

Middletown Master Plan Update: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Middletown is preparing a new comprehensive Master Plan for the first time in 20 years and we need your help!

What is a Master Plan?

A Master Plan is a general plan for the future of a municipality, providing a blueprint of what the community is like now and what we want our Township to be in the future. The Master Plan will be structured around a community-established vision, goals, and recommendations for Middletown's economic, social, physical, environmental, and fiscal development. This document will provide elected officials and decision-makers with a reference guide when making decisions related to land use, zoning, and capital investment. The Plan's element chapters will include text, diagrams, and maps. The Master Plan must include two required elements:

1. **A statement of the goals and objectives of the Plan:** These goals and objectives will be informed by community engagement and stakeholder input.
2. **A Land-use Element:** This section provides a vision for the future possibilities of development. It provides a useful tool for decision makers (such as elected officials) to guide growth and development, to inform developers as they seek to advance projects, and for residents and others to make known their desire for growth and change in the future. A municipal zoning ordinance must be substantially consistent with the Land Use plan element or designed to effectuate the Land Use Element.

However, a Master Plan can include additional elements as well. The Middletown Master Plan will also include the following elements: Circulation; Utilities; Community Facilities; Open Space, Recreation, and Conservation; Historic Preservation; Economic Development; Green Building and Environmental Sustainability. We will also include an Implementation chapter which will summarize the recommendations detailed in each of the elements and identify short- and long-term actions to implement the recommendations.

Why is a Master Plan Important?

The Master Plan serves as the basis for the zoning ordinance and every zoning ordinance must either be substantially consistent with the land use plan element of the Master Plan or designed to effectuate that plan element. Because of the importance of the Master Plan, New Jersey law requires that it be reexamined, updated and/or revised at least every 10 years. If the Township does not undertake this 10-year review, the Township's zoning ordinance loses its presumption of validity. Since the last full Master Plan Update, the Township has conducted several Master Plan Reexamination reports.

Who prepares and adopts a Master Plan?

A Master Plan Subcommittee has been formed to work with the Township's consultants to prepare the document. The Subcommittee is comprised of Planning Board members and Township staff. The Planning Board approves the Master Plan. Below is a list of the Subcommittee members:

- Tony Mercantante, Township Administrator
- Tara Berson, Communications Director
- Amy Citrano, Director of Planning
- David Merces, Chairman, Planning Board
- Carl Rathjen, Vice Chair, Planning Board
- Roseann Eteson, Member, Planning Board
- Vlad Berson, Member, Planning Board



When was the last Master Plan for Middletown adopted?

The Township adopted a 2004 comprehensive Master Plan. Between 2004 and 2023, the Township adopted periodic review and reexamination reports. The Middletown Planning Board formally reexamined the Township's Master Plan in 2009, 2011, 2014, and 2023 at which times various elements of the Master Plan were amended including Land Use, Housing, Circulation, Conservation/Open Space/Recreation, Utilities and Community Facilities. Since much has changed since the last comprehensive Master Plan was completed in 2004, the Township desires to perform a complete Master Plan update. The current effort will provide the Township with an opportunity to revise, revisit and improve the previous planning efforts to create a Plan which aligns with the current needs and interests of the community.

Will the Master Plan change zoning?

No, a Master Plan is a policy document, not a law or regulation. However, the Master Plan may make recommendations about zoning, and any zoning adopted by a municipality must be consistent with the Master Plan. Typically, once a Master Plan is adopted, the Township Committee would then consider making the recommended zoning changes. That is a separate process, which would include a public hearing.

When will the Master Plan be completed?

The planning process began in December 2023 and is expected to span approximately 12 months.

How can I participate?

Stay tuned for engagement opportunities by frequently checking the Township's Master Plan website: middletownnj.org/mpinput.

Opportunities for public input include two in-person workshops, as well as online surveys. Phase 1 of public engagement will assess the community's general vision for the future of Middletown, as well as the identification of planning challenges and opportunities. Phase 2 of public engagement will focus on presenting draft Master Plan strategies and recommendations for community input.

