

MIDDLETON SELECT BOARD
MEETING AGENDA
FULLER MEADOW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
NATHAN MEDIA CENTER
143 SOUTH MAIN STREET, MIDDLETON, MA 01949
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2023
7:00 PM

This meeting is being recorded

This meeting will be a hybrid of in-person and remote via Zoom. To join the meeting remotely, go to:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88938544609?pwd=aHRlbnJwQzluZXdHL2RjYVczYWxNdz09>

- 7:00 pm 1. Business
- a. Warrant: 2316
 - b. Minutes: January 24, 2023
 - c. Town Administrator Updates and Reports
- 7:10 pm 2. Public Comment
- 7:20 pm 3. TA recruitment update; votes may be taken
- 7:25 pm 4. Accept and review presentation and final report on *Aging in Middleton* by Sue Berger of the UMass McCormack Graduate School of Policy & Global Studies; votes may be taken
- 7:40 pm 5. Review and approve Amendment #2 for design services with Context Architecture in the amount of \$4,915; votes may be taken
- 7:50 pm 6. Review and discuss Common Victualer application for Aroma Joe's; votes may be taken
- 8:00 pm 7. Follow up discussion from Operating Budget Summit; votes may be taken
- 8:10 pm 8. Review and discuss May 9, 2023 Annual Town Meeting warrant; votes may be taken
- 8:20 pm 9. Update on outstanding licenses; votes may be taken
- 8:30 pm 10. Review and vote to accept the following donations; votes may be taken:
- a. Piano from Brian and Michelle Cresta to the Council on Aging
 - b. \$500 for the Middleton Food Pantry from United Civil Inc.
- 8:35 pm 11. Updates & Announcements
- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------|---|
| Upcoming Meetings: | February 21 | Regular Select Board meeting |
| | March 4 | Saturday FY 24 Capital Budget Summit, 8:30 AM |
| | March 7 & 21 | Regular Select Board meetings |

The Board reserves the right to consider items on the agenda out of order. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.

MEETING MINUTES

SELECT BOARD
FULLER MEADOW SCHOOL, NATHAN MEDIA CENTER
143 SOUTH MAIN STREET, MIDDLETON, MA 01949
TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2023
7:00 PM

This meeting was recorded

Present: Chair Kosta Prentakis, Brian Cresta, Jeff Garber, Rick Kassiotis
Not Present: Debbie Carbone

Others Attending: Town Administrator Andy Sheehan; Assistant Town Administrator (ATA)/HR Director Jackie Bresnahan

The Board reserves the right to consider items on the agenda out of order. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.

7:00 PM With a quorum present, Prentakis called the meeting to order.
The Chair observed this was Town Administrator Sheehan's last Select Board meeting as he has accepted a new position in Sudbury.

BUSINESS

Warrant Approval: Town Administrator Andy Sheehan provided a brief overview of Warrant #2315. The Town Accountant has reviewed the warrant and requested the Board's approval.

On a **MOTION** made by **Cresta** second by **Kassiotis**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously by roll call to approve warrant # 2315 as presented.

Minutes Approval: The Board was provided with the minutes from the Open Session January 10, 2023 meeting and took the following action:

On a **MOTION** made by **Cresta** second by **Kassiotis**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously by roll call to approve the January 10, 2023 minutes as presented.

Town Administrator's Report: Town Administrator Andy Sheehan provided the Board with information and updates on the following:

- Town Administration has worked over the years to improve the town's financial condition, including the bond rating. Moody's Investors Service has upgraded the Town of Middleton, issuer and the outstanding general obligation limited tax (GOLT) ratings to Aa1 from Aa2.
Town Administrator Sheehan spoke on the metrics that contribute to the rating, and potential actions of the town that may impact the rating.
- Developing FY24 for July 1 – June 30, 2024. February 4 and March 4 are two all day budget meetings in preparation for the May 9, 2023 Town Meeting approval.
- At the MMA annual meeting, Governor Healey and Lt Governor Driscoll announced a number of funding initiatives and supplemental funding. The Governor must file the FY24 budget by March 1; the Town will monitor the progress of the budget.

- Town Administrator Sheehan noted this is his last Select Board meeting. He went on to acknowledge those Select Board members he has served with since 2015 and other boards/committees, volunteers, and appointed/elected officials he has worked as well as the residents that supported his administration. Lastly, he thanked the employees for their efforts and good work over the past 7 years.

Public Comment- *There was no public comment.*

Update on Town Administrator search process and transition; votes may be taken.

A Town Administrator position description was provided to the Board and reviewed; there are no changes to the schedule.

Town Administrator Sheehan briefly reviewed the transition plan, including the assistance of retired Town Administrator Mel Kleckner in an advisory capacity, budgeting, and collective bargaining .

Also hired through Capital Strategic Solutions, was Blythe Robinson, a retired Town Administrator, who would assist the town with, e.g. procurement documents in preparation of anticipated Request for Proposals.

Other updates:

- A first draft of the town meeting warrant is in progress.
- The Deed for the final parcels held by Massachusetts Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) is ready for signing. This is the last 2 of the 16 parcels (wetland and open space) along the Ipswich River within the Town of Middleton. This is later on the agenda.
- The final draft of the Danvers-Middleton Water Intermunicipal Agreement is being finalized and a meeting with Danvers Town Manager is scheduled next week.
- Meeting with Finance Committee to review town meeting, specifically the five revolving funds; there is an article to amend revolving fund by law to remove two of the revolving funds. Also to be discussed is a special purpose stabilization fund for money from the Opioid settlement. The town will see a minimum distribution of \$27,000; there are specific guidelines of how this money may be spent.
- The 10-year agreement with Comcast Cable franchise is wrapping up; this is a number of years past due and the prior contract is being honored.
- The Town Building Committee has primary responsibility for managing the project; the Town Administrator is an ex officio member. The appointment of Interim Town Administrator Bresnahan is on the agenda.
- Ms. Bresnahan will continue to manage the transition to the Danvers IT hub and represent the town on the Regional IT and fiber project.

Exit interview on FY2022 Audit with Tony Roselli of Roselli, Clark & Associates; votes may be taken

Tony Roselli was present and spoke on the FY22 audit. He noted 2021 was the first year the town required a single audit. Sarah Wood was acknowledged for her work. The Town of Middleton was the first to submit their FY22 single audit in the state of Massachusetts. Mr. Roselli reviewed the Management Report and noted the savings realized with the timing of bonding, risks pending the government's vote on raising the debt ceiling, and the importance of IT security & fraud protection. Under Observations, Mr. Roselli noted the Municipal Light Department's process to issue a refund check i.e. when an account is closed and there is a remaining balance, is not in line with the state's accounting process. He noted the Treasurer is only a signer on the Municipal Light account and recommended the Treasurer have custodial relationship of this, and all accounts.

Roselli, Clark & Associates is the Auditors for the Municipal Electrical Department and agreed to work on an acceptable process to all parties. Mr. Roselli encouraged departments to use their donation and gift accounts.

FY24 Operating Budget Preliminary Update; votes may be taken

Town Administrator Sheehan gave an updated overview of the FY24 budget process.

Budget books will be distributed electronically by January 30; hard copies are available by request.

He noted although it is not unusual to have a deficit at this time of year the FY24 deficit is significant due to school assessment (10% increase)/Masco (5.6% increase) and retirement assessment (13.2% increase) and property casual and workman's comp insurances (24% increase) and an override may be unavoidable. Ms. Bresnahan reviewed the schedule for Budget Saturday on February 4, and noted it was anticipated to use the full time allotted as this is expected to be a challenging budget process. She added there are many supplemental requests this year.

A discussion ensued around the school budget increases.

Declaration of surplus vehicles & equipment; votes may be taken

- Police: 2009 & 2011 Crown Victoria; 2004 Signa Utility Trailer
- Fire: 2003 Crown Victoria; RIOCH multifunction copy machine
- Council on Aging: 2007 Eldorado Aero Van; 2009 Fire E450 Cutvan

It was anticipated to use Municibid, an online auction marketplace for government agencies, to sell their surplus directly to the public. All auctions take place online and are available to bid 24 hours a day.

On a **MOTION** made by **Cresta**, second by **Kassiotis**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously by roll to designate as surplus the list of vehicles and equipment as presented this evening.

Review and discuss executing a deed accepting the last two parcels of former Essex County land from the Division of capital Asset Management and Maintenance; votes may be taken

Town Administrator Sheehan reviewed these two vacant parcels were not previously conveyed due errors in the original legislation (book & Page). Both parcels are off Maple Street on the Ipswich River; other than the canoe launch, these are wetlands and floodplain.

On a **MOTION** made by **Cresta**, second by **Garber**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously by roll to execute the deeds on the last to parcels on the Essex County Land from the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance.

Review & vote on the following (re)appointments; votes may be taken

Jackie Bresnahan, as Ex Officio Member of the Town Building Committee, beginning February 1, 2023.

On a **MOTION** made by **Cresta**, second by **Garber**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously by roll call to appoint Jackie Bresnahan, as an Ex Officio member of the Town Building Committee, beginning February 1, 2023.

Follow up on outstanding licensee requirement for 2023; votes may be taken.

At a previous meeting the Board voted some license approvals contingent on the applicant meeting all requirements. Ms. Bresnahan updated the Board on those businesses making "good faith efforts" to work with the Town:

American Legion Post (alcohol) is actively making corrections and needs to be reinspected by Fire.

McDonalds & Middleton Subway are making good faith efforts and need reinspection.

Those businesses making no efforts towards being in compliance: Best Bagel, Charlie's Roast Beef, Freddy's Place

Two businesses now in full compliance: Panni Pizza and Danvers Fish & Game

The Board was provided with a draft letter, as reviewed by Building Commissioner, to be issued to the three businesses making no effort to be in compliance. The letter states the applicant / licenses would be rescinded if inspections are not schedule in 10 business days. Letters will be sent certified, return receipt. The ten day window starts the day the letter is received.

It was agreed an update be provided to the Board at the next meeting regarding those businesses making a good faith effort and pending the update, the Board may issue a notice.

The Board collectively did not continue extending the deadline citing other businesses followed the process and timeline.

Ms. Bresnahan noted letters will be sent regarding the updated fee schedule for 2023 licenses including the institution of late fees; this will be on an upcoming Select Board meeting agenda. The Board briefly discussed the newly approved liquor licenses and the need to decide on the criteria to be awarded one of these licenses.

On a **MOTION** made by **Cresta**, second by **Kassiotis**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously by roll call to send a letter, under the Chair's signature, send the letter by certified mail to those three businesses still not in compliance or making headway.

Updates & Announcements

Member Cresta recognized Andrew Sheehan's time in Middleton, and spoke on the success of his administration and opined Middleton was substantially a better town and acknowledged the work Mr. Sheehan did the past seven years and wished him all the best in his new role. Chair Prentakis added to that expressing his gratitude of the work done preparing the town for new town building facilities. Mr. Kassiotis noted the bar for the next Town Administrator has been set high.

In closing, Mr. Sheehan thanked the Board and recognized the those in the organization for their support and help during his tenure.

- February 4 – Saturday FY24 Operating Budget Summit
- February 7 & 21 – Select Board meetings
- March 4 - Saturday FY24 Capital Budget Summit

Adjourn – The Select Board voted unanimously by roll call to adjourn at 8:39 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine E. Tinsley

Catherine Tinsley, Minutes Secretary

Jeff Garber, BOS Clerk

Documents either distributed to the Select Board before the meeting in a packet or at the meeting:

Agenda: January 24, 2023

Warrant #2315: Payroll: \$ 765,777; Bills Payable: \$ 932,315

Minutes: OS January 10, 2023

Town of Middleton Management Letter Year Ended June 30, 2022, Roselli, Clark & Associates

Independent Auditor's Report on Internal Control Over Financial Reporting and on Compliance and other matters based on an Audit of Financial Statements Performed in Accordance with Government Auditing Standard.

Independent Auditor's Report on Compliance for Each Major Program and on Internal Control Over Compliance required by Uniform Guidance.

Schedule of Expenditure of Federal Awards

Notes to Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards

Schedule of Findings and Questioned Costs

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Releases Deed

Memorandum from A. Sheehan to Select Board, Re Town Administrator transition update, 1.24.23

Memorandum from A. Sheehan, J. Bresnahan, S. Wood, to Select Board and Finance Committee, Re. FY24

Preliminary Budget Update January 23, 2023

Memorandum from J./ Bresnahan to Select Board re Declaration of Surplus Vehicles & Items 1.23.23.

Certified Letter re licensees not in compliance



Aging in Middleton: A Community Needs Assessment

December 2022

Commissioned by the Middleton Council on Aging

Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging
Gerontology Institute
University of Massachusetts Boston





OFFICE OF THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Town of Middleton
Memorial Hall
48 South Main Street
Middleton, MA 01949-2253
978-777-3617

www.middletonma.gov
andrew.sheehan@middletonma.gov

Dear Middleton Resident:

Middleton has embarked on a transformational project, the construction of a municipal complex. The complex, located at the former Middleton Golf Course at 105 South Main Street, will dramatically reshape our community. It will consist of a new Public Safety Building housing the Fire and Police departments, and a new Town Hall/Community Center. The Community Center will be the new home of the Middleton Council on Aging.

To aid in the design of the Community Center we recently initiated *Aging in Middleton*. This study is being prepared by the University of Massachusetts' McCormack Graduate School of Policy & Global Studies. Funding for the study was approved at the May 2022 Annual Town Meeting.

In order to better understand the needs of the community the study's authors undertook a robust outreach and engagement campaign. This started with two listening sessions in July, one via Zoom and one in-person at the Flint Public Library. Five focus group meetings were then held with stakeholders, caregivers, retirees/newly retired, men/veterans, and homebound seniors.

The feedback from attendees was largely focused on the new building. Respondents expressed a desire for adequate gathering spaces, spaces that allow for exercise and other activities, private spaces where confidential discussions can be held, and outdoor spaces that can offer active as well as passive opportunities. Parking at our existing facility is extremely limited and attendees were thrilled that the new space will have abundant parking.

The UMass-Boston team is led by Susan Berger of the Center for Social & Demographic Research on Aging's Gerontology Institute. As the Center's name states, her team is made up of experts in the field of gerontology. We are fortunate to have such a talented and committed group of professionals to help guide us into a future of endless possibilities.

Middleton's 60 and older population is growing. We have a duty to provide services to support this growing cohort. The *Aging in Middleton* report establishes a path for us to follow in truly making Middleton an age-friendly community. If we do that we will be giving back to seniors for all they have given us. I think it is high time.

Thank you to all who provided feedback at the listening sessions and to everyone who reads the report.

Sincerely,

Andrew J. Sheehan
Town Administrator

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Contributors and Acknowledgements

This report was produced by the Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging (CSDRA), a research unit within the Gerontology Institute at UMass Boston's McCormack School. The CSDRA provides resources and research expertise to communities, non-governmental organizations, and other agencies through the Commonwealth.

Dr. Sue Berger and Dr. Caitlin Coyle are primarily responsible for the contents of this report. Other UMass Boston contributors include Ceara Somerville, MS and undergraduate students Daniel Caron and Himani Pachchigar. We are grateful to Jillian Smith, Director of the Middleton Council on Aging who provided leadership and guidance for this project. We acknowledge the Town of Middleton which provided funding for the project. Additionally, we are grateful to Middleton Town leaders and residents for their time and insights during town forums, interviews, and focus groups.

For more information, contact:

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Executive Summary

This report describes research undertaken by the Center for Social & Demographic Research on Aging within the Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston, on behalf of the Town of Middleton. The content of this report is meant to inform the Middleton Council on Aging (COA), and organizations that work with and on behalf of older residents of Middleton, for the purposes of planning and coordination of services. Through a process of community engagement and mixed method data collection, the goals of this project are twofold: 1) to inform the planning and design of the future senior center space and 2) to inform the Council on Aging and the Town about the needs and preferences for programs and services to be offered at the senior center.

Sustained growth in the percentage of older Middleton residents, compared to the full Middleton population, is expected within the next decade. The overarching observation – that the share of older residents of Middleton is already large and will continue to expand – makes clear the importance of considering how well features of the Town, the services and amenities available, and virtually every aspect of the community align with the age demographic moving forward. Planning is especially warranted with respect to the Council on Aging and the future senior center space, which may be heavily impacted by aging of Middleton residents.

In preparing for this demographic shift, the Middleton COA and the Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging at the University of Massachusetts Boston partnered to conduct a study to investigate the needs, interests, preferences, and opinions of the Town's residents and stakeholders. Data for this needs assessment were drawn from several sources, including:

- Information obtained through the U.S. Census Bureau and other publicly available sources.
- Two community forums.
- Two focus groups, one consisting of Veterans and the other made up of Town employees who work with or interact with Middleton older residents.
- Seventeen interviews with individuals from the following three groups: caregivers, residents who rarely leave their home, and pre-retirees/recent retirees.

A broad range of findings are reported in this document, highlighting positive features of Middleton as well as concerns expressed by older residents and stakeholders. While many of our findings, and the recommendations that follow, intersect with the scope of responsibility held by the Middleton Council on Aging, it is understood that adequately responding to needs and concerns expressed in the community will require the involvement

of other municipal offices and community stakeholders, and some will require a substantial collaborative effort. Thus, this report is intended to inform planning by the Middleton Council on Aging as well as other Town offices, private and public organizations that provide services and advocate for older people within Middleton, and the community at large.

We summarize the key findings and provide a sampling of recommendations below.

➤ **Demographic Profile Highlights**

- In 2020, almost 26% of the Middleton population was 60 and older, including 3% who were 80 years and older. Projections suggest that moving forward, the relative size of Middleton's older population will grow, with residents age 60 and older making up about one-third of Middleton's population by 2035.
- A sizable share of Middleton residents who are 65 and older who live alone also own their home (72%). Home maintenance and supports are often necessary for older homeowners – especially those who live alone – to maintain comfort and safety in their homes.
- The majority of housing structures in Middleton are single unit structures (86%). This has implications regarding housing options for older adults as many seniors desire small, one floor living, or housing in buildings with minimal maintenance, such as condominiums or apartments.
- Many Middleton residents aged 65 and over remain in the workforce. Almost 29% of Middleton adults age 65 to 74 are participating in the labor force. Of those age 75 and older, nearly 26% remain in the workforce. This large number of older workers may indicate financial needs. As well, for those who work daytime hours, many senior center activities may not be accessible to them.
- More than one out of five Middleton residents report at least one disability, with 14% having one disability and 8% reporting two or more disabilities. These residents may benefit from specific services and outreach.

➤ **Challenges of Aging in Middleton & Related Recommendations**

- *Opportunities to downsize are limited.* There are limited housing options in Middleton, including no designated senior housing, few condominiums and apartments, and zoning that doesn't allow for homesteading. To address limited downsizing options, contribute to local conversations about housing options for older adults who wish to downsize while staying in Middleton and advocate for options that current residents can afford and maintain. Promote awareness of various housing options across the lifespan and advocate for zoning changes to make it easier to have additional dwelling units.

- *Cost of living and taxes are high in Middleton.* Participants shared their concerns regarding the cost of living in Middleton, from housing to high taxes to the economy overall and their fear of inflation. The participants primarily worried about affording the upkeep of their home, food, and health care. To address cost of living concerns, educate Middleton older adults about currently available programs and develop new programs to support aging in place on a limited income. Consider expanding educational workshops on topics related to economic security and adjusting eligibility guidelines for property tax exemptions and tax work-off programs to make these programs more widely available. Explore the possibility of adding a proxy option for the tax work-off program where a friend or family member can do the work on behalf of a resident who may be physically or cognitively unable to work.
- *Limited transportation options in Middleton are a challenge to aging in place.* There is no public transportation in town, except for Paratransit (the RIDE) which has its limitations. The COA does provide some transportation, but it is very limited in what it can provide (e.g., limited hours and distances/locations). Participants at the town forums and interviewees who do drive spoke about the ways they limit their driving (e.g., only right turns), as traffic patterns in town have made safe driving more difficult for them and all expressed concern for remaining in Middleton once they are unable to drive. To address transportation concerns for older residents, ensure that those at high risk of experiencing barriers to transportation are aware of available options. Investigate innovative programs that will help older adults travel where they need to go, at a price they can afford, and with the flexibility they value (e.g., GoGoGrandparent¹) while promoting existing opportunities for car safety programs (e.g., CarFit²) as ways to support safe driving for as long as possible.
- *Maintaining and creating social connections is a priority for many older residents of Middleton.* Not driving or limiting driving can lead to isolation in Middleton. Other reasons for feeling isolated emerged as well. Town forum participants shared that there is currently no gathering place for older residents to socialize. Several of the residents interviewed live alone and they spoke about how isolating it can be. One pre-retiree stated he would only go to programs or on outings if he knew someone to go with while another interviewee shared that scams are the biggest challenge as a caregiver for her mom. To increase social connections and decrease isolation, consider ways to welcome first-time senior center participants. Develop an initiative to reach out to older residents of Middleton who are living alone. Implement a “surrogate grandparent” program that matches older adults with local families. Hold

¹ <https://gogograndparent.com/>

² <https://car-fit.org>

workshops on tips and tricks to avoid scams. Host a quarterly breakfast for local organizations to come together to communicate about issues of isolation. And as the planning for the future senior center progresses, assure the building provides a welcoming environment with space for informal gatherings and confidential conversations.

- *Caregivers need more support than is currently available in Middleton.* The caregivers we spoke with all shared the challenges of caring for a loved one at home. They discussed many of the services that would make the job a bit easier for them. All the caregivers we spoke with expressed the need for respite. One caregiver specifically emphasized the challenge of finding people to care for someone with dementia, as the needs of those with memory problems are different than the needs of people with physical limitations. To support caregivers, host caregiving events as an opportunity to connect the Middleton COA with family caregivers and as a resource for caregivers. Encourage Town staff to participate in Dementia Friends³ training to raise awareness about residents and families living with dementia. Provide referrals and transportation to nearby Memory Cafés (or develop Middleton's own Memory Café) for residents and their caregivers to attend. Consider developing a volunteer program for respite, with volunteers trained to spend a few hours a week visiting with an older resident.

➤ **The Middleton COA/Senior Center: Challenges & Recommendations**

- *Accessibility of the Middleton Senior Center is physically limited for those who have mobility limitations and inaccessible to those Middleton residents who have daytime responsibilities.* The current senior center has a limited number of parking spaces, including limited handicap accessible parking. Once inside, the building is barely accessible to those with mobility challenges. Those who use a wheelchair are unable to independently access the main area without assistance. The senior center is open limited days and times, making it challenging for those who are still working or have other daytime commitments to participate in activities. To assure that the future senior center is accessible to all Middleton residents, add significantly more parking including handicap accessible parking spaces, build a covered entranceway for drop-off and pick-up, add curb cuts and include textured segments at cross-walks, assure that there are no steps to enter or an accessible ramp is easily available, provide traffic patterns to enter and exit the senior center via right turns only, and expand hours that the senior center is open to include weekend and evening hours.

³ <https://dementiafriendsusa.org/>

- Current space limits the type and variety of programs available—thus excluding many residents from utilizing the COA at all.* The current space for senior activities is not adequate. Many activities are scheduled at a variety of buildings around town and are constrained by scheduling challenges (i.e., space shared with many others). Currently, there is only one activity location at the senior center which restricts the number of activities that can happen at one time and the number of people who can participate at one time. It can be difficult to hear program speakers and hold quiet conversations in the current building as the acoustics are not ideal for older adults. To assure that the new building is supportive of the many needs and interests of older residents, provide multiple rooms to allow more than one activity to occur at the same time. Advocate for both large and small spaces to accommodate a variety of programming needs. Include space for a full kitchen and a café, provide dedicated spaces for a game room and exercise room, provide technology capability in activity rooms for remote programming, and provide accessible outdoor space including shaded seating, activity areas and space for a garden. Assure there is soundproofing between rooms and appropriate lighting throughout and use energy efficient technology, whenever possible. Explore ways to assure there is a welcoming area where people can sit and gather for coffee or just to chat.
- The image and reputation of the senior center is that it is for the very old.* We heard many comments from both residents and town employees that most people think of the senior center as a place to go if you are very old, in poor health, or in need of assistance. Several of the pre-retirees would like to see activities of interest for those who might be in their 60s and newly retired, as well. To update the image of the senior center, consider changing the name to something more inclusive. Provide a strong social media presence, while continuing to send out paper newsletters to older residents. When space and staffing allow, expand programming, to include, for example, more active programs, men's programs, performances, cultural and educational programs, nutrition and cooking programs, and intergenerational programs.
- Services offered by the COA are valued; additional services are suggested.* Some of the services study participants valued were the check-in phone calls, supermarket shuttle, SHINE services, and Meals on Wheels. Some specific suggestions of services residents would like to help them safely age-in-place varied from handyman services (e.g., change batteries, shovel snow, etc.) to volunteers to run errands (e.g., pick up medications). To expand available services, explore the possibility of offering free hearing and vision screenings, weekly blood pressure clinics, discounted podiatry services, and massage therapy appointments. Consider developing a list of resources

for contractors who will provide home modifications to support safety within the home. Expand the tax work-off programs to include more choice of work settings.

- *Staffing for the senior center is not adequate to meet the needs of the current and future seniors of Middleton.* Additional staff is needed to increase both programming and outreach. Participants in the stakeholder focus group shared their concern that while the town is paying for new space, no additional staff is budgeted for. To address staffing needs of the senior center, advocate for a larger budget for the COA. Once the new building is complete, additional staff will be needed to meet the needs of current and future seniors as expanded programming and outreach will require both additional volunteers and paid staff. Consider expanding social work/social service capacity to address the complexity of economic, social, and health needs of the community of all ages. Strengthen outreach to include marketing of the senior center and build and nurture a volunteer base.
- *Awareness and communication about the COA/senior center are an ongoing effort.* Study participants shared that communication with residents and among staff could be improved. Study participants stated that many residents don't know about senior center activities and services. A lot of town communication is done electronically yet many of the older residents do not use email or social media. As well, several of the town employees emphasized the need for better communication among departments, while acknowledging that the comradery between department leaders is strong. To improve communication regarding COA and senior center activities, consider expanding social media presence while continuing to send out print newsletters. Initiate senior center open houses. Increase direct outreach through weekly phone calls and email. Expand communication among town departments and organizations through monthly meetings and collaborative projects that support older residents.

Growth of the Middleton older adult population signals growth in demand for programs and services offered by the COA. To support resident's desire to age in place, adequate access to programs and services will be needed. The Council on Aging and the future senior center space have the great potential to support Middleton older adults as they remain in the community they love.

Introduction

Like many towns and cities across Massachusetts, the size of the older adult population in Middleton is growing. Currently, more than one out of every four residents are 60 and older and this share is projected to grow larger over the coming years. As the older adult population continues to grow, planning is necessary to ensure that the Town is adequately prepared to meet the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities that an aging population offers. In response to the growth of the older adult population, the Town of Middleton has approved a Community Center to be built as part of a complex that includes Public Safety (the Police and Fire Departments) and the Town Hall offices. The senior center will be housed in the Community Center building.

In preparation for the new senior center space, this needs assessment was undertaken to support planning for programming and services that would be offered at the senior center. Through a process of community engagement and mixed method data collection, the goals of this project are twofold: 1) to inform the planning and design of the future senior center space, and 2) to inform the Council on Aging and the Town about the needs and preferences for programs and services to be offered at the senior center.

This project was completed in two sections. The first portion, concluded in August 2022, included a demographic profile outlining characteristics of Middleton residents who are age 60 and older and results from two town forums held in July 2022. The second round of data collection, concluded in October 2022, included individual interviews and focus groups including town leaders and residents. This report summarizes the results of this project as a whole; and it includes recommendations to be considered by the Town of Middleton as it moves forward.

The Town of Middleton Council on Aging

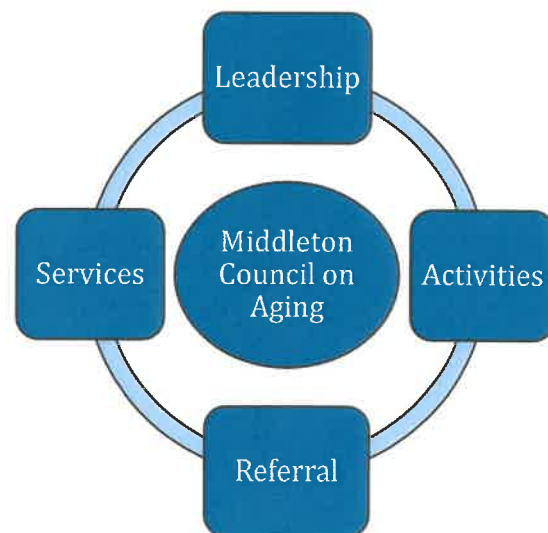
In Massachusetts, Councils on Aging (COAs) are municipally-appointed agencies meant to link older residents to needed resources. Virtually every city and town in Massachusetts has a COA, and in most communities they serve as the only public social service agency. Each COA is expected to establish its own priorities based on local needs and resources. As a municipal department, the Middleton Council on Aging was established with the purpose of enhancing and promoting “the best quality of life for elders” in Middleton and by treating those they serve “with respect, dignity, and interest”, striving to foster “self-fulfillment and independence”.⁴

⁴ Middleton COA Mission Statement: <https://middletonma.gov/179/Council-on-Aging>

In general, when considering the mission of COAs, observers commonly think of two sets of responsibilities. First, COAs promote well-being among older residents by offering activities that appeal specifically to older adults and that promote personal growth and social engagement. Exercise classes, holiday events, and educational programs are good examples. Second, COAs provide services to older residents and their families that promote physical and emotional wellness. Blood pressure clinics and transportation services are common examples of such services. Many observers are not aware of two additional important COA responsibilities. COA staff members link older residents in the community to existing programs for which they may be eligible by providing needed information and referring residents to appropriate programs and services. For example, staff may help residents apply for fuel assistance, SNAP benefits, or health insurance made available through the state or federal government. Finally, COAs provide leadership within the community around senior issues by interacting with other municipal offices and boards, and serving as resources to residents and organizations.

The Middleton Council on Aging takes on these many responsibilities (see **Figure 1**). The COA offers programs and services to primarily Middleton older residents, although many of the programs are open to residents of all ages. The Middleton Council on Aging is located on Maple Street and the space of the building totals approximately 3,000 square feet with limited parking available and difficult access for those with mobility limitations. The COA provides an array of activities and services offered for free or at low cost to community members. COA staff also refer eligible residents to services and programs available through other offices and organizations. The COA provides an array of activities and services offered for free or at low cost to community members. Serving as a resource to other Town offices and organizations working in the community, and collaborating on initiatives broadly beneficial to residents, the Council on Aging plays an important leadership role in the community. The Middleton COA services and programs are funded through municipal appropriation, support from the Friends of the COA, and grant support from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA), Massachusetts Councils on Aging Title III C and B, New England Bio Labs, and the Middleton Cultural Council.

Figure 1. Roles of Middleton Council on Aging



The Middleton COA operates Monday through Thursday from 9:30a.m. to 2:00p.m. The COA employs multiple paid staff, including a Director, an Assistant Director, a Veteran and Outreach Coordinator, an Administrative Assistant, and a Front Office and Program's Coordinator along with van drivers, meal site aides, and lead site aids. Individuals who lead or teach programs or classes offered through the COA are paid through grants or volunteer their services. Paid staff are supplemented by volunteers who together contribute many hours annually in support of numerous activities, including providing technology support, sharing health insurance information, delivering Meals on Wheels, and many other essential services. The Middleton COA Board is made up of town-appointed volunteers who live in the community. Its nine members act as an advisory committee to the Director, Jillian Smith. Members also advocate for programs and services meant to fill the needs of older residents.

Examples of programs and services offered through the Middleton COA include:

- Outreach services that connect residents to services and benefits for which they are already eligible (e.g., SHINE; SNAP).
- Programs that help residents stay in their homes (e.g., Meals on Wheels; transportation services, check-in phone calls, grocery shopping).
- Programs that help residents stay healthy (e.g., exercise classes; chair yoga; walks; blood pressure clinic).
- Programs that provide learning opportunities (e.g., Lifelong Learning programs; book club; technology support).
- Programs that provide the opportunity for residents to socialize with others (e.g., Veteran's programs; art classes, BINGO).
- Programs that support residents dealing with challenging circumstances (e.g., food pantry; National Alliance on Mental Illness family support group).
- Referrals that connect residents to professional services (e.g., financial resource program, homecare, life coaching and counseling).

A complete calendar of programs and events is available through the Middleton COA and is available online⁵. A paper copy of the newsletter is sent to over 900 residents and any individual can request a paper or online version of this resource.

Data from the Council on Aging indicate that during FY 2022, a total of 1,344 unique ("unduplicated") individuals were served through the Middleton COA. While the COA primarily serves Middleton residents 60 and older, 21 residents under age 60 and 175 residents from other towns benefited from the services offered. During this same time period, 199 residents benefitted from nutritional programs, including Meals on Wheels,

⁵ <https://middletonma.gov/179/Council-on-Aging>

senior center congregate meals, and other food programs. Other high involvement services and programs included outreach and communication with older residents, exercise classes, life-long learning classes, health screenings, transportation to/from center, and social activities.

As the numbers of older residents increase, the need for resources dedicated to the older segment of the population will also continue to grow and change. Thus, it is crucial that the Middleton COA plan in earnest to assure that resources are used efficiently and effectively to meet the current and future needs of older residents. The purpose of this report is to describe the research process and key findings of the needs assessment study. For each of the key findings, we provide a set of recommendations for Middleton moving forward.

Methods

Methods used in compiling this report include analysis of existing data from the U.S. Census Bureau and projections generated by the Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts. Additionally, data was collected from community forums, focus groups, and resident interviews. Quantitative analyses include descriptive statistics from Census data and Donahue Institute population projections; qualitative analysis include themes based on reviewing data from town forums, focus groups, and interviews.

Demographic Profile

As an initial step toward understanding characteristics of the Town of Middleton's older population through quantitative data, we generated a demographic profile of the Town using data from the decennial U.S. Census and the American Community Survey (ACS) - a large, annual survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. For purposes of this assessment, we primarily used information drawn from the most current 5-year ACS files (2016-2020) along with projections generated by the Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts, to summarize demographic characteristics including growth of the older population, shifts in the age distribution, race/ethnicity and education distributions, householder status, living arrangements, household income, and disability status.

Community Forums

In July 2022, two community forums were conducted, one held at the Flint Library in the afternoon with 47 people present and the other held remotely in the evening with five participants. After a brief presentation by a Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging (CSDRA) researcher regarding basic demographic data and a description of the project, attendees shared their thoughts regarding strengths and challenges to growing old in Middleton, along with ideas for future improvements specific to the future Senior center space. Comments were also received from Council on Aging Board members and other

Middleton residents after the forum during individual conversations with CSDRA staff and written comments. Both forums had a dedicated note taker. In addition, the remote forum, with approval from all participants, was audio-recorded. This recording was used for clarification of some of the notes.

Focus Groups

In the Fall of 2022, two focus groups were conducted for the purpose of getting a deeper understanding of the needs of the community as it relates to aging in Middleton. Participants were recruited by the Director of the COA, with input from her staff. One focus group consisted of Veterans (n=11), all men who participate in the monthly Middleton Senior Center Veteran's group. The other focus group was held remotely with employees of the Town of Middleton (n=6) who work with or interact with older residents. This focus group included the Town Administrator, the Assistant Town Administrator, the Chief of Police, the Chief of Fire, the Library Director, and the COA Director. Additionally, the Director of Public Health was unable to attend the focus group and instead, participated in a phone interview. Each focus group had a dedicated note taker. In addition, the remote focus group, with approval from all participants, was audio-recorded.

Interviews

While the initial plan was to hold five focus groups, it was challenging for certain groups of individuals to attend in-person meetings, participate at set times, or access remote technology. Therefore, we did phone interviews with individuals from three groups: caregivers; those who rarely leave their home; and pre-retirees/recent retirees. In the Fall of 2022, we conducted individual interviews with 17 residents from these groups, all recruited by the Director of the COA, with input from her staff, via direct contact and social media postings. These interviews, conducted by telephone, ranged from 15 to 50 minutes in length and the interviewer took notes during each phone call. Interviews focused on the interviewee's perceptions relating to unmet needs of older adults in the community, and how the future senior center can best meet the needs of these older residents.

- *Caregiver participants (n=5)*: Of the five caregivers interviewed, two were currently providing care for their family member while three were no longer caregivers (e.g., family member passed away). Four of the interviewees were older adults while one was still caring for children at home while also caring for their parent. These five caregivers have been living in Middleton between seven to 43 years.
- *Participants who rarely leave their home (n=5)*: Of these five individuals interviewed, one person was married and the other four live alone. Two people do not leave their home due to their health. One interviewee can go out and about although she uses a walker for mobility and does not use the senior center due to the stairs. The other two people interviewed infrequently leave their home. One of these individuals has attended a few lunch events at the senior center and the other is connected to the

Council on Aging through the Meals on Wheels program. These five individuals have lived in Middleton between six and 53 years.

- *Pre-retiree/recent retiree participants (n=7)*: Five of these participants work part-time, one retired during the pandemic, and one retired before the pandemic. The length of time these individuals have lived in Middleton varies greatly; one of these seven individuals moved to Middleton just over one year ago while one individual was born in Middleton and has lived in the Town his entire life.

Analysis

Notes taken during the study's qualitative components (i.e., community forum, focus groups, and interviews) were reviewed and common themes were noted. Qualitative notes were reviewed again, and we connected each line to one of the common themes. As additional themes emerged, notes were reviewed once more, and comments moved to appropriate themes. These detailed notes and themes were used to characterize and categorize salient ways in which aging issues are impacting older adults and individuals who work with older adults in the Town of Middleton. We used information from all sources of data to develop recommendations reported at the end of each section.

Results: Demographic Profile of Middleton

Age Structure and Population Growth

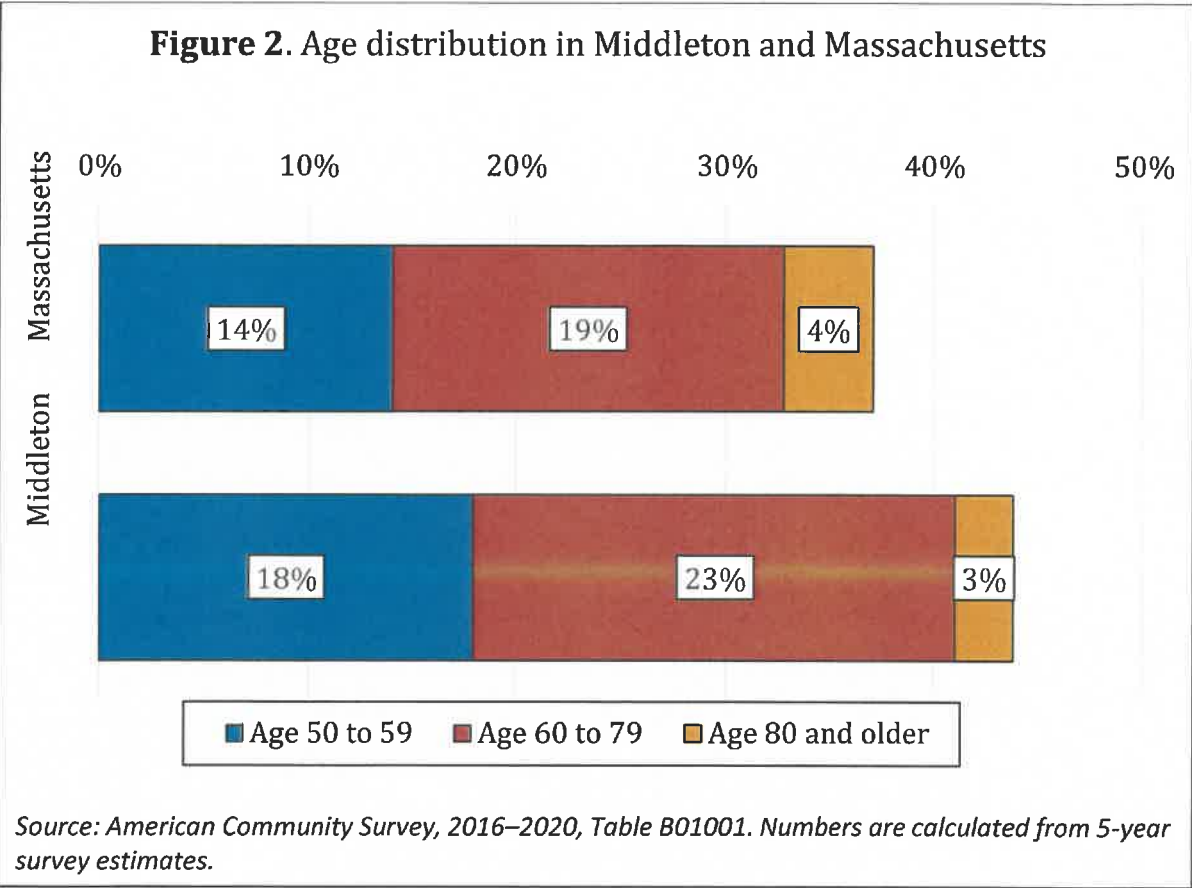
According to American Community Survey (ACS), there were about 9,952 residents living in the Town of Middleton in 2020. About 44% of the population (4,359 individuals) were age 50 and older (See **Table 1**). Residents who were age 50 to 59 (1,786 individuals) made up 18% of the population; residents age 60 to 79 (2,300 individuals) comprised around 23%, and another 273 residents (3%) were age 80 and older.

Table 1. Number and percentage distribution of Middleton's population by age category, 2020

Age Category	Number	Percentage
Under age 18	1,764	18%
Age 18 to 49	3,829	38%
Age 50 to 59	1,786	18%
Age 60 to 69	1421	14%
Age 70 to 79	879	9%
Age 80 and older	273	3%
Total	9,952	100%

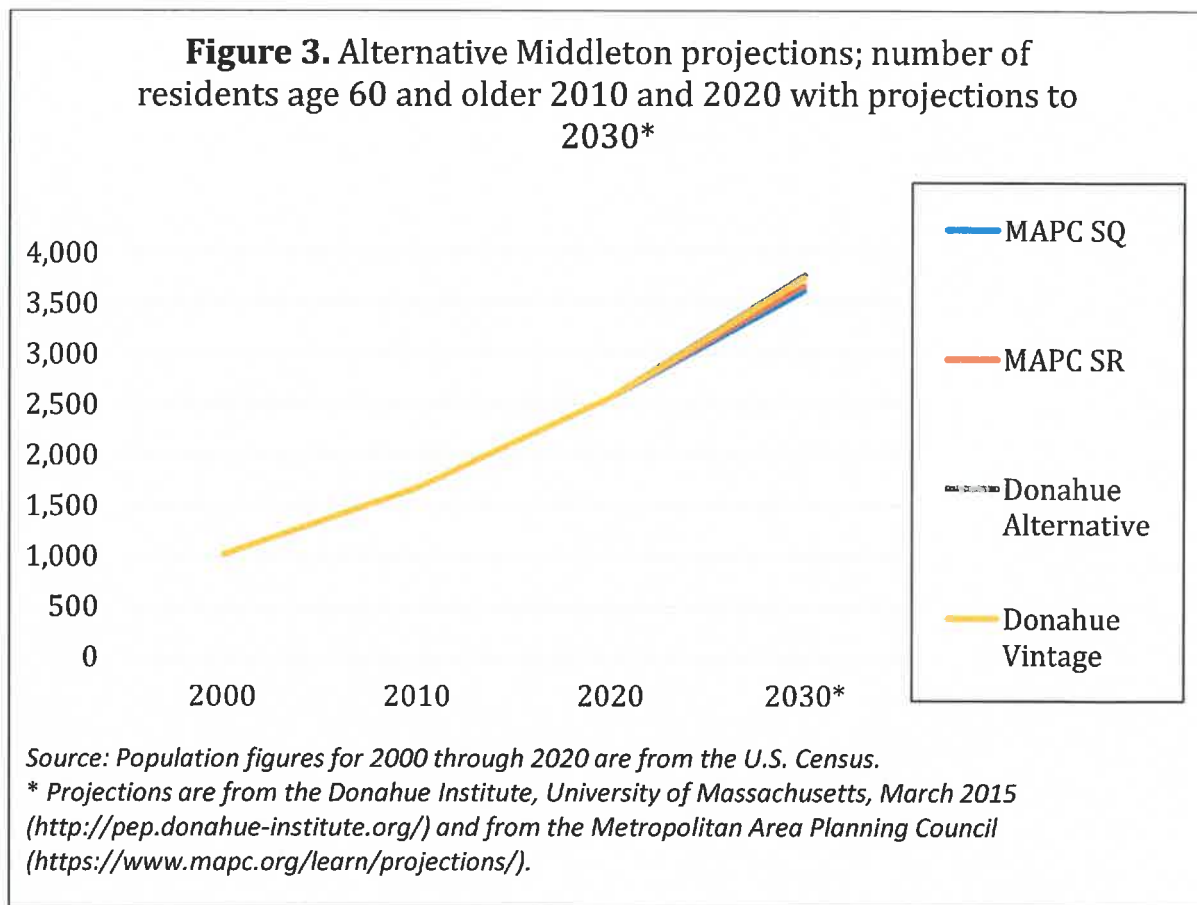
Source: American Community Survey, 2016-2020, Table B01001. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.

The share of the Middleton population age 50 and older is larger than the overall state of Massachusetts age 50 and older population (**Figure 2**). About 37% of the Massachusetts population was in the 50+ age group in 2020, compared to 44% of the Middleton population. Compared to the Commonwealth, Middleton also had a higher portion of residents age 60 and older while the share of Middleton residents age 80 and older is slightly lower than the one estimated for the state as a whole. In 2020, Massachusetts residents age 60 and over comprised about 23% of the population, including 4% age 80 and over. In Middleton, about 26% of the population was 60 or older, including 3% who were 80 years or older.



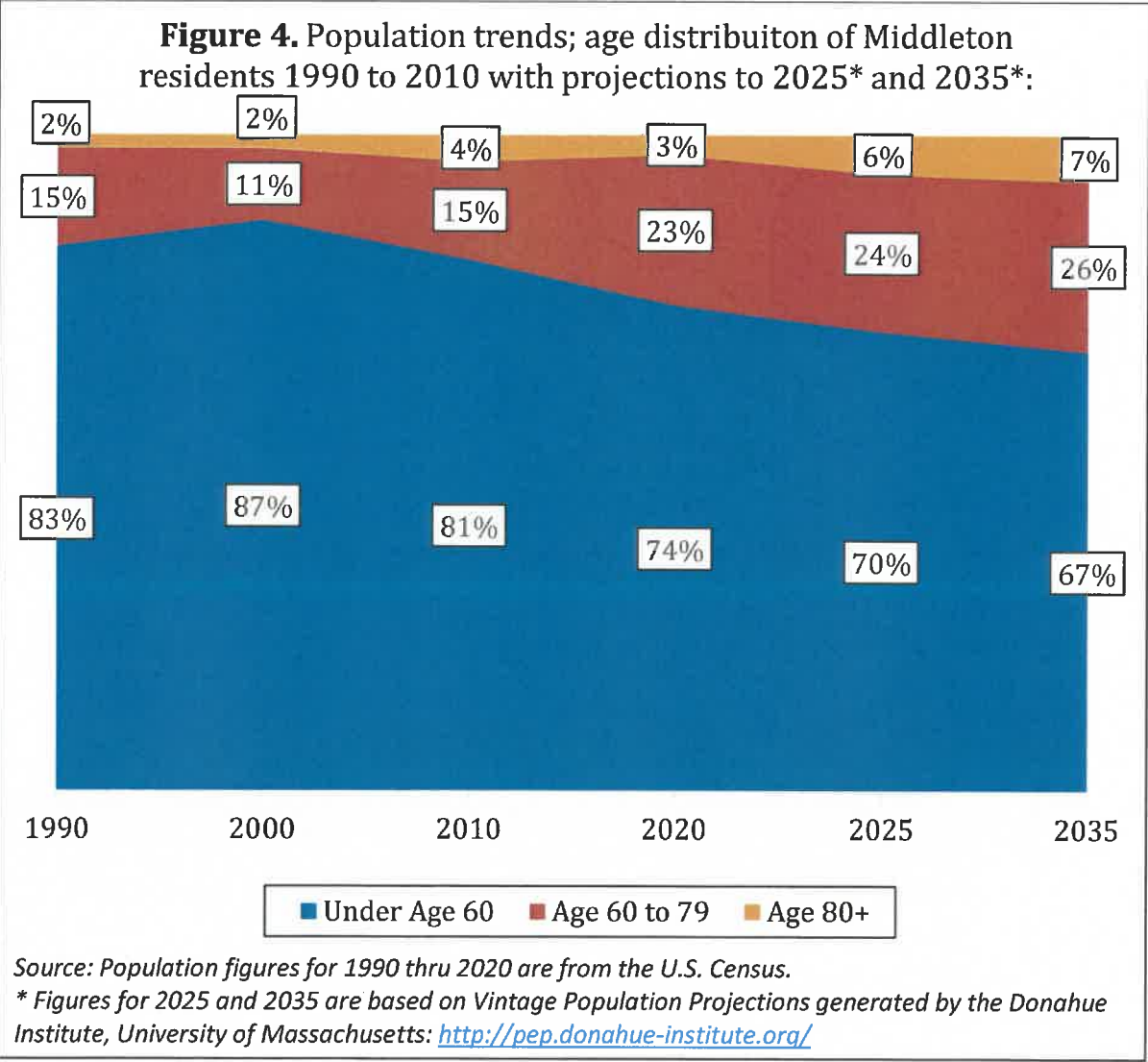
Population growth in both Massachusetts and the Town of Middleton has been concentrated in older age groups. During 2000 and 2010, the population of all ages increased by 16% in Middleton, while the population in Massachusetts increased by 3%. In both Middleton and Massachusetts, the absolute numbers of residents age 50 and over also grew substantially during this time period (*US Census, Table QT-P1*). The segment of Middleton’s population age 50 to 59 increased in size by 48%, a rate of growth higher than in Massachusetts overall (29%). The population of residents who are age 60 and older increased by 64% in Middleton, compared to a 16% increase for the state.

The increments in the share of the older population are projected to continue in the following decades. **Figure 3** shows the trajectory in Middleton's age 60+ population based on federal Census data for 2000 to 2020 and four sets of projections for 2030, two generated by the Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts and two produced by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). Although different assumptions were used to produce the projections, together they suggest a continuation of the upward trend in the size of the older population.



While the figure above shows projections for growth of those 60 and older, **Figure 4** shows the age distribution of Middleton's population from 1990 to 2020, and population projections for 2025 and 2035. In 1990, about 17% of the Town's population was age 60 and older; this percentage decreased in 2000 (13%) but increased in 2010 (19%) and continued

to increase to 26% by 2020. According to projections created by the Donahue Institute⁶ at the University of Massachusetts, a trend toward an older population is expected in future decades. Donahue Institute vintage projections suggest that by 2035, more than one out of each three Middleton residents will be age 60 or older—26% of the Town’s population will be between the ages of 60 and 79, with an additional 7% age 80 and older. These projections suggest that by 2035 there will be significantly more residents age 60 and older than the 2,573 Middleton residents 60 and older in 2020.



⁶ Population projections are shaped by assumptions about birth rates and death rates, as well as domestic and international in-migration and out-migration. The Donahue Institute projections used here also account for population change associated with aging of the population, which is a strong predictor of future growth and decline of population levels. For more information on the methods used to create Donahue Institute projections, see Renski, Koshgarian, & Strate (March 2015).

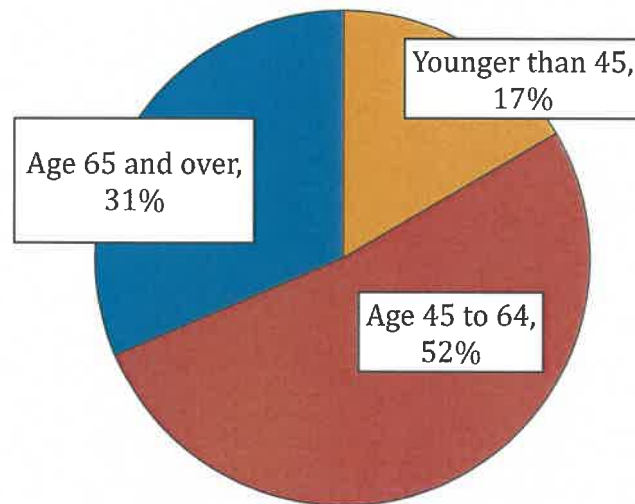
Socio-Demographic Composition of Middleton's Older Population

Middleton is less diverse than the state with respect to race. For all ages combined, about 90% of Middleton residents report their race as White non-Hispanic, compared to 71% in Massachusetts (*ACS, 2016–2020, Table B01001*). Middleton older adults are less diverse than the population of older adults in Massachusetts, as well. The large majority of older residents reported White race and ethnicity (98%). Less than 1% reported Asian as their race and ethnicity while just over 1% reported two or more races.

Additionally, over 12% of older Middleton residents speak a language other than English at home (*ACS, 2016–2020, Table B16004*). Those who speak another language other than English at home most commonly speak an Indo-European language (10%) which includes many languages including, for example, Portuguese and South Asian languages (e.g., Hindi or Bengali). An additional 2% speak another language.

A majority of Middleton's 3,062 households have householders who are middle-aged or older. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, a "householder" is the person reported as the head of household, typically the person in whose name the home is owned or rented. Residents age 45 and older are householders of 83% of all households in Middleton⁷ including 31% of those who are age 65 and over (**Figure 5**).

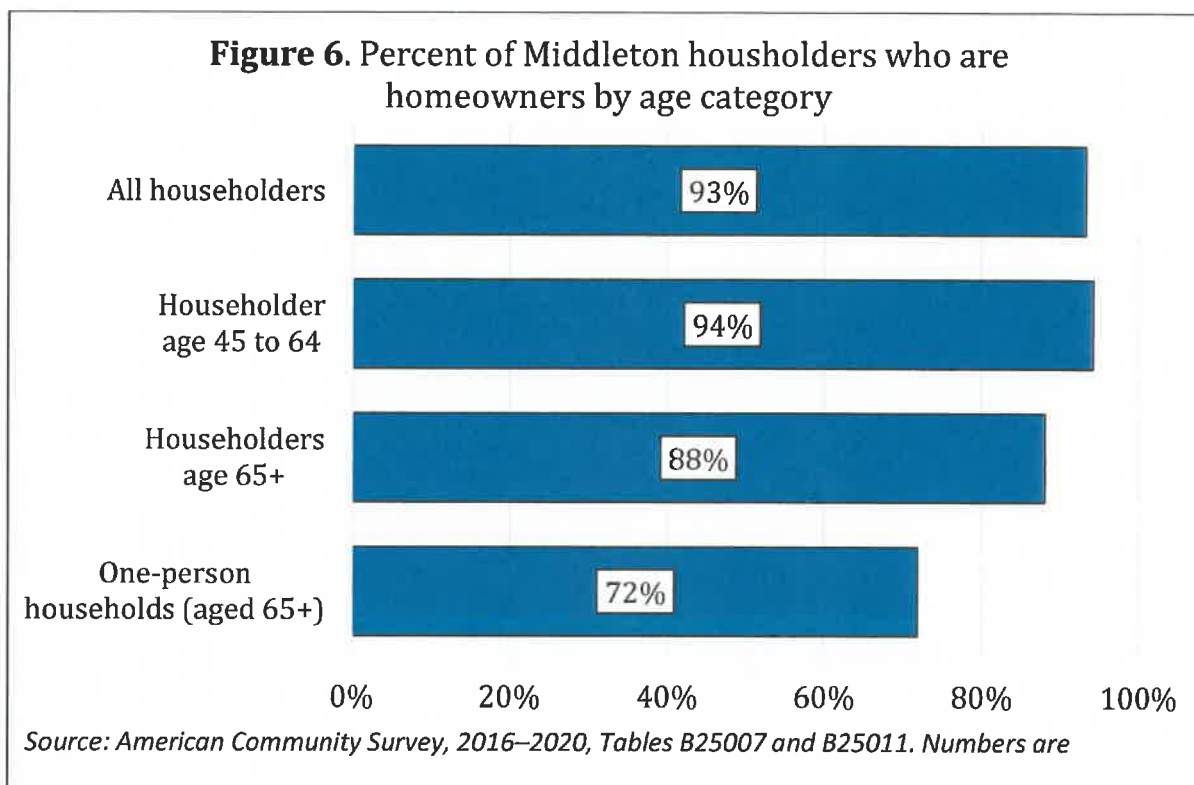
Figure 5. Age structure of Middleton householders



Source: American Community Survey, 2016–2020, Table B25007. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.

⁷ Many available Census data on the older population of Middleton are based on ages 45 and 65 as reference points rather than ages 50 and 60, as are used elsewhere in this report.

Most Middleton residents live in homes that they own or are purchasing (93%; **Figure 6**). Nearly 94% of residents age 45 to 64 own their homes, and 88% of residents 65 and older own their homes. A share of Middleton residents who are 65 and older and live alone, also own their home (72%). The high number of older homeowners has implications for what amenities and services are likely to be needed and valued by members of the community. Home maintenance and supports are often necessary for older homeowners—especially those who live alone—in order to maintain comfort and safety in their homes.

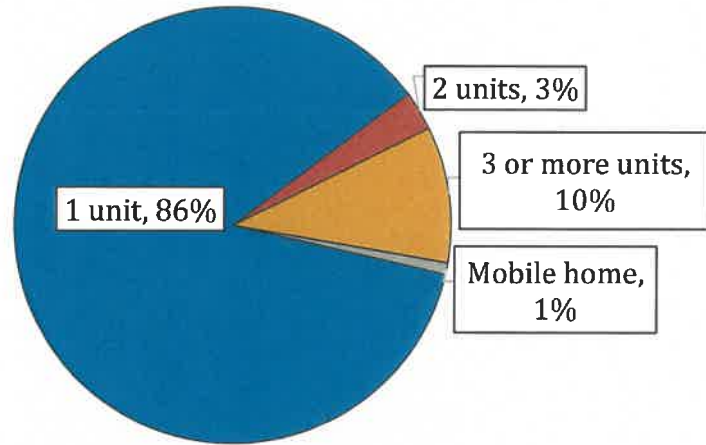


Additionally, 53% of Middleton’s 3062 households have at least one individual who is age 60 or older (*ACS 2016–2029, Table B11006*). This high proportion— which is likely to increase in the future— generally reflects the widespread demand for programs, services, and other considerations that address aging-related concerns, including health and caregiving needs, transportation options, and safe home environments.

Among the 3,233 housing structures in Middleton (**Figure 7**), 86% are single unit structures and the remaining 14% are housing structures that contain two or more housing units, which include apartment complexes.

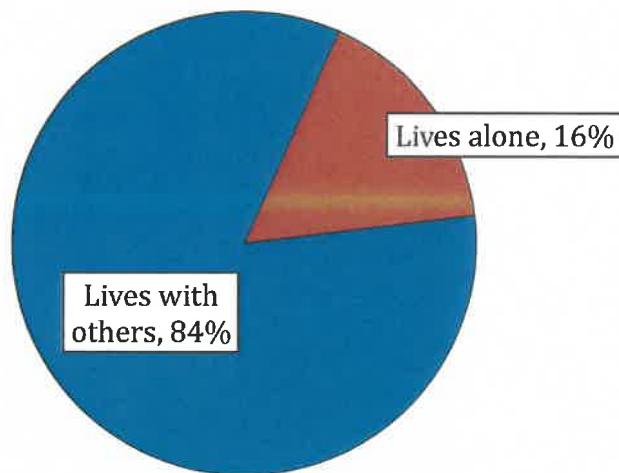
A proportion of Middleton residents who are age 65 and older (16%) live alone in their household whereas 84% live in households that include other people, such as a spouse, parents, children, or grandchildren (**Figure 8**).

Figure 7. Number of units in Middleton housing structures



Source: American Community Survey, 2016–2020, Table B25024. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.

Figure 8. Living arrangements of Middleton residents, age 65 and older

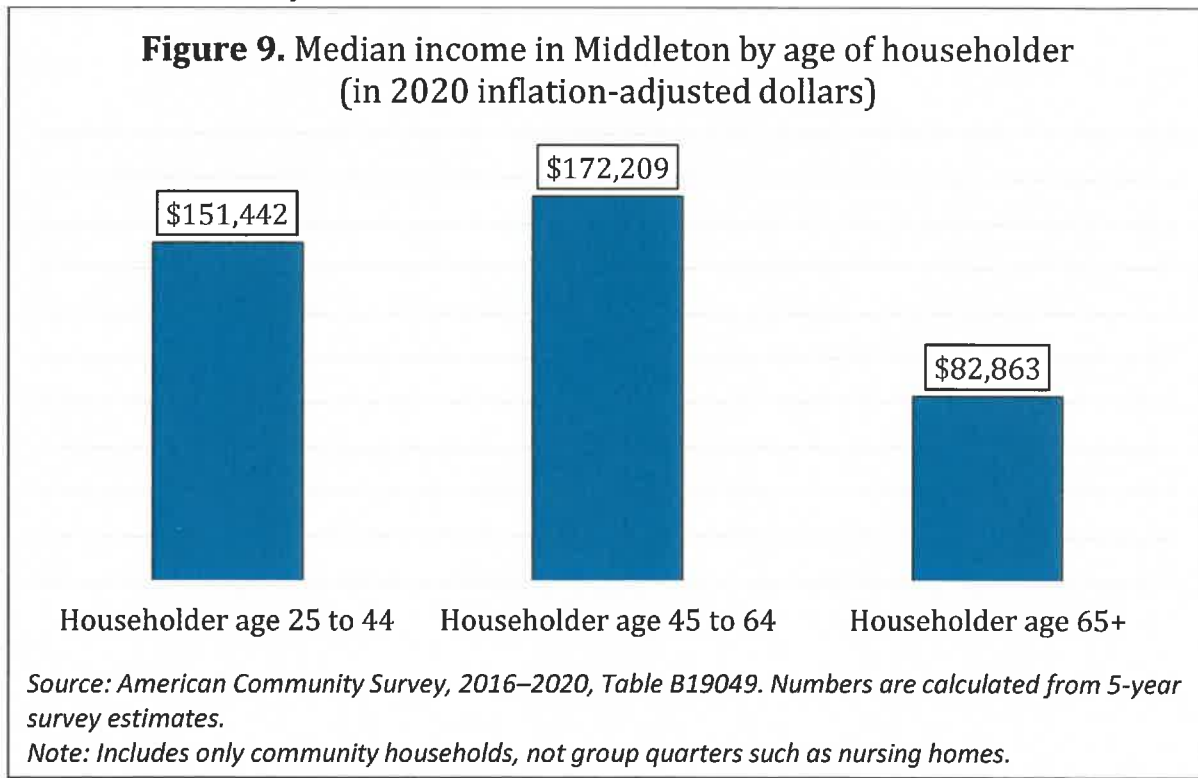


Source: American Community Survey, 2016–2020, Table B09020. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.

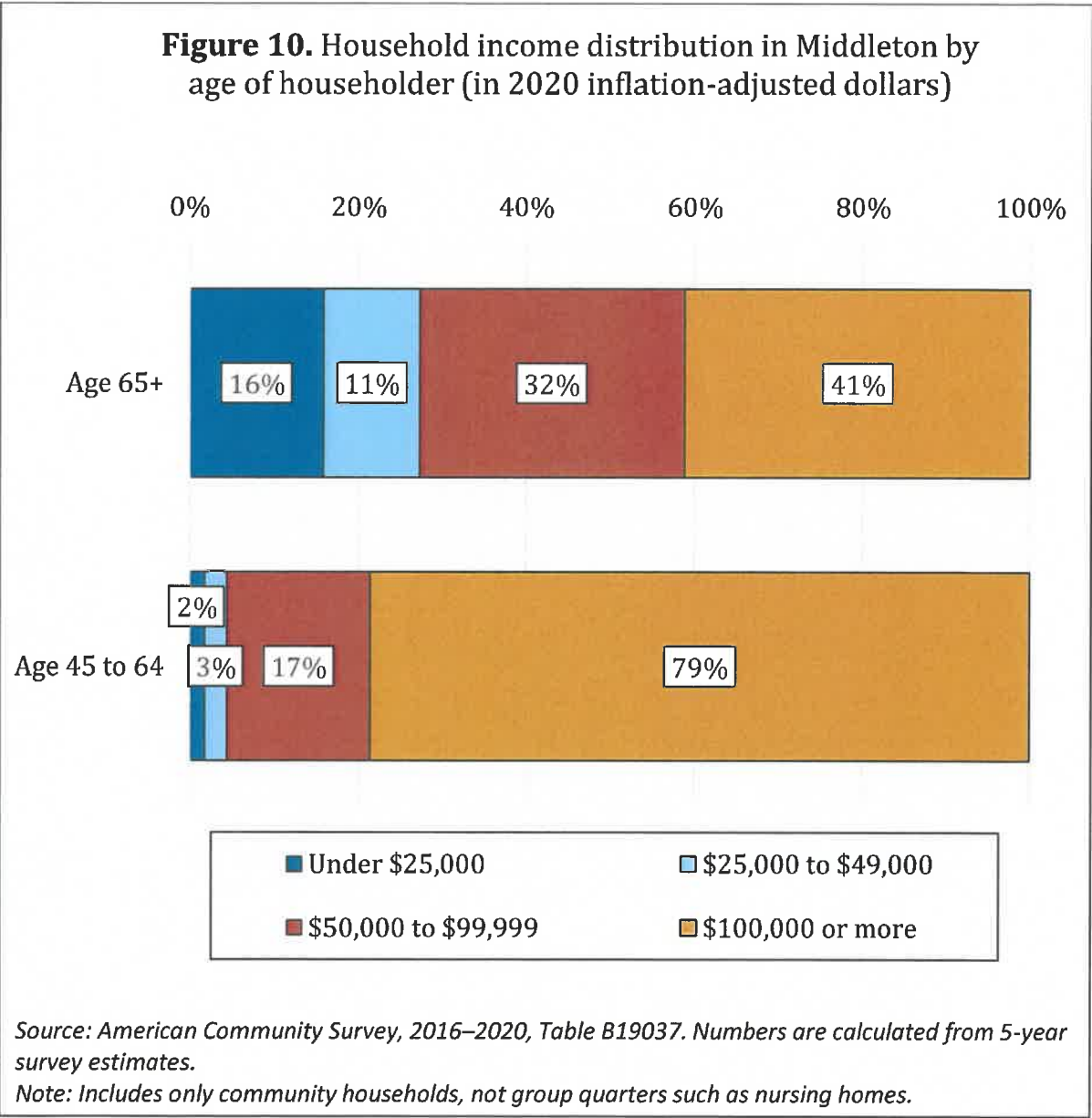
American Community Survey estimates on education suggest that Middleton residents are well educated on average. About 45% of persons 65 and older have some college education including 20% with a bachelor's degree and 8% with a graduate/professional degree (ACS, 2016–2020, Table B15001). This educational profile contributes to the vitality and character of the community, which depends on older adults who value opportunities to be involved through volunteer and civic engagement activities, as well as late-life learning opportunities—activities that are often present in highly educated communities (Fitzgerald & Caro, 2014).

Similar to older adults living in communities throughout the U.S., a large proportion of Middleton residents aged 65 and over remain in the workforce. Almost 29% of Middleton adults age 65 to 74 are participating in the labor force. Of those age 75 and older, nearly 26% remain in the workforce (*ACS, 2016–2020, Table S2301*). Additionally, more than 21% of men age 65 and older report veteran status (*ACS, 2016–2020, Table B21001*). As a result, many of the Town’s older residents may be eligible to receive some benefits and program services based on their military service or that of their spouses.

With respect to household income, there is some comparative disadvantage of some older residents in Middleton (**Figure 9**). Middleton residents’ median household income is considerably higher than the one estimated for Massachusetts as a whole, \$145,525 compared to \$84,385. Among Middleton’s householders, those aged 45 to 64 have the highest median income at \$172,209—which is also greater than the statewide median for this age group (\$103,973). Among householders 65 and older, the median income is \$82,863, also higher than the statewide median for this age group (\$52,973), but much lower than the median income of younger Middleton householders. Older residents living alone are at the greatest disadvantage in terms of household income. While there is not enough data to determine median income for older men living alone, older women living alone have a median income of \$35,163. Given that about 16% of older residents age 65 and older live alone in Middleton, these figures suggest that a sizeable number of residents may be at risk of economic insecurity.

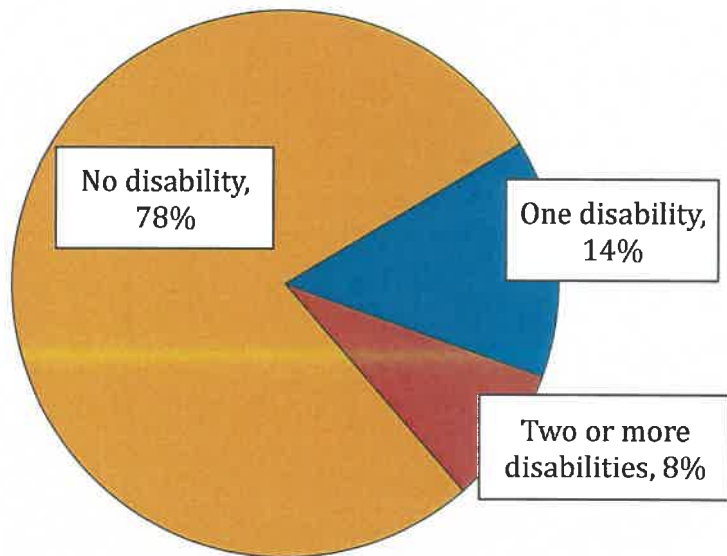


The economic profile of older Middleton residents relative to younger residents is further illustrated in **Figure 10**, which shows that the older adult population lives on a modest income. Forty one percent of Middleton residents age 65 and older report incomes of \$100,000 or more. By comparison, 79% of households headed by younger residents report this level of income. Nevertheless, a large share of households headed by someone age 65 and older (16%) report annual incomes under \$25,000. This compares with just 2% of households headed by individuals age 45 to 64 having incomes under \$25,000. Thus, there is a sizeable segment of Middleton’s older population that is at risk of financial insecurity or economic disadvantage.



There is an increased likelihood of acquiring disability with age. Many of Middleton’s residents age 65 and older experience some level of disability that could impact their ability to function independently in the community. About 14% of Middleton’s residents age 65 and older have one disability, and 8% report two or more disabilities (**Figure 11**). Among the different types of disability that are assessed in ACS, the most commonly cited by Middleton residents 65 and older were ambulatory difficulties-difficulty walking or climbing stairs-(14%) and hearing problems (11%; *ACS 2016–2020, Table S1810*). Other disabilities experienced by older Middleton residents include independent living limitations-difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor’s office or shopping-(4%), vision difficulties (3%), cognitive difficulties (3%), and self-care difficulties (3%).

Figure 11. Percentage of Middleton residents age 65+ reporting at least one disability



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2016–2020, Table C18108.

Results from residents and community stakeholders

In support of this project, two town forums were held to hear from Middleton residents regarding their ideas and needs for the future senior center space. A few residents provided written feedback and the COA Board shared their thoughts and suggestions in a written document. In the Fall of 2022, we conducted focus groups and interviews with participants recruited by the Director of the COA, with input from her staff. The aim of these focus groups and interviews was to hear about aging related concerns from residents with lived experience in Middleton, including voices of men, caregivers, those who rarely leave their

home, and pre-retirees. We also wanted to hear from stakeholders who interact with Middleton older residents.

Many themes that emerged from one group (e.g., the community forums) were reinforced by other groups. While there was much overlap in the insights and concerns shared, certain groups emphasized some challenges more than others. In the discussion below, we highlight the specific participant group, when relevant. In addition, residents shared many of the positive reasons they choose to live in Middleton and why they want to remain living in the Town as they age. Based on the strengths and challenges identified, we offer recommendations to the Town as they move forward with planning for the future.

Strengths of Middleton as a Community

Residents shared many reasons why they love living in Middleton. They spoke about the rural nature of the Town, appreciating the hiking trails and access to the river and noting that the abundance of outdoor space promotes an active and healthy lifestyle. Despite the rural nature of Middleton, the Town's location, with easy access to healthcare, shopping, and restaurants, was also highlighted as a strength. Residents spoke highly about opportunities for community engagement, as well. There are many town events, often organized and led by volunteers. Community members actively participate in town activities, demonstrating strong levels of community spirit. Town residents value volunteering, giving back to the community they live in and love. Several residents emphasized the value of the Council on Aging. They spoke highly about the staff and services, specifically noting how helpful they were to older residents during the COVID-19 pandemic, helping residents remain engaged during isolation. Many of the people interviewed mentioned the director of the COA, Jillian Smith, by name, singing her praises, talking about the positive changes she has made at the Center. Study participants also spoke very highly of Patrick Maher, Veteran and COA Outreach staff, and how he has gone above and beyond for them. One person stated that "Patrick was a lifesaver" and didn't think "she would still be here if it weren't for him". Residents also noted a great team approach within the town in support of the older residents with good communication between departments such as the COA, police, and fire. One individual summed it up when she stated she has a lot of gratitude for things already in the community and hoped that the Town would improve on what they have.

Challenges of Aging in Middleton & Related Recommendations

Residents shared many challenges to aging in Middleton. Most study participants agreed that limited housing options and economic challenges, limited transportation options, and isolation make it difficult to age in Middleton. Additionally, caregivers emphasized the limited support services available in the town for caregivers and their care recipients as a primary challenge.

- *Opportunities to downsize are limited.* Many residents during the town forums voiced their frustration that Middleton has very few housing options for seniors with no designated senior housing, no continuing care retirement community, few condominiums and apartments, and zoning that doesn't allow for homesteading. It can be challenging for older residents, on limited incomes, to remain in Middleton as there are few options for those who want to move to a more financially and physically accessible home.

Recommendations to support housing options for Middleton older residents.

- Contribute to local conversations about housing options for older adults who wish to downsize while staying in Middleton. Advocate for options that current residents can afford, including condominiums and other types of housing that offer low maintenance and single-floor living, as well as market rate housing and senior living housing.
 - Promote awareness of various housing options across the lifespan. Consider hosting a "housing choice" planning seminar to encourage proactive thinking about aging in place. Invite local experts (e.g., real estate agents, contractors, disability commission members, lawyers, financial professionals) who can share their perspective about future housing options based on a wide range of individual scenarios.
 - Advocate for zoning changes to make it easier to have additional dwelling units. For example, encourage zoning that allows homeowners to carve out space in their home to rent or build small, detached units.
- *Cost of living and taxes are high in Middleton.* Town forum, focus group, and interview participants all shared their concerns regarding the cost of living in Middleton, from housing to high taxes to the economy overall and their fear of inflation. The participants primarily worried about affording the upkeep of their home, food, and health care. Several individuals stated they really appreciated the free lunch programs that the senior center offers and suggested the Council on Aging provide more free programs, services, and discounts for needed services (e.g., handyman who will shovel for free/limited fee).

Recommendations to address economic challenges for Middleton older residents.

- Educate the community about currently available programs and develop new programs to support aging in place on a limited income. For example:
 - Adjust eligibility guidelines for property tax exemptions and tax work-off programs to make these programs more widely available.

- Consider adding a proxy option for the tax work-off program where a friend or family member can do the work on behalf of a resident who may be physically or cognitively unable to work.
 - Develop a small grants program for home repairs and home modifications.
 - Expand educational workshops on topics related to economic security, such as planning for retirement, finding new employment, creating ways to use home equity to age in place, or seeking alternative housing models like home-sharing or renting out rooms. Pre-retirees, specifically, expressed a desire for educational seminars on finances and investments. Several individuals suggested programming in partnership with businesses and other town organizations; for example, inviting local banks to speak about available programs.
- *Limited transportation options in Middleton are a challenge to aging in place.* Although the majority of residents who attended the town forums continue to drive, they shared their concern for those who don't drive and for the time when they can no longer drive. There is no public transportation in town, except for Paratransit (the RIDE) which has its limitations. The COA does provide some transportation, but it is very limited in what it can provide (e.g., limited hours and distances/locations). Participants at the town forum and interviewees who do drive spoke about the ways they limit their driving (e.g., only right turns, only daytime hours, only in good weather), as traffic patterns in town has made safe driving more difficult for them. Several of the people interviewed shared that there are several programs at the senior center that they would like to attend but are unable to as they have no way of getting there. One of the individuals who rarely leaves her home needs door through door transportation (i.e., needs assistance to get in and out of house, into appointments) and therefore, available paratransit does not meet her needs. This prevents her from leaving home and is very isolating. Even one person who does drive stated she feels isolated in town as she limits her driving and therefore, often is home alone. Others who limit their driving stated that the limited transportation is their biggest challenge to aging in Middleton. A few people acknowledged the senior center van and wish it were available more often and for a larger variety of activities (e.g., errands, grocery shopping more than once/week).

Recommendations to provide transportation alternatives for Middleton older residents.

- Explore the development of a formal volunteer transportation program (e.g., F.I.S.H.)⁸ to expand door-to-door transportation to the senior center or other social gatherings or shopping excursions and appointments.
- Ensure that segments of the community at high risk of experiencing barriers to transportation are aware of available options: residents aged 80 and older, non-

⁸ <https://www.wayland.ma.us/council-aging/pages/fish-friends-service-helping>

drivers, those who modify their driving, and those with significant mobility limitations.

- Investigate other opportunities to establish programs that will help older adults travel where they need to go, at a price they can afford and with the flexibility they value. Promote use of on-demand ride services by offering informational sessions about programs like Uberhealth⁹, GoGoGrandparent¹⁰ or the Transportation Resources, Information, Planning & Partnership for Seniors (TRIPPS) program¹¹.
 - Widen the promotion of existing opportunities for car safety programs as ways to support safe driving for as long as possible. AARP offers several programs, including a free Car-Fit program¹² and a Smart Driver Course¹³, both programs that provide information and materials on community-specific resources that could enhance their safety as drivers, and/or increase their mobility in the community.
 - Offer “travel training” events for residents to familiarize themselves with available transportation options. This will provide an opportunity to spread the word about the COA van and its hours of operation, paratransit, ride-sharing services, and other travel programs.
 - Provide rides to specific town events. For example, provide rides to town meetings, for those who want to attend but don’t drive at night or schedule some town meetings during day times, to encourage those who don’t drive or limit their driving to daytime hours to participate. Provide rides to polls on voting days, to allow seniors who don’t drive to make their voice heard.
 - Consider purchase of a smaller vehicle that can be used to provide rides around town so that the van is available for large groups. A small vehicle also makes rides more social and less stigmatizing. Explore rebates or incentives for purchase of electric vehicles or consider other Town vehicles that can be used.
- *Maintaining and creating social connections is a priority for many older residents of Middleton.* As noted above, not driving or limiting driving can lead to isolation in Middleton. Other reasons for feeling isolated emerged as well. Town forum participants shared that there is currently no gathering place for older residents to socialize. Residents spoke about Angelica’s, a restaurant in Middleton which has permanently closed. Previously, this venue was used both for senior functions and for informal gatherings. Several of the residents interviewed live alone and they spoke about how isolating it can be. They shared that it is challenging to attend senior center events,

⁹ <https://www.uberhealth.com>

¹⁰ <https://gogograndparent.com/>

¹¹ <https://www.mass.gov/doc/tripps-0/download>

¹² <https://car-fit.org>

¹³ [Online Defensive Driving Course From AARP Driver Safety](#)

reasons ranging from transportation challenges to not knowing anyone to not knowing what is available. One pre-retiree stated he would only go to programs or on outings if he knew someone to go with; he would not attend alone. The veterans who participated in the focus group emphasized how much they appreciate the veteran monthly luncheon as they value the support from their community. And two of the interviewees who received Meals on Wheels acknowledged how much pleasure they get from talking each day with the delivery person, albeit briefly. Importantly, one interviewee shared that scams are the biggest challenge as a caregiver for her mom. She stated that she has already needed to take away the keys as her mom is no longer safe to drive but she does not want to take away her phone as it is her lifeline to family and friends. That said, her mom clicks on all sorts of pop-ups and has been scammed several times.

Recommendations to creative social connections for Middleton older residents.

- Consider ways to welcome first-time senior center participants who are reluctant to participate on their own (e.g., a “new member day” or a “bring a buddy” program).
- Develop an initiative to reach out to older residents of Middleton who are living alone. For example, begin a door knocking project that would include a committee or group of volunteers that is tasked with contacting single person households in Middleton to identify them, their needs, and request contact information.
- Explore the adoption of an opt-in electronic system for systematically identifying and communicating with at-risk and vulnerable adults and families during emergencies.
- Hold a workshop on tips and tricks to avoid scams. Consider partnering with police and local banks to share their role in addressing scams.
- Implement a “surrogate grandparent” program that matches older adults with local families for mentorship and socialization to those whose families live out-of-town or are otherwise absent. Consider hosting a grandparent’s day luncheon to celebrate the participants.
- Host a quarterly breakfast for local organizations to come together. These events would include community education about the programs and services available through various agencies but also provide a mechanism by which communication about issues of isolation among providers can be streamlined and relationships established.
- To ensure representation of residents on local boards, committees, and initiatives, consider establishing a “citizen’s civic academy”¹⁴. This educates residents about the basics of local policymaking and governance and empowers them with self-advocacy skills.

¹⁴ <http://www.healthy-waltham.org/waltham-senior-civic-academy/>

- Assure that the future senior center space provides a welcoming environment with space for informal gatherings and confidential conversations.
- *Caregivers need more support than is currently available in Middleton.* The caregivers we spoke with all shared the challenges of caring for a loved one at home. They discussed many of the services that would make the job a bit easier for them (or would have made the job easier). While many of the solutions varied, all the caregivers we spoke with expressed the need for respite. They struggle to find time for themselves to run errands, shower, or exercise and they find it exhausting, at times, to keep their loved one engaged throughout the day. While one person took advantage of a day program in another North Shore town, the travel time added to the burden of care. Another caregiver emphasized the challenge of finding people to care for someone with dementia, as the needs of those with memory problems are different than the needs of people with physical limitations.

Recommendations to support Middleton caregivers.

- Host a family caregiver “resource fair” as an opportunity to connect the Middleton COA with family caregivers.
- Host a “Caregiver’s Night Out” to provide residents of Middleton who might be caring for a spouse, parent, or grandparent an opportunity to enjoy a night of entertainment. Explore partnerships with volunteer groups to provide respite care during the event.
- Encourage Town staff to participate in Dementia Friends¹⁵ training to raise awareness about residents and families living with dementia.
- Provide referrals and transportation to nearby Memory Cafés for residents and their caregivers to attend. Explore the possibility of offering a Memory Café at the Middleton senior center, once the new building is complete.
- Develop a volunteer program for respite, with volunteers trained to spend a few hours a week visiting with an older resident, providing the caregiver time to do whatever they choose.
- Provide a monthly support group for caregivers, in a hybrid format. This would provide a venue for caregivers to share problems and solutions (e.g., tips for dealing with incontinence) and provide much needed support. One individual stated he would participate in a widow’s support group, if available, now that he has time.

¹⁵ <https://dementiafriendsusa.org/>

The Middleton COA/Senior Center: Challenges & Recommendations

The demand for COA programs and services is expected to escalate in coming years and the current senior center space is not adequate to meet the needs of current and future older residents. Overall, older residents expressed frustration with the current senior center stating that they pay a lot in taxes and get few services. The sentiment by many is that Middleton has lost sight of its seniors and although the COA staff do whatever they can to support the older residents, the small number of staff with limited space can't provide all that the current residents deserve or that the future, growing population of older adults will need. While those who access the senior center appreciate the opportunities it offers, many of the study participants shared reasons why they do not use the senior center as much as they might like to or need to. The themes that emerged specific to the COA and senior center include the space, the image, the programs available, the services offered, the staffing, and the communication.

- *Accessibility of the Middleton Senior Center is difficult to access for those who have mobility limitations and inaccessible to those Middleton residents who have daytime responsibilities.* Town forum participants, focus group participants, and interviewees from all groups noted the limited number of parking spaces, including limited handicap accessible parking, at the current senior center. This emerged repeatedly as a major limiting factor to accessing programs at the senior center. Once inside the building, several people shared that it is barely accessible to those with mobility challenges. Those who use a wheelchair are unable to independently access the main area without assistance. Several participants noted the limited days and times the senior center is open, making it challenging for those who are still working or have other daytime commitments (e.g., babysitting grandchildren) to participate in activities.

Recommendations to facilitate accessibility at the future Community Center.

- Add significantly more parking. Older residents are more likely to attend an event or activity at the senior center if they don't anticipate challenges with parking.
- Add additional handicap accessible parking space near the handicap entrance of the building.
- Build a covered entranceway for drop-off and pick-up so that a car or the COA van can drive up and residents can enter the building without getting wet during inclement weather.
- Add curb cuts and include textured segments at crosswalks to facilitate safe walking to and from the building.
- Assure that there are no steps to enter, or that an accessible ramp is easily available in the front of the building.
- In order to maximize safety upon entry and exit, provide traffic patterns to enter and exit the senior center via right turns only.

- Keep the majority of space for older adults on the main level and provide adequate elevators to access other floors.
 - Assure that programs are free or at a minimal fee. For programs that include a fee, provide access to those who are unable to attend due to cost.
 - Expand hours that the senior center is open to include weekend and evening hours as a way to reach those who are still working or have other daytime commitments.
- *Current space limits the type and variety of programs available—thus excluding many residents from utilizing the COA at all.* Town forum participants, focus group participants, and interviewees all acknowledged that the current space for senior activities is not adequate. Many activities are scheduled at a variety of buildings around town and are constrained by scheduling challenges (i.e., space shared with many others). The hope is that the new center will have space to centralize activities. Currently, there is only one activity location at the senior center which restricts the number of activities that can happen at one time and the number of people who can participate at one time. Several noted that it is difficult to hear program speakers and hold quiet conversations in the current building as the acoustics are not ideal for older adults. Many residents shared the desire for a variety of activities which include dedicated space. For example, almost all the participants at the town forums expressed a desire for both a kitchen and a café. Many of the veterans suggested a café as well, as a place to socialize as they believe that a café, opened much of the day, would be used extensively. Others expressed the need for quiet, counseling rooms along with staff offices. Outdoor space was also highlighted by many study participants, with the desire for a patio and space for outdoor activities. One town employee shared the importance of outdoor space for those who prefer not to socialize indoors due to the ongoing concerns of COVID-19. And more generally, many expressed the need for the senior center to be a gathering place for Middleton older residents to congregate, socialize, and get support as needed. Additionally, participants emphasized that environmental aspects of the new building (e.g., lighting, temperature, acoustics) and equipment (e.g., phone charging table, computers) be considered in planning to assure the future senior center meets the needs of the older residents.

Recommendations to make the space at the new senior center user-friendly for older residents and supportive of a wide variety of programs and services.

- Provide multiple rooms and/or a large room that can easily be subdivided for more than one activity to occur at the same time. This will help meet the needs of a growing population of older adults with varied interests.
- Include space for a full kitchen and a café. A full kitchen would allow meals to be prepared on-site for congregate meals, for home-delivered meals, and for events

- hosted at the new facility. A café would provide a convenient space for residents to gather socially and drop-in for coffee or lunch without advance planning.
- Provide private, small rooms for counseling and staff offices. Many residents value confidentiality when learning about and receiving services offered by the COA.
 - Provide a welcoming area where people can sit and gather for coffee or just to chat. The senior center can be a wonderful gathering place for Middleton older residents to congregate, socialize, and get support, as needed.
 - Provide dedicated spaces for a game room and exercise room. A game room with a billiard table, card table, and other games doubles as a place for people to gather and socialize. An exercise room with equipment (e.g., treadmill, weights) provides a place for seniors to exercise in a safe, comfortable environment.
 - Provide technology capability in activity rooms for remote programming. Access to computers within the senior center for residents to use is also recommended, as this would provide older residents a space to learn how to use technology and have easy access to use it.
 - Provide accessible outdoor space including shaded seating, activity areas (e.g., walking tracks, pickleball and bocce courts, and meditation area) and space for a garden (e.g., raised beds and flowers).
 - Assure there is good soundproofing between rooms and appropriate lighting throughout. As one ages, hearing and vision decreases so assuring good acoustics and good visual contrast and lighting throughout the Center is important. Consider providing earphone access for programming to assure those with hearing loss can participate.
 - Provide plenty of storage. Storage will allow for flexibility of activities, ensuring a place for folding chairs, tables, equipment, and other items when not in use. Some study participants also suggested storage for residents, such as day lockers, to provide space for residents to hang coats or store items if coming to the center for multiple activities on one day.
 - Use energy efficient technology, whenever possible. For example, consider installing solar panels and automobile charging stations.
 - Provide adequate space, with a separate entry, for the food pantry. This could encourage more residents to familiarize themselves with and use the pantry.
 - Assure the space is adequate for town voting, as there has been some discussion that the Town voting location may switch from the schools to the senior center.
 - Consider the potential need for using the senior center for shelter due to weather emergency or power outages. Therefore, including shower facilities and generators might be appropriate.

- Advocate for both large and small spaces to accommodate presentations, movies, and life-long learning classes along with small group programming, counseling, and quiet space, as needed.
 - Consider fundraising efforts to ensure that the new building will be appropriately equipped with items such as video conferencing capability (e.g., cameras and microphones), indoor and outdoor exercise equipment, etc.
- *The image and reputation of the senior center is that it is for the very old.* We heard many comments from both residents and town employees that most people think of the senior center as a place to go if you are very old, in poor health, or in need of assistance. Several of the pre-retirees shared that they understand the need for programming to support the oldest old but would like to see a balance with activities of interest to those who might be in their 60s and newly retired, as well. Town employees discussed the challenge of reaching a broader age range in the current limited space but look forward to more diverse programming to meet more of Middleton older residents' interests and needs in the larger, future senior center.

Recommendations to change the image of the senior center from serving the needs of the very old to a place for all older adults to socialize, have fun, and receive needed services.

- Consider changing the name of the senior center to something more inclusive (e.g., center for healthy aging).
- Provide a strong social media presence to reach the younger seniors who might be more comfortable with technology, while continuing to send out paper newsletters to older residents.
- Expand programming types. Residents who participated in the town forums, focus groups, and interviews all shared ideas for programming that would bring more residents to the senior center. Town employees, as well, shared ideas for expanded programming. All study participants acknowledged that it is challenging to increase the offerings at this time as there is limited space for additional activities, but everyone hopes that the future senior center will provide a wider array of activities. Some suggestions include the following:
 - *Exercise/active programming:* Several participants stated that the main reason they would use a senior center would be to participate in exercise programs. Many pre-retirees suggested offering active programming geared toward people who are physically able. Zumba, line dancing, and different types of yoga are examples that were mentioned. One study participant suggested exercise programs with labeled levels (e.g., walks at level 1, 2, or 3) to attract people with varied abilities. Another individual who does not currently attend the center as she is unable to climb stairs and she is nervous using the "rickety"

lift stated that she would love to participate in chair exercise programs, if available and accessible.

- *Technology programs:* Study participants shared many ideas of technology programs that would benefit older residents. For example, programs to teach older residents how to use their smart phone, how to take pictures with their smart phone, or how to use Zoom would appeal to many seniors. These technology workshops could both support the use of technology of older adults and provide access to materials that are shared through technology.
- *Indoor and outdoor games:* Many participants suggested groups for a variety of indoor games including Bridge, Rummikub, Dominos, Mah Jongg, Chess, BINGO, and Wordle. Others expressed the hope that the future senior center would have both a pool table and a Ping-Pong table, items that could be shared by members of the entire Middleton community. As well, space for outdoor games was mentioned by many, both during interviews and at the town forums. For example, pickleball was emphasized as a way to attract a cohort of older residents who are physically able to play. Space for a Bocce ball court might attract others who enjoy outdoor games.
- *Gardening:* Middleton used to be a farming community, so not surprisingly, both residents and town employees suggested providing outdoor space for gardening. Some suggested it would be nice for those who live in a condominium or don't have their own residential outdoor space to have the option of maintaining a mini plot at the senior center.
- *Men's programming:* Participants who attended the town forums, residents in the focus groups and those interviewed, and town employees all mentioned the importance of providing programming for men. While the programs for veterans are well-attended by men, outreach to men who are not veterans is also needed. Some suggestions included a Men's senior breakfast, men's coffee hour, or a men's club. Others suggested speed dating programming as another way to attract men to the senior center.
- *Creative outlets:* A variety of suggestions for creative programming was suggested including different craft groups (e.g., ceramics, knitting groups, painting) and groups that make items to donate (e.g., first aid kits, making cards). One person expressed a desire for a senior choir.
- *Performances/cultural programs/educational programs:* Many of the people interviewed spoke about their love of the theatre and stated they would attend the senior center to see films, plays, or concerts. Study participants expressed their interest in lectures and listening to authors or other speakers on a range

of topics. Many of those interviewed who rarely leave their home along with several pre-retirees mentioned a book club as a group they would join. This could be in hybrid format, reaching those who are unable to get to the senior center. Town employees suggested educational programs regarding health and safety, including topics related to fall prevention, security systems, and general medical conditions.

- *Trips:* Day trips were mentioned often by focus group participants and those who were interviewed, as many participate in and value the current trip offerings. Types of additional suggested trips varied including cultural trips (e.g., concerts/theatre) and historic trips (e.g., museums, historic sites). One gentleman encouraged more trips for those with mobility challenges, for example trips to theatres or restaurants where the amount of walking is limited.
- *Nutrition and cooking programming:* Veterans, caregivers, pre-retirees, and those who struggle to leave their home all commented about how much they appreciate the food provided by the senior center. Several of those interviewed appreciated the delivered meals, and despite not always liking the taste, they really valued getting a meal delivered each day and greatly appreciated the visit by the person who delivers the meals. Others spoke about the meals offered at the senior center during programs and commented that free food is always a draw to the center. Many expressed the hope that the future senior center would have a café as a place to gather, enjoy food, and socialize. One of the caregivers brings his spouse to events where meals are offered. He initially attended these meals as a way to help his wife but has realized it helps him as much, as it gets him out of the house and provides a venue for him to socialize. Town employees suggested programs about nutrition and cooking, stating that when people cook for themselves, they tend to eat more processed meals that are quick and easy to prepare but not necessarily healthy. They expressed the hope that the kitchen in the future building will be large enough to provide space for cooking classes. Finally, one of the participants specifically expressed how much she values the food pantry, as it has helped her extend her limited food budget.
- *Intergenerational programs:* Many of the above suggestions could be intergenerational, but participants suggested specific intergenerational programming, including tech classes taught by high school students, volunteer opportunities with older residents reading to younger students, and programs for grandparents and grandchildren.

- *Services offered by the COA are valued; additional services are suggested.* Many participants spoke about the services that the COA provides that they take advantage of and services they wish were available. Some of the services study participants valued were the check-in phone calls, supermarket shuttle, SHINE services, and meals-on-wheels. Additional services to help people safely age-in-place, discussed by employees, pre-retirees, those who struggle to leave their home, and veterans, varied from handyman services (e.g., change batteries, shovel snow, etc.) to volunteers to run errands (e.g., pick up medications). Tax work-off programs were mentioned by both employees and residents as a way to alleviate tax burden and provide an opportunity for socialization.

Recommendations for expanding COA services to support older residents.

- Consider making the senior center a “one-stop shopping” environment where older residents, for example, could come to get their flu shot, see a podiatrist, and attend a lecture or film, all in one trip.
 - Some specific suggestions of services residents would like to see offered by the COA include:
 - free hearing and vision screenings
 - weekly blood pressure clinics
 - discounted podiatry services
 - massage therapy appointments
 - Develop a list of resources for contractors who will provide home modifications to support safety within the home. Help residents identify trustworthy sources of assistance (e.g., handyman). Consider implementing a volunteer run monthly “fix-it” drop-in program for residents to bring in small, broken items
 - Expand the tax work-off programs to include more choice of work settings for seniors. Tax work-off programs provide a chance for seniors to save on their taxes along with an opportunity to meet people and socialize.
- *Staffing for the senior center is not adequate to meet the needs of the current and future seniors of Middleton.* There was much discussion in the stakeholder focus group about the need for more staff for both increased programming and increased outreach. Participants in this focus group shared their concern that while the town is paying for new space, no additional staff is budgeted for. Some participants spoke about the importance of a five-year staffing plan to address the need for new staff and to plan for upcoming retirements. One person suggested the town hire a social worker to share among the Council on Aging and other programs to address many issues such as opioid abuse and hoarding, challenges that cross ages. Several interviewees also spoke about staffing when they shared that older residents in town should be valued more. Pre-

retirees and other interviewees emphasized that older residents add diversity and vibrancy to the town. They felt that the community should support older residents more and one way of providing this support that they specifically mentioned was providing a larger budget for the COA so the new center can be staffed well. Based on findings from town forums, focus groups, and interviews, it is clear that once the new building is complete, additional staff will be needed to meet the needs of current and future seniors. Expanded programming and outreach will require both additional volunteers and paid staff.

Recommendations to increase staffing at the senior center.

- Expand social work/social service capacity to address the complexity of economic, social, and health needs of the community of all ages.
- Strengthen outreach to include marketing of the senior center.
- Build and nurture a volunteer base. Older residents have many skills (e.g., nurse for blood pressure clinic; farmer for gardening support; IT specialist for technology groups) and often want to share their knowledge and skills with others.

- *Awareness and communication about the COA/Senior Center are an ongoing effort.* Several of those interviewed stated that they didn't know what activities and programs the COA offered. One person who rarely leaves her home stated that she doesn't know what services are available that she could access from home. Others emphasized the need for more outreach, suggesting weekly phone calls and email blasts. As well, several of the town employees emphasized the need for better communication among departments, while acknowledging that the comradery between department leaders is strong. They also discussed the challenges to reaching older residents. A lot of town communication is done electronically yet many of the older residents do not use email or social media. Many older residents currently attend the library to get a lot of their needs met (e.g., tech training). Town employees hope that when the new building is completed, is more accessible, and has more parking, older residents will realize the senior center is the ideal place for them to get their many needs met. Overall, communication with older residents can be challenging, yet all were motivated to find effective strategies to make sure seniors know about the services available to them.

Recommendations to improve communication with older residents and among town employees

- Consider increasing the visibility of the senior center. For example:
 - Expand social media presence as a method of outreach to younger seniors.
 - Initiate a "refer a friend" program to reach more Middleton residents.

- Schedule senior center open houses to introduce residents to the COA and the new building.
- Encourage COA users to promote the COA programs and services among neighbors and friends. Word of mouth is a strategy that shouldn't be overlooked, especially in a small town like Middleton.
- Consider increasing direct outreach through weekly phone calls and emails.
- Consider monthly meetings for representatives from Town departments who interact with older adults. These meetings can be used to discuss specific older residents in need, explore collaborative programming, and provide an opportunity for town leaders to support one another.
- Expand the current COA newsletter to include general town events so that seniors learn about what is happening in Middleton, separate from just events at the senior center.
- Engage in collaborative projects that support older residents and increase communication among Town organizations (e.g., intergenerational programming; recruiting employees from local organizations to speak at senior events).

Conclusions

The Town of Middleton's older population grew substantially during the last decade. Increases are expected to continue as the number of seniors increase moving forward, as well as the share of the Middleton population they represent. Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau show that in 2020, there were 2,573 residents age 60 or older living in Middleton. Currently, more than one out of four Middleton residents is age 60 or older. Demographic projections suggest that by 2035, approximately one-third of Middleton residents will be in that age group. Based on this growth alone, demand for programs and services that are needed and desired by older adults in Middleton will be greater than ever before.

The purpose of this study was to generate and organize information on the older population in Middleton. Assessment methods were designed to identify areas of concern with respect to aging in Middleton, and to provide a context for planning to address future aging-related needs of the Town's population. Special focus was placed on suggestions for the future senior center space along with COA programming and services to meet the needs of current and future Middleton older adults. Toward this end, our methodology included description of existing data, two town forums, two focus groups (veterans and Middleton employees) and resident interviews (pre-retirees, caregivers, those who struggle to leave their home).

Currently, the Middleton COA is estimated to be interacting with almost half of Middleton seniors annually. The programs generating the most use include outreach and communication (1,222 "unduplicated" individuals), nutritional services (199 "unduplicated"

individuals), exercise classes (74 “unduplicated” individuals), and health screenings (51 “unduplicated” individuals). This level of service use is impressive, given that the Middleton COA is housed in one large room at Town Hall, with very limited dedicated programming space.

Results of this study suggest that many seniors in Middleton are long-time residents who enjoy the Town’s character and value its natural amenities. Older residents of Middleton have a strong sense of community. This trait is seen as one of Middleton’s many strengths that can be drawn upon in the future to address changes that will accompany the aging of the population. Nevertheless, as is true in most towns, there are qualities of Middleton that often challenge the ability of older residents to remain in the community as they age. Concerns related to aging in Middleton that emerged from this study focused on limited housing options and economic challenges, inadequate transportation, isolation, and insufficient support services for caregivers and their care recipients. Thus, there are challenges inherent in maintaining the character of Middleton, even as the Town evolves to accommodate the needs of its older population.

Results of this study also suggest that the Middleton Council on Aging is meeting an important need in the community and providing significant value to older residents and their families. Despite limitations, they are having a meaningful impact on the quality of life of some Middleton older residents. Staff members develop creative workarounds to adapt to these constraints. In our conversations with community members and town employees, we heard strong support for the Council on Aging and its staff.

While the Council on Aging provides some programming and services for Middleton older residents, the current senior center cannot fully meet the needs of the many seniors who might benefit from additional programming and services. Challenges of the current senior center include the space, the image, the programs available, the services offered, the staffing, and the communication.

The residents at the town forums, COA board members, and focus group and interview participants, shared many ideas for ways to make the future senior center accessible, welcoming, and functional for Middleton older residents. One key suggestion that was made clear by town forum participants is the need for older adult and senior center representation on the planning

One suggestion, worthy of highlighting, is the importance of including at least one representative from the Council on Aging Board on the planning committee. This person would communicate the needs of older residents to the planning committee and communicate to the COA the decisions and plans as they move forward.

committee that is charged with executing plans for the future community campus. Without a representative on the planning committee to advocate for older residents, the participants in the forum expressed concern that their needs would not be met.

Growth of the Middleton older adult population signals growth in demand for programs and services offered by the COA. To support resident's desire to age in place, adequate access to programs and services will be needed. The Council on Aging and the future senior center space have the great potential to support Middleton older adults as they remain in the community they love.



AMENDMENT NO. 2 TO CONTRACT

20 January 2023

OWNER Town of Middleton, Massachusetts 01949

AGREEMENT Agreement for Architectural Design Services,
dated April 5, 2022

PROJECT Municipal Center

SERVICES ADDITIONAL SURVEY OF WETLAND FLAGGING

- Additional flagging of the wetland in the Northeast portion of the site near Route 114 and additional wetland flagging along the existing ponds due West of the building sites was requested by the Town's Conservation Agent and additional flagging was completed.
- The scope for this Amendment includes surveying the additional flags and placing them on the site survey.

CONTRACT AMOUNT: \$4,915,000.00

AMENDMENT NO.1 FEE \$ 1,663.00 (\$1,512.00 plus 10% mark-up)

AMENDMENT NO.2 FEE \$ 4,620.00 (\$4,200.00 plus 10% mark-up)

NEW CONTRACT AMOUNT: \$4,921,283.00

ARCHITECT Jeff Shaw, Principal, Context Architecture, Inc.

TOWN OF MIDDLETON Jeffrey P. Garber, Clerk, Select Board

File: 2204.00: A/O Contract



CHANGE ORDER AGREEMENT

Client: Context Architecture
Consultant: Bohler Engineering MA, LLC
Contract Date: March 17, 2022
Contract Rev. date (if applicable):
Bohler Project#: M221004
Change Order No. #1
Change Order Date: January 13, 2023
Project Name: Proposed Municipal Complex
Project Address: 105 South Main Street
Middleton, Massachusetts

Context Architecture and Bohler Engineering MA, LLC entered into a Professional Engineering Services Agreement on the 17th day of March, 2022 (the "Contract"). This Change Order fully incorporates by reference the Contract and any prior Change Orders entered into between Context Architecture and Bohler Engineering MA, LLC. This Change Order Agreement modifies and amends the above-referenced Contract and any prior Change Orders only as specifically identified herein.

The change or addition to Bohler Engineering MA, LLC's scope of services includes the following:

PHASE 103 – Additional Wetland Locations

This section will include the field location of wetland flags (to be established by the Town of Middleton) by our subconsultant. Wetland flags will be located by an on the ground survey utilizing a sketch of flag locations provided by the Town of Middleton. It is assumed that the site will consist of up to 100 wetland flags. This information will be gathered and collectively compiled into the AutoCAD Civil 3D 2018 survey drawing document.

Total Phase Increase = \$4,200.00


Total Contract Increase = \$4,200.00

By signing below, I represent and acknowledge that I am authorized to execute this Change Order on behalf of the entity above my signature.

CONTEXT ARCHITECTURE

By: C. Christopher Logan
Print: C. Christopher Logan
Title: Associate
Date: 20 January 2023

BOHLER ENGINEERING MA, LLC

By: 
Print: Tim Hayes
Title: Project Manager
Date: 1/13/23



Council on Aging
Old Town Hall
38 Maple Street
Middleton, MA. 01949
978-777-4067
www.townofmiddleton.org



Jan 24, 2023

Board of Selectmen
48 South Main Street
Middleton, MA. 01949

Re: Middleton Food Bank Donations

Please add the following donations to your agenda for acceptance by the Board of Selectmen for the Middleton Food Pantry, and notify me when the check has been accepted so that it can then be deposited.

Thank you,

Jillian Smith

Jillian Smith
COA Director

A donation has been made payable to the Town of Middleton Food Pantry:

Date: 12/30/22

Name: United Civil Inc
Donation: \$500.00

Check Number 17941

This donor would like to remain anonymous Yes xx No

A donation has been made payable to the Town of Middleton Food Pantry:

ORIGINAL DOCUMENT PRINTED WITH MICROPRINTED BORDER ON FRONT AND SECURE DOCUMENT WATERMARKS ON BACK - HOLD AT ANGLE TO VIEW

UNITED CIVIL, INC.
240 NEWBURY STREET
DANVERS, MA 01923

BROOKLINE BANK
BROOKLINE, MA 02445
53-7148/2113

17941

DATE 12/30/2022

PAY
TO THE
ORDER OF

Middleton Food Pantry

\$ **500.00

Five Hundred and 00/100*****

DOLLARS

Middleton Food Pantry
33 Maple Street
Middleton, MA 01949

[Signature]

MEMO

Food Pantry Donation

⑈017941⑈ ⑆211371489⑆ 2071002329⑈

UNITED CIVIL, INC.
Middleton Food Pantry

12/30/2022

17941

500.00

Brookline Bank

Food Pantry Donation

500.00