

# DESTINATION 2040

MIDDLESEX COUNTY ♦ NJ  
MASTER PLAN



## Phase 1 Outreach Report

Destination 2040 Phase 1 Outreach  
November-December 2018

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## BACKGROUND

As part of the county's extensive public outreach initiative for DESTINATION2040, Middlesex County's Comprehensive Master Plan update, Rutgers Public Outreach and Engagement Team (POET) conducted ten outreach events during November and December 2018 in locations throughout the county. During each event, Rutgers POET staff set up a booth in a public place, like the library or community center, where they facilitated several outreach activities. The goal of these outreach events was to ask people who live, work, and attend school in the county two simple questions:

***What do you like about Middlesex County?***

***What would you change about Middlesex County?***

The purpose of collecting responses to these questions was to establish a basic understanding of what topics and themes are most "top-of-mind" for those in the county. Working from this basic understanding, public engagement strategies planned for Phase 2 outreach in spring 2019 will collect feedback on specific categories or topic areas about life in the county.

Planning and facilitation of these ten outreach events was based on the "go-to-them" model of outreach. In this model, opportunities for public comment and engagement occur where people are already located and congregated. For example, rather than inviting members of the public to submit feedback by attending a public hearing at a public building, a booth is set up with a comment box and post it boards at an existing community event. The go-to-them model of outreach seeks to reduce the inconvenience of participation for residents by reaching people where they already spend their time. This creates opportunities for participation particularly for those who might otherwise not participate due to scheduling conflicts, lack of knowledge and awareness about a project, lack of familiarity with public decision-making processes, discomfort or language barriers when interacting with public officials, and other obstacles.

## FORMAT OF OUTREACH EVENTS FOR PHASE 1

Rutgers POET staff planned and facilitated ten outreach events throughout the county. Table 1 shows information on the location and date of each of the events. At each event, Rutgers POET staffed the outreach booth to display the outreach activities and some DESTINATION2040 informational and promotional material. Staff engaged with passersby using the following outreach activities:

- **Post-it Note Activity:** This activity encouraged participants to write down on post-it notes what they liked and what they would change about the county. The post-it notes were displayed on two large boards, one board for "Like" comments and another board for "Change" comments. By presenting the survey questions on poster boards with colorful post-it notes, Rutgers POET staff were able to not only attract attention to the display, but also use existing comments to drive and encourage more responses. Essentially, posted comments became conversation pieces for additional responses.
- **Video Testimonials:** Participants were voluntarily filmed using an iPad, capturing what they liked and would change about the county while Rutgers POET staff video-recorded their response.

- **Feedback Cards:** Participants also had the capability to write down what they liked and would change about the county which included basic demographic information about themselves. Cards were collected using ballot boxes.

The location and timing of outreach events were scheduled to capitalize on existing high traffic. Outreach locations were also chosen to achieve geographic and demographic diversity. For example, Monroe Township has the highest median age of any municipality in the county, therefore a booth was positioned at the town’s senior center. Since higher education institutions play a strong role in the county, events were hosted at Rutgers University and Middlesex County College. Hospitals in the county draw many commuters and residents, and booths were placed at Robert Wood Johnson Hospital in New Brunswick as well as Raritan Bay Medical Center in Perth Amboy, which also attracts a significant Spanish-speaking population. An event was hosted in a historically black church in Perth Amboy that draws congregants from around the county. There were two events in libraries during their holiday fairs, one of which was in South Brunswick, which has a significant South Asian population and is the first school district in the area to close for Diwali. East Brunswick library was the other location which is a large community, centrally located within the county.

**Table 1: Locations and Dates of Outreach Events for Phase 1**

Municipality	Event Location	Date	# of Comments
<b>Monroe</b>	Monroe Senior Center	Monday, 11/19/18	103
<b>New Brunswick</b>	Rutgers Student Center	Monday, 11/26/18	129
<b>Woodbridge</b>	Middlesex County College	Tuesday, 11/27/18	83
<b>Edison Township</b>	Menlo Park Mall	Friday, 11/30/18	134
<b>South Brunswick</b>	South Brunswick Public Library	Saturday, 12/1/18	127
<b>Woodbridge</b>	Woodbridge Center Mall	Sunday, 12/2/18	150
<b>New Brunswick</b>	Robert Wood Johnson Hospital	Wednesday, 12/5/18	341
<b>East Brunswick</b>	East Brunswick Library	Wednesday, 12/12/18	87
<b>Perth Amboy</b>	Raritan Bay Medical Center	Thursday, 12/13/18	176
<b>Perth Amboy</b>	Cathedral International	Sunday, 12/16/18	151
<b>Total Comments</b>			<b>1481</b>

## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM PHASE 1 OUTREACH

### PROCESSING COMMENTS

Rutgers POET staff transcribed all responses received from the post-it notes and feedback cards. Video testimonials were not transcribed if the participant also provided a written comment either using the post its or completing a feedback card. Several comments received in Spanish were translated into English. All comments can be parsed by the outreach event at which they were received. Comments that were written on feedback cards can also be analyzed by the demographic data completed on the feedback card. If a respondent wrote a comment on a post-it, demographic information was captured from the respondent.

### TOTAL COMMENTS AND PARTICIPANTS

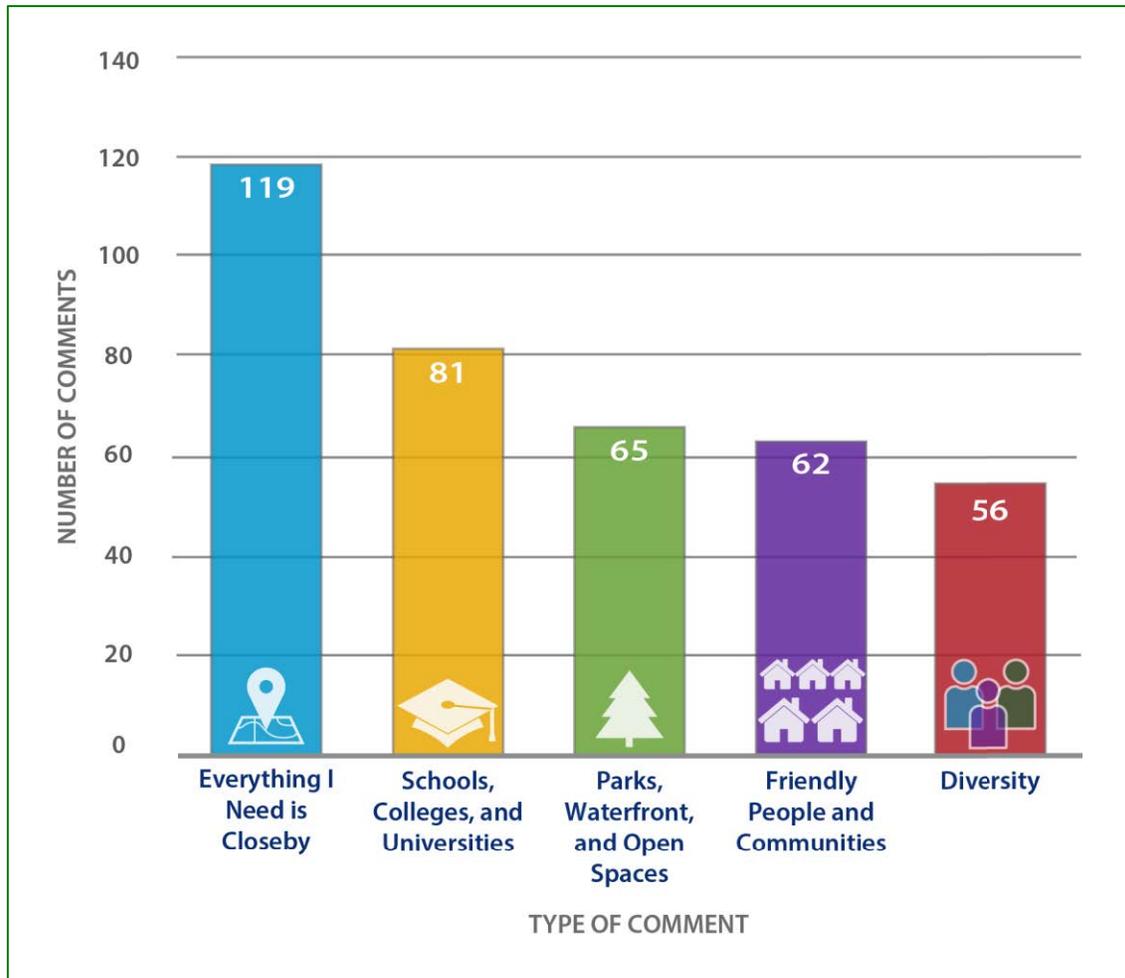
Resulting from the ten outreach events in November and December of 2018, there were nearly **1,500 comments, including 721 “like” comments and 760 “change” comments** from approximately **1,100 participants** on a wide range of topics about what respondents liked and would change about Middlesex County.

### SUMMARY OF “LIKE” AND “CHANGE” RESPONSES

Summarized below are the prevalent comments that participants provided when responding to the two outreach questions. Rutgers POET tallied the number of identical or similar comments received to identify those that were proposed most frequently. For example, comments about specific school districts and colleges were grouped together under “Schools and higher education.”

**Figure 1** and **Figure 2** display the top five (5) or most frequent “Like” and “Change” comments from all comments received from the ten outreach events conducted in November and December 2018 (Phase 1). Following each figure is a short summary of each of the top comments. The top five comments from both “like” and “change” represent approximately 50% of the total comments of “like” and “change” respectively from Phase 1 outreach events. Verbatim comments from each of the ten outreach events as well as a more detailed summary of specific topics, including public health, land use & economic development, transportation and housing, are available.

**SUMMARY OF TOP 5 RESPONSES:  
WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT MIDDLESEX COUNTY?**



**Figure 1: What do you like about Middlesex County? Top 5 Responses**

**#1 Everything I Need is Closeby | 119 comments**

Respondents like having easy access to other places and amenities in the region, both broadly and specifically. Some participants refer to the county’s “central location” or “proximity.” Many others reference specific places or amenities that they like being able to easily access. These include: major cities like New York and Philadelphia, other states, Princeton and other local towns, rural areas, entertainment venues, the beach, airports, and shopping. Some participants connected the county’s regional accessibility with transportation connectivity. They reference access to many highways and public transit options. Some participants also note easy access to a number of jobs and having an easy commute to work.

## **#2 Schools, Colleges, and Universities** | *81 comments*

Participants like many different aspects of the county's K-12 school districts, Middlesex County College, and Rutgers University. Many feel that the county's educational amenities created good opportunities. Participants like their local school districts, the affordability of education, and access to a number of education institutions. Middlesex County College students feel that the school is a good value and that there is high level of engagement between professors and students. Rutgers students like the New Brunswick campus's scenery and energy.

## **#3 Parks, Waterfront, and Open Spaces** | *65 comments*

Participants enjoy access to parks, and some participants name specific parks they enjoy (Roosevelt, Johnson). They like that parks provide recreational facilities, trails (Greenway), and natural beauty. Participants also like the county's natural green areas, open spaces, and waterfronts.

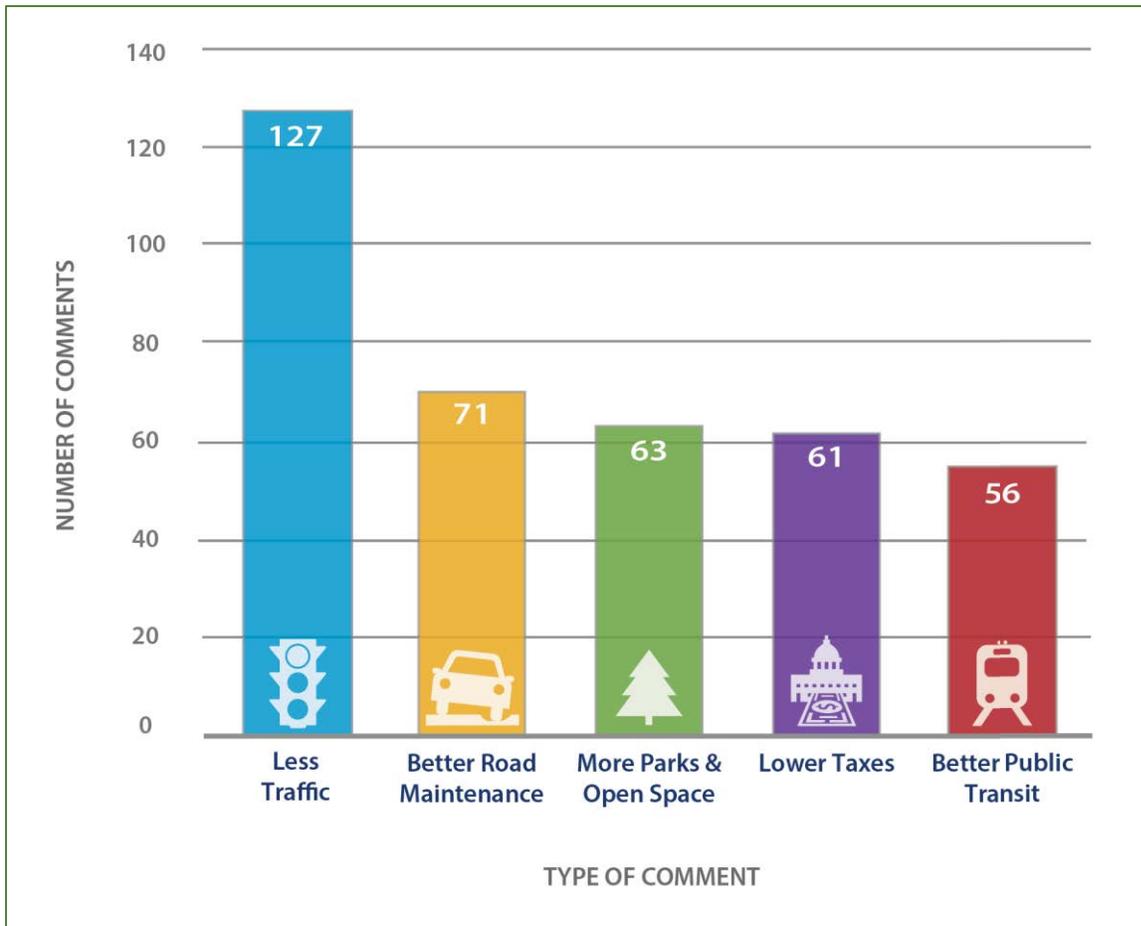
## **#4 Friendly People and Communities** | *62 comments*

Participants note friendly people in their communities. They like being part of a "close-knit community," and people in the county are welcoming and friendly. Some participants enjoy living in family-oriented neighborhoods. Others like the peace and quiet of their neighborhoods.

## **#5 Diversity** | *56 comments*

Many participants simply like the county's diversity. They like that the county is an ethnically and cultural "melting pot," and they enjoy living in diverse, friendly neighborhoods. Participants feel that diversity is welcomed in the county. They also like having access to restaurants serving food from a variety of cultures and ethnicities.

**SUMMARY OF TOP 5 RESPONSES:  
WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE ABOUT MIDDLESEX COUNTY?**



**Figure 2: What would you change about Middlesex County? Top Responses**

**#1 Less Traffic** | 127 comments

Participants want less traffic in the county both in general and on specific roads. Route 18 and Route 1 are noted most frequently. Several participants also mention Route 130, I-287, Route 27, Ryders Lane, and traffic in downtown New Brunswick. Participants associate the traffic in some areas to road work, roadway design, the timing of traffic lights, and the high volume of motor vehicles and trucks.

**#2 Better Road Maintenance** | 71 comments

Participants describe poor road conditions, especially potholes. They name specific roads and places that have many potholes, such as New Brunswick, Perth Amboy, and Route 18. Participants note broken and bumpy streets need paving, and roads should be cleaned and cleared of debris more frequently.

### #3 More Parks and Open Space | 63 comments

Participants describe the need for improving parks and preserving more open space. They want more amenities across the parks in the county, such as more youth activities, recreation facilities, dog parks, a greenway bike share, and paths along waterfront areas. Participants also want better maintenance of existing park facilities like picnic areas, playgrounds, and fields. Participants also desire greater preservation of open space in the county, as well as more natural wildlife habitat areas in parks. Several participants mention the importance of preserving trees and adding environmentally friendly features to the parks.

### #4 Lower Taxes | 61 comments

Many participants state that taxes are too high, particularly property taxes. Some participants have moved out of the county or are considering moving out in order to pay lower taxes elsewhere. Some participants feel that taxes are too high for seniors, and some want lower property taxes for homeowners who do not have children in the local school system.

### #5 Better Public transit | 56 comments

Participants express the desire for better public transportation across all modes, especially bus and commuter rail. They would like more options for getting around the area, particularly to New York via public transportation. Specific changes include more train stations and bus stops, more frequent and on-time bus and train service, more bus routes, and increased light rail and ferry service.

## OUTREACH EVENT REPORTS AND TOPIC SPECIFIC REPORTS

Each of the ten “go-to-them” outreach events in November and December of 2016 was summarized in the following reports, which contain the verbatim feedback that Rutgers POET staff collected. Also, comments received on particular topics for land use & economic development, public health, housing and transportation were summarized into reports based on the ten outreach events from Phase 1.



## Monroe Senior Center

**Date:** Monday, November 19, 2018, 11am – 2pm

**Location:** Monroe Senior Center, 12 Halsey Reed Rd, Monroe Township, NJ 08831

**Rutgers POET Staff:** Miriam Salerno, Trish Sanchez, Sarah Tomasello

### Event Summary

This was the first Destination 2040 outreach event. The outreach booth was stationed in the lobby of the Monroe Senior Center. Rutgers POET engaged with approximately 75 people, based on the number of comments, however there were more people who engaged but either agreed with an already posted comment or couldn't think of a comment. Most respondents did not fill out a demographic card at this event. The senior center was chosen because Monroe has many retirement communities and has the oldest median age of all the municipalities in Middlesex County.

### Survey Responses

**Summary** Respondents largely like aspects of the county related to these themes in the following order: (1) Public Services & Facilities; (2) Transportation; (3) Land Use & Development. Respondents' comments regarding changes they would make in the county mainly touched on: (1) Land Use & Development; (2) Transportation; (3) Public Services & Facilities.

### Question #1 Responses *What do you like about living/working in Middlesex County?*

**Public Services & Facilities (17 comments)** The most common positive response from participants highlighted their appreciation for the senior center, and the many resources and activities hosted by the senior center and the library.

- Senior Center
  - Love the Senior Center – like a hotel!
  - Senior center is nice and rec center has activities like pickle ball

- Karen at the senior center is great. Innovative!
- I like the senior center
- Senior community is awesome
- Senior services in Monroe are great (3 comments)
- Monroe senior center is reliable and helps people with everything (2 comments)
- Senior care
- They care about retired people
- All the activities at the senior center and it's a great resource
- Library
  - Monroe library is wonderful – clubs, books, music, lessons, etc.
  - The library is excellent. Good communication.
- Government
  - Monroe has good police and mayor
  - Government is very efficient

**Transportation (7 comments)** Participants appreciated the accessibility to other areas and senior-centric transportation options.

- Proximity/Accessibility to other areas
  - Easy access to Princeton (2 comments)
  - Easy access to many airports
- Other
  - Good transportation for seniors (2 comments)
  - Not much traffic
  - Plenty of parking

**Land Use & Development (5 comments)** Participants liked the rural feel of the township.

- Rural feel
  - Rural is nice and open farmlands
  - Country-like
  - Ruralness in Monroe area
- Other
  - Nice area and lots to do
  - Everything needed is here in Monroe

**Arts & Culture (4 comments)** Participants liked the performances and art shows and that there was a lot to do.

- Art shows for all age groups
- Olde Town in Piscataway
- Performances
- The movie theater has a great price!

**Miscellaneous (4 comments)** Respondents liked the location and enjoyed living in Monroe.

- Proximity/Location
  - Great central location - access to Pennsylvania and New York City
  - Centrally located
- Other
  - Everything
  - I like living here.



### Public Health

- Urgent care centers are great and close by (24 hours and 7 days/week)
- Abundant supply of ortho/cardio doctors!

### Public Safety

- Peace of mind
- Monroe is very safe

### Parks & Open Space

- Parks – Roosevelt and Johnson

### Economic Opportunity

- Less expensive affordable place to live for seniors

### Question #2 Responses *What would you change about Middlesex County?*

**Land Use & Development (21 comments)** Respondents overwhelmingly felt that there were not enough shopping opportunities in the township. Additionally, three other respondents wanted a walkable downtown area, and some participants thought there was too much development.

- Too much development
  - Too much growth and development (2 comments)
  - Too many new apartment buildings
- Not enough shopping
  - No Wegman's or Trader Joes, need more supermarkets (5 comments)

- Why are stores and restaurants not coming here?
- Need more and better restaurants (3 comments)
- Not enough shopping places – Route 33 would be great (3 comments)
- Need to go outside Monroe to shop (2 comments)
- Empty stores in new center
- Walkable downtown
  - Need more mixed-use development with housing and shopping and other uses together
  - Need a downtown, more livable community that is walkable (2 comments)

**Transportation (17 comments)** Respondents wanted more transportation options -specifically, public transit and active transit. They also noted that there were not enough street lights or street signs.

- Too much traffic (2 comments)
- Public Transit
  - More trains and better transportation
  - Public transportation is poor!
  - Middlesex County does not have enough transportation to various destinations.
  - Transportation is not accessible for home health aid.
- Bike and pedestrian access
  - Need to drive everywhere
  - Can't cycle here
  - Can't walk anywhere
- Street Design
  - No street signs for many places – can't find what street I'm on (2 comments)
  - Street signs should be lighted
  - No roads that accommodate the new buildings
  - Streets need paving
  - Need street lights (3 comments)

**Public Services & Facilities (11 comments)** Participants focused on schools being overcrowded and often tied that to the rapid development. They also felt that county services were too far away and that taxes were too high.

- Schools
  - Schools
  - Severe demand on school space
  - Need better coordination between school boards and town planners
  - Developers should build schools as part of new communities
  - Not enough schools and more kids
  - Too many schools (2 comments)
- Services
  - Restore outreach services for seniors
  - Services are all in New Brunswick or Woodbridge – too far (2 comments)
  - Lunch program at senior center

**Economic Opportunity (7 comments)** Participants feel that taxes and cost of living are too high.

- Taxes
  - Taxes are too high (2 comments)
  - Taxes are too high for seniors
  - New Jersey saving on taxes for veterans is much lower than NY
- Cost of living
  - Cost of living is too high (2 comments)
  - Cost of living is lower in Pennsylvania

### Housing

- More senior and low-income housing in New Brunswick
- More homeless shelters

### Arts & Culture

- Concerts and plays in the park – end up outside concerts

### Parks & Open Space

- Too many cricket fields

### Public Health

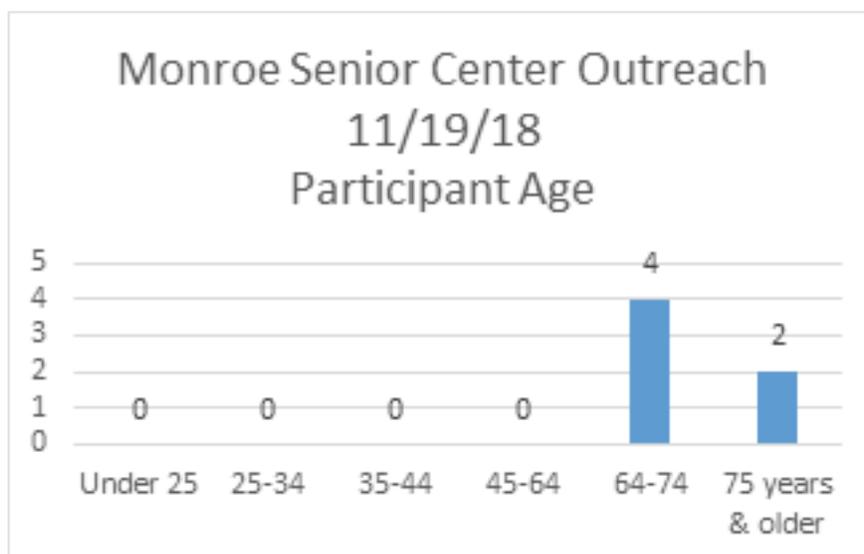
- No hospital close by in the county

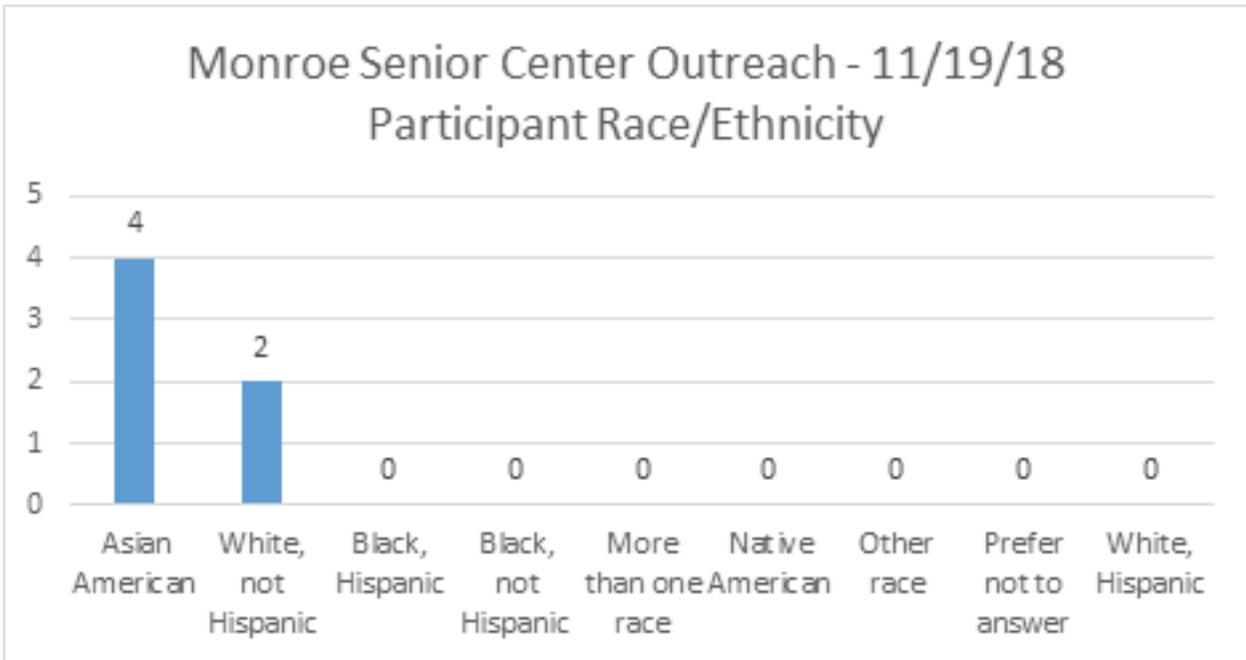
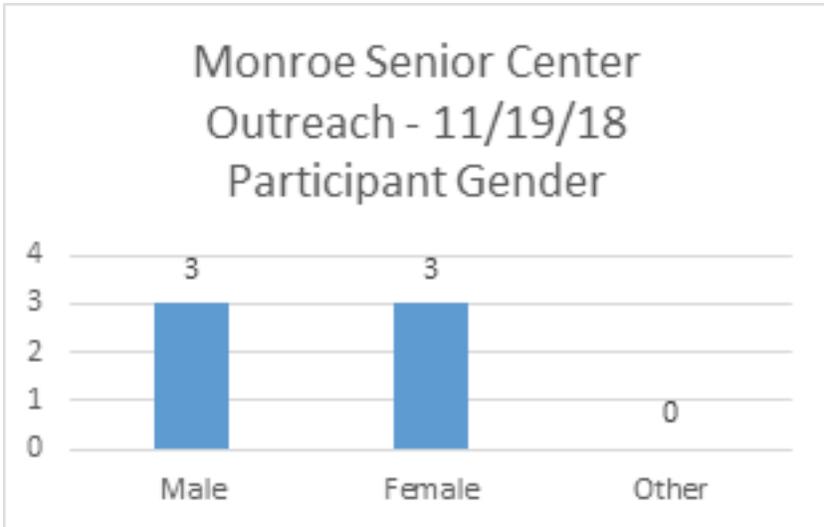
### Miscellaneous

- More balanced politics
- Change some of the politicians

## Demographic Summary

The following demographic information is incomplete. Only six out of at least 75 participants filled out a demographic information card at this event. Based on the information that was collected, all participants were over 64 years old, males and females were equally represented, and the ethnic breakdown of participants was mostly White and Asian-American.







## Rutgers Student Center

**Date:** Monday, November 26, 2018 from 10:30 am – 2:30 pm

**Location:** Rutgers University College Ave Student Center, New Brunswick, NJ

**Rutgers POET Staff:** Trish Sanchez, Miriam Salerno, Donna Iken, Anna Quan

### EVENT SUMMARY

The outreach booth was stationed in the atrium hallway, between the cafeteria seating and a set of steps that led to the main doors of the Rutgers Student Center on College Avenue. Because the outreach booth was stationed in one of the two hallways that adjoined the cafeteria and steps, many students passed by the booth. Rutgers POET staff engaged with more than 75 students, an estimate based on the number of “like” comments (58), “change” comments (61), and demographic surveys (57). Feedback and demographic cards were not collected for all respondents. For the most part, POET staff engaged with students; university staff workers and visitors also approached the booth and provided some feedback.

### SURVEY RESPONSES

**Summary** The categories that had the highest number of “like” comments were (1) Arts & Culture; (2) Transportation; and (3) Public Services & Facilities. The categories with the highest number of “change” comments were (1) Transportation; (2) Economic Opportunity; (3) Public Safety.

**Question #1 Responses** *What do you like about living/working in Middlesex County?*

**Arts & Culture (16 comments)** Respondents are proud of the cultural, ethnic and economic

diversity present in Middlesex County and the friendly community.

- People
  - Easy to meet people
  - Friendliness (2)
  - A lot of people
- Diversity
  - Cultural and ethnic diversity (5)
  - Food diversity. Latin-American food in New Brunswick, Asian food in Edison.

**Transportation (11 comments)** Respondents enjoyed their proximity to nearby cities, such as New York and Philadelphia. They also appreciated how easily they can access local places and how walkable their communities are.

- Proximity to NYC and/or Philadelphia (4)
- Central location (2)
- Walkable access to local places (2)
- Access to local places (2)
- Easy commute from North Brunswick

**Public Services & Facilities (11 comments)** Participants like various aspects of Rutgers University, schools in the county, and other public services.

- Rutgers
  - Rutgers University (2)
  - Rutgers Gardens
  - Diversity in campus scenery
  - Energy of school and campus
  - Accessible bus system between campuses
- School System
  - Good school system
  - AC in schools
  - School system in Woodbridge Township
- Libraries
- Recycling trash bins

**Parks & Open Space (6 comments)** Respondents appreciated the parks and open space in Middlesex County, from the beauty of the scenery to the cleanliness of the parks and the amenities offered at the parks (i.e. tennis courts at Johnson Park).

- Outdoor activities
  - Enjoys Middlesex County parks – play tennis at Johnson Park
  - Fun atmosphere, great outdoor activities
  - There are hiking places but also walkable downtowns
- Scenic
  - Scenic environment
  - Pretty around here
  - Abundant open space in South River

**Land Use & Development (4 comments)**

- Great places



- Like Highland Park
- Lots to do in New Brunswick, it has changed significantly
- A lot of great restaurants
- Restaurants in New Brunswick / Easton Avenue

#### **Environment (4 comments)**

- Environment – balance in nature and infrastructure
- A lot of trees
- Trees and lakes (2)

#### **Economic Opportunity (3 comments)**

- Job opportunities (2)
- Lots of local businesses

#### **Public Safety**

- Safe environment

#### **Question #2 Responses** *What would you change about Middlesex County?*

**Transportation (26 comments)** Respondents mentioned transportation issues that ranged from roadway conditions and traffic to public transportation, parking, and transportation to different counties.

- Public Transportation
  - Frequency (2)
  - Increase frequency and connections of NJ Transit buses
  - Increase frequency of bus lines 815 and 818.
  - Timely mass bus transit systems (2)
  - Bus system is late or doesn't arrive
  - NJ Transit train between Metuchen and New Brunswick and to New York is delayed,

- canceled, and have few options later at night.
- Cleaner train stations
- Improve and subsidize public transportation
- NJ Transit buses do not go directly to Rutgers campuses
- Better transportation to other counties (e.g. Somerset County)
- Roadway Conditions
  - Potholes / need to pave streets (4)
  - Prevent flooding on Route 1 and Route 27
  - Expand Route 18
- Parking
  - Better or more parking in New Brunswick (4)
  - Need more accessible parking around train station
  - Parking for family events indoors
- Traffic Congestion (6)
  - Route 18 (2)
  - Route 18, on Turnpike
  - Route 27
  - Route 1
  - Traffic
- Need more efficient transportation
- Rutgers Transportation
  - Improve bicycle paths at Rutgers – New Brunswick campuses
  - Safety on crosswalks by improving speed limits on campuses
  - Less Rutgers Parking Police influence
  - Parking on Rutgers campuses (2)
  - Free parking for commuters
  - Quicker buses
  - More Rutgers buses (2)
  - Unreliable bus service
  - Coordinate Rutgers buses. They are sometimes overcrowded or empty.
  - More frequent Rutgers weekend buses

**Economic Opportunity (6 comments)** A number of participants want to see lower taxes.

- Lower taxes (5)
- Lower property tax

**Public Safety (5 comments)** Participants desire a safer environment in the towns around Rutgers.

- Safer environment in New Brunswick (2)
- More safety in New Brunswick and Highland Park (robbers)
- More police presence, safer neighborhoods, lots of theft. Packages are stolen from doorsteps near Cook-Douglass campus.
- More lights at night

**Housing (4 comments)** Respondents addressed housing affordability issues in New Brunswick.

- Gentrification in New Brunswick

- More affordable housing for non-students in New Brunswick
- More housing help for homeless individuals. Men's shelter is booked (Person had a job but couldn't afford housing)
- Increase affordable housing

**Environment**

- Cleaner Raritan River
- Too industrial looking, want a more eco-friendly look
- Less pollution

**Public Services & Facilities**

- More garbage pickup.
- Better handling of public services (roads, traffic, safety, school closures) during inclement weather

**Arts & Culture**

- More inclusive spaces (2)

**Land Use & Development**

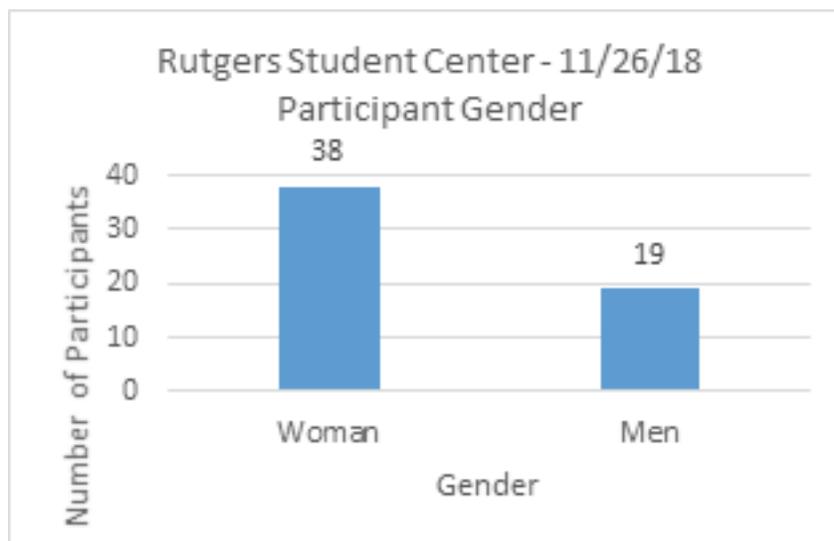
- More efficient development – it takes too long to commute.

**Public Health**

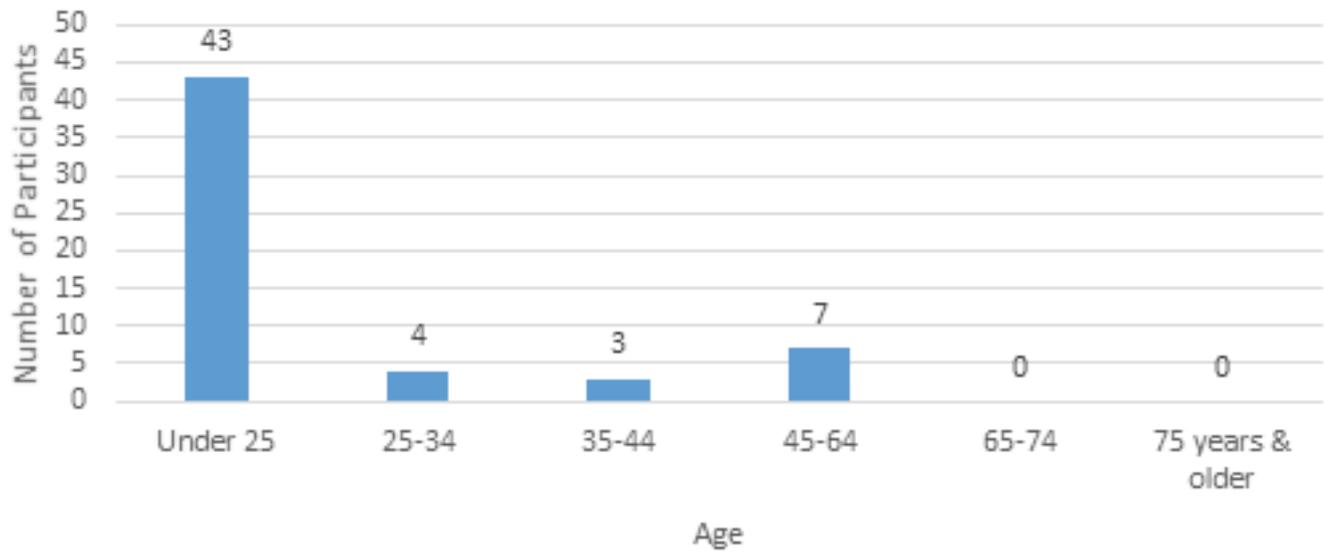
- Increased funding for skilled nursing facilities

**DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY**

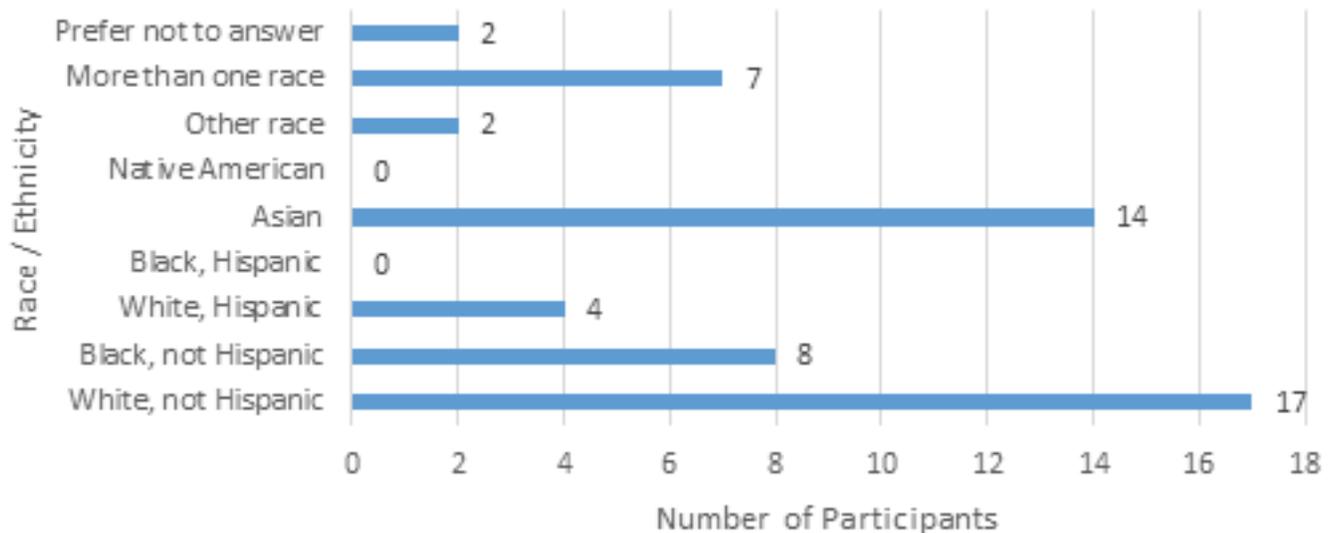
Women participated at twice the rate of men. The majority of respondents were under the age of 25, as undergraduate students frequent the college center. There are also a few people from the age categories of 25-34, 35-44, and 45-54; they included university staff and visitors. The pool of participants was racially and ethnically diverse, showing higher counts of people who identified as White, not Hispanic and Asian; some Black, not Hispanic and people who identified as More than One Race; and a few people who identified as White, Hispanic or Other race or chose to not disclose their racial/ethnic identity.



## Rutgers Student Center - 11/26/18 Participant Age



## Rutgers Student Center - 11/26/18 Participant Race/Ethnicity





## Middlesex County College

**Date:** Tuesday, November 27, 2018, 12pm–4pm

**Location:** Middlesex County College, Edison, NJ

**Rutgers POET Staff:** Trish Sanchez, Sarah Tomasello, Anna Quan

### EVENT SUMMARY

The outreach booth was stationed in a busy hallway in the student center on the Middlesex County College campus, between the cafeteria and student lounge area. Other campus organizations also had booths set up in the hallway, attracting even more students to the area. Rutgers POET staff engaged with at least 45 people, based on the number of demographic survey cards collected; many were county college students. Demographic survey cards were not collected from all participants, and approximately 80-100 people participated in the outreach in total.

### SURVEY RESPONSES

**Summary** Respondents largely liked aspects of the county related to the following themes, ranked in order of number of comments: (1) Arts & Culture; (2) Public Services & Facilities. Respondents' comments regarding changes they would make in the county mainly touched on the themes of: (1) Transportation; (2) Land Use & Development; (3) Parks & Open Space.

**Question #1 Responses** *What do you like about living/working in Middlesex County?*

**Arts & Culture (18 comments)** Many participants appreciate the cultural and ethnic diversity in the county, as well as the variety of restaurants available. Other participants like living in a

close-knit, welcoming, and pleasant community. One participant likes the county fair, and another was enthusiastic about a mural found on the county college campus.

- Diversity
  - Diverse mix of cultures and ethnicities (8 comments)
  - Diversity of culture, food, and people
  - Ethnic restaurants (3 comments)
- Community
  - Close knit community
  - Welcoming people
  - Edison is very pleasant & calm, close to college, like Highland Park
- Arts & Activities
  - Lots to do
  - County fair
  - Wall of artwork in the MCC academic advising building

**Public Services & Facilities (11 comments)** Many students talked about their positive experiences at Middlesex County College. They especially like the college's faculty and cost of attendance. Respondents also appreciated the quality of education in the county more broadly. One student liked the programs that are provided to inmates of the county jail.

- Middlesex County College
  - Student-teacher engagement at MCC (2 comments)
  - The education and lessons gained from professors at MCC
  - Students are energetic and MCC staff actually care about us
  - MCC is flexible and affordable for students
  - MCC is cheap
  - MCC is a good start.
- Education
  - County cares about children's education, care about attendance
  - East Brunswick schools
  - Great schools, great communities
- County jail
  - County prison system because they give you programs

**Miscellaneous** Several respondents like the accessibility of many desirable amenities due to the county's proximity to major cities, major highways, entertainment venues, the shore, and other destinations.

- Has everything—ocean, parks, malls, major highways, close to NYC
- Close to NYC, close to Philly, Great location!
- Central NJ, close to PNC Art Center, like State Theater, entertainment, like MCC

### Land Use & Development

- Playa Bowl near Middlesex County College
- Chick-Fil-A in Menlo, Woodbridge Mall
- Easy access to services, police, fire, gas stations

### Economic Opportunity

- Not too expensive compared to other counties
- Opportunities better than Hudson County



### Parks & Open Space

- Wildlife areas - Johnson Park, Colonial Park, take pictures
- Greenway

### Public Safety

- Like the fact that Sayreville is safe

### Transportation

- Accessibility to public transit
- Not that much traffic

### Question #2 Responses *What would you change about Middlesex County?*

Transportation (23 comments) Many respondents are concerned about pot holes, traffic and public transit.

- Potholes
  - Potholes (6 comments)
  - Potholes on Metlars Ln. Piscataway
  - New Brunswick roads have a lot of potholes, some roads don't need to be fixed and get fixed but other roads don't get fixed
- Traffic
  - Less traffic on Rt. 287 and Rt. 18
  - So much traffic because of construction on Ryders Lane in East Brunswick
  - Construction in winter and increase in traffic
- Public transportation
  - Infrequency of public transportation
  - More public transportation in Piscataway

- Better bus transportation - takes 3 buses to get from North Edison to Middlesex County College, don't know where buses go
- More parking
  - More parking lots for MCC (2 comments)
  - More parking in New Brunswick
- Safety
  - Safety of streets
  - Woodbridge Ave. is dangerous near MCC
- Costs
  - High gas prices
  - High-priced monthly bus tickets
- Pedestrian issues
  - Want easier way to walk to places
  - Highland Park-New Brunswick bridge & pedestrian way floods

**Land Use & Development (6 comments)** Two respondents do not like the amount of development occurring. Others want to see more food options, recreation centers, and things to do.

- Too much development
  - Too much building in North Brunswick
  - Excess of construction, worse places, worse times
- More amenities
  - Better food options, more parking at MCC
  - Want more vegetarian and vegan options/restaurants
  - More recreation centers
  - Not a lot to do around here (exception: a lot of food places), grew up in Edison

**Parks & Open Space (5 comments)** Respondents would like to see more parks and greenways, and they would like the parks to have cleaner and more natural environments. One person wants more activities for children, and another wants parks to stay open later.

- Need more recreational parks in city areas (New Brunswick, Perth Amboy, Woodbridge), things for children to do
- Cleaner park areas, picnic areas, overall park
- Want to expand Middlesex County Greenway to Perth Amboy and Piscataway
- Want more trees and wildlife in parks
- Don't like that parks close early, police yelled at her for being in Kennedy Park at 10 pm.

**Environment (4 comments)** Respondents offered suggestions on ways that the county environment could be improved, such as cleaning the Raritan Bay and using solar panels.

- Raritan Bay could be cleaned and used more efficiently (e.g. go fishing)
- Lawrence Harbor in Old Bridge superfund site is close to a playground
- Middlesex County going green, e.g. solar panels, save energy from solar panels privately, in batteries
- Trash on roadways

**Public Services & Facilities (4 comments)** Students talked about changes they would like to see at Middlesex County College.

- Middlesex County College
  - Bigger Middlesex County College venue at the New Brunswick location
  - Quality control of educators
  - Need accurate academic advice
- Maintenance
  - Clean up the roads and debris, cut the grass on highways, clean up poop under New Brunswick overpass

### Arts & Culture (4 comments)

- More racial and ethnic integration
- Allow MCC theatre clubs to use the theatre
- More community events
- Want more diversity in restaurants (Caribbean)

### Public Safety

- Reform law enforcement
- Should not get arrested for 2 grams of weed. The court system should not have prolonged cases, marijuana cases

### Economic Opportunity

- Too high prices for food and gas

### Housing

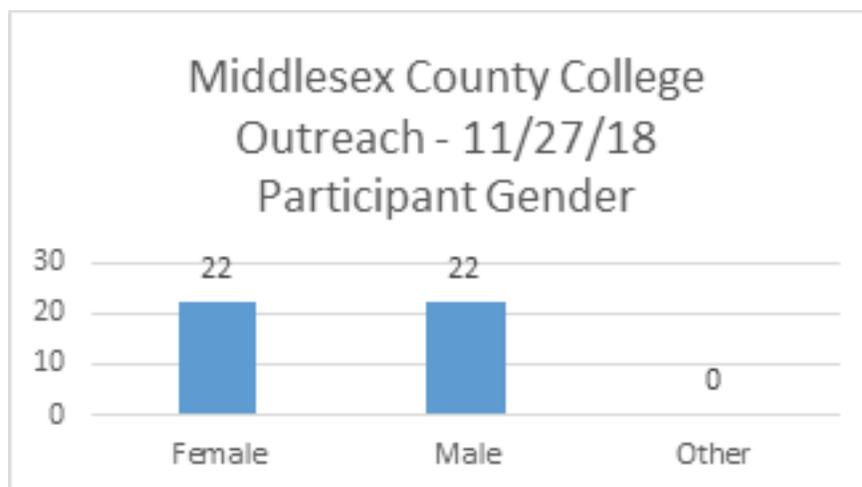
- Not enough affordable housing - especially new construction

### Miscellaneous

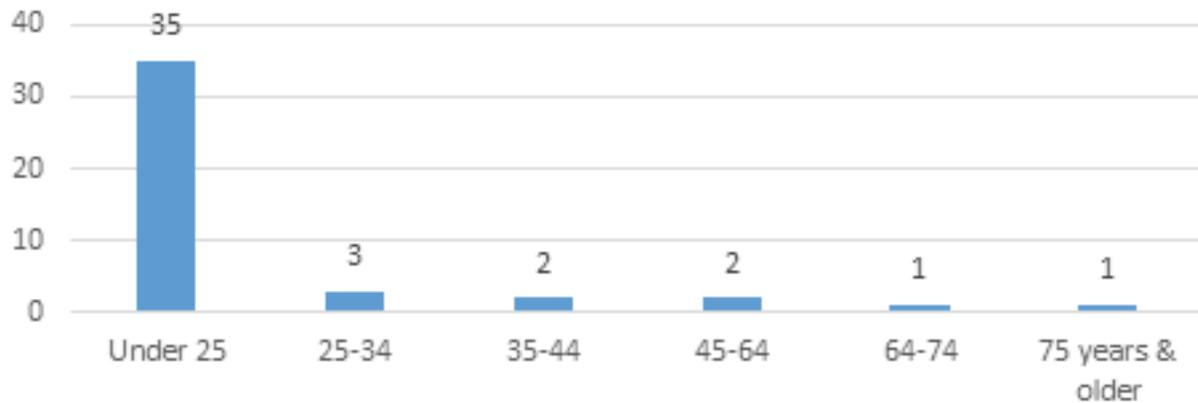
- Pizza Friday!! At every firehouse!

## Demographic Summary

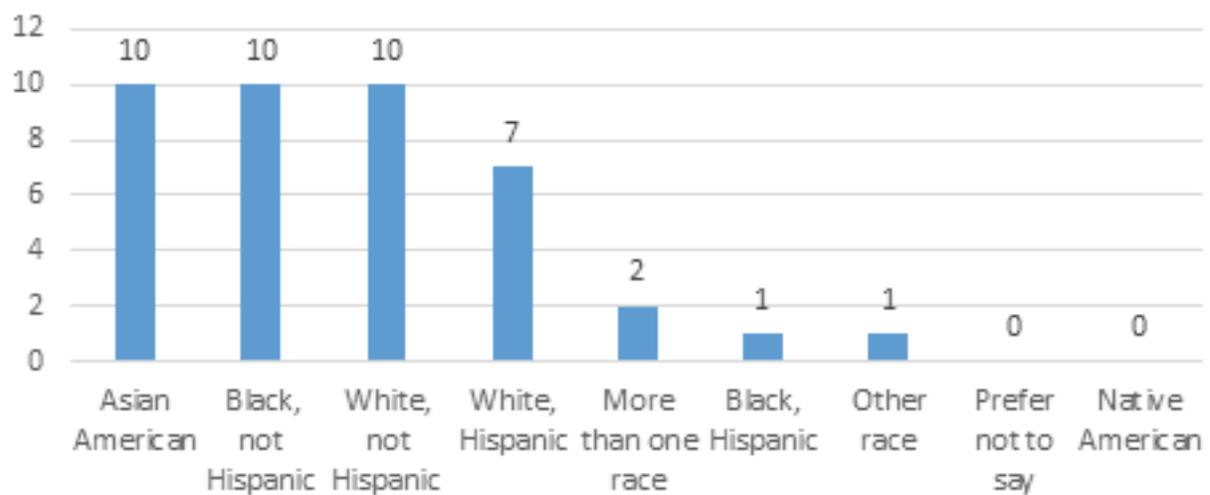
Males and females participated in equal numbers. Participation was racially and ethnically diverse, including black, white, Asian American, and Hispanic participants. The vast majority of participants were under 25 years old.



### Middlesex County College Outreach - 11/27/18 Participant Age



### Middlesex County College Outreach - 11/27/18 Participant Race/Ethnicity





## Menlo Park Mall

**Date:** Friday, November 30, 2018 from 12pm – 5pm

**Location:** Menlo Park Mall, Edison, NJ

**Rutgers POET Staff:** Trish Sanchez, Sarah Tomasello, Silvia Cuevas, Stephanie Crozier

### Event Summary

The outreach booth was stationed in the central atrium of the Menlo Park Mall in Edison. Because the mall was crowded and the booth was well positioned, many people passed by the booth from multiple directions. Rutgers POET and Middlesex County Office of Planning staff engaged with at least 46 people based on the number of demographic feedback cards collected, however there were many other people who gave feedback but a survey card was not collected. At least 150 people engaged and participated. The mall draws visitors regionally therefore, the respondents who do not live in Middlesex County worked or studied within the county.

### Survey Responses

**Summary** Respondents' comments on what they like about the county mainly touched on the following themes, in order of number of comments received: (1) Public Services & Facilities; (2) Transportation; (3) Parks & Open Space. Respondents' comments regarding changes they would make about the county mainly touched on the following themes: (1) Transportation; (2) Public Services & Facilities; (3) Miscellaneous.

### Question #1 Responses *What do you like about living/working in Middlesex County?*

**Public Services & Facilities (13 comments)** Respondents shared a variety of public services that they felt were effective including: recycling, response to maintenance issues, and the educational system and opportunities. One person each highlighted the animal shelter, ice skating rink, and excellent senior citizen services.

- Education
  - School opportunities (2 comments)

- Rutgers
- Education system
- Public Works and Sanitation
- DPW
  - Fast response to problems and maintenance requests made by citizens (2 comments)
  - Good recycling efforts and policies for rubbish pickup (fridge, stove, etc.) (2 comments)
  - Recycling, but need more
- Other
  - Excellent senior citizen services
  - Animal Shelter
  - Roosevelt ice skating rink

**Transportation (10 comments)** Many participants liked the county's proximity to major highways and cities and the convenient transit hubs that allow for accessibility to other areas. Accessibility related to ADA was also mentioned as a benefit. A few participants highlighted the roads including the back roads as being something they appreciated.

- Proximity
  - Accessibility
  - Close to major highways
  - Close to major cities (2 comments)
- Public Transit
  - NJ Transit has decent ADA policy
  - Good transit into city
  - Many convenient transit hubs
- Roads
  - I love my commute on the back roads!
  - Roads (2 comments)

**Parks & Open Space (9 comments)** Participants enjoy access to the parks and open spaces that allow for outside recreation. One participant specifically mentioned the golf courses and another noted that the parks are well-maintained.

- Parks (5 comments)
- Roosevelt Park
- Open space
- Golf courses
- Good park maintenance

**Arts & Culture (8 comments)** Many participants appreciate the diversity in the county, and over-all, people liked their small, quiet community with art and museums.

- Art and museums
- Ethnic shopping
- Diversity (3 comments)
- Family-oriented
- Small community
- It's quiet



**Land Use & Development (8 comments)** The quality and variety of shopping and restaurants attract visitors from around the county.

- Shopping
- Shopping (2 comments)
- Variety of restaurants and shopping (2 comments)
- Great mall area, like that it's quieter than Newark
- Mall, came from Union County to shop
- The Menlo Park mall, traveled from Monmouth County to come shop
- Other
- Real estate is impressive

**Miscellaneous (6 comments)** Overall, respondents liked the feel and aesthetics of the county.

- Accept dogs in many establishments
- It looks nice
- Everything is cool
- "We're happy here"
- Better than Hudson and Essex County
- Make Monroe Township the ideal town in MC

**Public Safety**

- Feel safe here
- Low crime

**Economic Opportunity**

- Job opportunities
- Fostering the business community

## Environment

- Waterfront

## Public Health

- Medical network

## Question #2 Responses *What would you change about Middlesex County?*

**Transportation (31 comments)** This theme received the greatest number and variety of comments. The most common concerns focused on road maintenance such as fixing potholes, cleaning the roads, speeding up road repairs, and improving public transit, policies to share the road, and limiting traffic.

- Road work
  - Construction! Road department not using resources well, especially employees. Using our taxes.
  - Repair work taking too long at Metropark, need a bigger parking lot there
  - Road repairs take too long, I-287 repairs by Whole Foods
  - Road work (3 comments)
- Road maintenance
  - Better maintain roadways (3 comments)
  - Make roads cleaner and wider
  - Roads need to be cleared of snow
- Potholes
  - Potholes on Rt 18
  - Maintain infrastructure as shipping/freight increases
- Driver Safety
  - Improve driver safety on Rt 27
  - Vision Zero
  - Rude, aggressive drivers
- Alternative Transportation Modes
  - Improve bike policies and paths, roads should be shared (2 comments)
  - Fix NJ Transit (3 comments)
  - Better public transportation (3 comments)
- Traffic
  - New Brunswick traffic
  - Route 1 congestion
  - Traffic (2 comments)
- Other
  - Gas is expensive
  - More traffic lights at intersections

**Public Services & Facilities (14 comments)** Participants' suggestions focused on improving educational opportunities, improving ADA policies and social services and programs for people with special needs, activities for children, teens, and young adults, providing information on recycling, and doing a better job of cleaning the streets and sidewalks. One participant stated a need for social and economic incentives for students and immigrants.

- Education
  - JFK high school needs improved administration and environment
  - Improve education for special needs students
  - More funding for schools
  - MCC needs stronger curriculum
  - Social and economic incentives for students, immigrants
- Public Works
  - Better recycling information and program
  - Teach the community how to recycle especially Perth Amboy
  - Trash on sidewalks
  - Sweeping the streets often
  - Leaves are picked up automatically
- Social Services
  - Improve ADA policies, social services does not have enough resources for handicapped
  - Promoting/participation with special needs individuals /programs
  - More activities for kids and teens (2 comments)

**Miscellaneous (8 comments)** The most common comments by participants were to not change anything, and to legalize marijuana.

- Nothing (3 comments)
- “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”
- Legalize marijuana (3 comments)
- Less people

**Land Use & Development (5 comments)** While one respondent said there was too much development, overall, respondents wanted more walkable shopping areas, including upscale shopping, antiquing, restaurant options, and town centers.

- More upscale shopping and antiquing
- More places to eat out
- South Plainfield needs a town center
- Too much development
- Less car dealerships, more walkable areas

**Parks & Open Space (4 comments)** Participants had a variety of suggestions, including cleaner parks, and indoor recreation areas for children.

- Additional dog parks
- More parks and indoor places for kids that’s not a mall
- Cleaner parks
- No more cutting down trees and nature for the greenway in Metuchen

**Economic Opportunity (4 comments)** Multiple participants would like lower taxes, and one specifically wanted more job opportunities.

- More job opportunities
- Lower property taxes (3 comments)

### Arts & Culture

- More politeness in public
- More diversity

### Environment

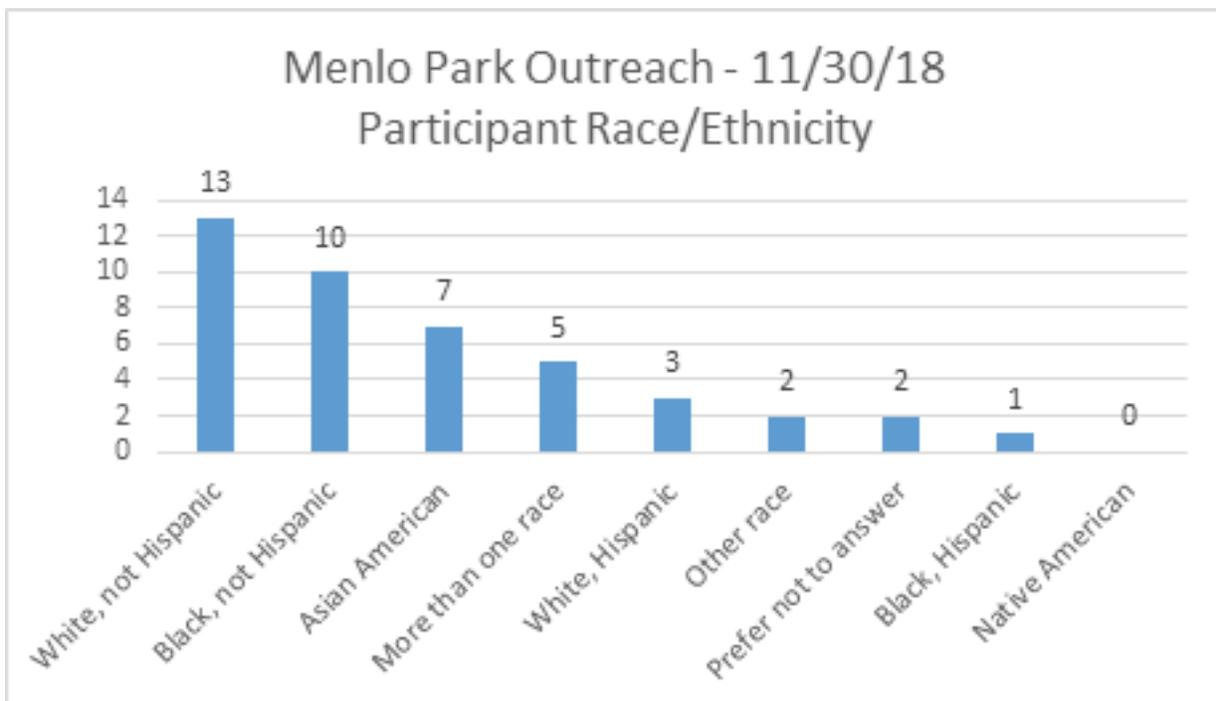
- Cleaner beaches
- Pollution along roads

### Public Safety

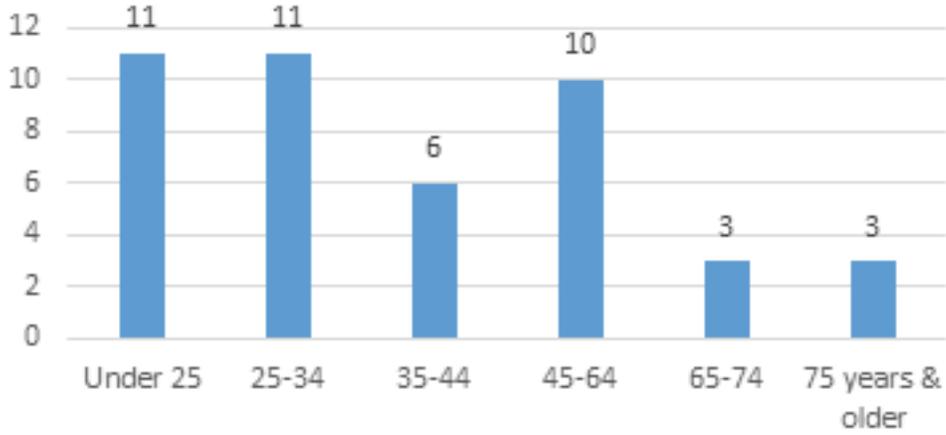
- Violence in school in New Brunswick
- I don't feel safe walking in New Brunswick

## DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

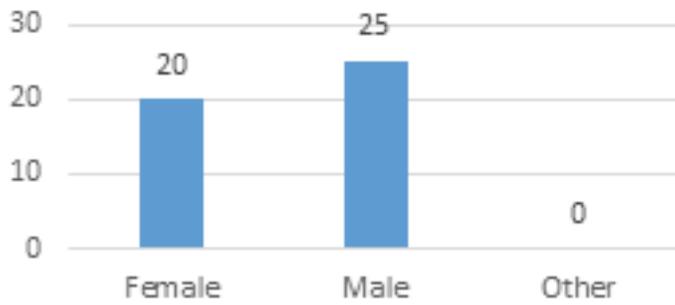
Slightly more males than females participated. There were a few participants over the age of 65 years old, and slightly more participants below 34 years of age. Participation was racially and ethnically diverse, including black, white, Asian American, and Hispanic participants. However, there were fewer Hispanic participants, but enough respondents chose “more than one race” to indicate racial diversity.



### Menlo Park Outreach - 11/30/18 Participant Age



### Menlo Park Outreach 11/30/18 Participant Gender





## South Brunswick Library

**Date:** Saturday, December 1, 2018, 11 am–4 pm

**Location:** South Brunswick Public Library

**Rutgers POET Staff:** Trish Sanchez, Ted Metz

### EVENT SUMMARY

The outreach booth was stationed near the entrance of the South Brunswick Public Library and very close to the book check out desk. The outreach table was set up during the library's annual holiday fair in order to get a wide variety of participants attending the special events that day. Staffed engaged with approximately 85 people, based on the number of comments received, including feedback cards and those who did not fill out comments.

### SURVEY RESPONSES

**Summary** Comments on what participants liked about the county touched on the following top three themes, based on the number of comments received: (1) Public Services & Facilities; (2) Arts & Culture; (3) Miscellaneous. Comments on what participants would change about the county touched on the following top three themes: (1) Transportation; (2) Parks & Open Space; (3) Land Use & Development.

**Question #1 Responses** *What do you like about living/working in Middlesex County?*

**Public Services & Facilities (28 comments)** The most common positive response from participants highlighted their appreciation for the school system. Respondents also liked the library, which was the location of the outreach event.

- Education
  - Schools (11 comments)
  - My teachers
  - Affordable education

- South Brunswick High School
- Near two great universities – Rutgers and Middlesex County College
- Library (12 comments)
- Municipal facilities

**Arts & Culture (16 comments)** Participants highlighted the county’s friendly communities and the activities and events available.

- Community
  - Friendly (4 comments)
  - Good community to live in (2 comments)
  - Family and kid friendly (2 comments)
  - Nice, quiet, clean communities
  - Inclusive community
- Activities and events
  - Lots of things to do
  - Plays in the Park
  - New Brunswick Cultural Center
  - Rutgers Day
  - Islamic Society of Central New Jersey
- Diversity

**Miscellaneous (5 comments)** Respondents liked the county’s proximity to nearby cities.

- Accessibility to NYC (2 comments)
- Being close to Princeton (2 comments)
- Access to Philadelphia
- Land Use & Development (4 comments)
- Great food options
- Burger King & McDonald’s are right next to each other
- Shops and close to malls
- Buildings in New Brunswick

**Parks & Open Space (4 comments)**

- Variety of parks (2 comments)
- We love the trees and forest
- Lots of nature

**Public Safety (4 comments)**

- Low/no crime (3 comments)
- Great police department

**Transportation**

- Public transportation
- Streets and roads are clean
- Convenient to get around

**Economic Opportunity**

- Job opportunities
- Living and working in Middlesex County

## Question #2 Responses *What would you change about Middlesex County?*

**Transportation (19 comments)** Participants talked about the need to reduce traffic, add more public transit options, and improve road conditions.

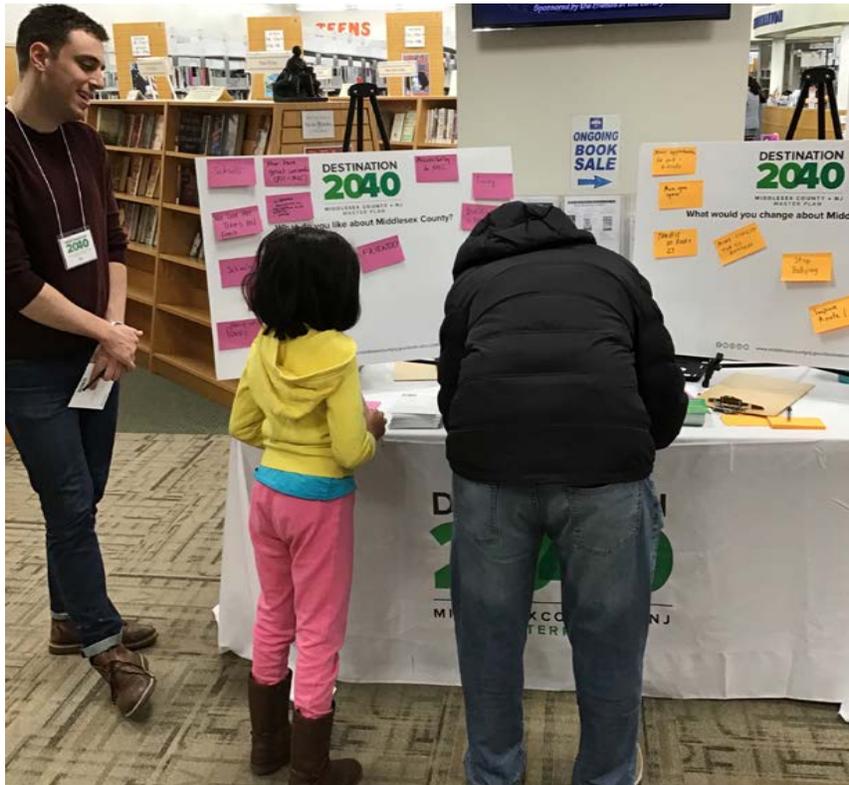
- Traffic/Congestion
  - Traffic (2 comments)
  - Widen Route 1 in South Brunswick
  - Traffic accidents on Route 1
  - Optimize lights around hospital on Route 1
  - Too many trucks on 130
- Public Transportation
  - New train to New York City (2 comments)
  - Rail service to everywhere
  - Need additional public bus transportation to South Brunswick area
  - Public transportation
- Roadway Conditions
  - Improve Route 1 (2 comments)
  - Potholes
  - Better preparation for weather condition
- Better commute to the city
- Easier access to NYC & Philadelphia
- Rename all the Ridge Roads in South Brunswick
- Free charging for electric cars

**Parks & Open Space (17 comments)** Respondents would like more parks and open space, and a greater variety of recreation opportunities, especially for children and activities that can be done indoors in the winter.

- Open space
  - More parks (3 comments)
  - More open space (3 comments)
  - Kids park at Cambridge Crossing, Community at 522
- Recreation
  - Swimming pool (2 comments)
  - Indoor community for winter recreation (2 comments)
  - Recreation and arts for kids – under community pass
  - More family activities
  - Kids play area
  - Table tennis
  - Tennis courts with lighting
  - Ice rink

**Land Use & Development (9 comments)** Participants said they wanted to see less development and better and more diverse shopping options.

- Shopping
  - More shopping malls



- More car stores
- Dining
  - More food/restaurants (besides fast food)
  - Taco bell!!!
- Development
  - More responsible development, especially near water
  - Too much development
  - Crowded
  - Too much construction going on
  - Too many motels on Route 1

### Economic Opportunity

- More companies and employers
- Large retailers driving out small businesses
- Reduce property tax

### Housing

- Build more affordable housing
- Universal code enforcement

### Arts & Culture

- More opportunities for art and artists (2 comments)

### Public Services & Facilities

- Better education, less sports
- Stop bullying



**Environment**

- Cutting trees (2 comments)

**Miscellaneous**

- More civility top to bottom

**Technology & Innovation**

- Community WiFi

**DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY**

Close to two-thirds of the participants were female, as shown in Figure 1. Most participants were between the ages of 35-64 (Figure 2). About two-thirds of the participants identified as Asian American, and about one-third identified as White, not Hispanic, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 1

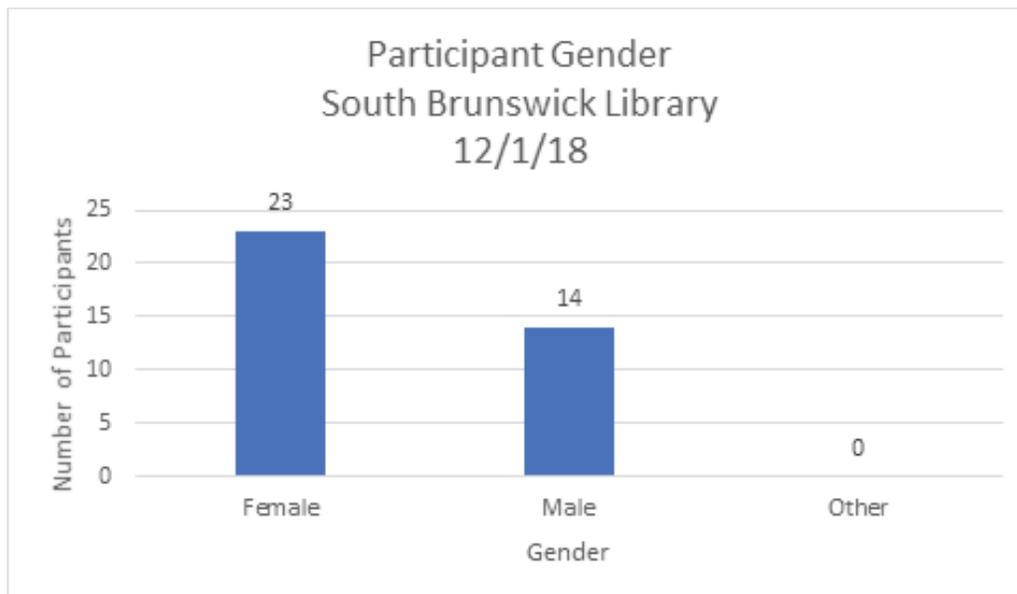


Figure 2

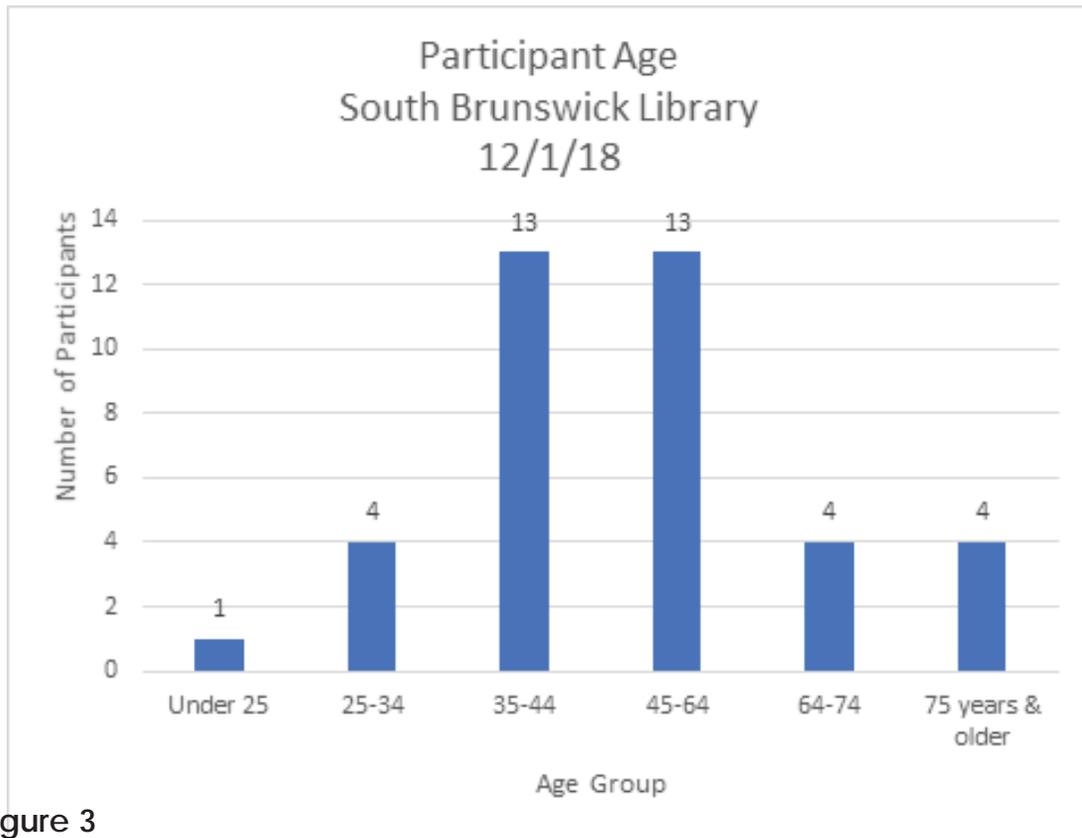
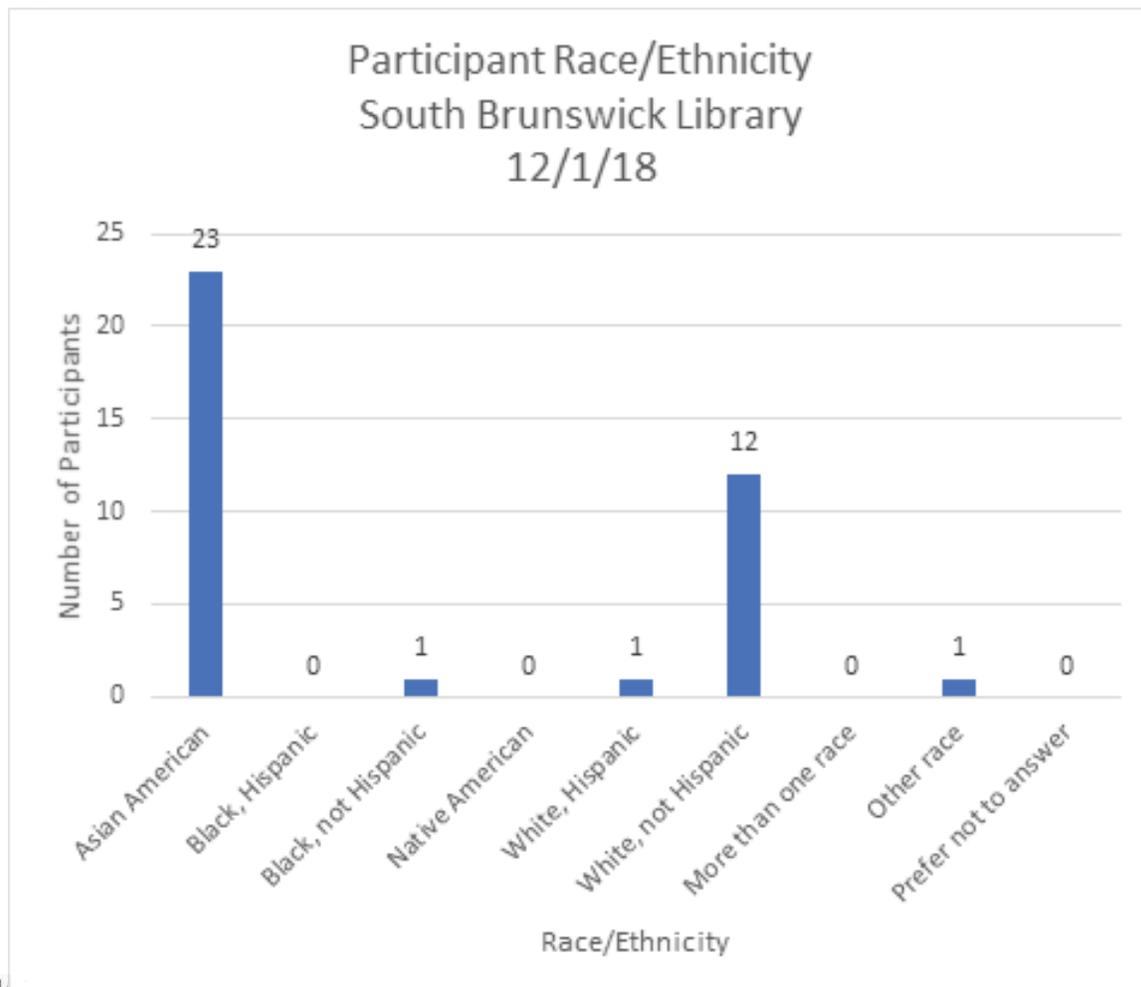


Figure 3





## Woodbridge Center Mall

**Date:** Sunday, December 2, 2018, 11am – 4pm

**Location:** Woodbridge Center Mall, Woodbridge, NJ

**Rutgers POET Staff:** Miriam Salerno, Sarah Tomasello, Stephanie Crozier

### EVENT SUMMARY

The outreach booth was stationed in the lower level center court of Woodbridge Center Mall, located at 250 Woodbridge Center Drive, Woodbridge, NJ 07095. Project staff, including from Rutgers POET and Middlesex County Office of Planning, collected demographic survey cards from 73 participants, and engaged with approximately 100 people in total.

### SURVEY RESPONSES

**Summary** Respondents largely like aspects of the county related to the themes of: (1) Public Safety; (2) Arts & Culture, Land Use & Development, Miscellaneous, Public Services & Facilities; (3) Parks & Open Space. Respondents' comments regarding changes they would make in the county mainly touched on: (1) Transportation; (2) Housing; (3) Parks & Open Space and Public Services & Facilities.

#### Question #1 Responses *What do you like about living/working in Middlesex County?*

**Arts & Culture (18 comments)** Many participants appreciate the cultural and ethnic diversity in the county, which one commenter tied in to the diverse shopping availability. Other participants like the activities hosted by the county, including the county fair, Plays in the Park, and local events.

- Diversity
  - Diversity (3 comments)
  - Diverse community (2 comments)
  - Shopping and nice Indian Community

- Diverse shopping
- Arts & Activities
  - Middlesex County Fair
  - Plays in the Park
  - All the local events in Woodbridge
- Other
  - Quiet (4 comments)
  - Peaceful (2 comments)

**Miscellaneous (12 comments)** Several respondents like the community and people around them, as well as the general proximity to other areas.

- Proximity/Location
  - Proximity to other states
  - Close proximity
- Community
  - Nice people/community (3 comments)
  - Closeness to family and friends (2 comments)
  - My friends and my house and my dog
- Other
  - Absolutely nothing
  - Love the stars!
  - Clean
  - Good place to live



**Land Use & Development (10 comments)** Many participants like the downtown areas, shopping, and restaurants and appreciated the convenience of getting to these amenities.

- Downtown development
  - Busy town
  - Downtown with fun stuff to do
- Shopping
  - Great shopping (4 comments)
  - Shopping complex
  - Very convenient for shopping. All the stores you need are close by
- Restaurants (2 comments)

**Public Services & Facilities (10 comments)** The most common positive response from participants highlighted their appreciation for the school system.

- Education
  - Good school system (7 comments)
  - Middlesex County College
  - All-day Kindergarten
- Helpful community leaders

**Parks & Open Space (6 comments)** Participants like the Perth Amboy Waterfront and the parks.

- Perth Amboy waterfront (4 comments)
- Beautiful parks
- Parks are good

**Economic Opportunity (5 comments)** Participants like the business opportunities and lower cost of living and doing business.

- Less expensive to work in New Jersey
- Job opportunities (2 comments)
- Very strong business climate
- Good living expenses

**Public Safety (5 comments)** Many respondents appreciate the safe, quiet, and clean neighborhoods.

- Safe area (4 comments)
- It's safer – less visible gangs, violence, drugs

### Transportation

- Public transit
- Metuchen bike share
- Very convenient to everything

### Public Health

- Good doctors (2 comments)
- Good hospitals, doctors

## Environment

- Living near the Arthur Kill

## Historic Preservation

- Gateway was for slaves to escape from Perth Amboy to Staten Island (underground railroad)

## Question #2 Responses *What would you change about Middlesex County?*

**Transportation (25 comments)** Participants would like less traffic and congestion, improved road conditions, and more public transit options.

- Traffic/ Congestion (12 comments)
- Roadway Conditions
  - Potholes (4 comments)
  - Repair roadways – bumpy, cracked roads (3 comments)
  - Repave streets of Perth Amboy
  - Make Garden State Parkway more scenic
- Public transportation
  - Light Rail
  - Restore Ferry Service
- Free Parking in Perth Amboy
- Better timing of lights on Route 1

**Housing (10 comments)** Overall, respondents felt that there the cost of housing (to rent or buy) is too high, and the property tax should be lowered.

- Lower rent
- More affordable housing
- High housing costs to rent or buy (2 comments)
- Property Tax is too high (6 comments)

**Parks & Open Space (8 comments)** Respondents would like to see more and bigger parks and preserved open space. One respondent would like a bike share on the Greenway, and another wants improvements to the Perth Amboy Waterfront.

- Parks
  - Additional/bigger parks
  - Better dog parks
  - Renovation of “Dwyer Park” (off Inman Avenue), North Edison
- Open Space
  - More preserved open space
  - No open space
- Recreation
  - Put a bike share on the Greenway
  - Perth Amboy Waterfront
  - A big pool

**Public Services & Facilities (8 comments)** Participants focused on changes they would like to see for education, improved library services, and lower taxes.



- Education
  - Overcrowding in public schools
  - More trade school
- Libraries
  - Improve libraries in Perth Amboy
  - Very little libraries
- Public Works
  - Clean, recycling, no use of plastic bags
  - Handle weather conditions
  - Better snow removal
- Child programming

#### Miscellaneous (7 comments)

- Corrupt politicians
- There are a lot of racist people
- More volunteering in the urban communities
- Change how the government controls what you know!
- Overpopulated
- Nothing/Perfect the way it is (2 comments)

**Land Use & Development (6 comments)** Two respondents did not like overcrowding and development, and other respondents wanted better and more diverse shopping options.

- Too much build up and apartments
- Shopping
  - Too many strip malls overcrowding
  - Shopping diversity in Perth Amboy
  - Perth Amboy does not have a bookstore

- Better restaurants (upscale)
- Shopping/restaurants stay open longer

**Economic Opportunity (5 comments)**

- Cost of living is too high (2 comments)
- Lower taxes (3 comments)

**Public Safety**

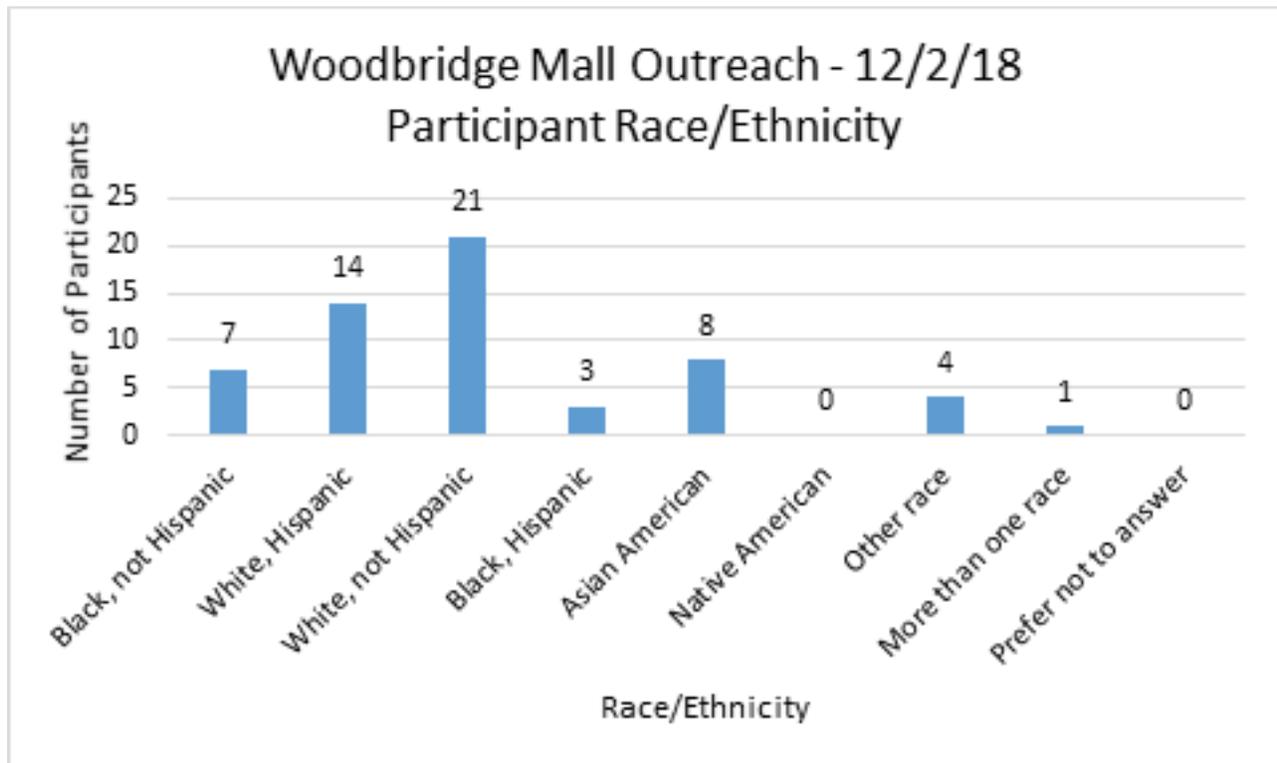
- Family court system is poorly run and disorganized
- Less profiling
- Enforce immigration laws!

**Technology & Innovation**

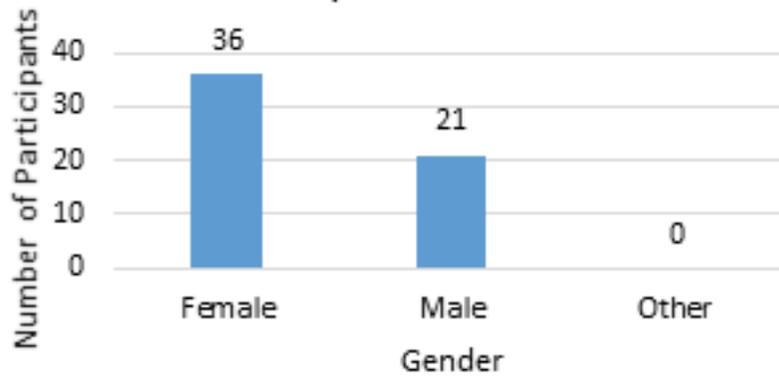
- Choice of cable provider

**DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY**

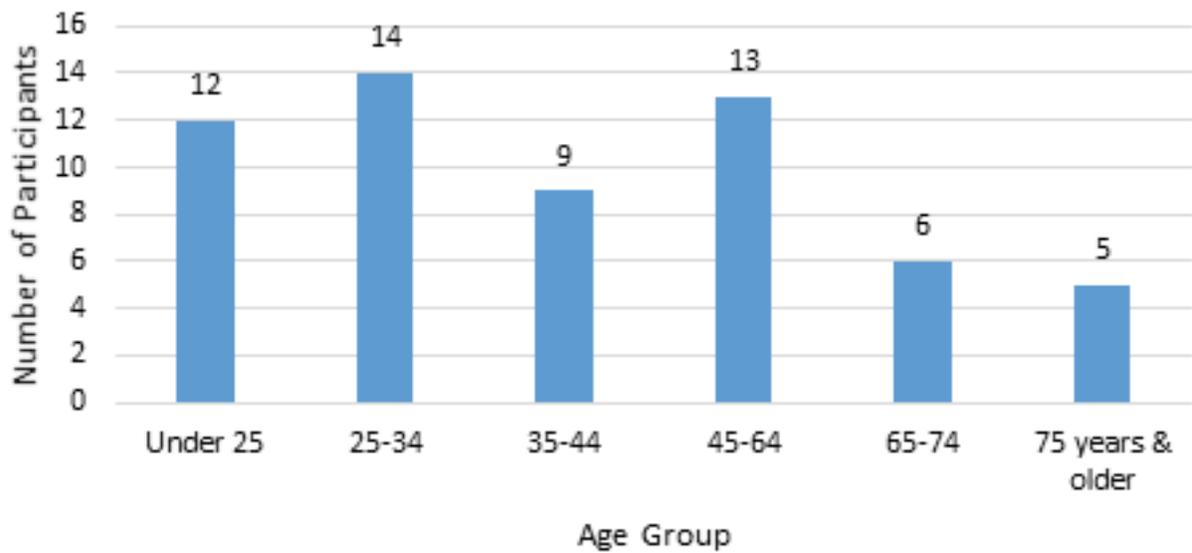
Close to two-thirds of the participants were female. Most participants were under 65 years old, and were pretty evenly distributed in the under-65 categories, though the fewest participants were in the 35-44 years old age group. Approximately half of the participants identified as White (almost half of whom identified as Hispanic) and there were also Black and Asian American respondents.



### Woodbridge Mall Outreach - 12/2/18 Participant Gender



### Woodbridge Mall Outreach - 12/2/18 Participant Age





## Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital

**Date:** Wednesday, December 5, 2018, 11 am–2 pm

**Location:** Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, New Brunswick

**Rutgers POET Staff:** Trish Sanchez, Ted Metz, Donna Iken

### Event Summary

The outreach table was stationed at the entrance to the cafeteria on the second floor of the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. The outreach table was set up during lunchtime in order to catch as participants as possible. Members of the Middlesex County Office of Planning assisted Rutgers staff to facilitate the outreach. Staff engaged with at least 155 participants based on the number of comments and feedback cards received.

### Survey Responses

**Summary** The majority of respondents' comments about what they like in the county touched on the following themes, ranked by number of comments: (1) Transportation; (2) Arts & Culture; (3) Land Use & Development and Miscellaneous. Comments about changes that should be made in the county mainly focused on: (1) Transportation; (2) Economic Opportunity; (3) Public Services & Facilities.

**Question #1 Responses** *What do you like about living/working in Middlesex County?*

**Transportation (32 comments)** Overall, respondents felt that they had a good commute and that there were many transportation options for them in the area, allowing for easy access to everything they need.

- Commuting
  - Close to work (9 comments)
  - Easy/good commute (3 comments)
  - Easy commute to New Brunswick from Hillsborough
- Access
  - Convenience/easy to get around (4 comments)

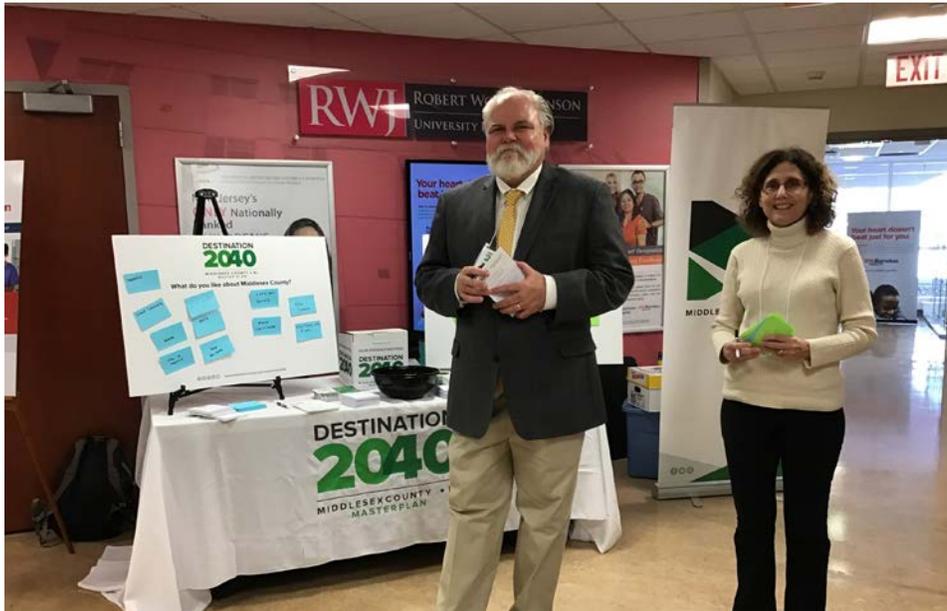
- Good transportation options/convenient to all forms of transportation (3 comments)
- Easy access to major roads and highways (2 comments)
- 30 minutes to the airport
- Public Transit
  - Train (2 comments)
  - Express trains to New York
  - Easy to get buses to city
  - Train station in New Brunswick is very close
- Tow path (part of East Coast Greenway) is great
- Blair Road
- New Brunswick traffic
- Route 18 is so much better
- Road resurfacing

**Arts & Culture (29 comments)** Many respondents stated that they enjoy the friendly people in their communities, the diversity, and the varied activities available in the county.

- Community/People
  - Friendly people (4 comments)
  - Great community (3 comments)
  - I like the tolerance level of majority of our people
  - Spotswood – small community
  - Grew up here, it’s home, very happy here
  - Nice community living
  - Dynamic people
- Diversity
  - Diversity (8 comments)
  - Cultural diversity/melting pot (3 comments)
- Activities
  - I like that you guys have multiple things to do (2 comments)
  - Plenty of activities for families and community to participate in
  - Proximity of areas with things to do, ballpark, shore, theaters, restaurants, lots going on
  - Plays in the Park
- The culture

**Land Use & Development (20 comments)** Participants liked the variety of shopping and dining options and easy access to jobs and retail.

- Dining
  - Plenty of restaurants (4 comments)
  - Good bar/restaurant scene (3 comments)
  - Great lunch option in downtown New Brunswick
  - Nice restaurants to go to after work
  - Places to eat
- Shopping (5 comments)
- Everything is here that I need–work, shop (3 comments)
- Upcoming developments to housing, businesses, and transportation
- Good supermarkets



**Miscellaneous (20 comments)** Respondents liked the general proximity to other areas like cities, rural places, and the beach.

- Proximity/Location
  - Central location (6 comments)
  - Easy access to city (3 comments)
  - Close to both city and country (3 comments)
  - Close to beach (3 comments)
  - Close proximity to the city while still offering a suburban lifestyle (2 comments)
  - Close to Princeton
- Nothing (2 comments)
- Everything's good

**Public Services & Facilities (19 comments)** The most common response was appreciation for quality education, especially higher education. People also appreciated the social services available in their communities.

- Education
  - Schools (4 comments)
  - Rutgers (3 comments)
  - Middlesex County College (2 comments)
  - Strong academic institutions
  - Like being close to university
- Social services
  - Lots of resources for help/aid (2 comments)
  - Social services
  - Elijah's Promise
  - Veterans services
- Monroe Tennis Center
- Sports options
- Bulk trash

**Public Health (10 comments)** Participants liked the many high quality hospitals nearby.

- RWJ Hospital (4 comments)

- All the good hospitals around (4 comments)
- Great access to healthcare
- Doctors and Children's Hospital

**Parks & Open Space (9 comments)** Participants liked the parks and open space.

- Open space and parks (5 comments)
- Aesthetics/beautiful (2 comments)
- Rutgers Gardens
- Dog parks

**Economic Opportunity (8 comments)** Participants liked the job opportunities and many businesses in the area.

- Good/great jobs (2 comments)
- Economic opportunities
- Fast-paced working environment
- I enjoy my place of employment
- Area has numerous businesses
- Reasonable taxes
- Cost of living

**Public Safety (7 comments)** Respondents liked the quiet and safe conditions in parts of the county.

- Quiet
  - Quiet and clean in Old Bridge (2 comments)
  - Good quiet area
  - Quiet in East Brunswick
- Safety (2)
- North Brunswick has a great police force and lots of services

### Environment

- Ecological prevention efforts
- Rutgers CSA, need more of that

### Historic Preservation

- History

## Question #2 Responses *What would you change about Middlesex County?*

**Transportation (103 comments)** During this outreach event, the greatest number of comments collected on a single topic referred to traffic (about 60 comments), and nearly half of all collected comments focused on transportation. Other common concerns were parking, better public transit options, and poor roadway conditions.

- Traffic/Congestion on roads
  - Traffic on Route 18 (25 comments)
  - General traffic (18 comments)
  - Downtown New Brunswick traffic (8 comments)
  - Traffic on Route 1 (3 comments)

- Piscataway to Route 1 has a design defect
- Traffic from 287/Easton Avenue traffic (2 comments)
- Too many 18-wheelers on Route 130
- Traffic on Route 33 in Monroe
- Route 27 from New Brunswick to South Brunswick needs to be expanded from 2 lanes to at least one more lane. Bumper to bumper all the way home.
- Better and more parking near New Brunswick and the hospital (12 comments)
- Public Transit
  - Better/more transportation options (2 comments)
  - Less cars
  - NJ Transit bus is late or too early
  - More frequent train stops on NJ Transit
  - Local train in Middlesex County
  - More train service
  - Expand train service for commuters to East Brunswick
  - Broader access to public transportation! Better/more bus routes
  - Need more light rail to not have to transfer in Newark, no mass transit, only rely on one highway
- Roadway Conditions
  - Potholes and bumps (5 comments)
  - Roads need improvement (6 comments)
  - Paving in Edison
  - Work more closely with Monmouth County to improve roads
  - Clean streets like Somerset Street of debris behind and in front of Ronald McDonald of New Brunswick
- Bicycle and Pedestrian
  - Improve pedestrian bridge on Rt 27/Raritan
  - Bike lanes on Rt 27 and other places
  - Pedestrian crossing on Albany in afternoon
  - Enforcement of pedestrian traffic laws
- Widen/improve Route 18 (2 comments)
- Need speed bumps
- Stuck in one lane because no left or right turns

**Economic Opportunity (21 comments)** Respondents talked about high taxes and high cost of living.

- Taxes
  - Taxes are too high (14 comments)
  - We've lived in Middlesex County for over 40 years and raised our kids here. Now we are thinking about moving due to high taxes and congestion.
  - Property taxes are too high (2 comments)
- Cost of living
  - New Brunswick prices are too high
  - Too expensive
- Increase minimum wage
- Beat Silicon Valley
- Be more middle-class considerate due to salaries. Education: help for college students, help with their college loan debts. Cost is enormous. Loan forgiveness to be more. Open

to other careers. In finances and for medical students, etc. Homeowners' taxes need to change, car insurance needs to decrease

**Public Services & Facilities (20 comments)** Respondents would like to see better snow removal around the hospital, more recreation facilities, and improved education.

- Public Works
  - Improve and increase snow removal in New Brunswick, especially around the hospital (7 comments)
  - Clean up trash around town
  - Clean River Road/East Brunswick
- Recreation
  - More swim training centers, especially for kids (2 comments)
  - More events for people
  - More things for young adults to do
  - Lower cost summer camps
- Education
  - Improve standards of education
  - Schools
  - More programs in the school – focusing on sports
- I want to be sure that in Superior Court, the childcare room for domestic violence hearings is kept in the budget
- Improve emergency management
- Social assistance improvement, homeless assistance, more health fairs

**Housing (8 comments)** Respondents commented on the need to address homelessness and provide more affordable housing options.

- Homelessness
  - No open beds in homeless shelters in New Jersey (2 comments)
  - Homelessness on George Street
  - Invest in better shelters for homeless people
  - Homeless assistance
- Housing affordability
  - More affordable housing – development is moving people out
  - Need “real” affordable housing
- Too much gentrification, don't tear down homes to build parking lots

**Miscellaneous (8 comments)**

- Nothing (2 comments)
- Governmental changes, policies reforms
- Multiple use violations, ethnicity changing
- Frustrating to be near too many college students
- People's attitudes
- Reduce amount of municipalities
- New governor

**Public Safety (7 comments)** Respondents were mainly concerned about safety in New Brunswick.

- Safety in New Brunswick at night near the hospital (3 comments)
- Street lights because it is too dark (2 comments)

- Crime and safety in New Brunswick
- Put light on Somerset Street, by Ronald McDonald House

**Parks & Open Space (6 comments)** Respondents would like more parks and open space, especially for kids.

- More parks (4 comments)
- More green space and better parks
- Work on the local parks, offer more outdoor activities in the urban areas

**Land Use & Development**

- Develop Raritan Waterfront like how DC did Potomac
- More grocery stores near Centennial Avenue
- We could use a bar in South Brunswick

**Environment**

- Pollution (2 comments)
- Want to see good water supply

**DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY**

Ninety-eight demographic cards were collected. Approximately two-thirds of the participants were female, as shown in Figure 1. Most participants were generally aged 25 to 64 years old, with a few respondents above 65 and below 25 years old (Figure 2). Almost half of respondents identified as white, 16 identified as Black, not Hispanic, 14 identified as Asian American, and 11 selected more than one race (Figure 3).

Figure 1

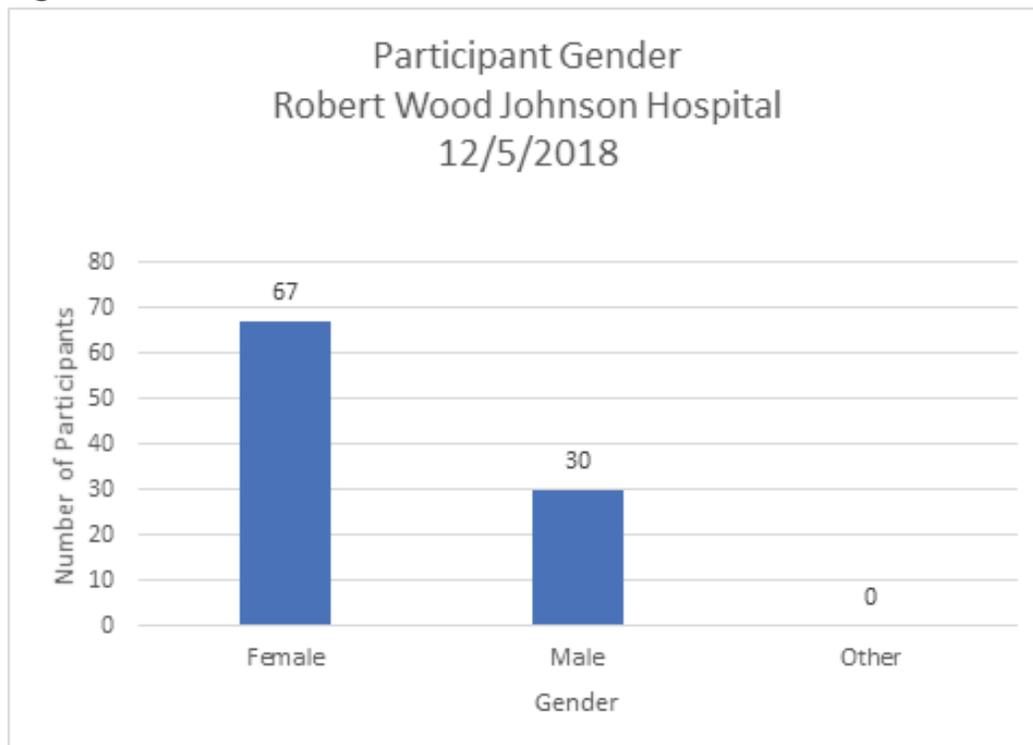


Figure 2

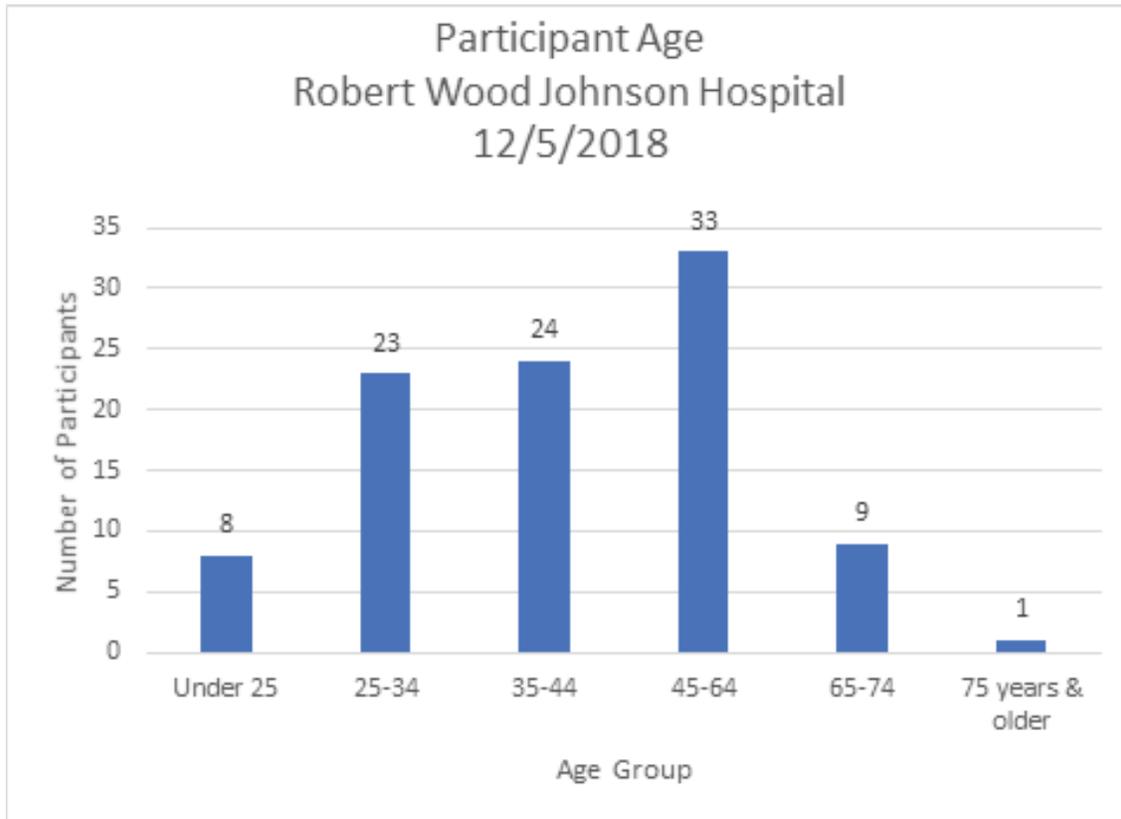
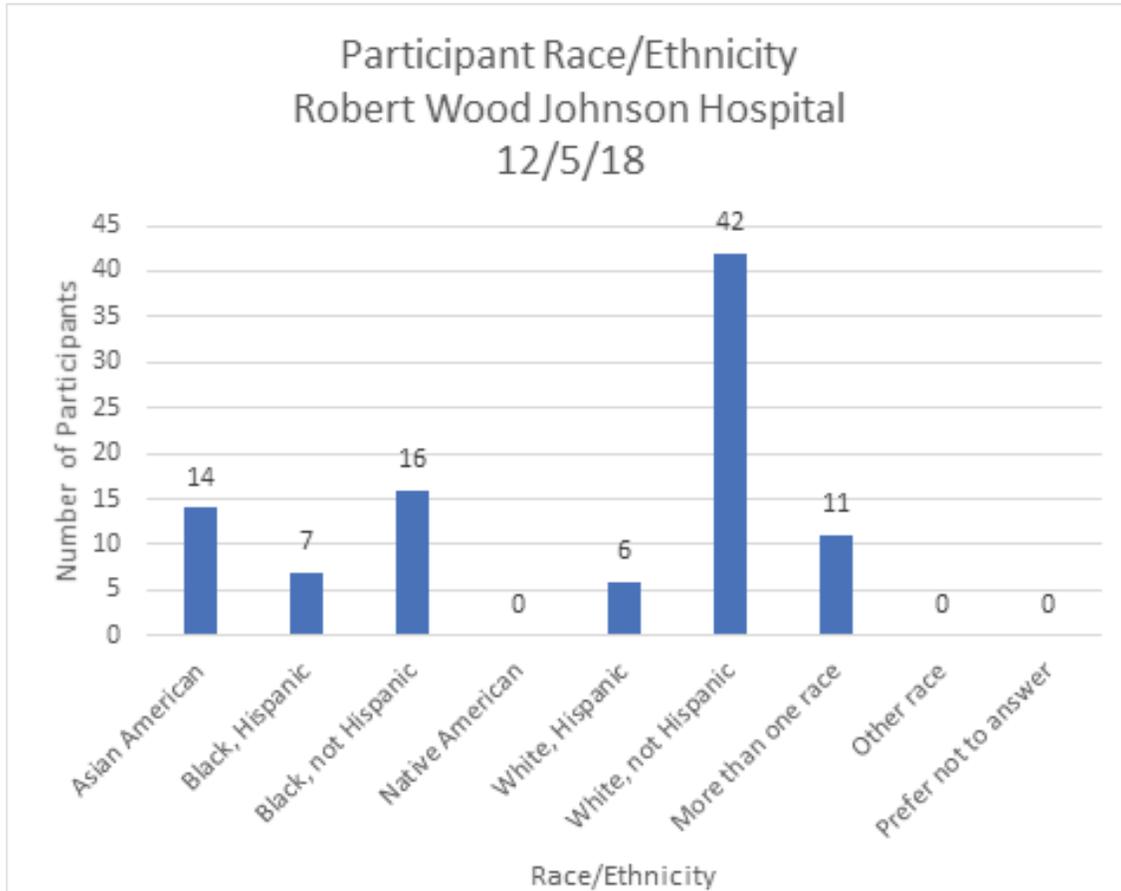
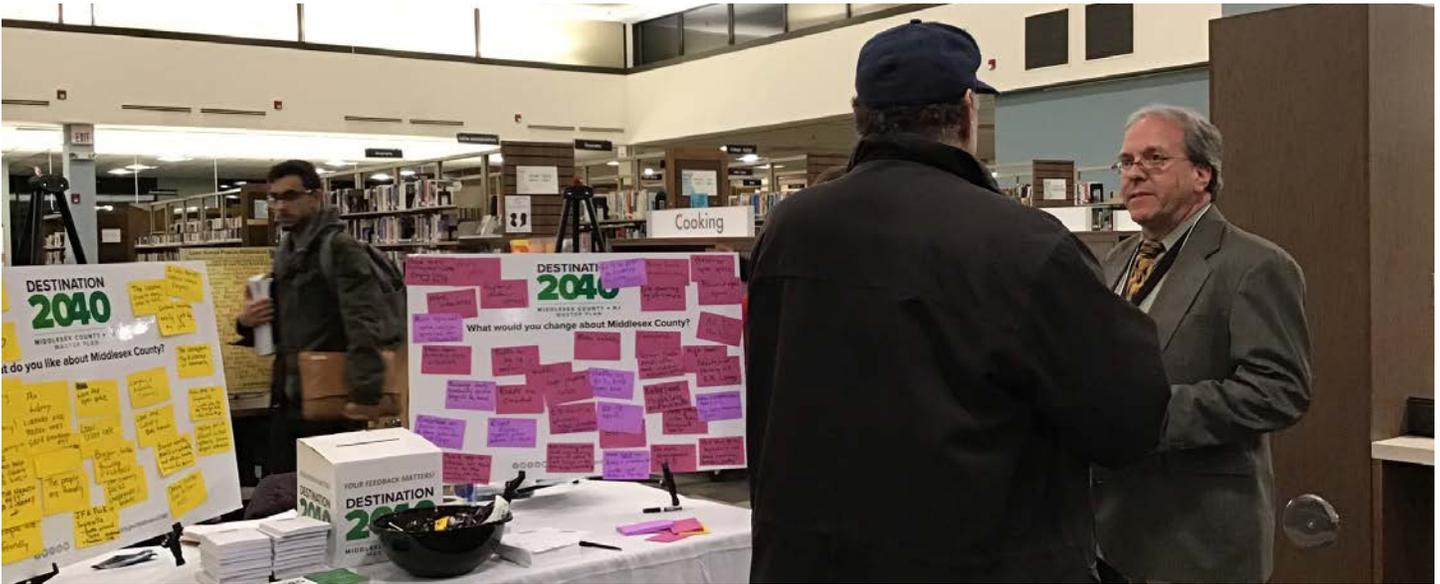


Figure 3





## East Brunswick Library

**Date:** Wednesday, December 12, 2018, 4 pm–7 pm

**Location:** East Brunswick Library,

**Rutgers POET Staff:** Miriam Salerno, Trish Sanchez, Sarah Tomasello

### Event Summary

The outreach booth was stationed at the entrance to the East Brunswick Library, enabling project staff to engage with people as they entered and left the library. Based on the number of comments and demographic surveys, POET and Middlesex County staff engaged with at least 47 people and approximately 70 total including those who did not fill out feedback cards.

### Survey Responses

**Summary** Respondents' comments on what they like about the county emphasized the following themes, in order of number of comments received: (1) Public Services & Facilities; (2) Arts & Culture and Transportation; (3) Parks & Open Space. Respondents' comments regarding changes they wanted to see in the county mainly focused on the following themes: (1) Transportation; (2) Public Services & Facilities; (3) Land Use & Development.

**Question #1 Responses** *What do you like about living/working in Middlesex County?*

**Public Services & Facilities (13 comments)** Respondents especially enjoyed East Brunswick Library services. They also appreciated the school system, senior services, and the Middlesex County recycling website.

- East Brunswick Library (9 comments)
- Schools
  - East Brunswick schools
  - Schools are wonderful – so many opportunities
- Senior services (senior walks, Meals on Wheels, and other County services for seniors)
- Middlesex County website about recycling

**Arts & Culture (7 comments)** Participants appreciated the county’s friendly residents and close-knit communities. They also liked the cultural and ethnic diversity and the benefit of having kids’ activities nearby. Another person liked the new Sayreville mall that provided jobs for the person’s teenaged children and was a new place to go.

- Friendly people (3 comments)
- Close-knit community (2 comments)
- Cultural and ethnic diversity
- Kids’ activities nearby

**Transportation (7 comments)** Participants liked the county’s proximity to multiple locations, including the shore, NYC, and Atlantic City.

- Close to shore and NYC (3 comments)
- Bus to Atlantic City
- Easy to get to job
- Central location
- Everything is accessible and nearby

**Parks & Open Space (4 comments)**

- Open space
- Parks
- County parks, Cheesequake is favorite park
- JFK Park in Sayreville–path around lake, fountain, skateboard rink

**Economic Opportunity**

- Lots of jobs in the area
- Big companies for jobs

**Housing**

- I love having a yard.
- Bigger, better quality rentals

**Public Safety**

- Very safe environment
- Low crime rate

**Land Use & Development**

- New mall in Sayreville – creates jobs for teenaged kids, new place to go

**Question #2 Responses** *What would you change about Middlesex County?*

**Transportation (16 comments)** Participants were frustrated with traffic on various routes (e.g. Route 1, Route 18, Ryders Lane, Route 9, Route 35). They also wanted to see improved roadway conditions like better paved roads and reconfigured stoplights.

- Traffic
  - Traffic (2)
  - Route 18 traffic (2)
  - Traffic on Route 1, 17 and Ryders Lane



- Route 9 to Route 35 in Woodbridge by Jewelry Exchange
- Less out-of-town traffic
- Make getting into New Brunswick easier
- Roadway Conditions
  - Better paved roads
  - Repave Arthur Street in East Brunswick
  - Speeding on Patrick St.
  - Get rid of the stoplights on Rt. 18
  - Need light on Rues Ln. and Winton Rd., traffic light, flashing on stop sign
  - Road repair–Tices Lane between Rt. 18 and Ryders Ln.
  - Add flashing speed limit sign warning drivers of speed limit change on Rt. 529 bridge into Old Bridge
- More bus routes

**Public Services & Facilities (10 comments)** Participants would like to see reduced corruption and improvements to schools and senior services.

- Corruption
  - Corruption
  - Term limits at all levels
  - No double dipping of services and benefits (e.g. judges holding multiple positions)
- Schools
  - Air conditioning in the high school
  - Remove layers of administration in school districts
  - More special education services for students, custom-tailored for each student
- Senior Services
  - Senior center needs to offer more outdoor activities

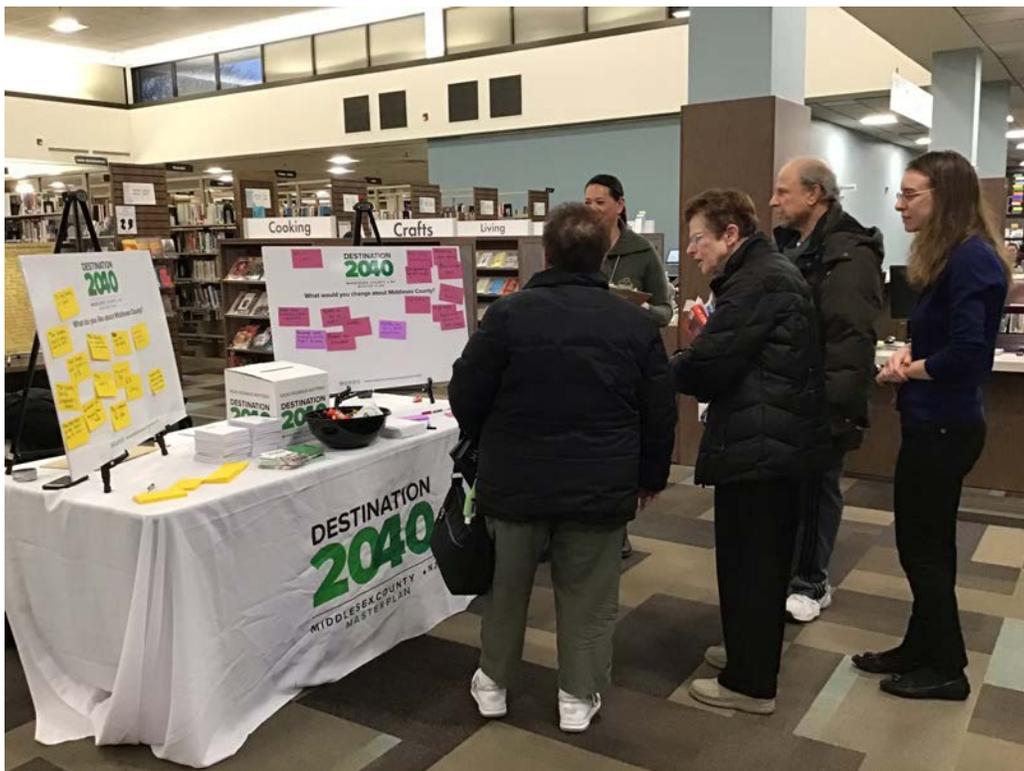
- Consortium on senior centers to share activities and cost / trips
- Regulations need overhaul (18-year-old draft but 21-year-old requirement to drink)
- Additional parking at East Brunswick Library

**Land Use & Development (8 comments)** Two respondents saw a disconnect between new commercial construction occurring while existing buildings sit vacant nearby. Others mentioned the need for more tax-generating properties, overdevelopment in East Brunswick, and the excessive use of variances.

- Empty storefronts
  - New construction going on. Too many abandoned stores.
  - Empty stores but keep building stores
  - Need more restaurants/bistros. Empty strips on Route 18.
- Too much development in East Brunswick
- More rateables
- Less governing by variances.
- East Brunswick needs a walkable retail downtown like Metuchen
- Add sidewalks. Create town center where people can gather.

**Economic Opportunity (6 comments)** Participants wanted to see more jobs and industries, including manufacturing. They also thought that taxes were too high.

- Jobs
  - Bring back manufacturing
  - More jobs
  - More industries
- Taxes
  - High taxes (2)
  - High property taxes



## Parks & Open Space

- Preserve open space (2)
- Add more amenities (e.g. benches, paths) to park between Parlin and Sayreville

## Arts & Culture

- Encourage more community service projects for teens.

## Housing

- Make homeownership more affordable

## Technology & Innovation

- Mobile app so citizens can report issues (e.g. road/traffic problems) to the county

## Demographic Summary

As seen in Figure 1 below, a few more men participated than women. In Figure 2, the age of participants skewed toward older adults; the majority of participants were aged 45-64, and about one-third were over the age of 65. Almost 60% of the participants were White, not Hispanic (Figure 3). A third of the participants identified as Asian, and a small percentage of people identified as Black, not Hispanic.

Figure 1

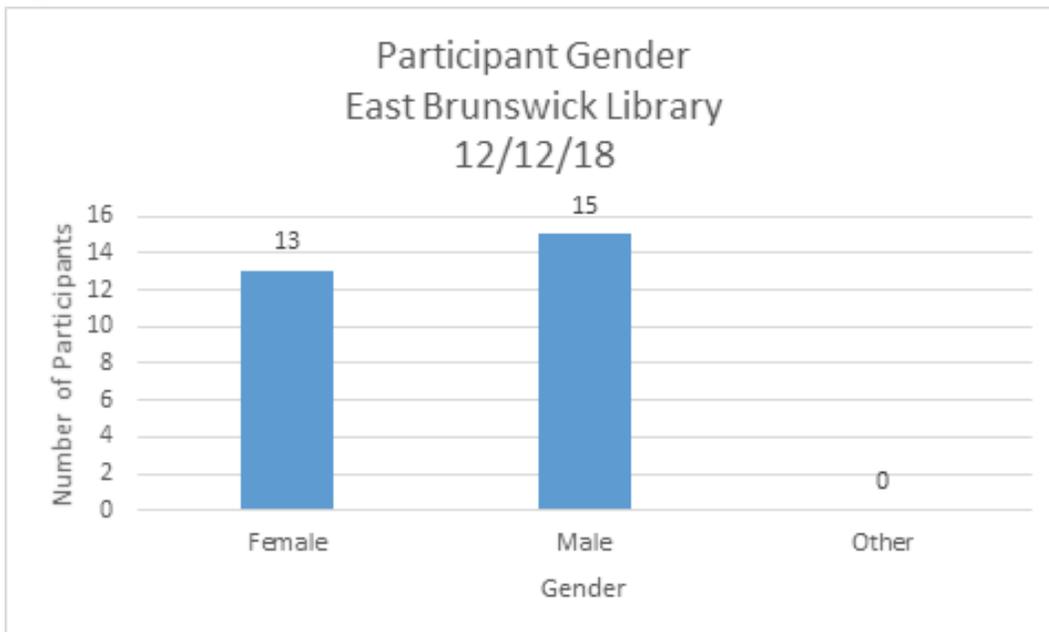


Figure 2

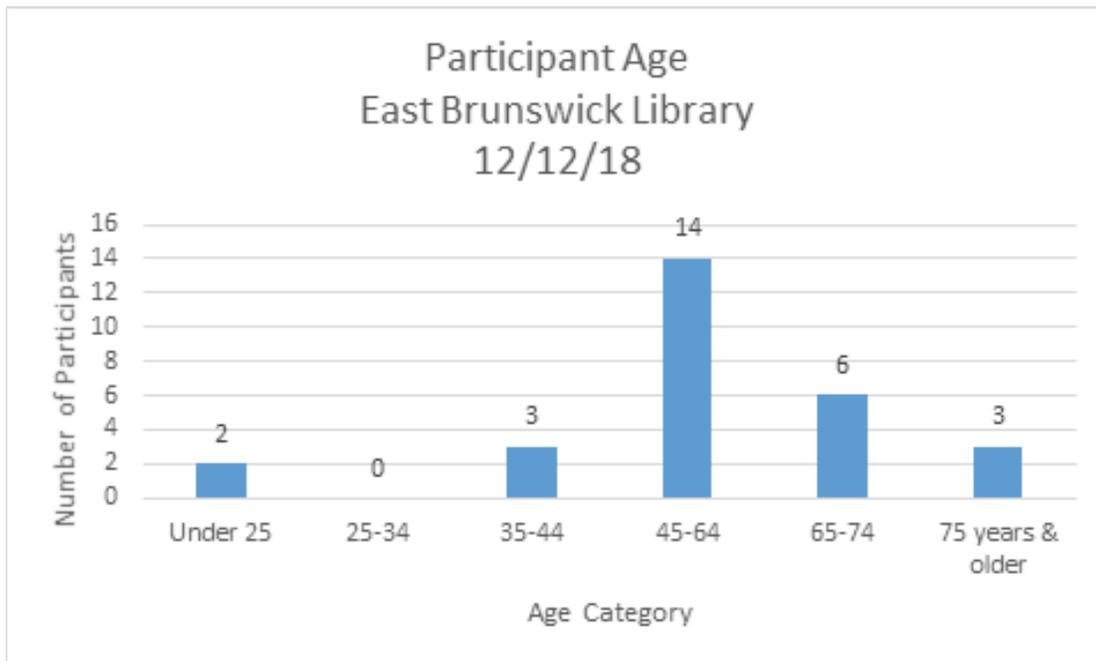
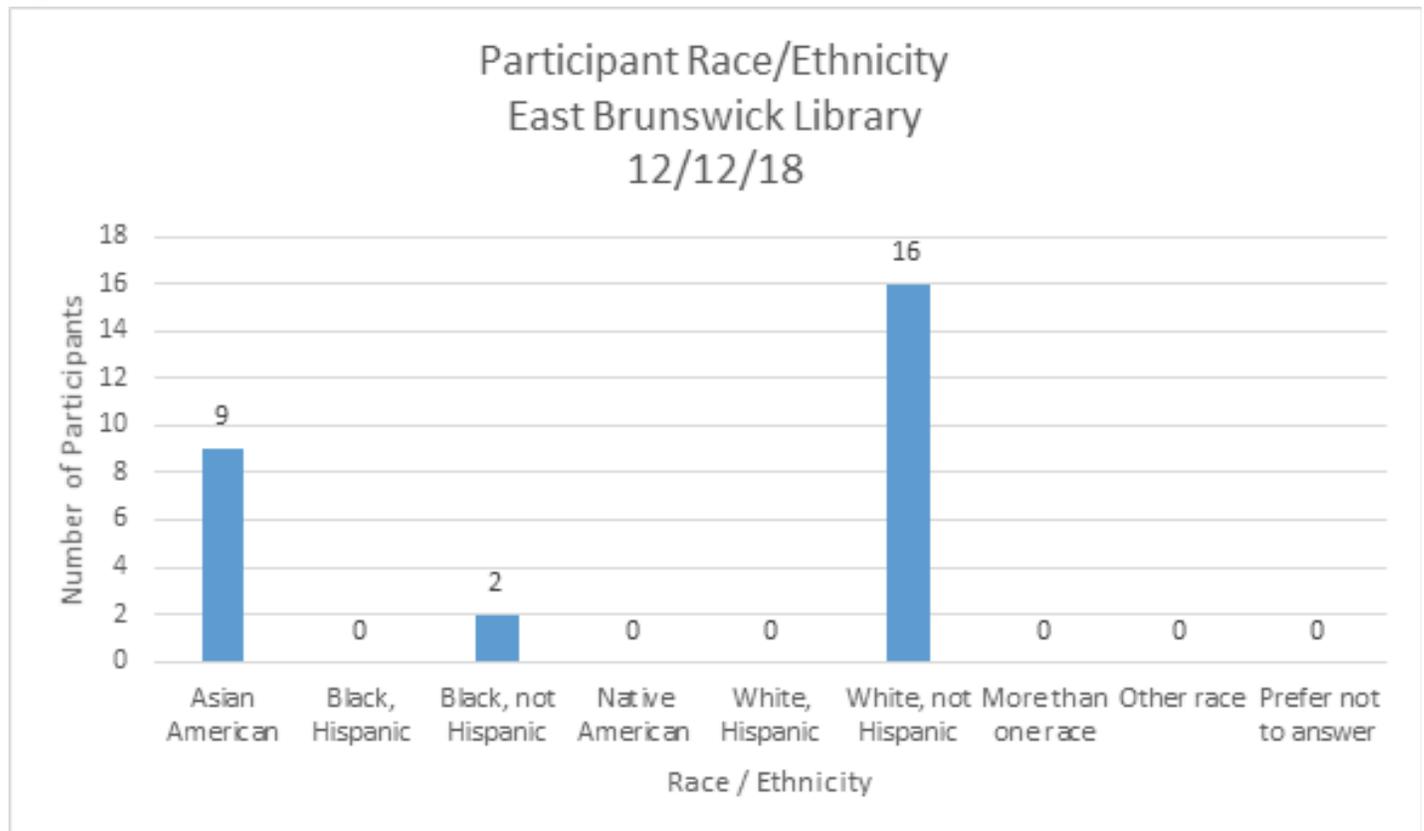


Figure 3





## Raritan Bay Medical Center, Perth Amboy

**Date:** Thursday, December 13, 2018 from 9 am–1 pm

**Location:** Raritan Bay Medical Center, Perth Amboy

**Rutgers POET Staff:** Stephanie Crozier, Silvia Cuevas, Michael Swan

### EVENT SUMMARY

The outreach booth was stationed in the concourse level of Raritan Medical Center in Perth Amboy. Rutgers POET and Middlesex County staff engaged with approximately 100 people total based on the number of comments and demographic cards collected.

### SURVEY RESPONSES

**Summary** Comments on what participants liked about the county mainly focused on the following themes ordered by the number of comments received: (1) Public Services & Facilities; (2) Parks & Open Space; (3) Transportation. Comments regarding changes participants would make primarily emphasized the following themes: (1) Transportation; (2) Public Services & Facilities; (3) Economic Opportunity. Six participants wrote their responses in Spanish; these comments have been translated to English.

**Question #1 Responses** *What do you like about living/working in Middlesex County?*

**Public Services & Facilities (17 comments)** Respondents appreciated the county's educational institutions, senior services, and public works programs.

- Education
  - Schools/education (5 comments)

- Middlesex County College (3 comments)
- High school
- County scholarships for students
- Colleges
- Senior Services
  - Senior center is great!
  - County providers' services for elders.
- Public Works
  - New garbage and recycling containers are great
  - Snowplows are good
- Utilities, police/fire
- Outreach programs for the poor.

**Parks & Open Space (16 comments)** Respondents liked aspects of the county's parks, open spaces, and coastline.

- Parks
  - Parks (3 comments)
  - Cleanliness (3 comments)
  - Abundance of parks or green space (2 comments)
  - Plays (2 comments)
  - Quiet
  - Warren Park and its participation with community
- Waterfront
  - Jersey Shore
  - Running along the waterfront Perth Amboy
- Open Space
  - Accessible, natural spaces
  - Open space

**Transportation (14 comments)** Participants liked that the county is within close proximity to desirable amenities and places.

- Regional Accessibility
  - Convenient location to larger cities (NYC and Philly) (2 comments)
  - Close to many attractions and conveniently located to airports
  - Shopping close to highway
  - Close to coast
  - Location west, north and south
  - Centrally located to major roads, downtown New Brunswick, dinner, shows and the hospitals
  - Everything you need close together, PA to Perth Amboy: safer, more businesses
  - North Brunswick is convenient.
  - Proximity
- Less congestion than Long Island
- Roads are well-maintained.
- Transportation
- Perth Amboy is a walkable town. Available transit.



**Arts & Culture (9 comments)** Participants liked the county’s friendly and diverse communities.

- Friendly and diverse communities
  - Diversity (3 comments)
  - Religious/cultural values
  - Calm neighborhoods, nice people, enjoy environment
  - Friendly environment, multi-cultural, community
  - Friendly place
- Good Shepherd Church
- Great street fairs in Piscataway, free music in summer

**Public Health (9 comments)** Respondents liked the hospitals and medical facilities in Middlesex County.

- Hospital (3 comments)
- Outstanding medical facilities
- Great hospital in Woodbridge (possibly referring to Raritan Bay Medical Center)
- Diverse patrons of local hospitals
- Raritan Bay Hospital (Old Bridge) amenities and expansion
- Hospitals’ culture of caring and kindness
- Hospitals improving their services

**Land Use & Development (5 comments)**

- Shopping (3 comments)
- Restaurants
- Proximity to entertainment and groceries

**Economic Opportunity**

## Environment

- Overall pretty clean

## Housing

- Housing facilities

## Miscellaneous

- I like everything.

## Question #2 Responses *What would you change about Middlesex County?*

**Transportation (35 comments)** Transportation received the greatest number of comments. The most common concerns were roadway conditions, traffic, public transportation and parking.

- Roadway conditions
  - Potholes (“pothole heaven”) (7 comments)
  - Roads are bad or need repair (4 comments)
  - Please fix the bridges/roads
  - Better roads, better pedestrian crossings at schools and in general
  - Broken parkways
- Traffic
  - Traffic/congestion (6 comments)
  - 1 hour to commute from New Brunswick to Old Bridge Raritan Bay
  - Traffic congestion in the afternoon, I plan my deliveries around it
  - Too busy Old Bridge to New Brunswick too much traffic
  - Change Bypass routes for I-287, too much traffic
- Public Transportation
  - Public transit is bad
  - Public transportation is very late: 813, 815, 817
  - Needs more buses that stop in more places
  - Not enough seating for bus stops in Perth Amboy
- Parking
  - Parking
  - Free parking in Perth Amboy
  - I don’t like the parking and then getting a \$64 ticket.
- People don’t follow traffic signs, people don’t follow left turn lane, go in lane and cut everyone off
- Enable left turns on roads
- Additional pedestrians and blinking traffic light
- Eliminate tolls on the Turnpike and Parkway. Car insurance too high.

**Public Services & Facilities (9 comments)** Participants would change the county’s education system, libraries, public works programs, and use of taxes.

- Education
  - Better school system, more afterschool activities
  - Better school system
  - Able to get an education



**Parks & Open Space (6 comments)** Respondents wanted to see various changes made to the park system, such as more class offerings and better maintenance.

- Parks
  - Goose poop issues in parks
  - Improve classes/activities offered in parks (e.g. cooking, hiking, snow shoes), see Monmouth County as a model
  - Parks need maintenance and seats.
  - Larger parks in Piscataway
- Waterfront
  - Jogging path on Perth Amboy waterfront
  - Cleaner beaches, no charges to go to beach

**Land Use & Development (6 comments)** Participants would change the amount and type of development occurring in the county, though one person wanted more modern malls.

- Miss small businesses, less of them, only malls
- Overdevelopment, Route 18 Old Bridge, cutting down trees
- More modern malls
- Overpopulation is very high (density)
- Construction
- Want free parking in hospital areas

**Environment (6 comments)** Participants commented on the lack of cleanliness in the county resulting from litter.

- Litter
  - Trash everywhere on New Brunswick streets and open space woods
  - Cleanliness
  - Clean sidewalks, Perth Amboy
  - Trash on street and waterways
- Environmental clean-up “cancer alley”
- Environment (trees are important)

**Arts & Culture (4 comments)**

- More concert venues
- A lot of diversity and stores
- More recreation for children
- Religious choices

**Public Health**

- People’s access to healthcare and medication. Patient education. Doctors don’t have time to help patients.
- Mental / medical care for veterans
- Improve public health and medical health. Help people who are working.

**Miscellaneous**

- Convenient to everyone
- Shared services, too political, affordable housing, less parochial

## Demographic Summary

More than twice the amount of females participated than males, as shown in Figure 1. As shown in Figure 2, people of almost all ages participated, with the majority aged 45-64. Participation was ethnically and racially diverse; most participants identified as White, Hispanic and White, not Hispanic, followed by Black, not Hispanic and Asian, and Black, Hispanic and Other Race (Figure 3).

Figure 1

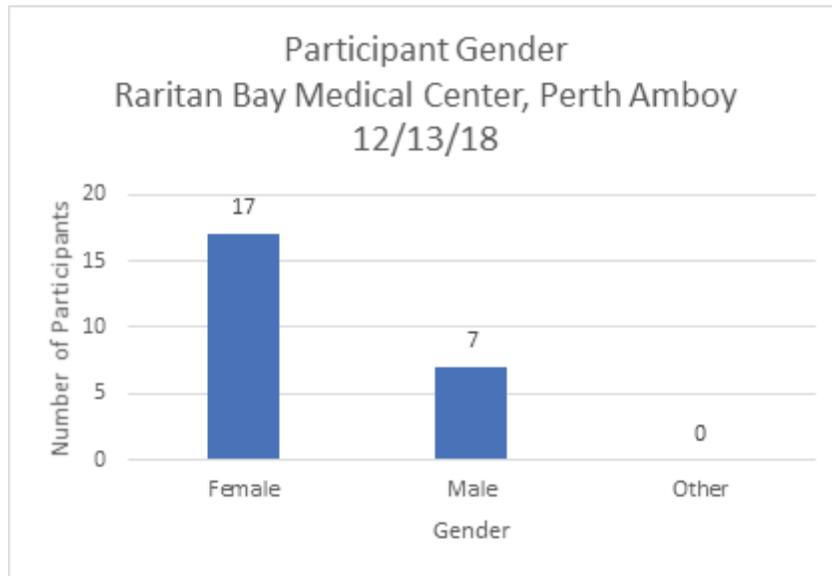


Figure 2

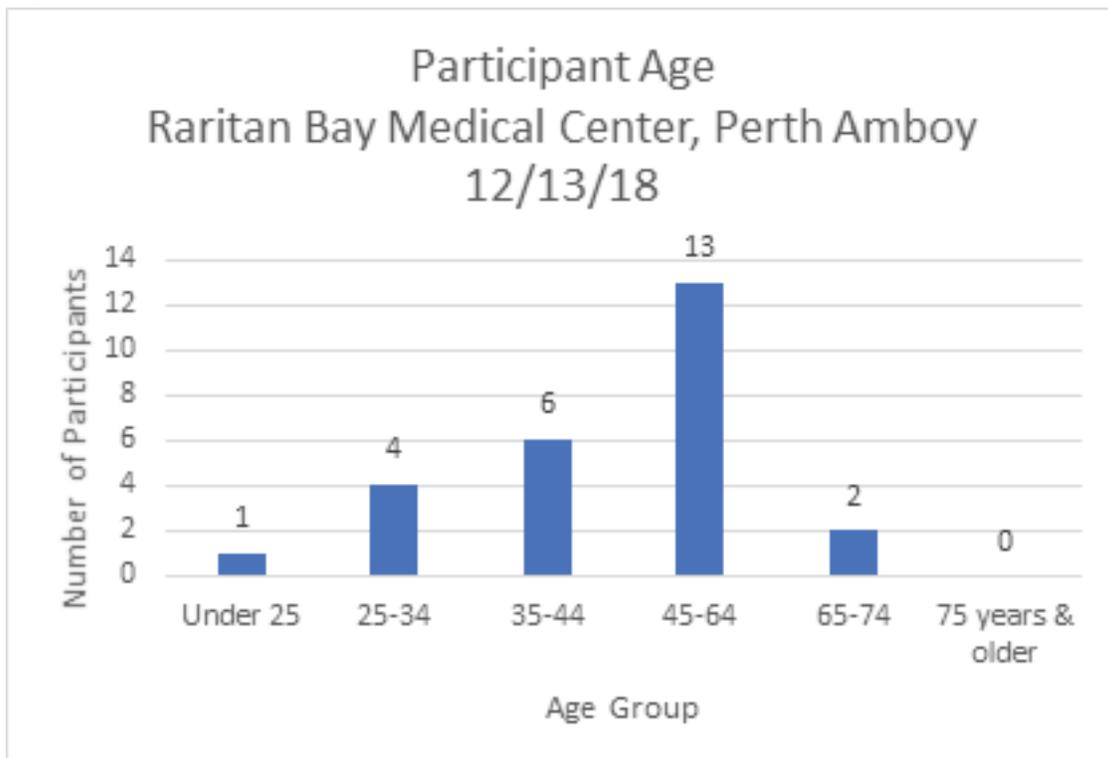
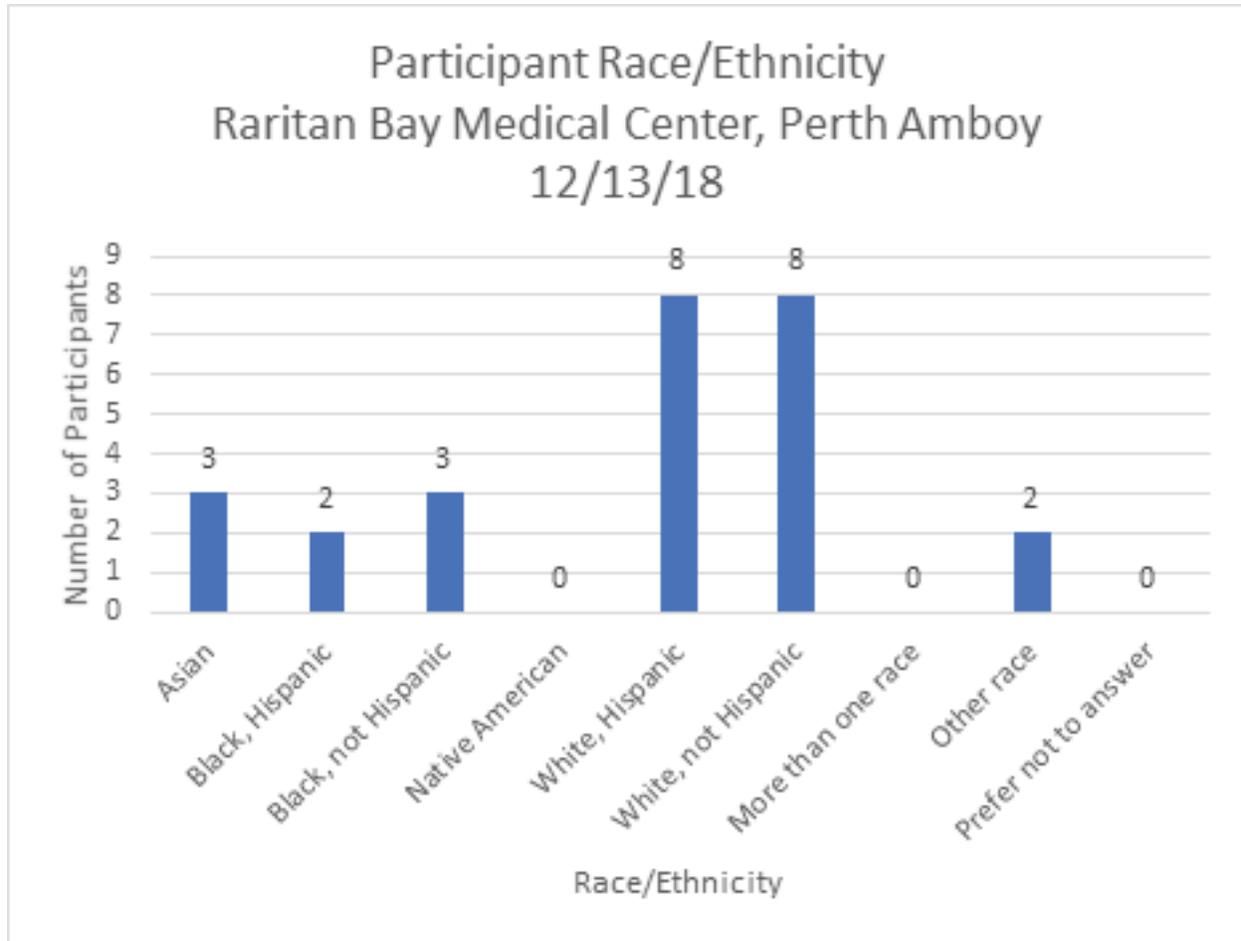


Figure 3





## Perth Amboy Cathedral International

**Date:** Sunday, December 16, 2018, 8:30 am –12 pm

**Location:** Perth Amboy Cathedral International, 205 Smith Street, Perth Amboy

**Rutgers POET Staff:** Stephanie Crozier, Dan Hutton, Donna Iken

### EVENT SUMMARY

The outreach booth was stationed at the entrance of Perth Amboy Cathedral International. The outreach table was set up before and after services and an announcement was made to encourage worshipers to visit the table and respond to the survey questions. Staff engaged with approximately 80 participants, based on the number of comments including those who did not fill out feedback cards.

### SURVEY RESPONSES

**Summary** The majority of comments on what participants liked about the county referenced the following topics, ranked by number of comments received: (1) Arts & Culture; (2) Public Services & Facilities; (3) Land Use & Development. Most comments about changes in the county referenced the following topics: (1) Public Services & Facilities; (2) Transportation; (3) Economic Opportunity.

**Question #1 Responses** *What do you like about living/working in Middlesex County?*

**Arts & Culture (24 comments)** Participants highlighted the diversity and the many cultural activities in the area.

- Community

- Community residents, neighbors, and people (6 comment)
- The smallness of the communities in Middlesex
- Like suburbs
- Community opportunities
- Nobody bothers anybody
- Diversity
  - Diversity (6 comments)
  - Diversity – global, ethnic, melting pot, good for everyone
  - Middlesex County is a very diverse and welcoming community.
  - Diversity in Sayreville
- Arts & Activities
  - Performing Arts
  - Free concerts
  - Culturally rich
  - I also appreciate that there are lots of arts and theatre programs.
  - Music in the summer on the waterfront

**Public Services & Facilities (11 comments)** The most common positive response from participants highlighted their appreciation for the school system. Respondents also liked recreation opportunities and government services.

- Education
  - Like the college experience
  - Good school systems
  - Middle School has good safe busing
  - Good schools in Perth Amboy
  - Cultural (race/ethnicity) awareness course in Edison school district implemented and know it is in other parts of Middlesex County
- Monroe is clean and quiet (2 comments)
- Road preparation for snow removal
- Good garbage operations in Woodbridge
- Woodbridge operations are good
- Mail in for DMV services

**Land Use & Development (9 comments)** Participants commented on the variety and proximity of shopping and dining options

- Shopping nearby
  - Good shopping—food, clothes, all needs here (3 comments)
  - Close shopping centers (3 comments)
- Restaurants
  - Lots of good eats (2 comments)
  - Diverse restaurants

**Miscellaneous (6 comments)** Participants liked the county’s proximity to other places and the fact that the county is growing.

- Location
  - Location, accessibility and convenience (3 comments)
  - Countryside
- Growing (2 comments)



**Transportation (6 comments)** Respondents liked the highway access and some public transit.

- Public Transit
  - Close proximity to trains
  - Good public transit bus line
  - Access link availability for special needs in Middlesex is great
- Highway Access
  - Easy access to a lot of highways
  - Closeness to 95, main roads, like most parking
- Commute to New York City

**Parks & Open Space (4 comments)**

- Waterfront (3 comments)
- Parks

**Economic Opportunity**

- More value for money (compared to New York)
- Close proximity to large cities for employment opportunities

**Housing**

- I like the housing developments and communities in the county
- Adult living communities

**Public Health**

- I liked that there were a lot of people who appreciate the help that the Health Department offered.
- Good medical services

**Public Safety**

- Police department
- Good police security

## Historic Preservation

- Historic

## Question #2 Responses *What would you change about Middlesex County?*

**Public Services & Facilities (19 comments)** Respondents would like to see better schools and more educational options. They also want more collaboration between the county and their own local organizations and municipalities. Finally, respondents want lower taxes, especially for those who do not have children in the school system.

- Education
  - School choice
    - ◆ Implement more charter schools
    - ◆ More schools for “gifted” students
    - ◆ I would allow children to attend whatever school they want as elementary school.
    - ◆ Tuition affordable for less income
  - Better Public Schools
    - ◆ Better public schools (2 comments)
    - ◆ Less crowded schools (2 comments)
    - ◆ Better high school
    - ◆ Better schools in the middle to lower class areas
  - School programs
    - ◆ More school-based program on preventions
    - ◆ More child well-being and not technology-based
    - ◆ Homeschoolers should be allowed to do certain activities at schools. This is because we pay taxes too but don’t benefit from school.
    - ◆ Full day pre-k and kindergarten
- Governance and collaboration
  - County collaboration between each office
  - More coordination between the county and non-profits
  - Faith-based representation in Middlesex County offices and councils
- Public works
  - Less visible garbage
  - Cleaner county (example: streets, highways)

**Transportation (18 comments)** Respondents want better and more public transit options, and improved roadways.

- Public Transportation
  - Transportation system is not the best or close by
  - Public transport minimal and concentrated in certain areas
  - Public transportation for services
  - Better public transit, add light rail
  - Better service here on train and buses
  - More parking in transit areas
  - Access Link should cross over into the entire state of New Jersey. It should pick up door to door without being based on where bus stops are (eg. Border area, friend can’t get Access Link because 2 blocks away from bus stop)
- Roadways
  - Better roads (4 comments)
  - Potholes (2 comments)

- Traffic
  - Route 27 and Oak Tree
  - South Edison traffic is gridlocked
  - Traffic on 287
  - A light takes long to change at the end of 440 (Harvardtown, Perth Amboy) and it's not easy to see kids crossing (maybe need to see light)
- Commute to New York City should be cheaper

**Economic Opportunity (14 comments)** Many respondents would like to see more job opportunities in the area and more small businesses and assistance for entrepreneurs.

- Taxes
  - Property taxes are too high (5 comments)
  - School taxes too high for seniors and residents who do not have children (5 comments)
  - Taxes not commensurate to what getting, more bank for buck, not good value (so just moved to Monmouth County)
- More job opportunities
  - More jobs (3 comments)
  - More jobs in Perth Amboy
  - More jobs for entry level
- Small Businesses
  - More small businesses
  - More possibilities for the start of small businesses (help with start up and/or funding)

**Housing (8 comments)** The most common concern with housing is affordability.

- Housing affordability
  - More affordable housing, general (3 comments)
  - Affordable homes for single mothers
  - More subsidized housing – rent is going up (Old Bridge)
- Homelessness
  - Better shelters for homeless women and children
  - Housing for homeless vets
- More single homes

**Land Use & Development (4 comments)**

- Shopping
  - More grocery stores in South Amboy
  - Bring back small business shopping
  - Stores for senior community clothing
- More restaurant development on the waterfront

**Arts & Culture**

- Bring back arts
- Cultural focus program child-free
- Diversity and inclusion

**Environment**

- Flooding

- Flood prevention for all flood zones
- It is not fair that more and more homes need flood insurance and the town is not addressing the issue (South Plainfield)
- Cleaner water in Perth Amboy

**Public Safety**

- Police
  - More cops around Perth Amboy
  - More police on streets in Perth Amboy, especially with U-turns
- Better lighting

**Parks & Open Space**

- Cleaner parks
- Parks more environmentally-friendly, cleaner, park maintenance nicer (broken swing sets)

**Public Health**

- Food insecurity

**DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY**

About one-third of participants filled out the demographic survey. As shown in Figure 1, slightly more than half of the participants were female. Half of the participants were between the ages of 45-64, and the rest of the participants were generally evenly distributed above and below that age category (Figure 2). As shown in Figure 3, all of the respondents identified as Black or Black, Hispanic.

**Figure 1**

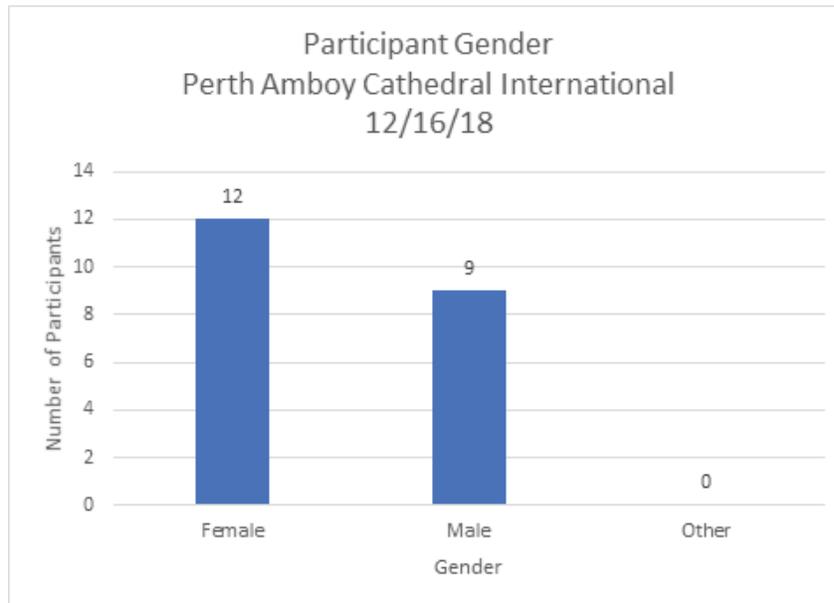


Figure 2

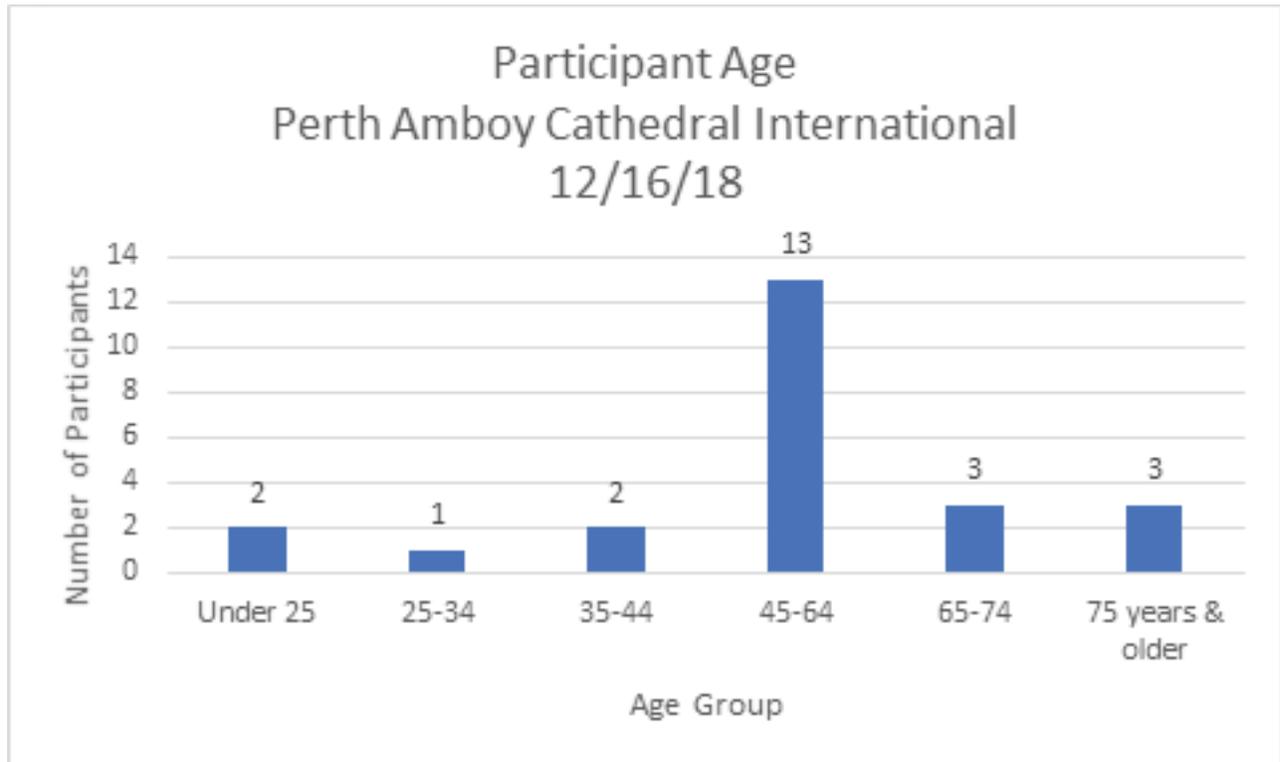


Figure 3

