



Master Plan Reexamination Report

Middletown Township Planning Board
Monmouth County, New Jersey

December 2025

Prepared by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony P. Mercantante", is written over a horizontal line.

Anthony P. Mercantante, PP AICP
Township Administrator

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Introduction

The Municipal Land Use Law requires a municipality to conduct a general reexamination of its master plan and development regulations at least once every 10 years from the previous reexamination.

The Middletown Township Planning Board adopted a comprehensive Master Plan in December 2025. Consistent with the provisions of the MLUL, the Planning Board periodically reexamines and updates certain elements of its Master Plan to proactively plan for future development. The Planning Board has reexamined the Master Plan in 2009, 2011, 2014 and March 2023. The 2009 Master Plan Reexamination Report amended the Land Use Plan. The 2011 Master Plan Reexamination Report amended the Land Use; Circulation; Open Space, Recreation and Conservation; Utilities; and Community Facilities Master Plan Elements.

The Recently adopted 2025 Master Plan did not include an update to the Housing Plan Element, largely due to the lack of clarity in the affordable housing “fair share” procedures during the drafting process. Specifically, in 2024, substantial amendments were made to the Fair Housing Act which were supposed to (1) simplify and streamline the Fair Share Plan approval process; and (2) create a fairer and less complicated system for municipalities. Neither of those goals were achieved. The scope of this Master Plan Reexamination Report therefore supplements the prior Reexamination Reports, unless specifically indicated to the contrary, and will primarily address Housing Plan and Affordable Housing related opportunities that have developed recently, and which will be included in a fully comprehensive Housing Plan update that is currently being developed. Moreover, specific amendments to Master Plan Housing Element are made part of this reexamination report.

Major Problems and Objectives Relating to Land Development at the time of adoption of the last Reexamination Reports in 2014 and 2023; and the extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased after such date

The following were identified as problems and objectives in 2023:

1. The need to address the Township’s affordable housing obligations per statutory provisions enacted by the by the State of New Jersey in 2024, which formally eliminated the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing and transferred authority to the New Jersey Courts and the Department of Community Affairs. Middletown intends to continue with its strong history of providing a wide variety of Affordable Housing types.

Over the past several decades, the Township has used planning and zoning techniques to offer a “variety and choice” of affordable housing units. Much has occurred since the adoption of the Township’s Housing Element and Fair Share Plan in 2008 and more recent

judicial approval of the Township's Third Round Fair Share Plan. This Reexamination Report recommends additional amendments to Middletown's Housing Element to acknowledge what has occurred since the last plan amendment, and to continue to plan for the provision of affordable housing in the future.

2. Adoption of Redevelopment Plans for certain areas.

The 2014 Master Plan Reexamination included a potential site for redevelopment, known as Block 615, Lot 94, that has now since been redeveloped with Planning Board approval, and therefore is no longer an area in need of redevelopment.

Also, the location of the former Middletown Tool Rental on Block 502, Lots 1, 2 and 7 was identified in the 2014 Reexamination Report as a potential site for redevelopment. Similarly, this recommendation is no longer valid, because the Township acquired this parcel and recently completed the development of 12 Affordable Housing units for veterans.

The following redevelopment areas and plans have been adopted by the Middletown Township Committee since 2014:

- North Middletown Redevelopment Area and Plan (Block 70, Lots 1, 2, 3).
- Port Belford Redevelopment Area and Plan, including affordable housing units.
- Circus Liquor Redevelopment Area and Plan.
- Town Hall Municipal Complex Redevelopment Area and Plan.
- Half Mile Road and Schultz Drive Redevelopment Area and Plan, and Rehabilitation Area.
- Exit 109 Redevelopment Area and Plan, including affordable housing units.
- 325 Rt. 36 property for redevelopment, including affordable housing units.

In addition, the Rt. 36 Corridor Redevelopment Investigation involving 506 properties, 87 of which met the criteria for redevelopment designation, was completed and approved by the Planning Board. The Planning Board approved a redevelopment investigation for Campbells Junction, which involves 74 properties.

Further, the Redevelopment Investigation for the AT&T Property (280+/- acres) has been completed and a planned mixed-use project anticipates the construction of additional affordable housing units.

Significant Changes in Assumptions, Policies & Objectives

Since the 2023 Master Plan Reexamination Report, a demographic, housing and employment analysis was conducted as part of the newly adopted 2025 Master Plan. It is

anticipated that this data will be further updated and included within the new Housing Plan Element currently being developed by the Township.

Also, in November 2024, Middletown voters supported an additional one-cent increase in the open space fund tax, increasing the yearly open space contribution from 3 to 4 cents per \$100 of assessed property value. This is in furtherance of the Townships' approach to, wherever possible, emphasize new construction on already developed or underdeveloped properties, rather than on vacant land, due to the ever-dwindling amount of open space and preserved and conserved land.

Specific Changes Recommended for the Housing Plan or Development Regulations

1. Implementation of the Comprehensive Master Plan adopted on December 3, 2025.
2. Changes to Development Regulations included in the 2023 Master Plan Reexamination Report as well as the 2025 Master Plan.
3. It is recommended for the Township to adopt an ordinance amendment to permit the conversion of Block 811, Lot 37 to up to 12 new affordable housing units.
4. It is recommended for the Township to establish zoning standards for Block 1045, lots 2, 3, & 4, for the development of up to 136 housing units, 109 of which shall be market rate and 27 of which will be additional new affordable units. Should the final number of units approved by the Planning Board be less than 136, the affordable set aside shall remain at 20%. No other terms and conditions of the settlement among the Township of Middletown and Adoni Property Group, LLC and The Franklin at Middletown, LLC, dated October 27, 2025, shall be amended.
5. It is recommended that the Township investigate and consider reviewing and updating non-residential parking requirements as presently provided by Township Ordinance. These standards have not been updated in many years and should be more aligned with current parking and vehicle usage trends, particularly for commercial office, professional office, and retail uses.
6. It is recommended for the Township to adopt a Redevelopment Plan for Block 795, Lot 5.01. The property currently contains 1.8 million square feet of office and research space that is only partially occupied, along with three 6-story parking structures that are substantially underutilized. The site is suitable for a mixed-use development to complement the current use. Uses to consider could include other non-residential development, market rate and affordable housing units, and creation of a Hotel/Conference Center, given the site's close proximity to both the Garden State Parkway and the Middletown Train Station.

7. It is recommended that an overlay zone be created for Block 596, Lots 250 and 251, currently zoned for multi-family development, establishing new and appropriate standards, since the site is already developed, would require complete replacement of the existing use, and, further, due to the likely contamination and remediation required on site. A density of at least 15 units per acre for the 5-acre property should be considered.

8. It is recommended that an overlay zone be established for Block 739, Lots 2.01, 2.02, & 2.03 Block 746, 2.01, 2.02, 2.03, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, & 25. This property is partially zoned for multifamily development, and the remainder has an approved single-family subdivision. The area consists of some very steep slopes, dense woodlands, and areas of severe erosion. The property also contains two dilapidated single family dwellings, one of which is unoccupied. Allowing the entire site to be developed with multi-family housing would result in less land disturbance, slope disturbance, and tree removal than the approved single-family portion alone. In addition, the approved single-family development would involve the extension of a paper street that would result in intrusion into an established single family neighborhood on Ridgewood Avenue. This would be precluded if developed differently, and it is further recommended that the several paper streets in and around the property be vacated as part of any future development, to the extent possible.

9. The Township should study the many older, pre-Fair Housing Act, multi-family developments in the Township that could be considered for appropriate redevelopment investigation and/or rezoning and consider the viability of modifying densities and replacement of older buildings, where viable.

10. Finally, it is recommended that Block 615, Lot 81 be rezoned to permit an inclusionary residential development of up to 10 units per acre. This parcel is currently mostly developed with a preschool and a very large gym that was developed in the early 1980's. It is immediately adjacent to another similar property already with an inclusionary development. The site is also very close to the Rt. 35 commercial corridor, is adjacent to an existing Township park, and is less than 10 minutes from the Middletown Train station. Road and traffic improvement for this site are already in place.

Recommendations concerning the incorporation of the Redevelopment Plans into the Land Use Element of the Master Plan.

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