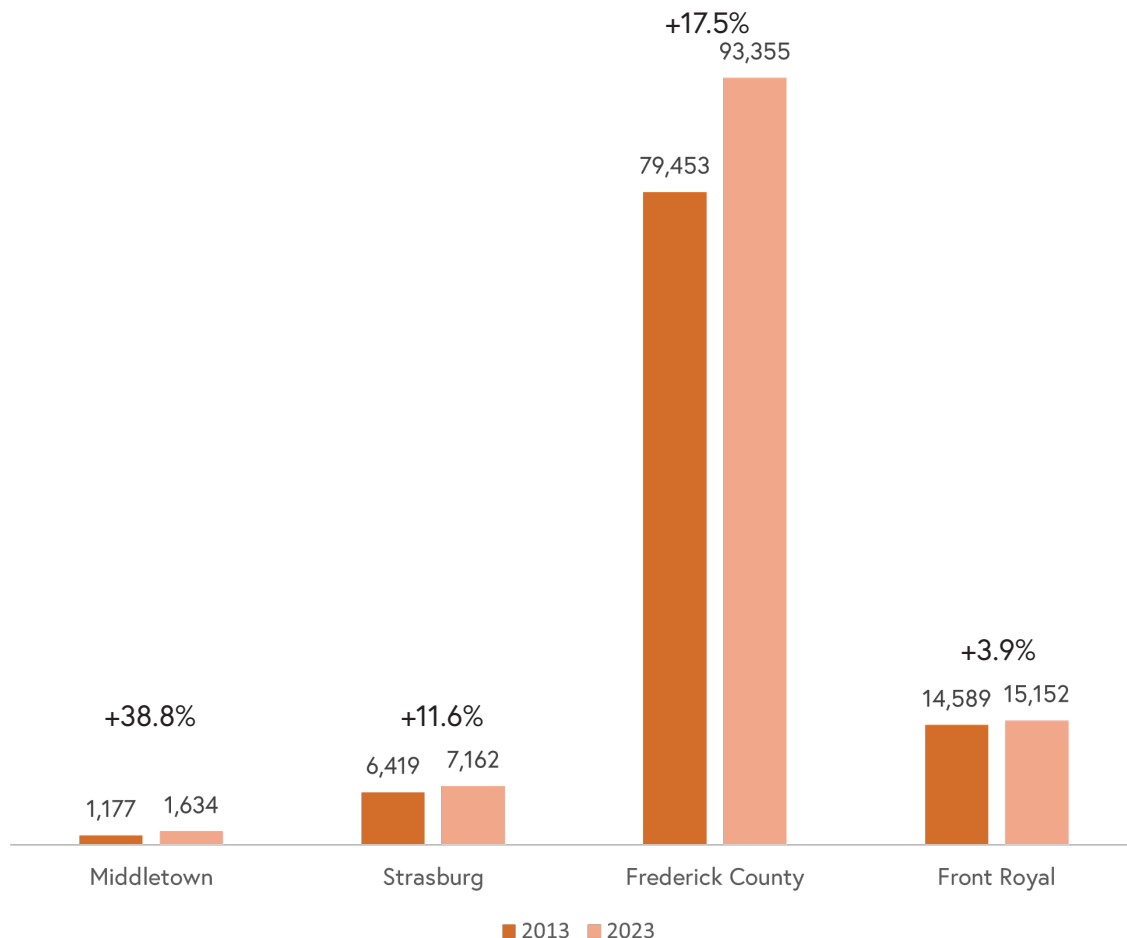
It is important to plan for infrastructure and land use patterns that accommodates the needs of current and future residents. Growth projections attempt to give an idea of what may happen in the future, but its important to note that growth could drastically exceed or fail to meet the forecasted numbers.

Census Data

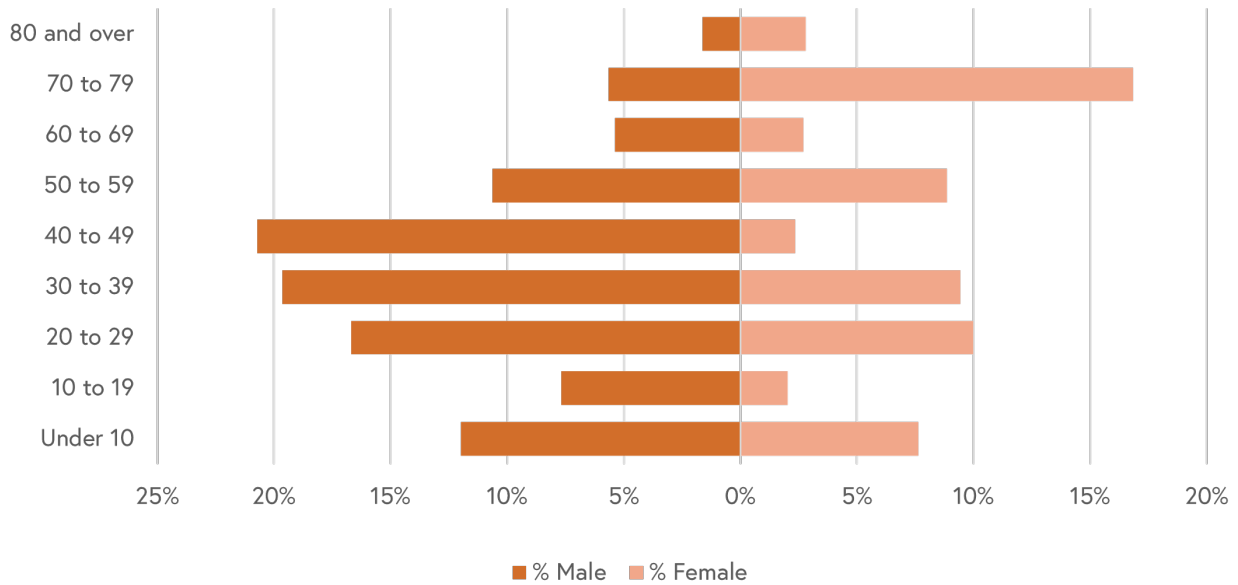
The United States Census Bureau has two major methods for collecting demographic information. The decennial census, required by the Constitution and conducted every ten years since 1790, is a short survey of every household in the country. The American Community Survey (ACS) is a longer form containing more questions, taken every year. It is published annually, and seeks to maintain accurate estimates by comparing the 1 year results with sets of 5 years. The decennial census has a smaller number of data points, like population, sex and race, with a lower margin of error. The ACS has a much larger number of data points (like social, economic and housing characteristics) and a wider margin of error. A mix of decennial census and ACS data is used to form the empirical basis for the Comprehensive Plan, to report a picture of the community as accurately as possible. This plan uses a combination of Decennial Census data and 2023 ACS 5 Year Estimates, which is the most recently available data as of the creation of this document.

Population Change Comparison

The graph below shows population change by percentages between 2013 and 2023 with comparisons to other neighboring localities in the region. Middletown had a growth of nearly 40% within the time period, gaining 457 residents. This represents an annual growth rate of 3.3%, far exceeding all neighboring localities. It should be noted that neighboring Frederick County gained nearly 14,000 residents within the same time period, representing a 17.5% increase.



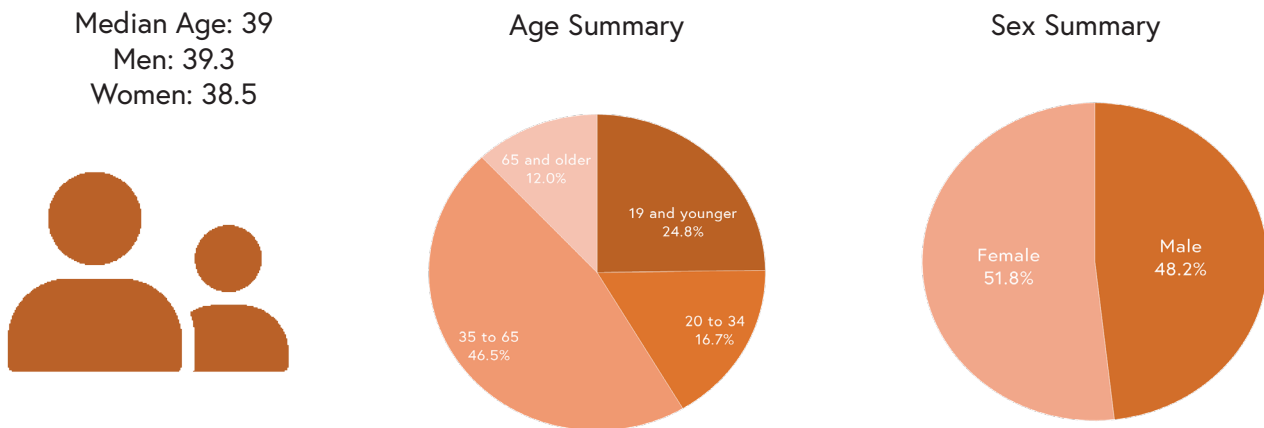
2013 & 2023 American Community Survey, B01003



2023 American Community Survey 5-Yr. Estimates, S0101

Age

The median age in the Town of Middletown is estimated at 39. For comparison, the median age in Virginia is almost the same at 38.8. The age pyramid above shows Middletown’s population grouped by sex and age category. Middletown’s population appears to have a mix of working age adults and older adults. For example, the median age for the 2010 American Community Survey estimates was 46 years old, in 2023 the median age was 39. With new subdivisions, it is possible many new families are arriving in Middletown and beginning to “show up” in the demographic data. It is not entirely clear why the population pyramid skews predominantly male for most age categories and is possible due to the margin of error, given that the American Community Survey shows that the population is around 4% more female than male in the community. Nevertheless, it is important to plan for all age groups and consider their needs as the Town makes investments for future generations.

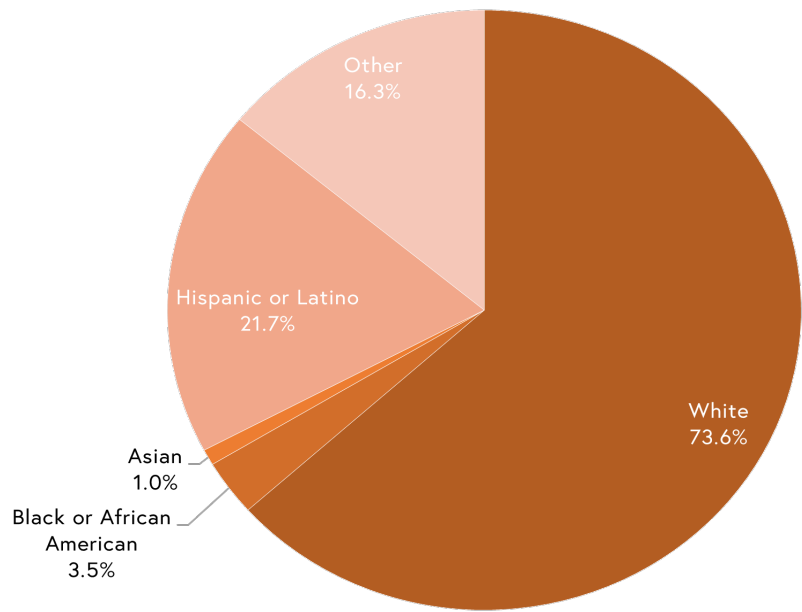


2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, DP05

Race and Ethnicity

According to 2023 American Community Survey data, 73.6% of Middletown identifies as “White alone,” while 3.5% identify as Black or African American. 16% of the population identifies as Other.

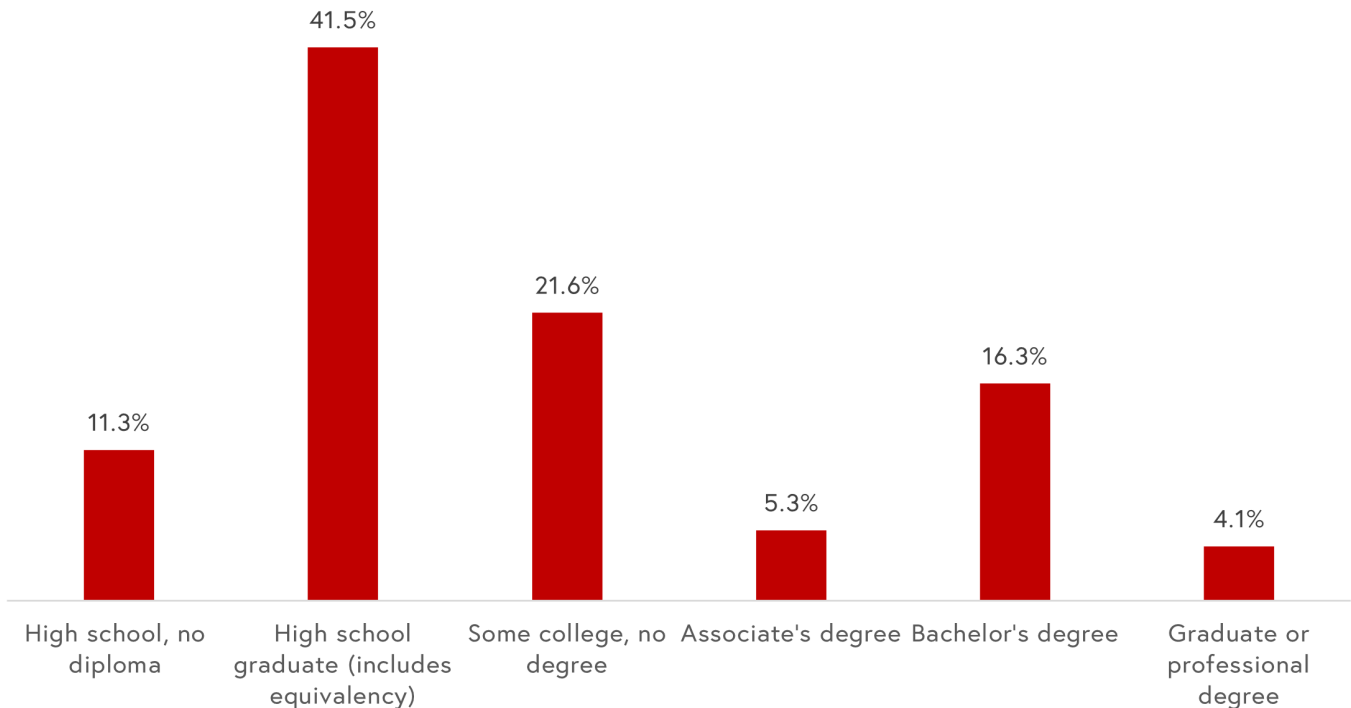
2023 American Community Survey estimates 21.7% of Middletown’s population identify as Hispanic or Latino.



2023 American Community Survey 5-Yr. Estimates, DP05

Educational Attainment

The population of Middletown that is over the age of 25 totals 1,174. Of this total, 88.8% are high school graduates or higher. However, only 21.6% of the population holds an Associates or Bachelor’s Degree and only 4.1% hold a Graduate or Professional Degree. Middletown’s economy has not been historically reliant on the need for higher education as a result of a primarily agricultural economy in the region. However, as technology advances, high speed internet access increases, or other resources become available, new businesses may locate in Middletown. Additionally, members of the community leaving to pursue higher education may choose to return to the County again with new skills and education to further develop and contribute to Middletown’s local economy. Nearby Laurel Ridge Community College is an excellent asset to the community to help provide educational opportunities for the community’s future growth.



2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, S1501

Housing

Household Size

Households are comprised of one or more people living together. This includes families related by birth, marriage, or adoption, as well as other combinations of people, such as roommates.

The total number of households in Middletown is estimated to be 716 with an average size of 2.65 people per household for Owner-occupied units and 2.22 for Renter-occupied units. If Middletown's population increases to the projected 1,978 by 2050, the Town will need approximately 130 additional housing units for a total of 846 households to maintain the same average size of people per housing unit.

Total Occupied Housing Units: 667

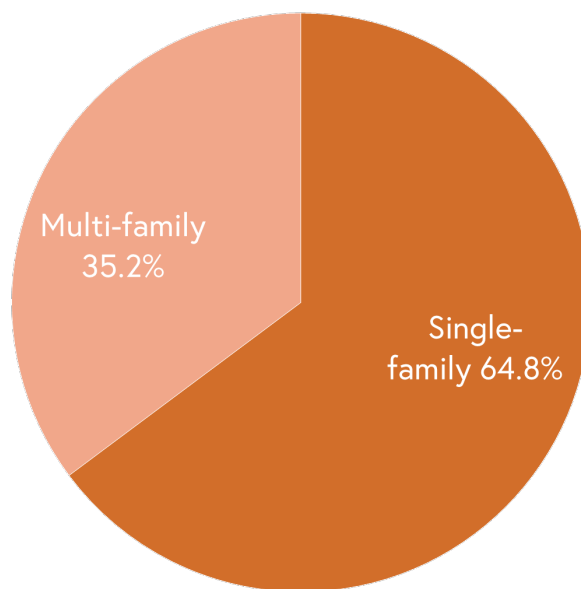
Average Size:

2.65 per Owner Occupied

2.22 per Renter Occupied

Housing Types

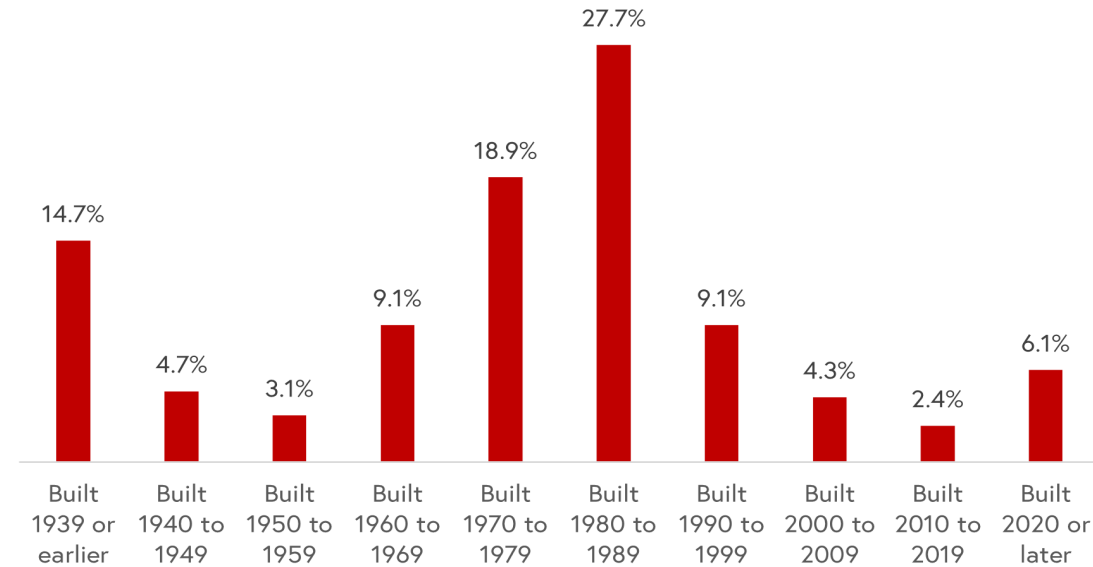
Single-family detached homes make up 64.8% of the housing stock in Middletown, or an estimated 464 units in total. The Town has some duplex homes estimated at 16 units, and 236 multi-family units (apartments), and 0 manufactured housing units. Compared to other localities, Middletown has a good percentage of multifamily units but distinctly lacks attached townhomes and other reasonably attainable forms of housing. The Comprehensive Plan is required by Virginia's State Code to provide for Manufactured Housing as a source of affordable housing. Ideally, housing options are diverse to meet many different lifestyle needs, such as downsizing, raising a family, or simply wanting to live in one type of housing over another. Determining suitable locations for additional multi-family or single-family attached homes would help further diversify the housing stock.



2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, S2504

Age of Housing

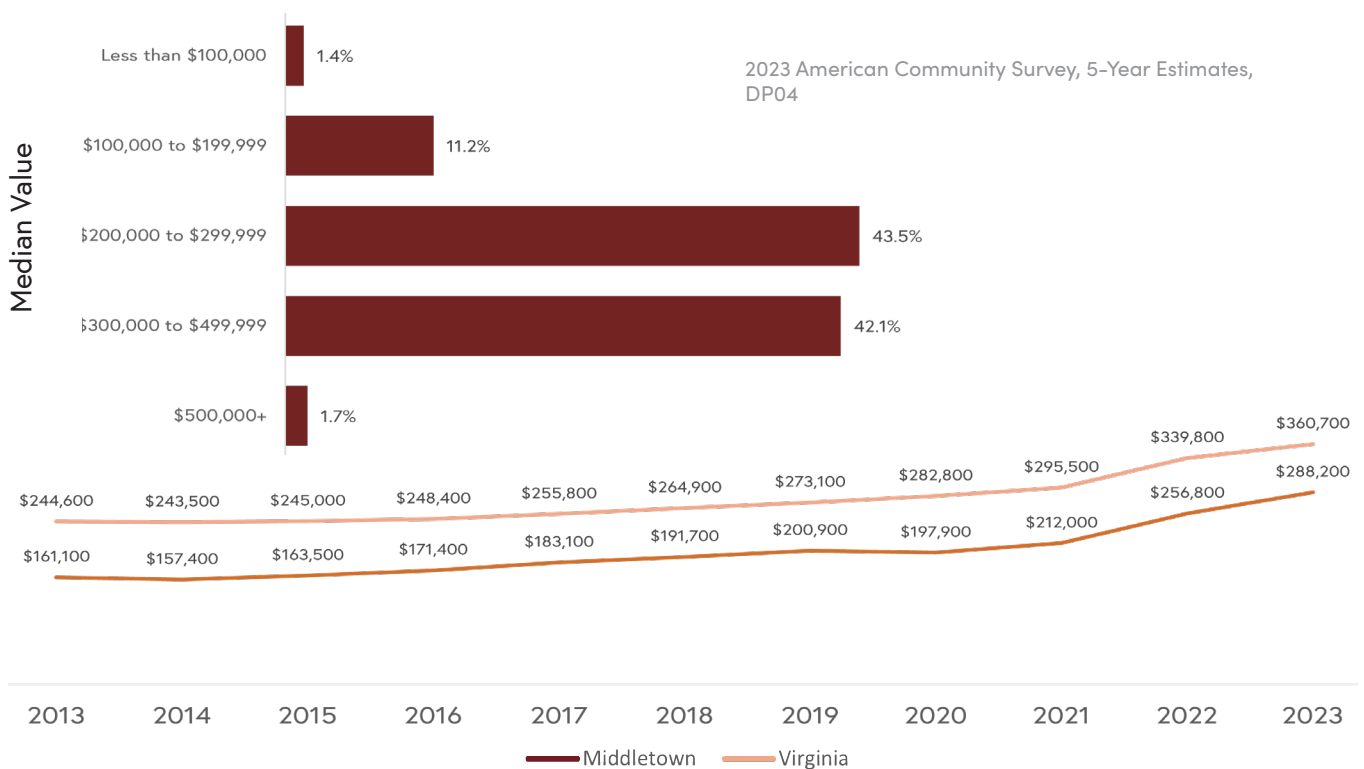
Middletown has roughly 716 housing units in total, about 667 of which are occupied. Middletown has a mix of older housing (60+ years old) and housing built towards the end of the 20th century. More homes were constructed in previous decades than are currently being constructed.



2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, DP04

Current Median Home Value & Over Time

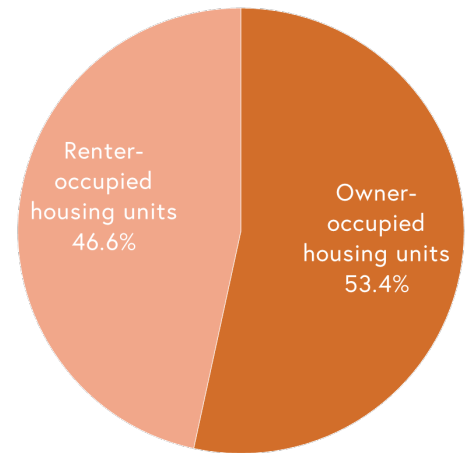
Of the 356 owner-occupied housing units, the median home value (including lot value, where applicable) was estimated at \$288,200 in 2023. Approximately 43.5% of homes have values between \$200,00 and \$299,999. For comparison, the median home value in Virginia overall was estimated at \$360,700, which makes Middletown a slightly more affordable place to live. However, in the future, as nearby metropolitan areas begin to grow, housing prices may begin to rise significantly if housing options aren't varied. The chart at the bottom of the page showing median value over time indicates that this trend may have already begun.



Owners & Renters

Homeownership is regarded as an effective way to “plant roots” in a community and build intergenerational wealth. It is also important to provide affordable, high-quality rental housing for young adults, families, older adults, and other residents who may not have the means to purchase a home or may not want to purchase a home.

Out of the 667 estimated occupied housing units in the Town, 53.4% are owner-occupied and 46.6% are renter-occupied. Middletown’s mix of housing is fairly standard for small towns in Virginia.



2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, S1101

Tenure

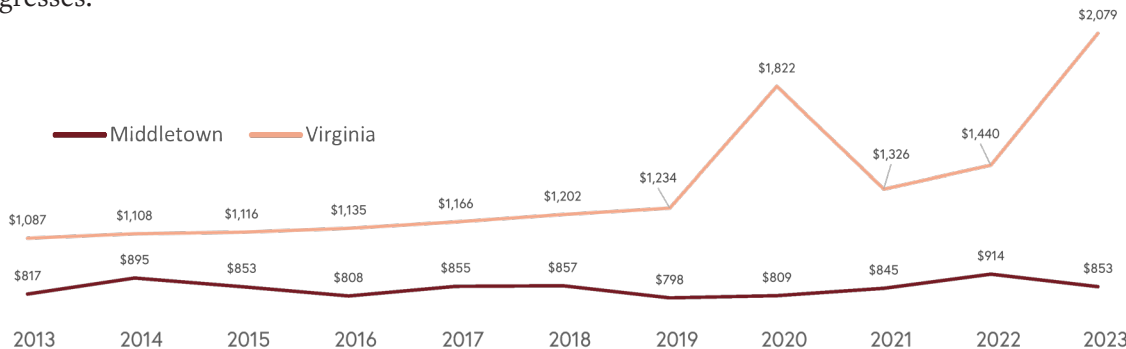
Ninety-three percent (93%) of the total 716 housing units in Middletown are either full time owner-occupied (53%) or renter-occupied (47%). There are an estimated 49 vacant units in the Town. The table below shows the change over the past decade, where the Town had over 100 more units than it had a decade ago, most of which were multifamily units. While the American Community Survey’s data has a wide margin of error, this is still an important data point to highlight for the Town. Having a diverse amount of types of housing available for ownership or for rent can build flexibility and resilience in the affordability of the housing market and provide pathways to homeownership opportunities for renters.

	2013		2023	
Owner Occupied - Full Time	334	69.3%	356	53.4%
Renter Occupied - Full Time	148	30.7%	311	46.6%
Vacant	40	7.2%	49	6.8%
a. For Rent	10	6.8%	17	5.2%
b. For Sale	0	0%	14	3.8%
c. Seasonal	16	2.9%	9	1.3%
d. Other	14	2.5%	9	1.3%
Total Units	552	-	667	-

2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Tables DP04, B25004

Median Gross Rent

Middletown’s median gross rent is estimated most recently at \$853. From the chart below, you can see that rent has stayed relatively constant compared to the State’s median in the same time period. This data may not represent the on-the-ground conditions for renters, and further examination may be needed as the planning process progresses.



2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, DP04

Median Monthly Housing Costs

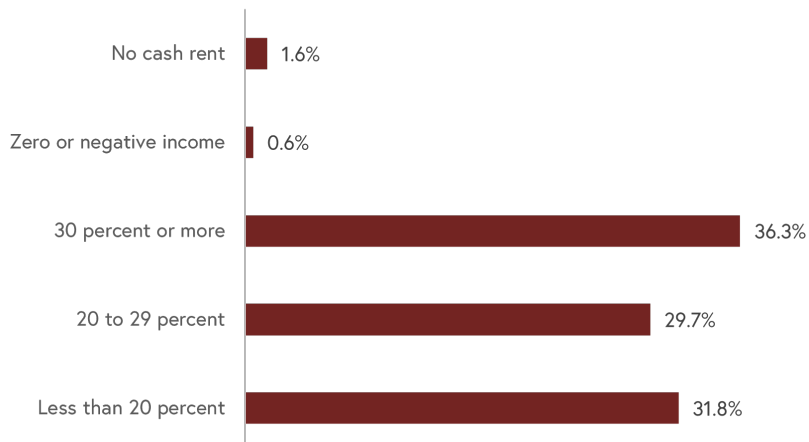
Middletown’s monthly housing costs are comparable to Strasburg, with more affordable rental units available. Compared to Frederick County, Winchester, or Front Royal, renter-occupied units pay substantially less. However, homeowners face similar costs to Winchester and Frederick County, and pay marginally more in monthly costs than Front Royal or Strasburg.



2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates Table S2503

Proportion of Income Spent on Housing Costs

A large proportion of Middletown households are considered cost burdened and spend 30% or more of their income on housing, accounting for 36.3% of all households. Additionally, a further 29.7% of households are approaching cost burdened, spending between 20 to 29% of their income on housing. If housing costs continue to rise, more members of the community will struggle afford life in the town.

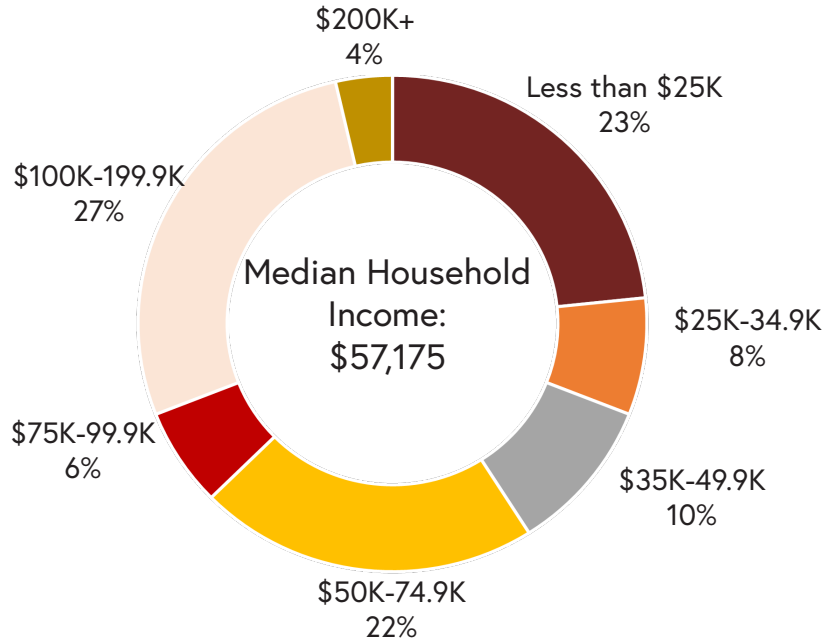


2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, S2503

Economy

Median Household Income

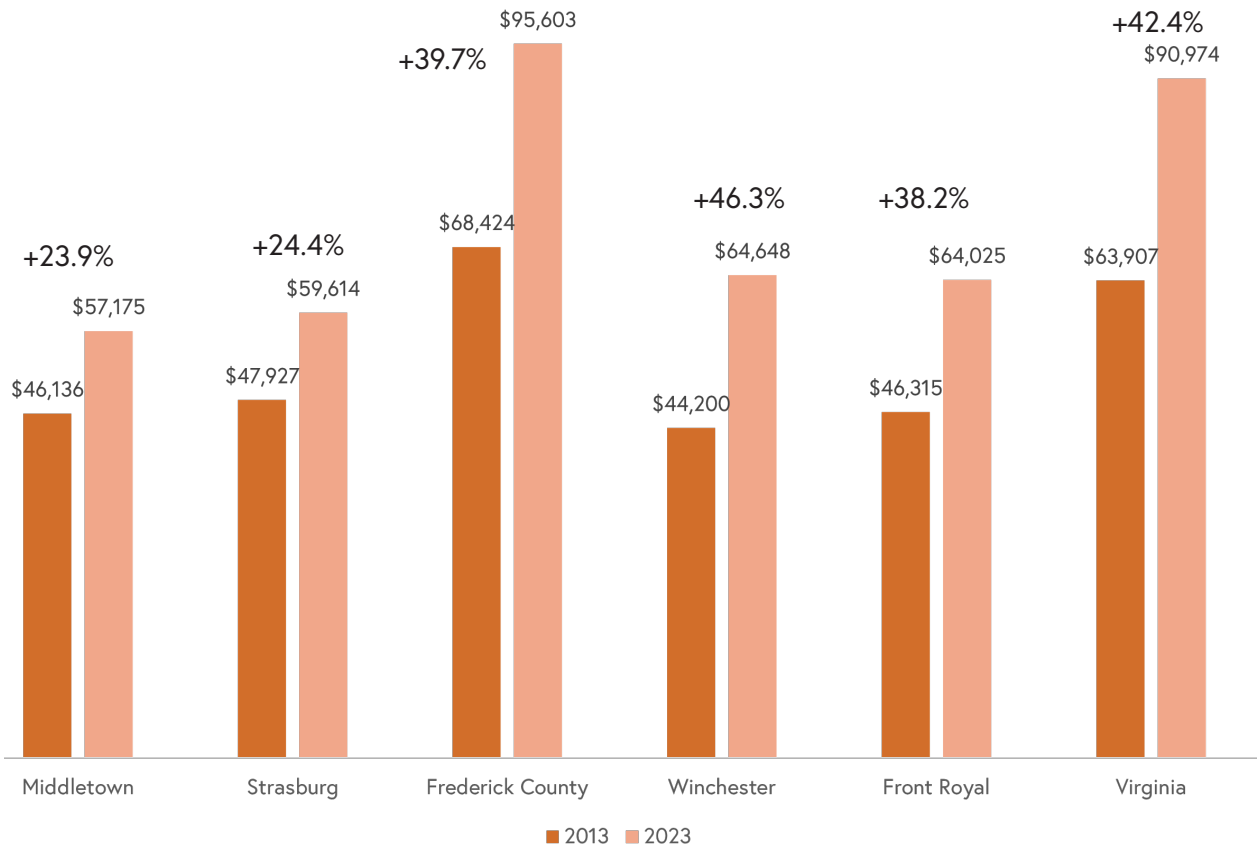
The median household income in Middletown is \$57,175, with nearly three quarters of households earning less than \$100,000. Middletown's median household income is about \$33,800 less than the statewide median of \$90,974.



2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, S1901

Median Household Income Comparison and Change Over Time

As shown in the bar graph below, median household income in Middletown increased 23.9% between 2013 and 2023 (ACS estimates, not accounting for inflation). Other localities in the region and the County have also experienced a growth in median household income, most notably Winchester at 46.3%. However, the median household incomes for towns in the region are still less than the overall statewide median household income.

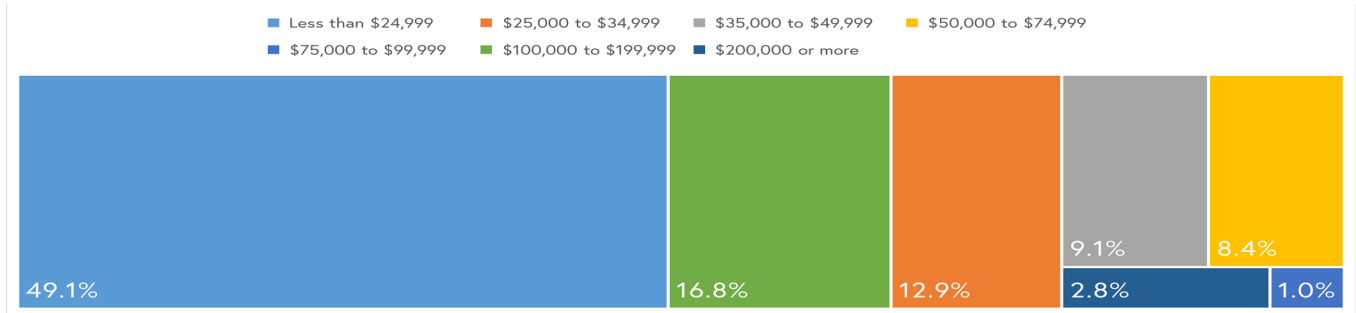


2013 & 2023 American Community Surveys, 5-Year Estimates, S1901

Individual Income

The breakdown of Middletown residents individual incomes by percentage of population is displayed below, depicting the median individual income in Middletown by percentage in 2023. Nearly half of all individuals in Middletown earn less than \$25,000, which is approximately the median income for individuals in the town. The next largest income bracket in Middletown are individuals earning greater than \$100,000, with approximately 17% of the population earning between \$100,000 and \$200,000 and a further 2.8% earning greater than \$200,000. Roughly 80% of individuals in Middletown earn less than \$100,000.

Individual Income by Percentage of Population in 2023



2013–2023 American Community Survey, 5–Year Estimates, S1901

Individual Income Over Time in Middletown and Virginia

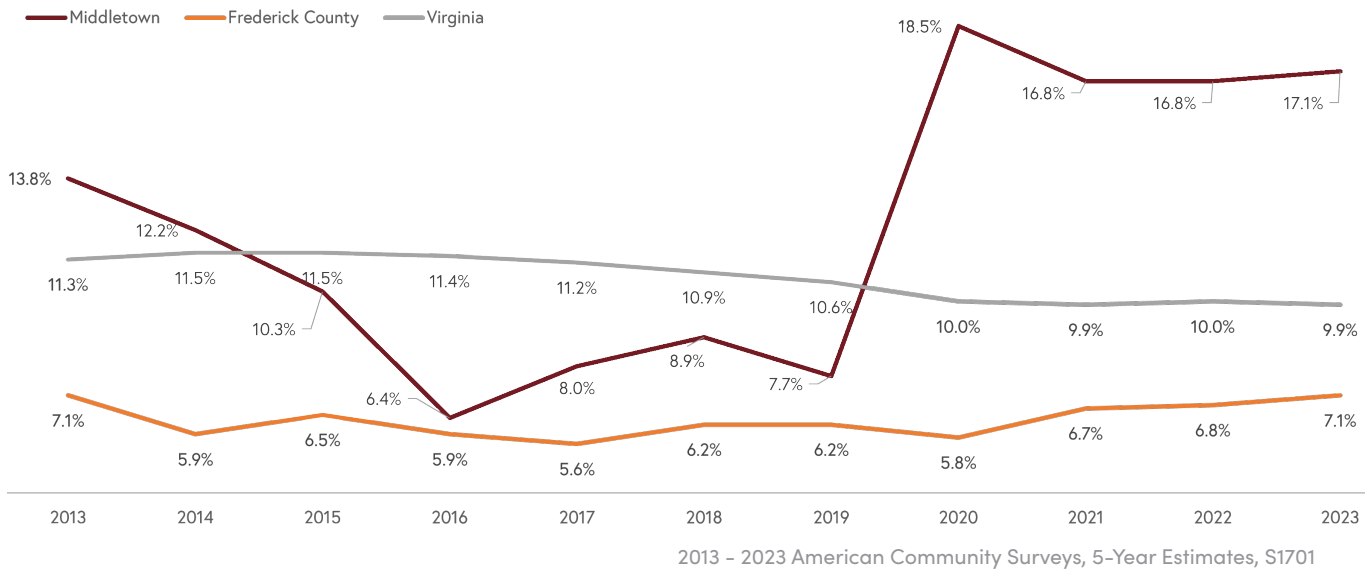


2013–2023 American Community Survey, 5–Year Estimates, S1901

The median individual income in Middletown has seen some significant change over the past ten years. Notably, in 2015, the Town’s median individual income had nearly reached the state’s median individual income. However, events such as the COVID-19 pandemic led to sharp declines in individual income following 2020. Since then, individual incomes have begun to climb to levels that were previously seen in the Town, but further economic development may be required to ensure that individual income continues to grow in Middletown.

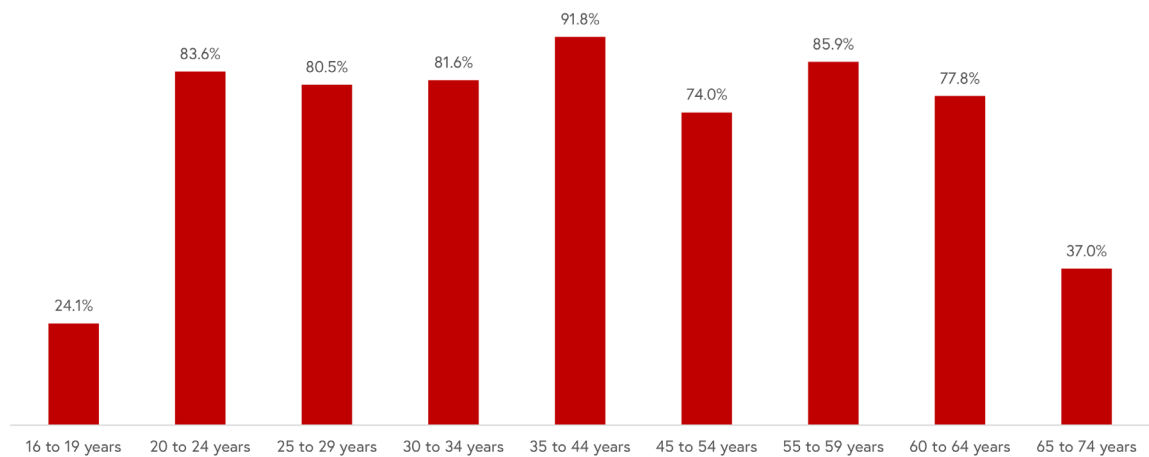
% Below Poverty Level

Poverty status is determined for individuals based on their annual income. The chart below shows Middletown and Frederick County's percentage of individuals under the poverty level over time compared to that of Virginia overall. It is notable that Middletown's poverty rate more than doubled in 2020 and has yet to come down to its rate prior to 2020. The Town's higher than average poverty level may be due to lasting impacts to the retail market following the COVID-19 pandemic. The United Way publishes a service titled ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) which estimates the household survival budget required to meet the minimum cost of household necessities (housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, technology) by County. The data available for Frederick County revealed that to support a family of four, both parents would need to be working and earning at least \$22 per hour, full time.



Labor Force Participation Rate

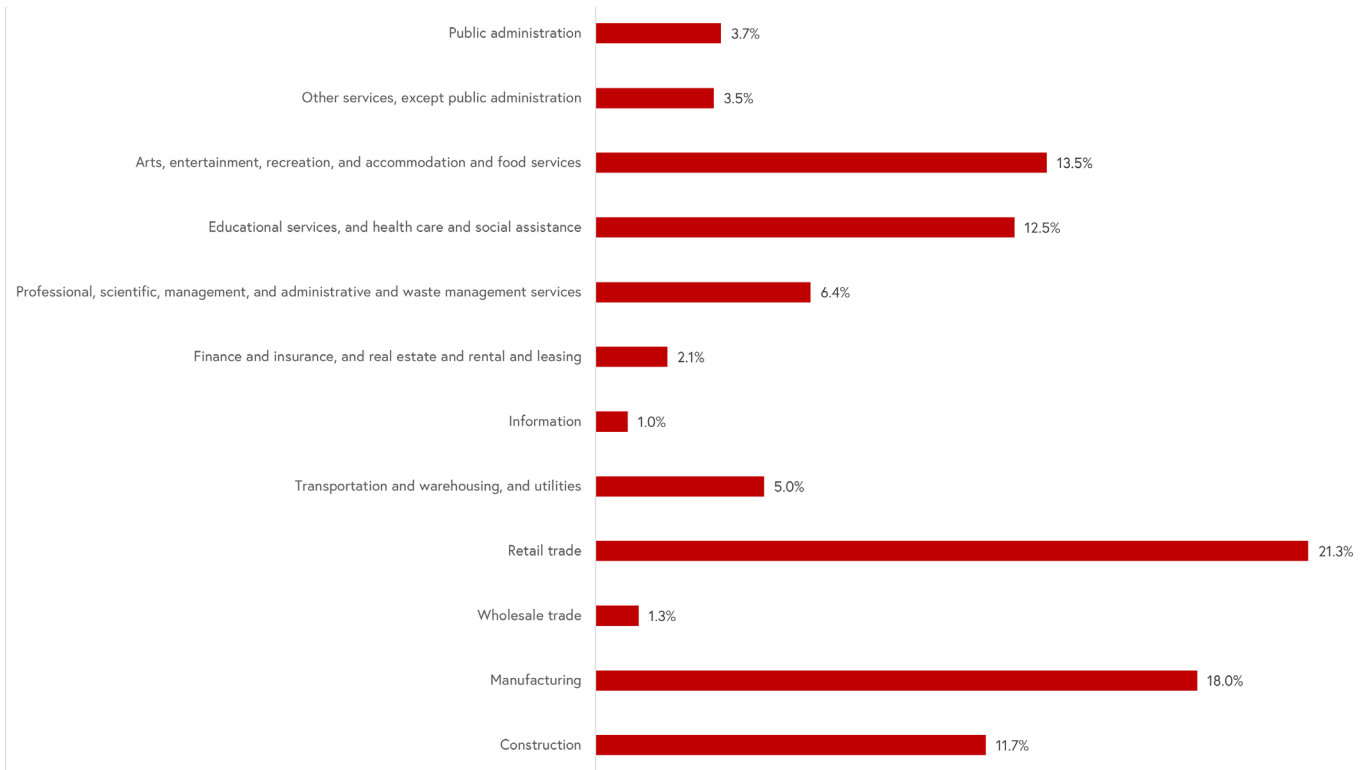
The Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) is the percentage of all people of working age who are either working or actively seeking work (Employed + Unemployed). Middletown's LFPR is 70%, which is above the national rate of 63.5% and Virginia's at 65.6%. The chart below shows the percentage of each age cohort's percentage of the population participating in the labor force. Middletown has an exceptionally high labor force participation rate for workers between the ages of 20 to 44, but a very low participation rate for teens between 16 and 19.



2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, S2301

Employment by Industry

Most people in the Town are employed in Retail Trade. Notably, many people in the Town are employed in Manufacturing or Educational Services. Middletown has a good mix of employment, however, there may be issues of sustainable wages for employment, as noted by Middletown’s poverty level. Employment data is difficult to track and is subject to seasonal shifts and under reporting.



2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates. S2405

Major Employers

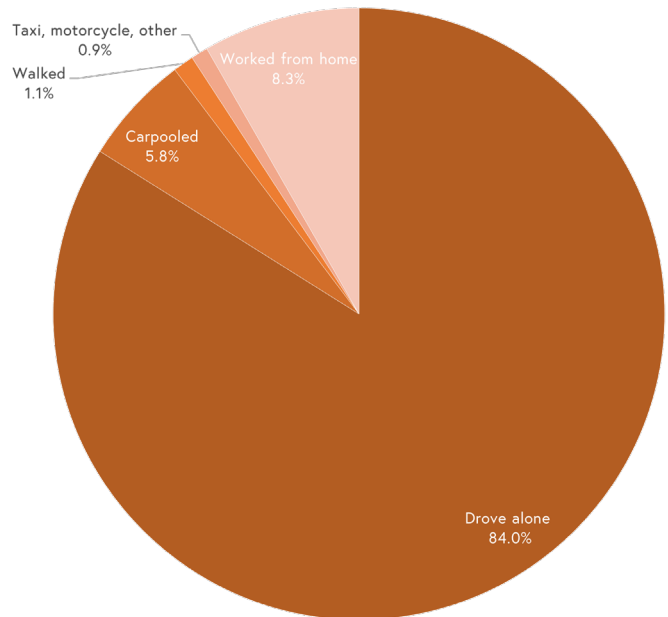
The Top Ten Employers is adapted from the VA Employment Commission’s Frederick County Community Profile, dated 1/22/25. Please note that data for major employers for the immediate vicinity of Middletown are not currently available, yet employment for Frederick County may indicate commuting trends and future growth. Specific employment for firms is not available.

Business/Organization Name	Rank FY24	Employees FY24
Amazon Fulfillment Services, Inc.	1	1000+
Frederick County School Board	2	1000+
Navy Federal Credit Union	3	1000+
Trex Company Inc & Subsid.	4	1000+
U.S. Department of Homeland Defense	5	1000+
Wal Mart	6	1000+
County of Frederick	7	1000+
H.P. Hood, Inc.	8	500-999
The Home Depot	9	500-999
Newell Brands Industries	10	500-999

Transportation

Commuting

84% of Middletown residents get to work by commuting in a car, truck, or van. This is typical of other localities. 8.4% of residents reported that they worked from home, while 5.8% reported that they carpooled to work. Only 1% of residents walk to their place of employment. Although Middletown is a small locality, if there is further growth and development it may burden the local road system with greater traffic. If development is targeted around more dense areas of the Town, there is the opportunity to allow for a greater share of the community walking and bicycling to daily needs, or employment.

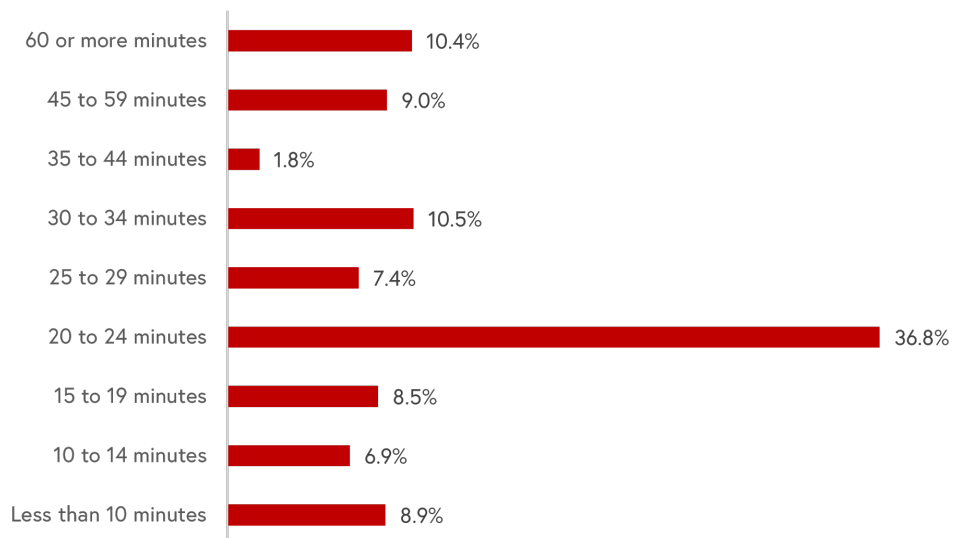


2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, S0801

Travel Time to Work

The largest percentage of Middletown’s workforce is commuting between 20 and 24 minutes to work (36.8%). 68.5% of Middletown’s commuters travel less than 30 minutes to work. This may indicate that most workers are employed within nearby population centers such as Winchester or Front Royal.

However, nearly 20% of workers travel more than 45 minutes to work, indicating employment in larger metropolitan areas.

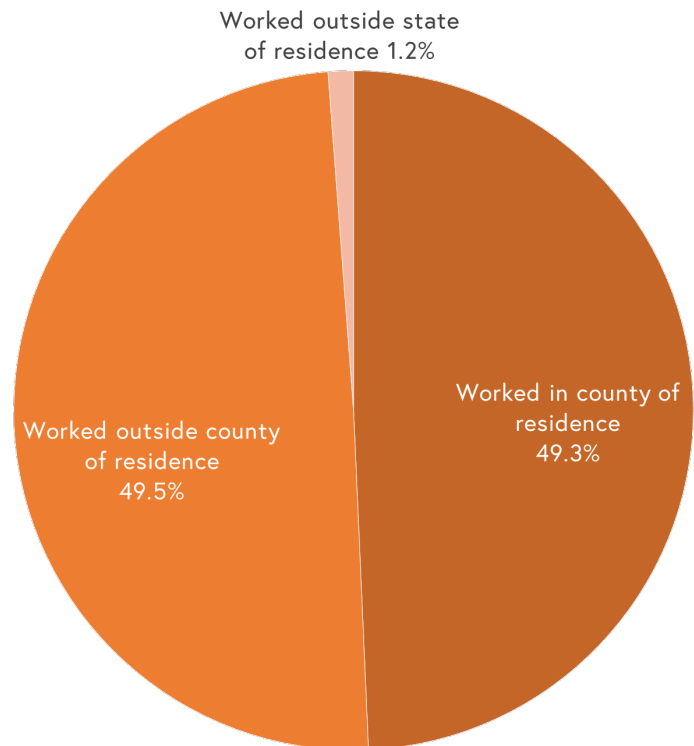


2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, S0801

Place of Work

When commuting times are cross-referenced with the place of work, it is noticeable that 49.3% of the population works in their County of residence.

Middletown’s regional location between Woodstock, Winchester, Strasburg, and Front Royal makes it an ideal location for workers who work in those localities.



2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, S0801

Commuting To/From

The tables below are produced by the U.S. Census Bureau’s “OnTheMap” application, which gives insight into where employed workers are commuting to (from Middletown), and commuting from (to Middletown). There are a total of 935 people employed within Middletown, with 538 people commuting to Middletown. Employment is generally spread throughout the region with a much larger outflow of workers than inflow, showing the Town is more of a “bedroom community.” Employment in Winchester, Front Royal, and Strasburg indicates that Middletown residents primarily serve as regional workers supporting nearby population centers.

Employed in Middletown, Live Outside	Employed and Live in Middletown	Live in Middletown, Employed Outside
538	17	656

Places Residents are Commuting To	Workers	%
City of Winchester	131	19.5%
Town of Front Royal	23	3.4%
Middletown	17	2.5%
Town of Strasburg	12	1.8%
Town of Leesburg	11	1.6%
Chantilly	10	1.5%
Arlington	9	1.3%
Town of Warrenton	9	1.3%
Town of Woodstock	9	1.3%
Reston	8	1.2%
Other Locations	434	64.5%

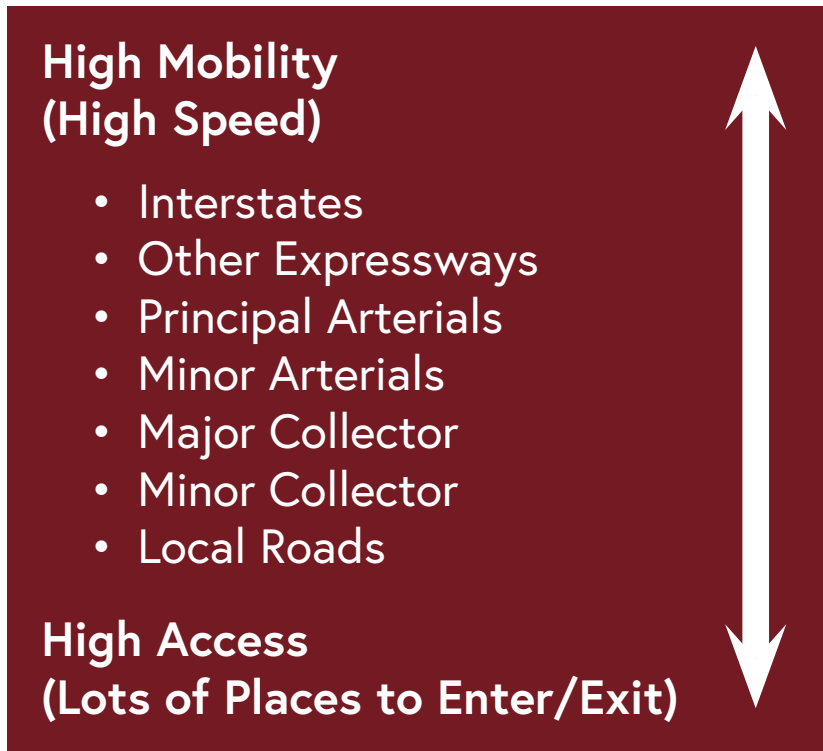
Places Residents are Commuting From	Workers	%
Town of Strasburg	32	5.8%
City of Winchester	32	5.8%
Town of Front Royal	21	3.8%
Middletown	17	3.1%
Town of Woodstock	8	1.4%
Town of Stephens City	7	1.3%
Ashburn	5	0.9%
Shawneeland	5	0.9%
Town of Luray	4	0.7%
New Baltimore	4	0.7%
Other Locations	420	75.7%

U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, 2022.

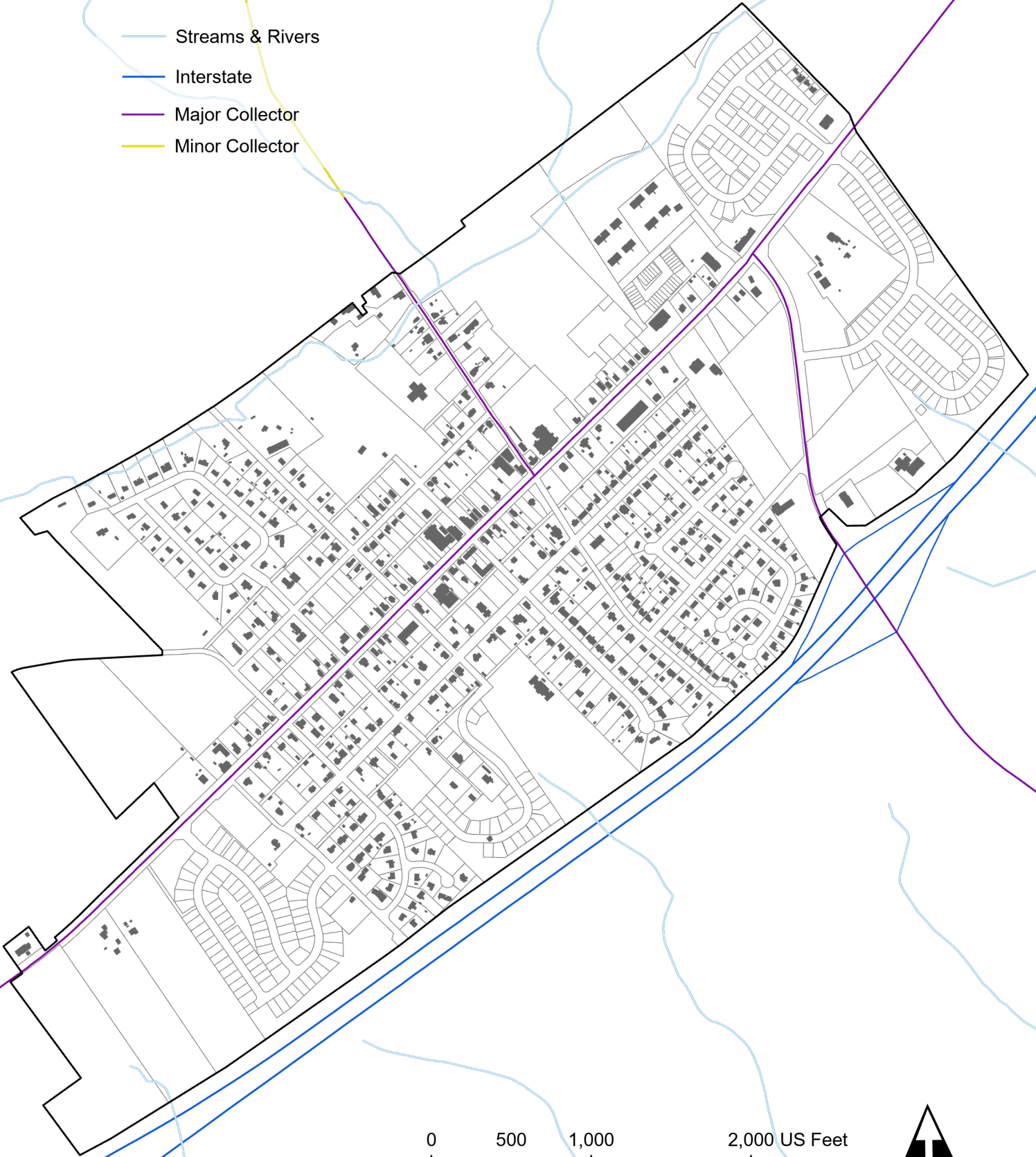
Functional Classification

The Federal Highway Administration (FWA) classifies roads based on mobility (how fast vehicles can move from one point to another) and access (the number of opportunities for vehicles to enter or leave that road). These designations influence decisions regarding maintenance and infrastructure projects. The Virginia Department of Transportation owns and maintains the Town's local roads due to the community's size.

Roads are designated with one of the following classifications:



- Streams & Rivers
- Interstate
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector



0 500 1,000 2,000 US Feet



Data Source: Virginia Department of Transportation
Existing Conditions

Annual Average Daily Traffic

Annual average daily traffic (AADT) is a measure of how many vehicles travel a section of a road each day, expressed as an average value from traffic counts taken over the course of a year. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) will generally prioritize maintenance or upgrade projects for roads with higher AADT.

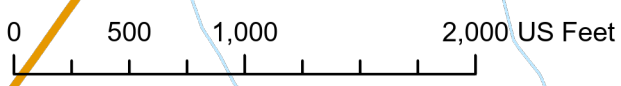
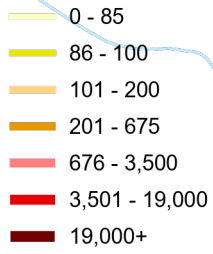
Route 11 (Main Street) and Route 42 (West Reservoir Road) are the Town's most heavily traveled roads, excluding Interstate 81.



Route 11 / Valley Pike, looking north.



Route 11 / Main St, looking north.



Data Source: Virginia Department of Transportation
Existing Conditions

Crashes

The following map shows the amount of recorded crashes along Middletown's roads. Notably, almost all areas of Middletown experience crashes. Typically, crashes are recorded along the highest traveled corridors, but there are some notable patterns. Intersections, in particular, have crashes recorded even in neighborhoods. Middletown's most traveled roads are where the highest amount of crashes occur, with strong clusters occurring along Reliance Road and Main Street. The VDOT's crash data map has not been separated by severity to produce the map of crashes. This Comprehensive Plan will seek to proactively plan to eliminate crashes of all types, saving life and property from harm. It is important to note that this data only records accidents that result in injury, death, or property damage of at least \$1,500. Minor accidents and those occurring on private property, such as within a parking lot, are not taken into account when collecting this information.

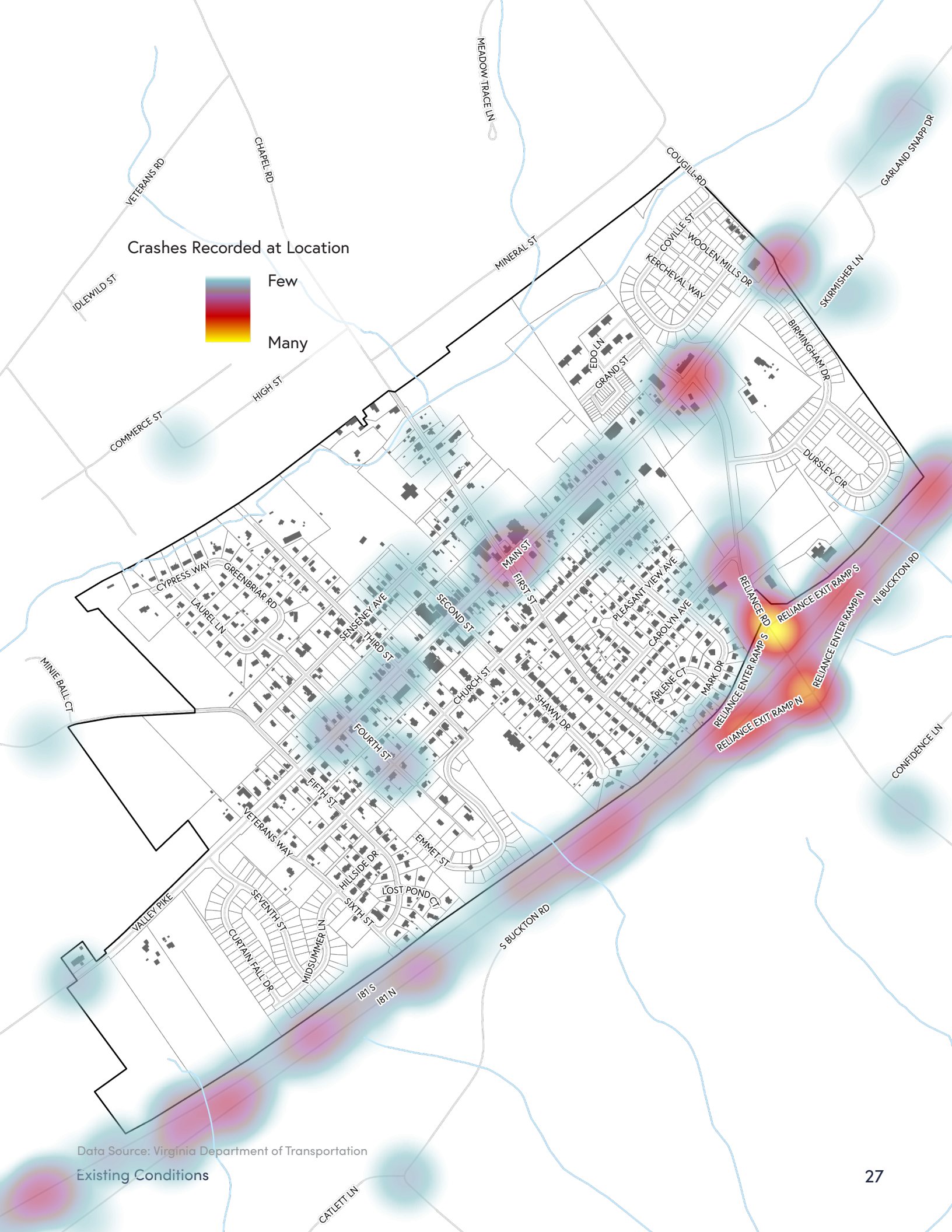
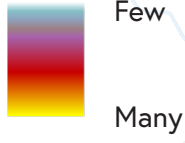


Safe Systems = Safe Mobility



From Vision Zero Network

Crashes Recorded at Location



Data Source: Virginia Department of Transportation

Existing Conditions

Rural Long Range Transportation Plan

VDOT worked with the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission, which serves as the Planning District Commission (PDC) for the region, to develop the 2035 Rural Long Range Transportation Plan (RLRTP). This plan was released in 2011, and covers the geographic areas of Shenandoah, Frederick, Clarke, Warren, and Page Counties as well as their incorporated towns, such as Middletown. As is the case with a Comprehensive Plan, the RLRTP is visionary in nature and provides recommendations that are not financially constrained.

The map below highlights the transportation system deficiencies in Middletown identified in the RLRTP. These deficiencies and recommendations are outlined in the table on the following pages.

*A potential project listed on the RLRTP is not guaranteed to be completed by VDOT. Through the comprehensive planning process, the Town will identify priority transportation projects using the RLRTP as a *guide*.

The RLRTP can be accessed at: <http://nsvregion.org/documents.html>

RLRTP #	Road	Segment Start	Segment End	Deficiency Type	Recommendation
5	I-81 / I-66	Warren County Line	Winchester MPO Border	Operation	Long-term widen to rural six-lane roadway with median (project in environmental stage)
6	US-11 (Valley Pike)	Warren County Line	SCL of Middletown	Operation	Long-term adjacent segment of I-81 is to be widened, monitor this segment for need of capacity improvements.
7	US-11 (Valley Pike)	NCL of Middletown	VA 735	Operation	Long-term adjacent segment of I-81 is to be widened, monitor this segment for need of capacity improvements.
11	VA 627 (Chapel Rd.)	VA 635 N.	WCL of Middletown	Safety	Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (including full-width lanes and shoulders).
12	VA 627 (Chapel Rd)	VA 625 N	VA 635 N	Safety	Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (including full-width lanes and shoulders).
13	VA 735 (Salem Church Road)	US 11	0.51 M. E. US 11	Safety	Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (including full-width lanes and shoulders).
14	VA 735 (Salem Church Road)	0.51 M.E. US 11	VA 636 N	Safety	Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (including full-width lanes and shoulders).
30	US 11 (Valley Pike)	SCL of Middletown	NCL of Middletown	Operation	Long-term adjacent segment of I-81 is to be widened, monitor this segment for need of capacity improvements. (Middletown)
31	VA T-1107 (Chapel Rd.)	SCL of Middletown	NCL of Middletown	Safety	Long-term adjacent segment of I-81 is to be widened, monitor this segment for need of capacity improvements. (Middletown)



Environment

Soils

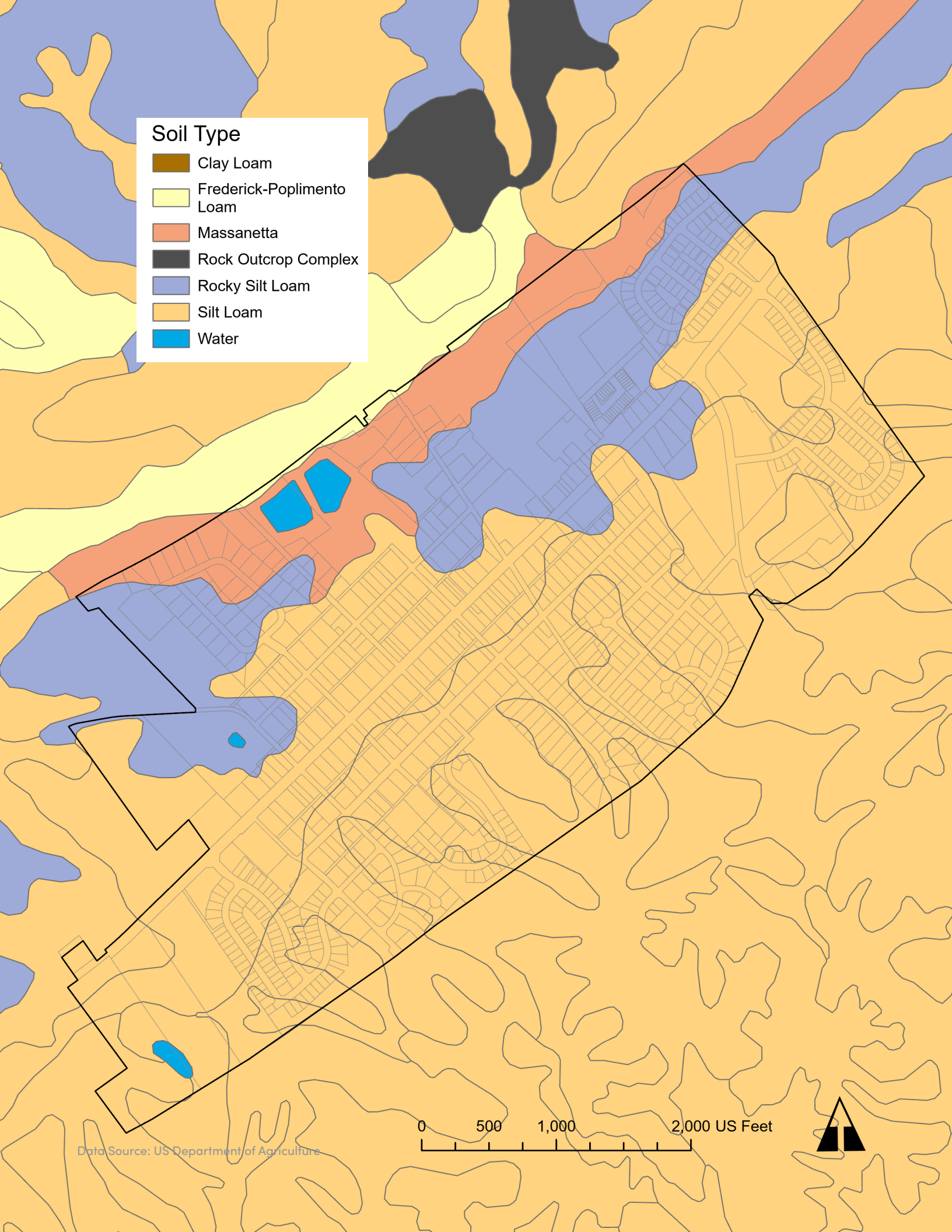
The United States Natural Resource Conservation Service conducts soil surveys, which outline soil types and characteristics that are present in certain areas. The soils present in Middletown are:

- Silt Loam - Well draining soil typically found in areas where limestone has weathered. This type of soil is suitable for Agriculture, Forestry, Engineering, Irrigation, Urban/Recreational, and Wildlife. The most productive trees grown in these soil areas are yellow poplars, eastern white pines, and Virginia pines.
- Rocky Silt Loam - These soil areas are similar to Silt Loam soils but contain a greater quantity of limestone and other materials. This soil type is prevalent in the Shenandoah Valley and are frequently cleared for agricultural production.
- Massanetta - Massanetta soil are well drained and formed in alluvial material eroded from soils formed in weathered limestone and shale. Massanetta is suitable for Agriculture, Forestry, Engineering, Urban/Recreational, and Wildlife. The most productive trees are sweetgum, Virginia pine, and northern red oak.
- Frederick-Poplimento Loam - A small portion of the Town lies in a Frederick-Poplimento Loam soil area. This soil type is a mix of Frederick and Poplimento Loams that have similar characteristics to the silt loams listed above.

These have been grouped by soil type and presented in a simplified map to the right. Soils range in depth to bedrock from 35 to 68 inches. When erosion and sediment control plans and stormwater management plans are reviewed during the development review process, the soil type and depth are important for determining the rate of stormwater infiltration into the soil and the amount of runoff that may result from development.

Soil Type

- Clay Loam
- Frederick-Poplimento Loam
- Massanetta
- Rock Outcrop Complex
- Rocky Silt Loam
- Silt Loam
- Water



0 500 1,000 2,000 US Feet



Data Source: US Department of Agriculture

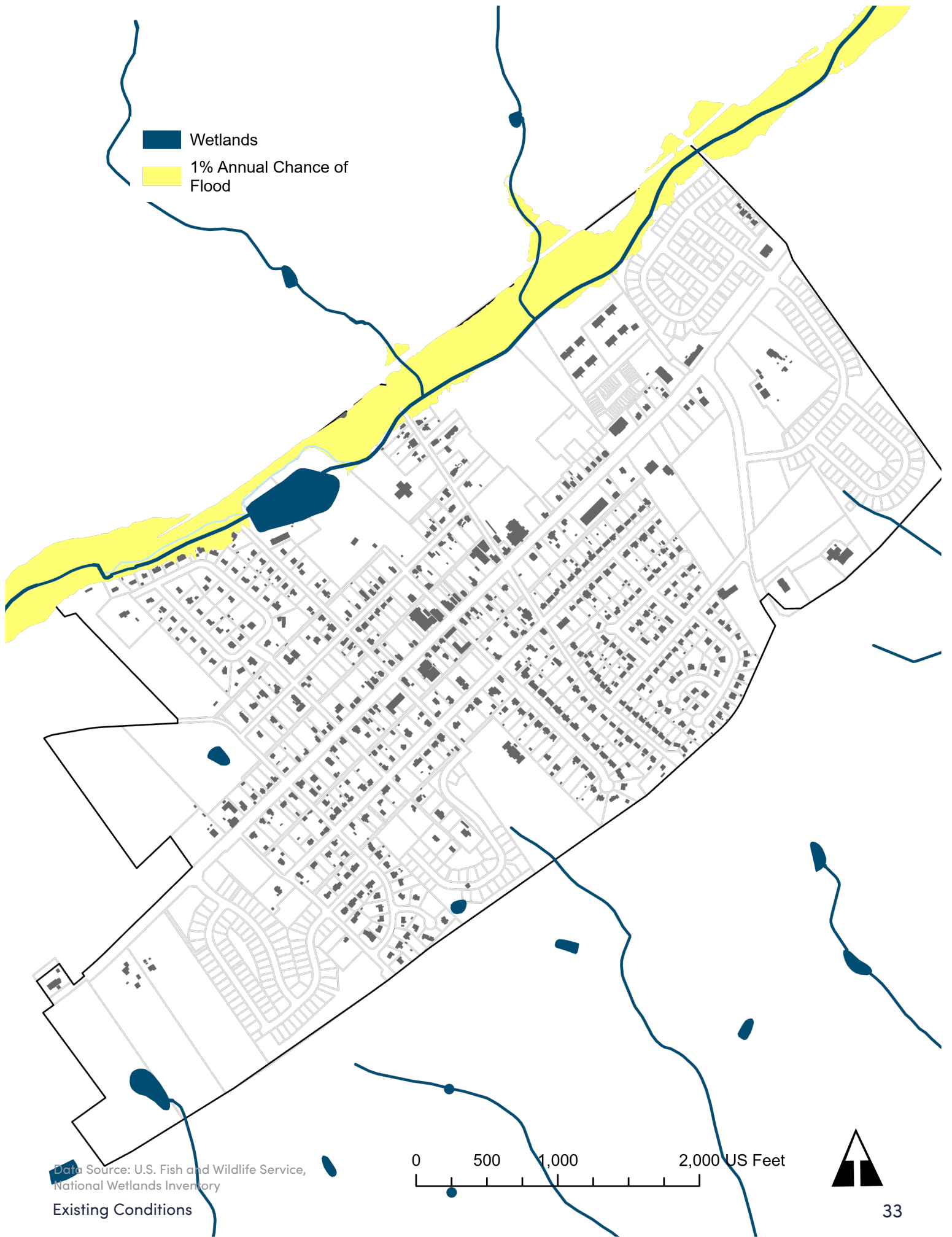
Wetlands & Floodplains

Wetlands are defined as areas that are wet or have wet soils during some part of the growing season. The map to the right displays the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wetlands Inventory records of wetland locations as well as the annual flood chance according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Wetlands have been historically considered to be wasted land area and were often filled in or drained to make the land developable. However, research has showed that wetlands are home to diverse populations of mammals, waterfowl, and marine life. In addition to providing habitat, many plant and animal species are only present in wetlands, which makes them an important part of regional ecosystems. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that Virginia has lost 42% of all Wetlands acreage between 1780-1980.

Additional environmental benefits to humans are wetlands ability to naturally improve water quality. Densely vegetated wetlands act as a filter by trapping sediments and nutrients before they flow into local waterbodies. Wetlands can also help prevent flooding and erosion with their sponge-like soils soaking up flood water.

While the National Wetlands Inventory is generally accurate, there are still some wetlands that are not mapped. When development occurs, surveys must take place that delineate all wetlands present on any given property.

Due to the high importance of wetlands, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) requires that a Virginia Water Protection (VWP) permit be obtained before disturbing a wetland or stream by clearing, filling, excavating, draining, or ditching.



Data Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
National Wetlands Inventory

Existing Conditions

Built Environment

Points of Interest

Community facilities in Middletown include government buildings, emergency resources, and the community park. These facilities are funded wholly or in-part by tax dollars, and they are accessible to the community at-large or otherwise provide essential services for life in Middletown. On the map to the right, there are also some important “Tourism” venues identified, such as the National Park Visitors Center and the War Memorial. These are some of the places that Middletown builds its community and quality of life, hence their inclusion alongside typical public community facilities.

Other services included in the map include veterinary services and educational facilities. These are privately owned businesses that provide services to Middletown residents and visitors. These resources are unique and make the Town a more desirable place to visit or reside within, particularly for those who are in need of, or provide these types of services.



- Education
- Government
- Medical
- Park
- Tourism



Existing Conditions

Historic District

The Middletown Historic District was registered to the National Register of Historic Places in 2003. The location is primarily focused along Main Street (U.S. Rt. 11) with properties located along Church Street, Senseney Avenue, as well as First, Third, Fourth, and Sixth Streets. According to the National Register nomination, there are 233 contributing buildings that are primarily Greek revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, or Bungalow/Craftsman. The nomination notes that resources include more than a dozen buildings that incorporate late-eighteenth century log construction.

Middletown's rich history began along the Great Wagon Road, later called the Valley Pike, and now known as U.S. Route 11. The Town was officially established by the Virginia General Assembly in 1794 and chartered by Frederick County in 1796. During the Civil War, Middletown was a prosperous trading center for the Shenandoah Valley, known as the "breadbasket of the Confederacy." Military activity was present in and around the town, culminating into the Battle of Cedar Creek in October of 1864, resulting in a strategic Union victory. After the war, residents of Middletown petitioned the Virginia General Assembly for incorporation in 1882, becoming an incorporated town with a mayor and council.



The Wayside Inn





Data Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Existing Conditions

0 500 1,000 2,000 US Feet

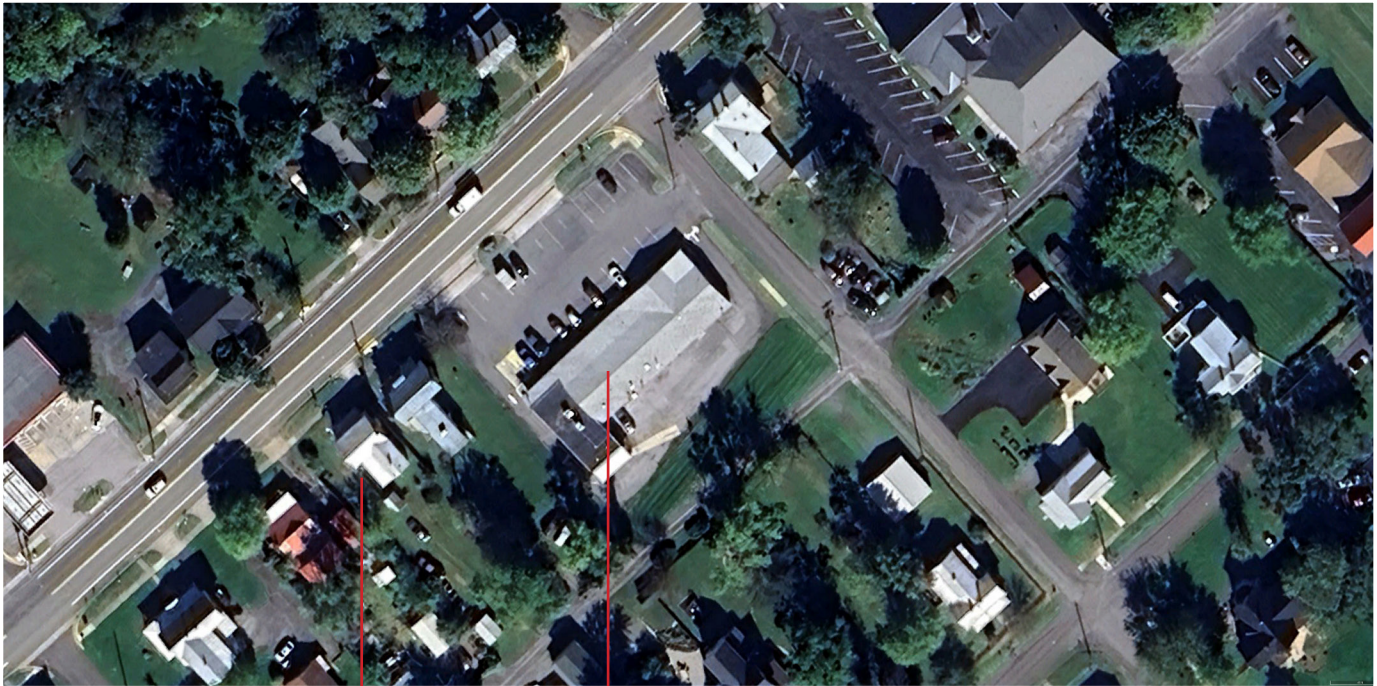


Existing Zoning

Zoning regulations are laws that determine how land can be used in certain areas, as well as requirements for the form of development. Middletown's Zoning Ordinance outlines zoning districts, each of which has its own regulations for uses, structures, landscaping buffer areas, setbacks, or other requirements.

The majority of Middletown is currently zoned R-1 for low density residential. There are several areas with MTND (Middletown Traditional Neighborhood Design - R-4) zoning for general residential uses, including housing, civic and open space, and certain businesses at a higher density. There are several areas along Main Street and on major corridors that are zoned for business (B-1 or B-2).

As Middletown recommends changes in land use through the Comprehensive Planning process, updating the Zoning Ordinance is an essential step in implementing these changes. Most Zoning Ordinances throughout Virginia and the United States are full of outdated requirements from past decades that sought to put extensive controls on where development could go and what requirements it needed to follow. Historically, those controls were often designed to segregate higher income from lower income areas or white residential areas from black residential areas. Beloved shops or restaurants in historic buildings could not be built today under current Zoning Regulations, due to parking requirements for instance. If the most loved parts of Middletown were built in the past and are seen as the safest places to walk around and enjoy your time, why would a community want to make building in the same way illegal? This is the type of question the comprehensive plan will explore in developing recommendations for goals, objectives, and strategies.

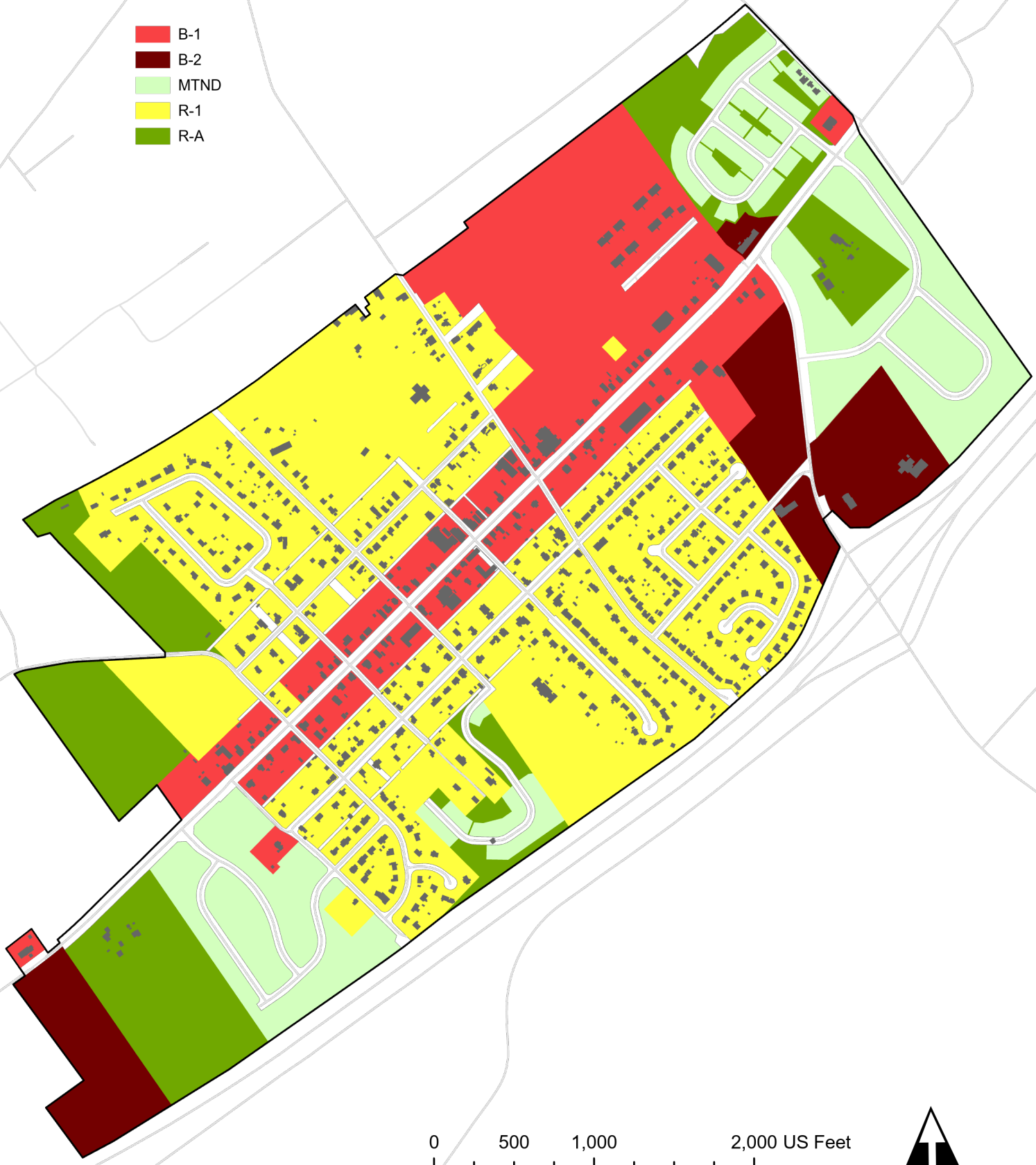


Historic residential properties that predate the Zoning Ordinance.

Post Office built to the Zoning Ordinance regulations.

What if every historic structure became a parking lot with a building set-back from the road?

- B-1
- B-2
- MTND
- R-1
- R-A



0 500 1,000 2,000 US Feet



Existing Conditions

Existing Land Use

It is important to examine how Middletown’s land is currently being used to ensure that it is efficient and productive. Efficiency and productive generally means that in areas where growth and development is planned, it is occurring as expected. A hypothetical example of inefficient land use would be if a historic commercial building along Main Street was replaced with a self-storage business. Self-storage businesses, while useful, are often “passive” meaning that they do not have a lot of people coming in or out of them like a restaurant does, meaning it is “inefficient” use of the land in that location along Main Street.

An important aspect of land use planning is ensuring consistency of uses, particularly when related to zoning. For example, many single family homes are located within the B-1 Commercial Zoning District, which is permitted according to the Middletown Zoning Ordinance but is generally not the intent of a business district. A mix of uses is to be expected in a historic town, as towns such as Middletown were founded prior to the advent of zoning. To embrace Middletown’s past, a strategy may be to reform zoning in the Town to account for the mix of uses and encourage new infill development that adds to Middletown’s historic charm.

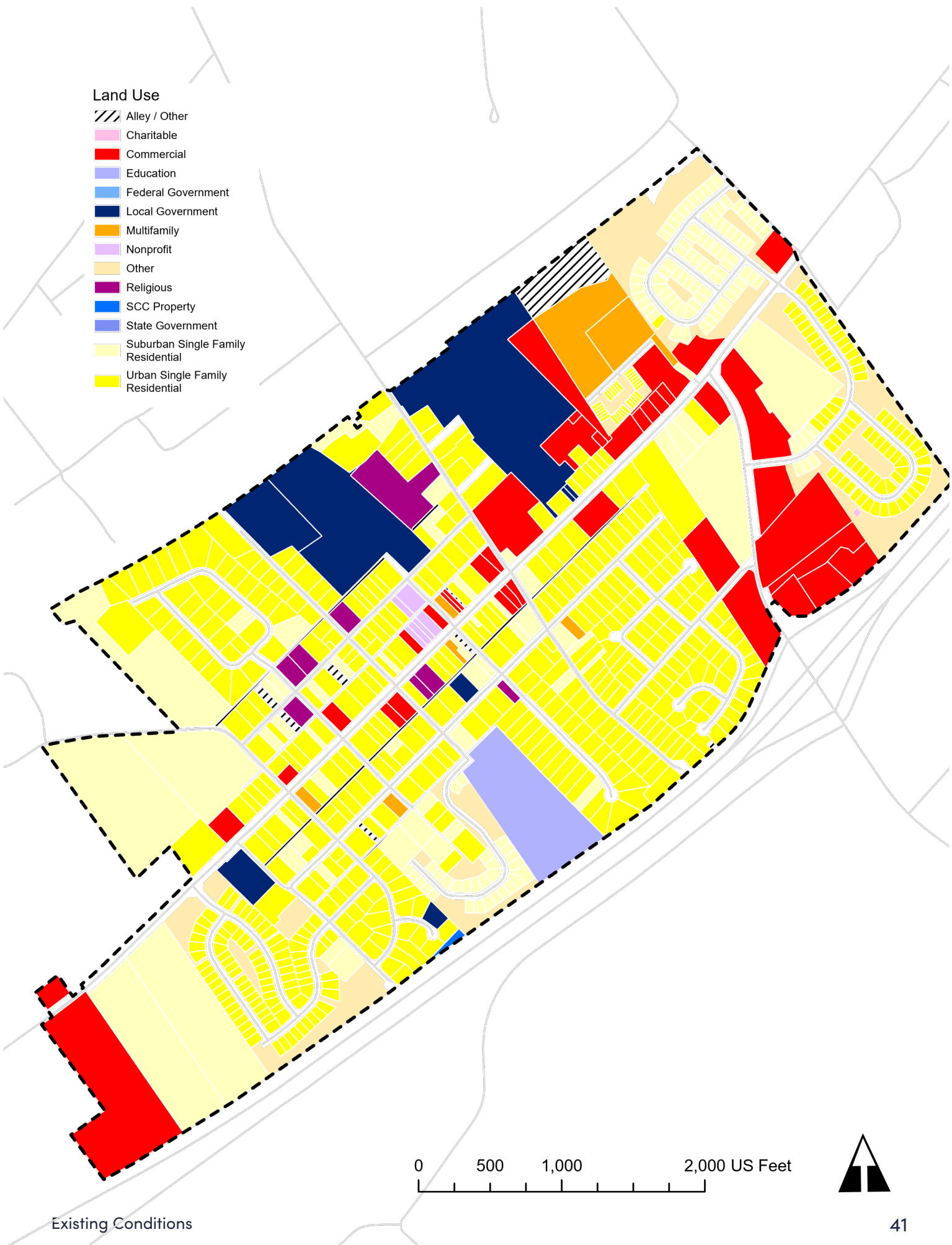
One of Middletown’s assets for tourism is the beauty of the natural countryside, and the local economy is also fortunate to have active farms directly adjacent to the Town’s boundaries. If these farms were subdivided and converted into residential units, the cost to supply and maintain sewer and water infrastructure outside of Town boundaries will eventually hurt the Town’s finances as well as erode the “small town charm” character that residents express their enjoyment of. This topic will be explored further in the full comprehensive plan with greater detail and examples.



Land Use Type	Acres (Approximate)	Percentage of Total
Suburban Single Family	102.53	23.5%
Urban Single Family	69.6	15.8%
Commercial	53.37	12.1%
Local Government	38.91	8.8%
Education	11.04	2.5%
Multifamily	9.2	2.1%
Religious	5.21	1.2%

Land Use

- Alley / Other
- Charitable
- Commercial
- Education
- Federal Government
- Local Government
- Multifamily
- Nonprofit
- Other
- Religious
- SCC Property
- State Government
- Suburban Single Family Residential
- Urban Single Family Residential



Existing Conditions