

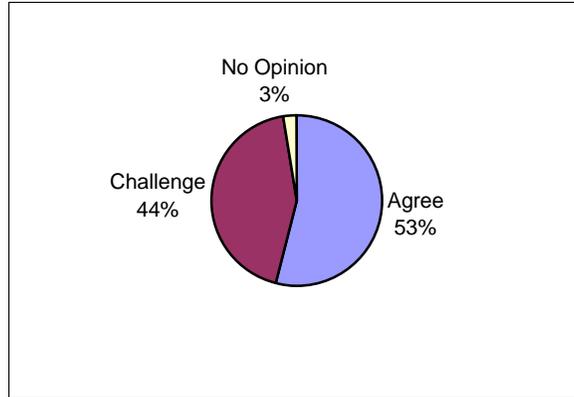
# Future of Middletown Survey Results

(This Survey is not a scientific poll.)

## Prediction 1

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By 2016, Middletown will be a major cultural attraction for Connecticut with a variety of art venues, such as theater, galleries, live music, public art, festivals, etc.



### Those that Agree with the prediction added:

- A major cultural center will be constructed either in the city or near the Connecticut River. This venue will build on the city's already diverse arts, cultural, musical initiatives.
- Our town is built for cultural attractions and Wesleyan is the key. This university could be open all year. Our Main Street is wide and can take the visitors with no problem.
- We could be the new "Boston".

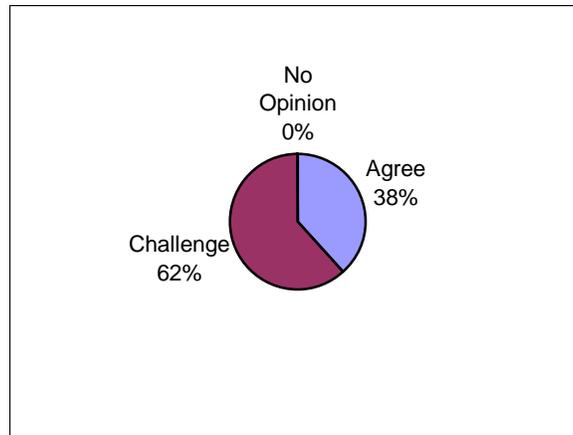
### Those that Challenge the prediction state:

- We need retail besides food and art.
- We have a lot of minor cultural attractions. I don't see any move to "major".
- Bringing a big box store selling low end market goods will not encourage the kind of people who are interested in arts, boutiques, gourmet restaurants to look at Middletown.
- Need a total commitment to do it and that's the challenge, most don't see the value in culture.
- Minimal direction from the City Council.
- Great image for Middletown. This is a direction that is desirable, but may not be attainable by 2016, particularly with the Goodspeed staying in Haddam.

## Prediction 2

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By 2016, Middletown residents will have easy access to the Connecticut River through public facilities and private development in Middletown's Harbor Park and proposed South Cove Development.



### Those that Agree with the prediction added:

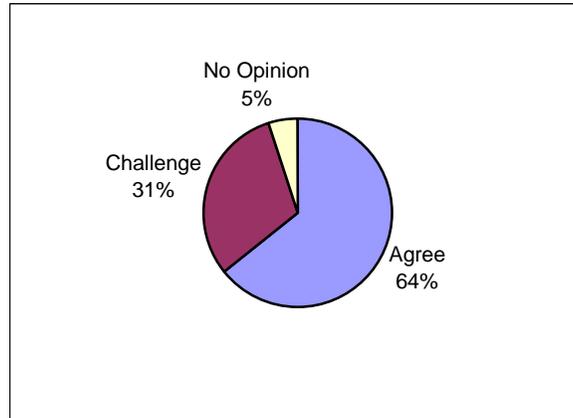
- Assuming the Route 9 and Route 17 interchange project is completed and a commercial development project moves forward within Harbor Park. Great Potential!
- We have it all, but the River is needs a bike trail, boat rentals, and river related events.
- Jonah Center should be encouraged to keep up their work. We should have good river development on the South End. Let's move the water district and the highway and get beautiful residential places to live as planned south end cove.
- This is a wish. I hope that the city will take this on as a real project. it would make the downtown more attractive.

### Those that Challenge the prediction state:

- The construction of South Cove is tied to improvements to Route 9. Theses improvements will take decades to finance, design and complete.
- It's a dump down there.
- It will be too expensive and some components are self serving by the proponents and not well thought out.
- Nobody is moving forward with this project, so I can't see it happening.
- Route 9 and railroad tracks and sewer treatment plant will continue to stand in the way of development.
- As a former resident of several waterside towns, I continue to be dismayed that the waterfront of the CT river is not valued at all. I am stunned that the waterfront is made up of decaying factories, lower income housing and a major highway dividing the public from a stunning view. I have real doubts that the city can make the many changes that are needed to improve access with route 9 in the way- both visual and noise pollution. What was the state thinking.
- Route 9 will never cease being a block to "easy access" to the riverfront.

### Prediction 3

Middletown's major employers in 2006 will continue to thrive in Middletown in 2016. (Pratt & Whitney, Middlesex Hospital, Wesleyan University, State of Connecticut, etc.)



#### Those that Agree with the prediction added:

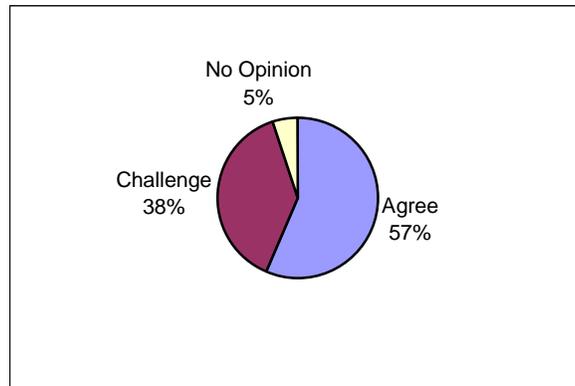
- I believe these employers are very stable. Pratt and Whitney will certainly face labor challenges but the site will be the point of consolidation, not the other way around.
- With the caveat that the City will need to continue to attract industry and business for the future stability, especially in replacing Aetna.
- The City government is supportive of the major employers, as they should be.

#### Those that Challenge the prediction state:

- We need to think ahead for ourselves; encourage new "green industries."
- If the downtown neighborhoods do not thrive then neither will the major employers. They should have more employees living in town and should stop gobbling up precious property for cars.
- Because there is little plans for the Aetna building when it becomes vacant, there are several issues facing our health care system and the rising cost of tuition may drive enrollment down at Wesleyan.
- Poor transportation infrastructure and the cost of living in Connecticut.
- Any private, for-profit organization can leave at any time. Mortgage Lenders and Aetna are the most recent corporation to prove this. Wesleyan and the Hospital, on the other hand, are here to stay. This is good. but Wesleyan and the Hospital, and all major employers, need to do much more to promote and support the virtues of living in the downtown core neighborhood.

## Prediction 4

By 2016, unique small businesses and national brands will provide Middletown residents and visitors with a unique shopping experience.



### Those that Agree with the prediction added:

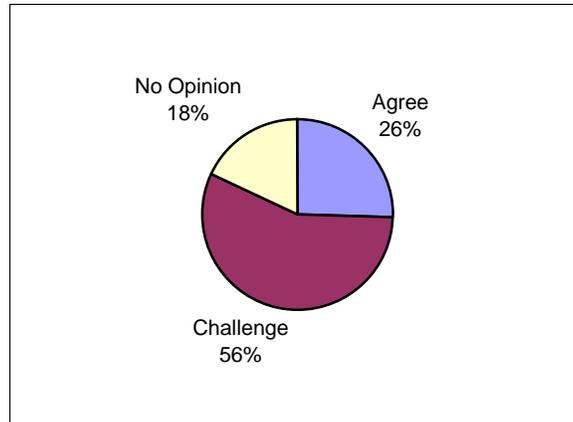
- It only a matter of time before the first large national anchor settles in or near the downtown. This will spark a surge in retail marketing and development.
- Middletown is ready for such retail growth.
- If infrastructure is maintained and updated.
- Could be is the route 66 corridor is developed properly.
- As food interest grows, so will retail.
- I agree but Middletown is mixing too many things. We can't have the downtown area look homey and welcoming and then throw a Big Box store into the mix. Don't get me wrong, get a Big Box, but put it in where the big box stores are such as upper Washington Street area.
- We have some small business - - we need more upscale national brands.

### Those that Challenge the prediction state:

- Until Route 9 access is changed, and the downtown area is developed with upscale apartments and housing, restaurants will continue to be the main attractions.
- When the city is encouraging big retailers, it's hard to think that small retailers will be happy to open here.
- We can't even get a large chain store in Middletown. We have to go to either Cromwell or Meriden to shop!
- I suspect national stores will override unique stores.
- You can achieve a unique shopping experience if you have high end brand retailers such as Starbucks, Kate Spade, COSI, Anthropology, Highland Park Market, Restoration Hardware on your Main Street. Greenwich for example, downtown West Hartford, Newport RI have very nice line ups that give you diversification and that "unique" experience. If your national brand references big box places, then they will take up parking in the downtown, create traffic congestion and will detour and frustrate visitors who want easy access to the quaint downtown shops and eateries thus the long term unique objective gets taken away.
- I'm not sure there is an easy coexistence between the national 'big box' retailers and unique, local 'boutique' type merchants. But one thing is certain: Middletown is a great city with amazing amounts of vacant real estate footprints between the river and the Main Street; we shouldn't have to offer large payouts to lure businesses here. They should be paying us to come.

## Prediction 5

By 2016, Middletown parks, green space, and preserved open space will more than meet the needs for outdoor recreation.



### Those that Agree with the prediction added:

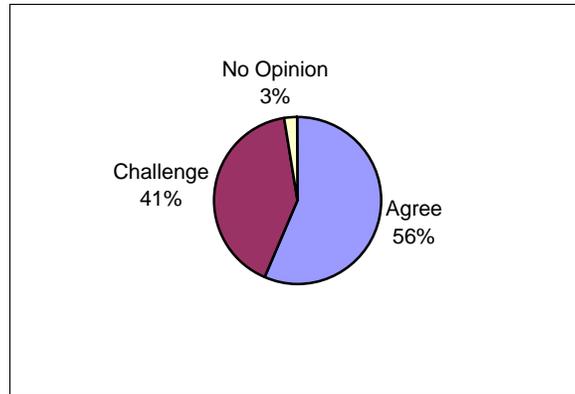
- Although Middletown has, and will continue to aggressively identify and obtain open space parcels, recreational needs tend not to benefit directly from these acquisitions. Existing playing fields for soccer, baseball and softball are in short supply. Additionally, a skateboard park, is needed to serve the teen and pre-teen population of Middletown.

### Those that Challenge the prediction state:

- 8 playgrounds were taken down this year, but how many will be replaced? It will take a new movement to increase (rather than decrease) our recreational spaces.
- The city is far behind in meeting the outdoor sports needs.
- Acquiring and/or protecting open space will not continue at the past rate unless we establish an open space fund which we can draw from for matching funds.
- The parks right now could use some help. We need something to make them more appealing and noticeable to residents.
- My kids go ice skating every single Sunday during the winter months. They have to go to either Newington Arena or West Hartford.
- Younger people will be looking for more.
- We do not keep them up and the parks need improvement.
- There is no 'passive recreational' green space in the downtown core neighborhoods. There are lots of children that live in downtown Middletown. Why don't they merit a nice playground of the sort that exists out on Country Club Road?
- The future of Maromas remains uncertain. Maromas needs to be preserved. The need for parks, green space and open space only grows as population size increases.
- Insufficient funds are being committed to this desirable aim.
- There is insufficient attention to adult recreation.

## Prediction 6

By 2016, Middletown will continue to retain its character as a historic New England college town on the banks of the Connecticut River



### Those that Agree with the prediction added:

- Middletown is pretty good at preserving its character while allowing room for development. The residents are interested in preservation on a whole, I think.
- The city charm rests on its shops, open air quality, views of the Connecticut River and varied activities. I don't see these changing anytime soon.
- Middletown typifies the New England college town.
- Middletown's goals, plans and objectives appear to align with the general premise of a vibrantly healthy college town.

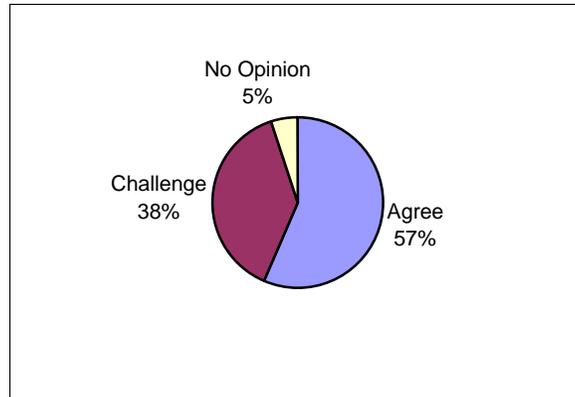
### Those that Challenge the prediction state:

- It isn't viewed that way now.
- I don't see it as having a historic character. A university town, yes, but not historic.
- There is no real plan for preserving the character of the town. Without such a plan, there's a danger that character will be lost.
- I think you have to be careful to build a community that feels safe to college students - then you will have the ability to call it a college town.
- I have lived in Middletown my whole life and have not ever considered Middletown a "college town." The colleges are separate entities within our borders.
- Middletown has already lost its character as an historic New England college town -- it is up to the vision of its citizens to create a new and even more appealing image.

## Prediction 7

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By 2016, Downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods will be a walk-able community with employers, entertainment, and services easily accessible to where people live.



### Those that Agree with the prediction added:

- We are trending that way.
- Good start on planning walking tours.
- There has been fantastic growth in the North End and if that is allowed to continue it will drive the bad elements out of Middletown.
- One of the reasons we still live in Middletown is because we can park downtown and walk.
- Middletown is already walkable. We need to make it more so.

### Those that Challenge the prediction state:

- It will be walkable but who wants to walk to a big box store in what is supposed to be an historic college town on the river?
- If they get rid of all the deadbeats that hang around!
- I truly hope so. There are many people who would like to live downtown, but without the services needed, such as grocery store, cleaners, shops, and apartments for the Baby Boomers and quality houses for home ownership, how is it possible?
- Not if mental health care services buy up all the homes in the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Crime and visual blight is the major issue that needs to be improved. Downtown does not feel safe or look safe with all the homeless and mentally challenged hanging out everywhere, sometimes begging for money. Also, large groups of teenagers just hanging out makes it seem unsafe. Sad, but true.
- Too much emphasis is being placed on developing a "downtown" shopping district. Downtown area needs more housing units (not affordable housing).

## Reflection 1

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Looking back, how has Middletown's renaissance fallen short. Think back to your views in 1996. Where have your expectations not been met?

- Main St. is a million times better than it was 10 years ago. I am a little disappointed by the lack of interesting (and thriving) retail.
- Loss of the Goodspeed Opera House; dramatic change in parking availability, extremely poor physical connection with the river waterfront.
- More redevelopment is needed in the general downtown area to eliminate the blighted buildings and get full occupancy. Middletown could become a tourist destination with the right types of stores downtown and a marina/hotel on the waterfront.
- It always happens more slowly than you anticipate.
- It is disappointing that moderate to large retail shopping has yet to become a fixture of the downtown area.
- Development has been good, but slow. To maintain pace and the goals of the renaissance things need to continue to be developed in a timely fashion.
- Clothing stores? Shoe stores? Nice stores? Stores to shop in? Okay, there is an example of one or two tucked in here and there, but there aren't choices!
- North End continues to be a source of embarrassment.
- I want to see the South End near the Hotel development. I think the North End is terrific.
- Lack of live music. Need to encourage in town arts festivals.
- Too many stores at the very low end of the market. The average income in Middletown is pretty high but there's no where to spend it.
- There are still too many vacant buildings on Main Street and too many idle people on Main Street.
- The Opera House was a disappointment.
- I would have thought that we would have had better access to the riverfront by now.
- Attracting national retailers.
- No modern apartment opportunities for young professionals.
- You say you want to attract young singles and young families downtown but you lack to provide one of the most important things for kids, a playground that can be walked to with parents, or somewhere for people to go and relax if they live downtown. If you have dogs you will want this. Single income young adults want this and so do young families.
- Boaters and the public having access to the River and a park for families.
- Waterfront development needs to happen and not just talked about.
- I am a little disappointed by the lack of interesting retail.

## Reflection 2

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Looking back how has Middletown renaissance surprised you?

- The whole thing surprised me. We have really taken a turn for the better that I didn't see coming.
- Outdoor eating venues, number and variety of restaurants, excellent quality of the food.
- Love the improvements and direction thus far. Keep forging ahead!
- A Target store downtown, etc. Would be a surprise I never thought we would see that! It may be a trend!
- The number of and variety of successful restaurants is surprising.
- We have become the restaurant destination. When I say I am from Middletown, everyone always replies wow I love the restaurants. This is great but I wish we were more of a destination than just a place to get a good meal.
- Who would think that we would become the dining mecca that we are!
- Surprised in a good way to see businesses wanting to open here and surprised in a not so good way... 4 little naked men holding hands in a circle in a family park.
- The speed at which it has happened.
- The city seems to be pro-business and has a can do attitude.
- Green Street Arts Center was a great addition.
- the renaissance has sustained itself and more solid that I had anticipated.
- I think the Destinta movie theater added a lot to the downtown draw!
- Busy active streets on weekend nights.
- It hasn't surprised me. A lot of people have worked very hard to make it happen, beginning with the Main Street program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

## Open Question

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In 10 years what is the dream that you hope to see fulfilled in Middletown?

- A continuance of current plans for development.
- A thriving, mixed-use, mixed-income downtown that has room for a diverse group of people (ethnically, financially, and age) and can accommodate them for all of their needs (shopping, education, entertainment and retail).
- An outdoor, open air amphitheatre, overlooking the Connecticut River Valley where major musical, theatrical events are held; routine tourist visits by rail from Essex; Route 9 traffic problems solved.
- Crime and Illegal Drugs a thing of the past everywhere within Middletown; a fully renovated downtown district; a healthy, safe environment for our kids, seniors, everyone else; a political system that works in harmony with the character of Middletown; a destination city.
- More mixed use housing close to downtown, a greater cultural appreciation and more ethnic diversity, etc
- In ten years, I would like to see a diverse layer of employment and housing opportunities locate within Middletown creating a sustainable and pedestrian friendly community.
- My dream is the harbor area will be completed and revitalized and the problems of the lights on route 9 will be gone.
- To not let just ANYBODY enjoy living here if they can't pull their own weight. EVERYONE needs to do their part and get a job and provide for themselves and their families instead of always relying on the working families to provide for them. Don't get me wrong...I have a constant Food Drive that I run for Amazing Grace, I provide a Blood Drive twice a year at my business, I hold a Toy Drive yearly during the holidays for the Riverview Children's Home, and the list goes on. I HATE to see people who don't need these services, but because they are too lazy, we let them enjoy them anyway! People who don't work but are capable should be monitored BEFORE they are allowed to enjoy these free services including the food baskets that I also provided for for families on Thanksgiving. It gets tiresome to keep providing for these people and I have seen many, many people stop giving because these kinds of services should ONLY be provided to people who very truly need them!
- Like I mentioned earlier; the new "Boston".
- Open space for my children and less taxes but this doesn't mean or industry tax base.
- More shopping!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- Reconstruction of the river front and a Rt. 9 bypass--get rid of those lights and stop cutting the rest of the city off from it's greatest feature--the historic CT river!
- More specialty clothing store. I remember Kabachnik and enjoyed shopping there.
- The retention of the restaurant scene, more interesting and "different" retail, more green and park like lands on the water side of the buildings (i.e. a park in the Rockfall parking lot next to City Hall or behind the Inn. And whatever happened to have low condos facing the water at the south end? We have overloaded the Main St. area with facilities for low income. Nice quality condos would fill up with middle to high income owners who would patronize better quality stores than we now have.

- The downtown and surrounding neighborhoods be charming, busy, unique. Students shopping and adding to our town atmosphere. North Hampton MA seems like a great model.
- I want to see our downtown take advantage of the River view and build more expensive residential units. I would like a museum and art group to go downtown.
- Multi-use buildings downtown with high end stores and a well designed park with accessible and ample parking for the park and the stores and restaurants. With regard to the Aetna building/new tenant, the dream is to see a socially responsible tenant who takes a major interest in the care of its building and gives back to its community.
- To get the Connecticut River back! And turn America's Cup into something nice and family friendly, not a meat market for 20-some-things from out of town. What about a Museum about the River, with a nice cafe, featuring Middletown's impressive maritime past?
- A continuation of the upward trend in retail occupancy that we have seen, with a mix of shops, food and services.
- Roads and utilities need to be revamped to accommodate the increase of population. Westfield area of Middletown has ben allowed to be over-developed while south end of Middletown remains rural in character without municipal water and sewer.
- Avoid big box development and retain it's small town charm.
- Revival of the Capitol Theater. Music clubs in downtown. No parking lots on Main Street. True access to the river (a tunneled Rte 9).
- I would love to see what has happened in the South End also transpire in the North End, thanks to more more grant money applied to beautification. I would like to see far less crime and the presence of populations that make the Main Street less friendly and safe. I would love to see more activities on Main St.
- To have the city leaders understand the value of "neighborhood" and "streetscape" in terms of integrity and development. To know that historic preservation is not about just saving old buildings. To work WITH the people of Middletown openly and honestly to find ways to make the future a shared vision.
- Route 9 & South Cove Projects completed and for our downtown to continue to grow and continue with our city's growth in (Cultural, Retail, Business & Industry) which will stabilize our Tax Base, while providing for a Quality of Life for it's residents & visitors.
- Waterfront development...tie this in with our beautiful Main Street.
- Bustling nightlife, plenty of open space parks, community orchestra.
- Have the town support private residences as close to town center as possible. The proximity of homes will help Middletown keep it's good characteristics. Make the waterfront SPECTACULAR. We have such a wonderful resource potential - it should be made very inviting with small venues attracting the Main Street crowd.
- More open space and better retail.
- A pleasant and pedestrian friendly access to the river with a green space to enjoy there-- free of asphalt parking lots, tacky restaurants, noise pollution and equipped with eco-friendly facilities. Let's take back what we own!
- A walkable city.
- Destination area for arts, shopping, entertainment and fine dining.
- Converting CVH into a corporate campus with thriving class A office space, residential and retail. One of the best sites in the entire state... Breath taking views for miles!

- Middletown has a good school system and it has the potential to have a fantastic school system. The fact that schools are not part of this survey is one of the reasons we are not beyond the "good" stage. Better schools will draw in more businesses and wealthier residents.
- I would like to see a well managed downtown with mom and pop shops integrated with national chains, better parking, and the run down housing replaced with new housing that is mixed with both affordable and higher end. I would also like to see the economic development department in town staffed with more people who have energy and experience in recruiting and attracting people who have vision and the resources to bring the town up to where it should be. The police department would be staffed to the appropriate number of police needed to manage the size the town really is.
- Get the drugs out of the town...people walking the streets.. The police walking the streets and getting to know the town people. Landowners must maintain their homes...police and fire departments checking streets for garbage and reporting it to the sanitation department...all of us working together to make middletown the best.
- I would love to see the soup kitchen and community health center removed from Main St. They are very important places but the need to be in a different location. Maybe the city can help by financing a new building for them. There should be a law on how many group homes or half way houses are allowed in this city, or in the north end area.