



DESTINATION 2040

MIDDLESEX COUNTY • NJ
MASTER PLAN

Destination 2040 Phase 1 Outreach

Summary of Comments from
Comment Boxes, Online Survey,
and Email

January–April 2019



I'm looking for...



FIND
SERVICES



STAY
CONNECTED



EVENTS



ENG

About Middlesex

Residents

Business

Visitors

Government



DESTINATION 2040

MIDDLESEX COUNTY • NJ
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Take the online survey

Give us your input and
enter to win a \$100 gift card!



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Response Method Summary

COMMENT BOXES

Comment boxes were placed in public, easily accessible locations within each Middlesex County municipality. Comment boxes were placed in libraries within each municipality with the exception of Helmetta, which shares library services with Spotswood and Dunellen. Boxes were also stationed at the Woodbridge and Dunellen municipal halls. The boxes were either placed by Rutgers POET staff when they were dropped at the location or by the contact person at the location. Boxes were placed between January and February 2019 and collected in mid- to late-April 2019.

The comment boxes were placed in highly visible locations and were accompanied by comment cards, pens, and informational cards and flyers about Destination 2040 in both English and Spanish. The comment cards asked respondents to answer two questions:

What do you like about living/working in Middlesex County?

What would you change about Middlesex County?

The feedback cards also asked the following five optional demographic questions:

1. Which group best describes your age?
 - Under 25
 - 25–34
 - 35–44
 - 45–64
 - 64–74
 - 75 years & older
2. Do you rent or own your home?
 - Rent
 - Own
 - Residence provided by others
 - Prefer not to answer
3. Are you?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other
4. What race or ethnicity best describes you?
 - White, not Hispanic
 - Black, not Hispanic
 - White, Hispanic
 - Black, Hispanic
 - Asian
 - Native American
 - Other race
 - More than one race
 - Prefer not to answer
5. What is your zip code? _____

In total, **155 comment cards** were collected using the comment boxes, and most cards included responses that touched on multiple topics.

ONLINE COMMENTS

Respondents had two options for submitting comments online; they could either email comments directly to a general Destination 2040 email address, or they could fill out a survey linked through the Destination 2040 website. The survey was promoted by Rutgers POET and Middlesex County staff through social media posts and informational flyer and postcard distribution at various internal and external events. Online survey respondents received questions identical to those displayed on the comment cards (detailed above).

In total, 104 responses were collected via the survey and email account, and most responses touched on multiple topics.

FEEDBACK BOXES AND WEBSITE COMMENTS

Summary Respondents' comments on what they like about the county totaled 505. These comments mainly touched on the following themes, in order of number of comments received: (1) Transportation; (2) Arts & Culture; (3) Public Services & Facilities. Respondents' comments regarding changes they would make about the county totaled 482. These comments mainly touched on the following themes: (1) Transportation; (2) Land Use & Development; (3) Public Services & Facilities.

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

Transportation (143 comments) Many participants liked the county's proximity to regional amenities and points of interest, such as major cities, the shore, and shopping. Many felt that everything they need is easily accessible because the county is centrally located. They liked the county's transportation connectivity, particularly the public transit options and highway access. Some participants felt they have easy commutes and that getting around the county is generally easy.

- Close to major cities (31)
- Everything I need is closeby (25)
- Convenient and accessible (23)
- Central location (19)
- Public transit (17)
- Access to highways (10)
- Easy commute (8)
- Close to the shore (5)
- Easy to get around (3)
- Airports nearby
- Bicycle and pedestrian amenities

Arts & Culture (124 comments) Participants especially appreciated the diversity of cultures within the county. They also liked the friendly people, close-knit communities, and family-friendly atmosphere. Participants liked that there is a lot to do in the county, especially community events and easy access to the arts.

- Diversity (51)
- Friendly people and communities (19)
- Community events and activities (15)
- Fine and performing arts (14)
- Family friendly (10)
- Quiet and peaceful (8)
- Lots to do (7)

Public Services & Facilities (68 comments) Respondents shared a variety of public services that they felt were effective, including local school systems, libraries, and services for seniors and those in need. In addition to local schools, respondents liked the access to an extensive higher education system.

- Local school systems (20)
- Good government services (16)
- Local libraries (13)

- Monroe Library
- The North Brunswick Library
- Close to major universities (10)
- Public assistance (3)
 - “How much the county helps those in need”
- Senior Services (3)
- Clean (2)
- Trash and recycling services

Parks & Open Space (50 comments) Respondents liked the presence of greenery, open space and an extensive park system. They also enjoyed having access to outdoor activities like sports, gardening, and visiting farmers markets.

- Greenery and open space (22)
- Lots of parks (20)
- Access to outdoor activities (8)
 - Recreation
 - Gardening
 - Farm stands

Land Use & Development (40 comments) Respondents liked the variety of shopping and dining options available within the county, particularly the opportunity to try cuisines from around the world. They also liked the range of development types present, from rural areas to busy urban environments. Some participants specified a preference for the county's walkable downtown areas.

- Types of shopping and restaurants (17)
 - Restaurants and shops from around the world
 - Many shopping and dining options
- Types of development (15)
 - Diversity of place types
 - Small towns
 - Urban places
 - Suburban feel
 - Rural areas
- Walkable downtowns (8)

Economic Opportunity (20 comments)

- Job opportunities (11)
- Good cost of living (5)
- Good business climate (2)
- Good tax rates (2)

Miscellaneous (18 comments)

- I like nothing about the county (12)
- I like everything about the county (3)
- Beautiful place (2)

Public Safety (16 comments)

- Safe neighborhoods (8)
- Low crime (7)
- Great local police

Public Health (12 comments)

- Good hospitals (9)
- Good doctors (3)

Environment (6 comments)

- The waterfront (5)
- Environmental policies

Historic Preservation (5 comments)

- Historic places (5)

Housing (1 comment)

- Housing options

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

Transportation (170 comments) Respondents wanted to see improvements to public transit service in the county. Other major concerns included road maintenance such as fixing potholes, cleaning the roads, speeding up road repairs, and improving public transit, improve safety for pedestrians and bicycles and improving public transit. One person expressed concern about traffic placement.

- Public Transit (50)
 - More public transit stations, such as the planned North Brunswick train station
 - Local light rail service
 - More public transit connectivity locally and to New York City and Philadelphia
 - Better train connectivity
 - Ferry service to New York City
 - More convenient bus scheduling
 - Better bus stops
 - Better information about bus schedules and routes
 - Improved transportation services for the disabled
 - Shuttle service to train stations
 - Reduce car dependence, make it easier to get around for those without a car
 - Better access to jobs via public transit
- Traffic and congestion (45 comments)
 - Traffic on Routes 1, 18, 287, 130 and Summerhill Rd
 - Add more lanes to congested highways
 - Reduce truck traffic on local roads
 - Roads cannot accommodate new development
- Bicycle & pedestrian (33 comments)
 - More bike trails
 - More pedestrian and bike-friendly roads

- More walking trails
- Safe conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Increase walking and biking to lessen car use and improve traffic conditions
- Make communities walkable
- Road maintenance (22)
 - Fix roads and other transportation infrastructure
 - Fix Landing Lane Bridge
 - Too many pot holes
- Improve road design (10)
 - Jug handles do not work
 - Improve traffic patterns
 - Road diets
 - Add more lanes
- Parking (9)
 - More parking in New Brunswick
 - Not enough parking
- Improve road safety

Land Use & Development (65 comments) Respondents were most concerned about the impacts of overdevelopment on the loss of green space and increased urbanization of once rural or low-density suburban areas. Respondents would like to see development occur in more efficient, compact patterns that reuse existing buildings and create town centers. They would like to see less “highway” type development like strip malls and more residential options within walking distance of food markets and other shopping. Some respondents would like more supermarket and dining options.

- Overdevelopment (32)
 - Population growth
 - Loss of rural environment
 - Too much crowding and too high housing density
 - Unnecessary or redundant commercial development
- More efficient development (15)
 - Reuse existing buildings instead of building new ones
 - Fewer vacant buildings
 - Housing and food stores within walking distance
 - More town centers or “downtown” areas
 - More public spaces
 - Walkable towns
 - Less strip malls and “highway” type development
- More shopping and restaurants (13)
 - More supermarket options
 - More dining options
- More small businesses (2)
- More cohesive architectural styles
- Electrical poles along Route 1 are an eyesore
- Pedestrian-friendly parking lots

Public Services & Facilities (63 comments) Respondents' suggestions included consolidating some municipal services, better coordination between adjacent towns, and reducing political partisanship. They also would like to see more composting programs and recycling drop-off points and less residents burning garbage. Respondents would like to see various changes made to local school systems, senior services, and other government functions.

- Government and public services (20)
 - Consolidate municipal services
 - Reduce corruption
 - Better coordination between towns on infrastructure and development projects
 - More balanced politics
- Trash, recycling, and composting (11)
 - Stop residents from burning trash
 - Clean up litter
 - Offer free composting programs
 - More recycling and waste drop off locations throughout the county
- Schools (10)
- Senior services (10)
 - Better transportation services
 - More programs/activities for seniors
- Public assistance programs (6)
- More public meeting information on county website
- Expand libraries
- Improve mail service
- Improve county branding
- Shovel snow from sidewalks
- More competition between internet service providers

Parks & Open Space (51 comments) Many respondents would like the county to have more open space and parks. They would also like more activities and amenities in county parks, such as

- More open space (24)
- More park amenities (12)
 - Expand Middlesex Greenway
- More parks (7)
- Offer activities in parks (3)
- Better maintain parks (2)
- Better access to the Raritan River (2)
- Create a dog park

Economic Opportunity (37 comments) Respondents would like to see lower taxes and more job opportunities.

- Lower taxes (30)
- More job opportunities (6)
- Better cost of living

Arts & Culture (29 comments) Respondents would like to see more community events, like street fairs and outdoor concerts, and more opportunities for artists. They would also like to increase diversity.

- More events and activities (17)
- Increase inclusivity and diversity (7)
- Provide more opportunities for artists (5)

Housing (17 comments) Respondents would like to see more housing to rent or own that is affordable for low- and middle-income residents. They are also concerned about homeless residents in the county and would like services available to help this population.

- More affordable housing (13)
- Help the homeless (4)

Miscellaneous (15 comments)

- Miscellaneous (10)
- Don't change anything (5)

Public Safety (14 comments)

- Reform Law Enforcement (6)
- Greater police presence (5)
- Animal welfare (2)
- Safer neighborhoods

Environment (12 comments)

- Environmental policy (5)
 - More renewable energy
 - More enforcement of air and water quality regulations
 - Reduce carbon emissions
 - Make buildings more efficient
- Preserve land for wildlife (3)
- Water pollution (2)
- More trees/preserve trees (2)

Public Health (4 comments)

- Build a medical college
- More public health
- Less difficult getting to doctors' appointments
- More medical office buildings

Historic Preservation (3 comments)

- Preserve historical sights (3)

Technology & Innovation (2 comments)

- Expand tech jobs in the county
- Educate communities about artificial intelligence and robots

Demographic Summary

Slightly more males than females participated. A majority of the participants were over 45 years old. Most owned their home. 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.