



Middletown Master Plan

Public Workshop #1: Open House

February 21, 2024 (7:00 - 9:00 PM)

Workshop Summary

The Township of Middletown hosted its first public workshop for the Master Plan Update on February 21, 2024. Approximately 140 residents and stakeholders participated in the open house event. Tony Mercantante, Township Administrator, welcomed the attendees and provided an overview of the master planning process. Susan Favate of BFJ Planning then kicked off a brief presentation by introducing the seven-person Master Plan Subcommittee and the consultant team. Mark Freker of BFJ Planning summarized the purpose, elements, and outline of a master plan and discussed Middletown's project timeline. Michelle Gilman of BFJ Planning presented Township demographic data in addition to land use and zoning trends. Ms. Favate concluded the presentation by inviting attendees to participate in the open house exercise and encouraging the audience to stay involved by subscribing to master plan updates and visiting the Ideas Wall, an online platform for the Middletown community to share ideas for the Master Plan.

Participants then had the opportunity to circulate the room and leave their feedback on various boards, which were categorized by planning topics (See Appendix 1 for photos):

- Zoning & Development
- Transportation & Mobility
- Parks, Open Space, and Community Facilities
- Environment and Resiliency
- Housing
- Historic & Cultural Resources
- Other (General Comments)

The topic-specific boards were staffed by either a Master Plan Subcommittee member or consulting team member. In addition to posting ideas on the boards, attendees had the opportunity to leave feedback via comment cards. Flyers with QR codes linked to the Ideas Wall were also posted around the room.





Common themes from each board are as follows:

Zoning & Development

- Residents advocated for prioritizing redevelopment of urbanized sites before constructing undeveloped land. In particular, retail areas with vacancies (e.g., Route 36) were cited as opportunities for redevelopment.
- Waterfront development was cited as an area of Middletown where development “doesn’t fit” with existing land uses. Some residents also expressed concern about redevelopment in Belford, within floodplain areas.
- There is a desire to restore the "charm" of the township, which participants defined as Middletown’s historic character and open spaces.
- When prompted to comment on what types of businesses are missing in Middletown, participants expressed an interest in seeing more local businesses, like breweries and restaurants. Additionally, they highlighted need for additional grocery options like Wegmans and H Mart, along with a demand for more medical practices in the area.
- Some residents expressed opposition to offshore wind projects.

Transportation & Mobility

- Residents identified a need for better pedestrian infrastructure, expanded public transportation to support mobility within the Township, and solutions to address congestion on access roads and Routes 35 and 36.
- Measures to enhance walkability, improve pedestrian safety, and mitigate traffic congestion were common themes. Participants also shared ideas of roadways that could be good locations for traffic calming.
- Residents who indicated they use NJ Transit or the Port Belford ferry noted that improving access to the ferry terminal and the train station would enhance the transit experience.
- There is an interest to explore other micro mobility options and local shuttle service.
- Improved sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, and micro mobility infrastructure were identified as cyclist and pedestrian priorities.

Parks, Open Space, and Community Facilities

- Improvements or upgrades are needed at Tindall Park, the Senior Center, and at bathroom facilities across Township parks.
- Residents are interested in the provision of passive recreation spaces, additional recreational options like a skate park, and more recreational spaces or activities for older adults.
- There is a desire to preserve open space and improve trail connections.

Environment & Resiliency

- The most significant environmental issues in Middletown include opposition to offshore wind development, flooding, dredging Comptons Creek, and a desire to reduce fossil fuel usage / promote decarbonization. Residents indicated that they would like to have a better understanding of how new development impacts drainage.



- To become more environmentally sustainable, the Township should support solar energy and electric initiatives, and prioritize emergency resiliency measures such as transitioning to underground utility lines and establishing a microgrid.

Housing

- Top housing issues include addressing flooding concerns, prioritizing the redevelopment of vacant or underutilized areas before new construction projects, and a desire to better understand the impact of new housing on factors such as school enrollment, traffic, and the environment.
- There is a desire for expanded housing options in Middletown, including accommodations for seniors, veterans, and young families. Some participants, however, advocated for no new housing developments.

Historic & Cultural Resources

- The following sites were listed as some of the Township's most valuable resources:
 - Cemeteries
 - Croydon Hall
 - Port Monmouth School
 - Belford Marine Railway
 - Historic Township buildings
 - Middletown Village
 - Belford
 - Marlpit Hall
 - Campbell's Junction
- Residents suggest supporting historic and cultural resources in Middletown by preserving and repurposing Port Monmouth School, prioritizing local businesses over big box stores, preserving parks and historic sites, and establishing a maritime museum in Belford.

Other (General Comments)

- Residents advocate for limiting overdevelopment, maintaining affordability, preserving open space and historical sites, and opposing offshore wind projects in Middletown.

Comment Cards

Two common themes expressed from comment cards were an opposition to offshore wind projects and a request for public workshop materials (e.g., presentation, board comments) to be made available online.



Appendix 1: Record of Board Notes

The following sections present transcribed comments that were shared by participants at the open house stations (Zoning & Development, Transportation & Mobility, Parks, Open Space, and Community Facilities, Housing, Environment and Resiliency, Historic and Cultural Resources, Other).

Zoning & Development

What areas of Middletown would you like to see change with new development? What areas should be preserved?

- No offshore wind
- If stores and such are vacant and something new is coming into town don't clear more woods and such down the animals need a place to live also
- Develop land with vacant businesses/buildings before developing open space
- Affordable housing overlay zone
- Greater flexibility in zoning to require repurposing of existing, acceptable vacant lots before clearing new real estate
- Preserve open space
- Next door to the dunes at shoal harbor
- Let's try to bring some charm back to the town small scale
- How about some more trees and open space!
- None! We have enough
- Open space should be preserved we've lost our rural/suburban feel – too much traffic
- The Kushner building in Lincroft must not happen
- Clean up/preserve Campbell's Junction. Too many cars around auto repair shop + street
- All undeveloped areas now need to be preserved
- Preserve open space
- Protect existing farmland
- Route 36 corridor needs help. Too many vacant businesses.
- Utilize vacant buildings and homes before building more
- No redevelopment of Belford Junction only implement ordinance for building owners to spruce up store fronts – code enforcement architectural guidelines. Ex. classy awnings, etc.
- Put a museum next to dunes and shoal harbor
- Wooded areas should be preserved...we are building too much
- How about keeping some charm to a once beautiful town
- Limit multi-family housing where it floods – especially Port Monmouth and Belford by the water
- EPA updated 2023 Inland Flood protection mile
- Leave the Bayshore waterfront Belford area alone. No redevelopment. How about revitalizing it!

Are the existing businesses in Middletown able to meet your needs, or do you need to travel elsewhere? Are there types of businesses that are lacking in town?

- More breweries
- Small businesses

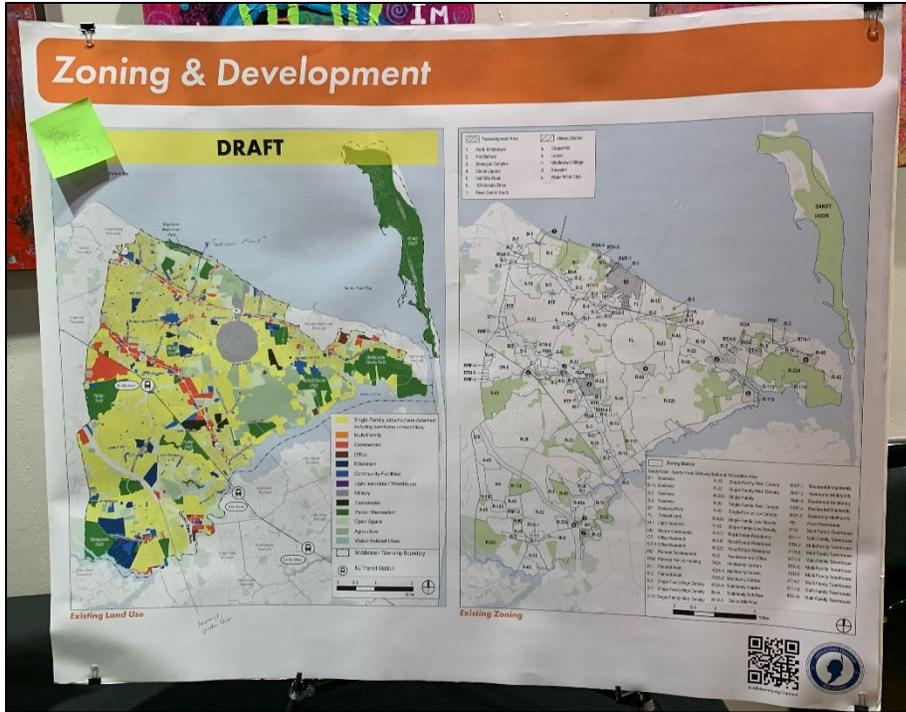


- Wegmans
- Small local businesses
- Need a H-Mart
- Medical offices, more restaurants, no more nail salons
- Protect the environment
- Primary care physicians not walk-ins

Are there parts of town where you feel like the land uses or development don't "fit"?

- Require minimum lot sizes for residential subdivision
- "Middletown walk"
- None of them
- Protect the beaches stop development
- No offshore wind cables/staging
- Go easy on Belford / port Monmouth development plan. Give nature a chance
- Condos. Multi dense housing
- No industrialization of waterfronts
- Protect our seashore





Transportation and Mobility

What are the main transportation issues in Middletown today?

- Is a comprehensive traffic study going to be part of the Master plan? It is needed
- If a development has over x amount of homes, it would be great to mandate the developer to handle shuttle services to train station, grocery shopping, etc...there is a senior center that provides shuttle services
- How to make the town more pedestrian friendly – i.e., crosswalks on Kings Hwy. which residents use to walk to train station and school
- Streets need sidewalks
- Access road from Belford Ferry to Hwy 36 other than Main St or add a traffic light at Palmer + Main Street Belford. Traffic is becoming exceedingly difficult for residents in the area!
- Help students get to Brookdale Community College!
- Traffic
- Sidewalks
- Shuttle service around town
- Congestion on routes 35 and 36
- Need more senior transit services
- Shuttles
- Need more sr. shuttles to shopping
- Church St sidewalks are needed
- Sidewalks from Kings Hwy. to Church St. for pedestrians to walk to train. Very unsafe now
- Too much reliance on out of town work for good paying jobs – drives high traffic congestion to transit hubs (train/ferry) & thoroughfares (Rt 35, 36) create in town good paying job growth



- Route 35 isn't wide enough to handle current traffic. It isn't safe to walk or cross on foot
- Concern about ferry traffic in Bedford – desire for access roads that serve residents
- Emergency / evacuation routes in Belford – consider beyond access roads

What would make it easier for you to travel around Middletown?

- Paved roads not patch work
- Get NJ transit to fix/beautify the red hill road / kings highway overpass
- Bicycle paths automobile free and well marked
- Walkway from heights terrace to train station
- Walkability of Route 35
- Ferry to Brooklyn
- Less development = less traffic = easier travel
- Build a walkway to get to the Seastreak from the dunes community without driving around
- Sidewalk from Kings Highway to train station on Church Street. Very unsafe walk
- Shuttle service around town
- Help students get to Brookdale Community College!
- Age related walkability more paratransit routes
- Sidewalk from train on church street
- New access roads from main street Belford
- Solar flashing signs @ crosswalks. Enforce speed limits
- Pedestrian crossings that are safe!
- Revisit lights to make some flashing in low traffic or off hours. Seems like a low cost fit to reprogram
- Tindall Road? The 35 Island! All those homes?
- No circle on Phalanx in front of Brookdale
- Traffic light only + speed bumps
- Flashing signals at crosswalks

Do you use NJ Transit or the Port Belford Ferry?

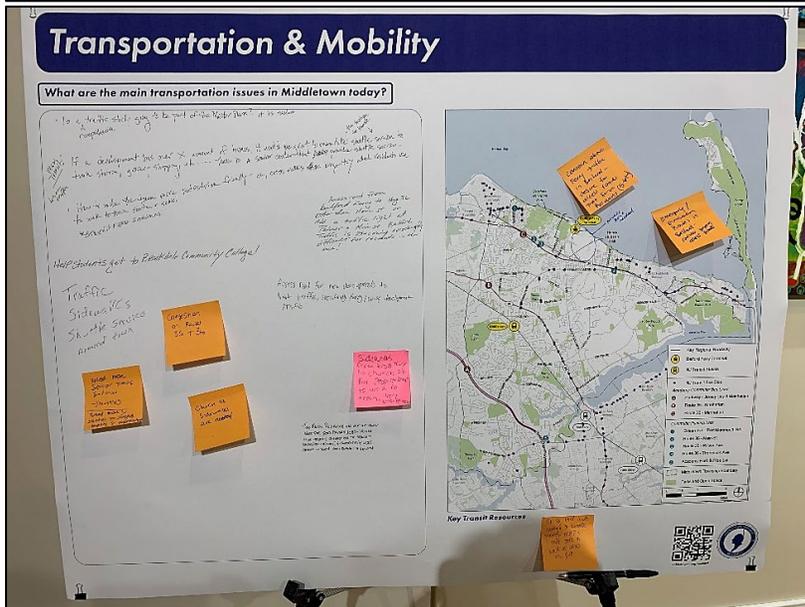
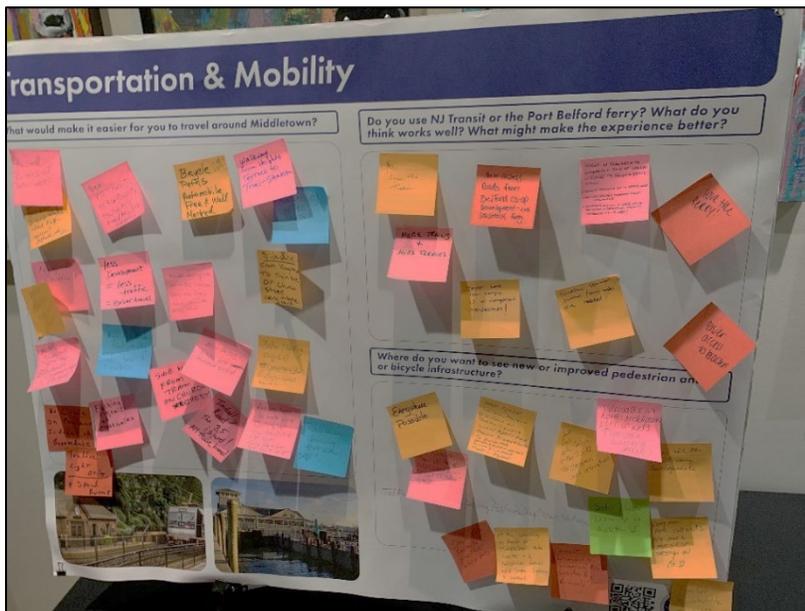
- Yes, love the train
- New access roads from Belford co-op development and Seastreak ferry
- More trains + more ferries
- Taylor lane near target is a dangerous intersection!
- Invest in research to understand role of transportation in future to design a better future
 - Commute evolution due to remote work
 - Last mile delivery congestion from ecommerce
 - Industrialization of surrounding geography affecting traffic patterns (east to west)
- Love the ferry!
- Township operated shuttles / mini buses are needed
- Easier access to beaches

Where do you want to see new or improved pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure?

- Everywhere possible



- Roads should have sidewalks on at least one side
- Have navy install presence detectors on traffic signals where navy road crosses township roads to eliminate unnecessary vehicle idling and improve traffic flow
- Sidewalks in north Middletown. Lots of kids and no safe walking routes
- Create safe routes for school for bikes and peds
- At the crossing in front of Middletown arts center – a pedestrian signal and better lighting is needed
- Connect residential and commercial areas supported by arterials
- Safer / better crossings on Route 35
- Plan for micromobility
- Everywhere! More sidewalks, bike lands, and pedestrian crossings on route 35
- Less bike traffic on Red Hill Road. Too dangerous need alternatives





Parks, Open Space, and Community Facilities

What parks/recreation do you like? What needs improving?

- All bathrooms at beaches and parks be open and not told to drive to open one for use
- No pick courts where the tennis courts are
- More parks / open space. Top clearing woods for more housing
- Real bathrooms at all parks
- More open space, and recreation areas. No pickleball at tennis courts in McMahons Park
- Bike / ped interconnections between parks are missing
- Skate park
- Integrated landscapes
- Placemaking
- More open space
- If something new coming in use locations that are vacant don't clear more areas
- More parks closer to large housing communities

Are there any types of parks/recreation that are missing?

- Roller skating
- Add parks when a development is built
- Repair Tindall park and put in pickleball courts
- Repair Tindall Park and put in pickleball courts
- Yes – repair Tindall courts
- More pickleball courts with lights
- No offshore wind - preserve pristine ocean vistas
- Provide pickleball courts as nice as Hazlet's
- More things for people to do in their 40s and up
- Better non vehicular connection /access to hyper local communities

What ideas do you have to support or enhance facilities in Middletown?

- Update senior center
- After school programs for children may be free arts / crafts, ceramics, cooking, etc
- Change the senior center transportation staff
- Plant trees
- Consider climate change
- More than 1 senior facility closer to large population
- No more building! Keep open space!
- A study needs to be done of firehouse location, EMS response, and the need for paid FD and 24 hour EMS staffing firehouses within ½ mile of each other are a waste of taxpayer dollars
- Vines have killed half of our park trees
- New senior center!
- Preserve walking trails and arks
- Respect wetlands
- Consider flooding!



- Do not develop every piece of open space. Passive parks
- Take care of historic structures



Environment & Resiliency

What are the most significant environmental issues facing Middletown?

- Flooding (2 comments)
- Way too much building along bay. Breeding grounds have been destroyed
- Overdevelopment
- Flooding! Consider flooding will be results of overbuilding present wetlands
- Solar panels on all school parking lots, town hall, and all other buildings owned by the town
- Stop building on wetlands
- Not enough areas left for drainage, especially by the bay
- Too many cars on road
- Stop offshore wind turbines
- Dredge Comptons Creek (2 comments)
- After the new flood project is finished, will Belford flood?
- Traffic
- Development
- Where do the animals go after you build?
- Where does the water go after you build?



- Need sand on Leonardo beach
- Need creek cleanout in Leonardo
- How is the water quality? Mine often smells like burning rubber
- Comptons Creek from Church Street through Apple Valley Drive area rain water control
- Maintain waterways in creeks and such so we don't flood
- No offshore wind farms
- Overdevelopment horrible quality of life
 - Too much use of fossil fuels

What are some actions or initiatives the Township should undertake to become more environmentally sustainable?

- No offshore wind
- Stop offshore wind industrialization
- Need an energy plan to quickly reduce greenhouse gases
- Enforce no idling for township vehicles
- Too much traffic
- Address access for clearer water for drinking showering
- No wind turbines save the whales
- Stop building!
- Recycle building materials as well as anything else
- Promote offshore wind promote solar
- Paratransit around town
- Put utilities underground
- Clean leaves from sewer drains
- Electric vehicles for municipality
- Solar panels on muni buildings and parking lots
- Improve electric grid reliability
- Plant more trees on muni land
- Underground electrical lines
- Solar on telephone poles
- No windmills
- Fix the roads
- Reinforce electrical infrastructure via resilient methods (e.g.. underground conduits)
- Microgrid to serve as northern Monmouth county hub for disaster recovery
- No offshore wind emf cables



Housing

What types of housing are needed in Middletown?

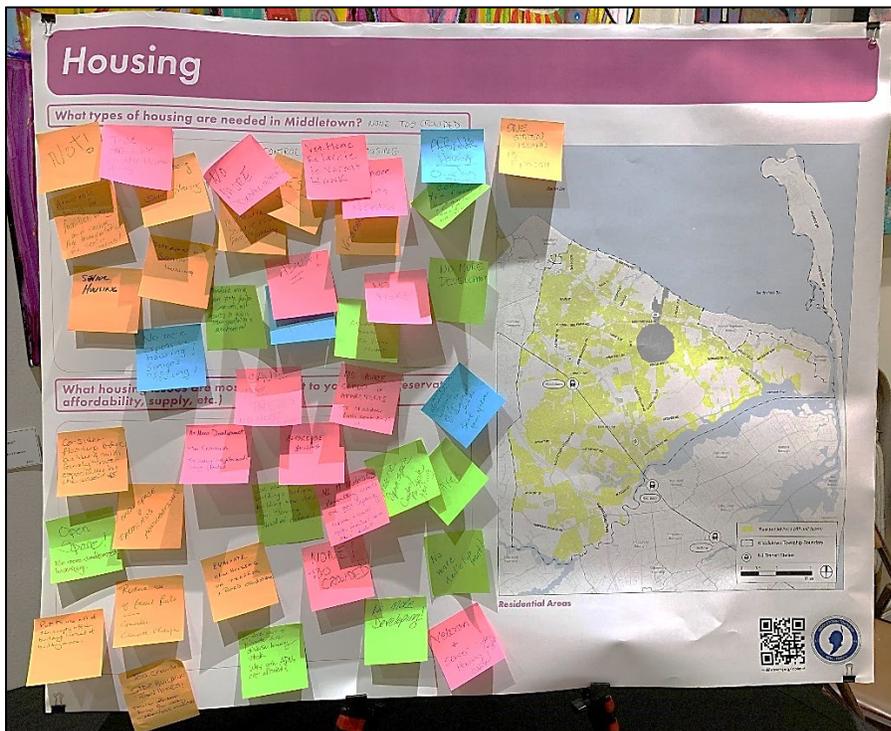
- None too crowded
- Not!
- One Staten Island is enough
- Affordable housing overlay zone
- Vet home relocate to vacant bank
- Senior housing
- Senior house
- Affordable housing for families, veterans, and seniors. Free transportation for senior housing!
- Veteran and senior housing
- No more expensive housing! Seniors need housing!
- ADUs!
- Affordable housing for young families and seniors with access to public transportation and recreation
- No more
- No more development
- Affordable housing for younger residents
- Veterans
- Save the trees no more housing



- No more condo or apartments too crowded schools can't handle it

What housing issues are most important to you?

- Affordable housing of previously development land. Save open space
- Consider flooding before building multifamily units especially by the water
- No more development. Too crowded. Too many neighborhoods being flooded
- Open space and farmland preservation
- Open space! No more condensed housing
- Put to use all of the empty office buildings instead of building more
- Too crowded stop building townhomes. Smaller affordable homes for working middle class community
- Explore ways to promote more diverse housing stock. Why are ADUs not allowed?
- Evaluate new housing on traffic and road congestion
- Affordable housing
- All 11 Middletown elementary schools are over capacity where would more families send their kids?
- Use abandoned buildings before building new ones stop clearing wooded areas
- Preserve open space control multiple housing
- Taxes
- No more development
- None! Too crowded
- No more developing
- Veteran and senior housing





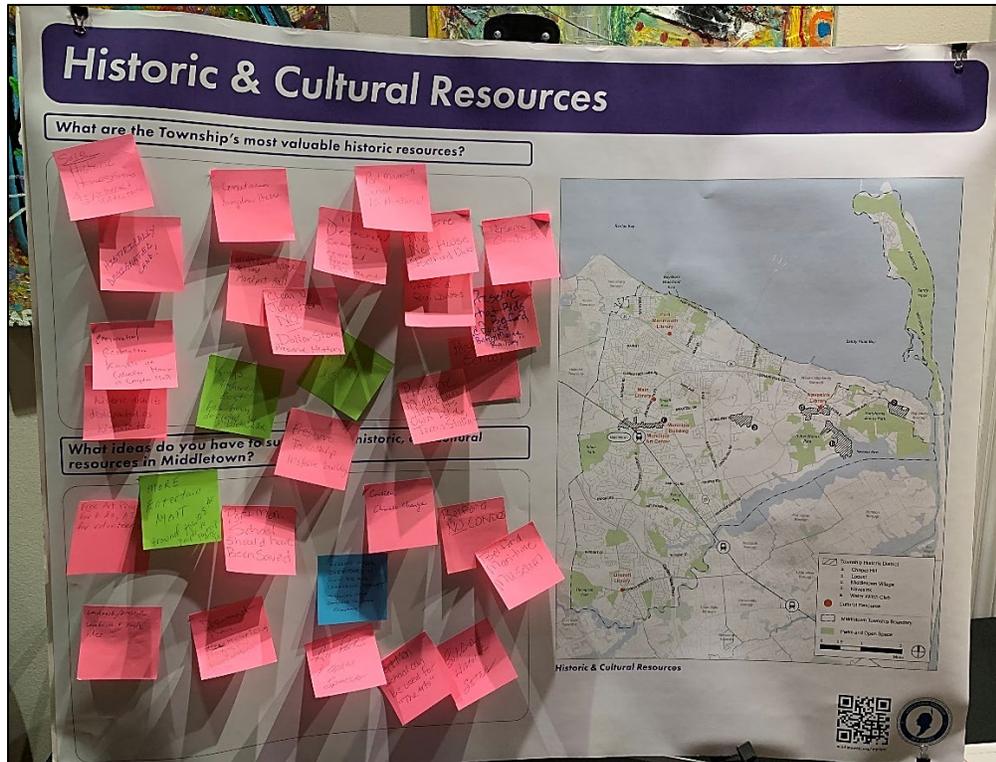
Historic & Cultural Resources

What are the Township's most valuable historic resources?

- Save historic homes + sights anywhere in Middletown
- Cemeteries
- Croydon hall
- Port Monmouth school is historic
- Preserve the net house at Belford docks
- Desecrated cemeteries removed from tax maps
- Preserve "Belford marine railway"
- Port Monmouth School
- Preserve Middletown Helps its own building train station
- Maintain history
- Preserve township historic buildings
- Kings highway east has been dessert by Middletown
- Middletown village
- Belford
- Marlpit hall
- Clean up junction no dollar store preserve history
- Historically designated land
- Preservation / restoration knights of Columbus House at Croydon Hall

What ideas do you have to support historic and cultural resources in Middletown?

- Free art program for kids, ask for volunteers
- More entertainment around town for people to participate in
- Port Monmouth school should have been saved
- Consider climate change
- Belford no condos
- Belford maritime museum
- Rezone major corridors to limit big box commercial development → funnel more commerce to local economy
- All parks and open spaces
- Port Monmouth school can be used for "the arts"
- Belford historic sites
- Document the historic building plaques
- Landmark preserve cemeteries + single sites



Other

What does your ideal Middletown look like in ten years?

- No more excessive building – more “open space”
- The oceanic bridge needs to be replaced, half is Middletown
- Oceanic Bridge repair do not replace
- We are “overdeveloped”
- Too expensive for our kids who grew up here...they move away
- 10 year plan – less buildings – more green (circa 1939)
- All new development fossil fuel free
- All township vehicles electric (gas vehicles only)
- No more overdevelopment
- Save historic buildings
- Port Monmouth School = sad
- No offshore wind
 - Cables, staging areas, docks
- No offshore wind agreements!
- No offshore wind agreements – save our shore
- No more overdevelopment, smaller affordable, single family homes not condos if you have to build. Too much congestion on the roads. Overcrowding in schools. You're pricing generational families out of their homes.
- Sidewalk from Kings Highway to train station on Church Street. High pedestrian traffic
- Leave the Belford seaport the way it is. No redevelopment is needed for the Belford area



- We are done! What's left? Stop!
- Paved roads
- Preserve history and open space
- Thriving via local economy, local business, lower dependence on large corporations/commuter economy
- Preserve history support small businesses
- No more housing
- Roads and land can't support a Belford 'buildup'

Other (General Comments)

What does your ideal Middletown look like in ten years?

No more excessive building - more open space - Ditto
The Oceanic Bridge NEEDS to be replaced, half is Middletown - Ditto
Oceanic Bridge REPAIR Do NOT replace
We are over developed - Ditto
Too expensive for our kids who grew up here... they move away - Ditto

10yr plan
LESS buildings - more green (CIRCA 1939)
All development fossil fuel free
All Township vehicles Electric (Gas vehicles only)
NO MORE Overdevelopment
SAVE Historic Bldgs
* Port Hanmouth School = SAD
A mess if you don't plan and slow stop Hwy site
No OFFSHORE WIND (CABLS) (Scraping Areas) (Rocks)
No offshore wind Agreements!
No offshore wind agreements - some or some
No more over development, sell or affordable high rent homes NOT condos if you have to build. Too much congestion on roads. Over crowding in schools. You're pricing generational families out of their homes.
Sidewalk from Kings Highway to Train Station on Church St. High Pedestrian traffic.
Leave the Belford Seaport the way it is. No development is needed for the Belford Area.

TECHNOLOGY LOCAL ECONOMY LOCAL BUSINESS LOWER DEPENDENCE ON LARGE CORPORATIONS/COMMUTER ECONOMY
Paved Roads
Preserve History Open Space
No more housing



Appendix 2: Record of Comment Cards

- No new industrial zoning
- No offshore wind cable landing areas
- No offshore wind staging areas
- No windmill offshore
- No pickleball courts too close to houses (McMahons Park)
- No condense housing projects
- More recreation facilities (swimming pool indoor)
- No more school closures (consolidation)
- Easier communication with town officials
- Fix roads, flooding
- Please transcribe all of the written comments and post it notes on to the website bulletin board for all to see
- We are going through the motions as required by law. But will you listen to the residents?? Look at the overdevelopment. Look at Middletown Walk. Do you care at all about Middletown?
- No offshore wind. No staging
- Can you post slides reviewed during this meeting on Middletown website?