

Acknowledgements

Middletown Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan
Township of Middletown, New Jersey

Middletown Township Committee

Mayor Gerald P. Scharfenberger
Deputy Mayor Pamela M. Brightbill
Sean F. Byrnes, Esq.
Patrick Short
Thomas P. Wilkens

Administrator – Robert Czech
Administrator – Anthony P. Mercantante
(April/2008)

Middletown Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs

Gregg A. Silva, Director
Ben Curci, Superintendent of Recreation
Michael McCoy, Assistant Director
Joyce Ferejohn, Project Coordinator

Recreation Advisory Committee

Tim Sodon, Chairman
Roseann Nardini, Vice Chairman
Peggy Flanagan
Mike Hogan
Eleasha Jeter

John Marsini
Mark Merezio
Joseph Oxley
Robert Santoro
Ann Marie Toto
Thomas Winter

Master Plan Steering Committee

Laura Agin
Karen Bilboa
Pam Brightbill
Robert Czech
John Deus
Dawn Diorio
William Doering

Joyce Ferejohn
Peggy Flanagan
Faith Hahn
Tony Mercantante
Gregg Silva
Tim Sodon
Tom Wilkens

Consultant Team

Brandstetter Carroll Inc.
2360 Chauvin Drive
Lexington, Kentucky 40517
(859) 268-1933 VOICE
(800) 368-1933
(859) 268-3341 FAX

Architect's Project No. 07025
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Patrick D. Hoagland, ASLA – Project Manager
Wayne Bain, CPRP
Lisa Wright
Mark E. Horman, ASLA
P.J. Feistritz
Lynda Gates
Ronald Vine - Leisure Vision, Inc.
The RBA Group
Annette Schultz, AICP
Charles Cunon, CLA

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan for the Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Township of Middletown, New Jersey

Executive Summary

The Need for a Plan

The Township of Middletown is fortunate to offer an abundance of parks and recreation opportunities for its residents. Parks are provided by the Township, Monmouth County, State and Federal governments. The Township primarily provides the neighborhood and community parks to serve the closer to home needs of residents. The Township and Schools provide most of the active recreation facilities in the community. Monmouth County, the State of New Jersey and the Federal Government provide larger and more specialized facilities and parks that attract visitors from the region. Overall, the Township provides 862 acres of park land at 43 sites, and an additional 413 acres of open space at 23 sites. Over 200 acres of land located at Middletown Board of Education sites are used for active recreation. Unique facilities provided by the Township include the Middletown Swim and Tennis Club, Middletown Arts Center, Poricy Park Nature Preserve, and the Senior Center, gym, classrooms and park facilities at Croydon Hall.

The Monmouth County Park Commission provides an additional 2,496 acres at nine parks within the Township. Over 2000 acres of park land are provided by the State and National Governments at the Leonardo State Marina, Swimming River Reservoir, and Gateway National Recreation Area.

Even with all of this park land, the Township Committee and the Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs have been hearing of specific unmet needs from residents, especially for athletic field improvements, an indoor swimming pool, an ice rink, and the need to improve the existing parks. The Department and Township responded by commissioning this

Master Plan process to verify these needs and to determine any other gaps in the delivery of parks and recreation services. The process has been citizen driven through a wide variety of methods to gain information on the specific needs of individuals and organized user groups. Once the gaps and needs were identified, a "Vision for the Future" was developed and then a series of action strategies were developed to accomplish the vision.



A Bold Vision

Chicago Architect and Urban Planner Daniel H. Burnham best summed up the philosophy of a bold vision by the following quote "Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever – growing insistency. Remember that our sons and grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us. Let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty. Think big."

With this preface, the leadership of Middletown, the Middletown Township Committee, Middletown Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs, Recreation Advisory Committee, Master Plan Steering Committee, and the Consultant, Brandstetter Carroll Inc.,

present this bold vision for the long-term future of parks and recreation in Middletown.

A Citizen Driven Plan

The Plan is truly based on the community needs. The public was involved in the process in the following methods:

1. Two public workshops at the beginning of the process.
2. A Community Attitude and Interest Survey that was completed by approximately 541 households.
3. A student survey of 247 Middletown high school and middle school students.
4. An active Parks and Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee.
5. Meetings with 45 stakeholder groups including athletic organizations, youth advocates, senior citizens and social services, partners and program organizations, government, and staff.
6. Comprehensive presentations in public forums.

What the Township of Middletown Residents Told Us

Through the many opportunities for community input, the citizens' needs were determined. The following is a brief summary of the needs as communicated in the various methods:

1. Sandy Hook National Recreation Area, Thompson Park, and Croydon Hall Activity Center and Park, were the parks visited by the most households in the past year.
2. 82% of households and 87% of the students responding to the surveys visited a park at least once in the past year.
3. Approximately 85% of the households that use parks rated the existing facilities as "Excellent" or "Good".
4. 36% of respondent households and 51% of the students have participated in programs

offered by the Middletown Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs in the past year.

5. The facilities with the highest unmet demand include:
 - Indoor fitness and exercise facilities
 - Paved walking and biking trails
 - Indoor swimming pools/water parks
 - Indoor ice rink
6. Programs and activities that are most important to respondent households include:
 - Adult fitness and wellness programs
 - Community special events/festivals
 - Nature Programs
 - Youth sports programs

Among the students, the most important were:

- Youth sports programs
 - Rowing, canoeing and kayaking
 - Youth art, dance and performing arts
 - Teen programs
7. There is a strong demand for an indoor ice rink and an indoor swimming pool.
 8. There is a strong desire to maintain and upgrade the parks and open space system.

Future Vision of Parks and Open Space for the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs

The vision for the future for parks and open space in Middletown, as determined from the surveys, workshops, community input, and the Consultant's recommendations, include the following components:

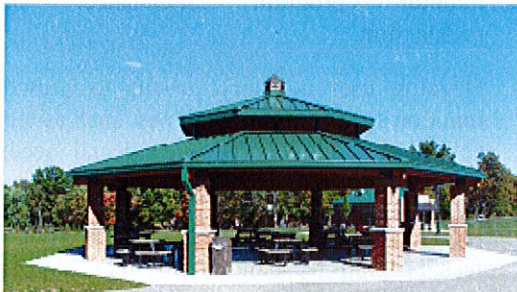
1. Develop an indoor multi-purpose community and recreation center.
2. Develop an indoor ice rink.
3. Develop an indoor pool. This could be part of the same center as the ice rinks or recreation center.

4. Develop a teen center.
5. Develop a large facility with a combination of the indoor ice, swimming pool, teen center, and recreation center components.
6. Expand the Hillside Recreation Center with the proposed addition.
7. Demolish and develop a new center at the site of the Tonya Keller Bayshore Recreation Center.
8. Develop synthetic turf fields to use for numerous sports activities.
9. Consider the development of spraygrounds in some of the large community parks.
10. Develop an integrated trail system of bikeways and walkways throughout the Township.
11. Preserve the environment and acquire more open space.

Major Recommended Facilities

The recommended park improvements include the following:

1. Upgrade the existing parks and facilities, including:
 - Picnic shelters
 - Playgrounds
 - Athletic fields
 - Restrooms
 - Beaches
 - Others



2. Develop two recreation centers with one being located in the central area of the Township and the other to be located in the location of the existing Tonya Keller Bayshore Recreation Center site.



3. Develop an indoor aquatic center with competition lap pool and family activity pool. This should be developed in conjunction with the ice rink or recreation center.



4. An ice rink should be developed in conjunction with a partner.



5. Develop a series of interconnected trails that link the neighborhoods, schools, parks, and community facilities.
6. Create a teen oriented park. This would include a skate park.



7. Playgrounds should be designed for the age specific group for which they are intended.



8. Develop larger and very creative destination playgrounds at the larger community parks.
9. Develop 90 foot base path baseball fields.
10. Improve soccer and baseball/softball fields with turf maintenance, filling of worn areas, and new site infrastructure where needed.
11. Develop synthetic turf fields at two locations throughout the Township.
12. Consider development of outdoor spraygrounds.



13. Develop a pavilion, amphitheater, or bandstand to provide the opportunity for a variety of cultural arts programs, concerts, and other presentations that are of value to the community.



14. Consider development of a dog park.
15. Addition of restrooms to improve the use of the parks.
16. Renovate the Croydon Hall Senior Center.
17. Develop 5 new outdoor basketball courts, 10 picnic shelters, restrooms, and 6 new playgrounds at various parks.

Other Recommendations

1. Expand program offerings with the new indoor centers, including pre-school and after-school programs.
2. Increase adult programs.
3. Develop a Master Plan for Poricy Park to provide increased environmental and cultural education programs.
4. Develop methods for customers to provide feedback on programs and continuously monitor program attendance and satisfaction.
5. Develop user advisory groups to provide input on specific program types, such as teen activities, youth sports, and special needs, etc.
6. Increase revenue generation through user fees, program fees, and facility rentals.

7. Develop a "Friends of the Parks" organization to raise funds for acquisition, programs, and development through donations, sponsorships, endowments, trusts, and grants.

Where to Get More Information

The Master Plan includes a great deal of additional detail including the following topics:

1. Population and land use
2. Existing budget and staff
3. Inventory of existing programs
4. Inventory of existing parks and facilities
5. Summary of public workshops and focus groups
6. Discussion of survey results
7. Park and facility needs
8. Individual park recommendations and budgets
9. Priorities for the proposed improvements
10. Implementation strategies
11. Potential funding sources

This information is intended to provide the direction needed by the Middletown Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs, Middletown Township Committee, Recreation Advisory Committee, and community groups to implement the Master Plan. The final Master Plan is available for viewing at the Township Clerk's Office, at the Middletown Public Library, and at the offices of the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs at Croydon Hall. The Master Plan can also be viewed on the Middletown Township website at www.middletownnj.org.



the Biggest Small Town in New Jersey

MIDDLETOWN
Township, New Jersey

TOWNSHIP OF MIDDLETOWN EXISTING PARKS AND OPEN SPACE MAP

Monmouth County, New Jersey
September 2007

