



MIDDLETOWN

**2021
Annual
Report**

Table of Contents

City Manager Letter	3
Health	4
Economic Development	5
MWO	7
Public Safety	8
Development Services	10
Public Works	11
Future Projects & Planning	12



LETTER FROM THE CITY MANAGER

Friends, Colleagues and Neighbors:

As I reflect back on 2021, I am reminded of our progress and challenges. While the variant-fueled COVID-19 pandemic continued, we managed to persevere and even triumph.

We brought vaccinations to tens of thousands of Middletown residents. We finished an entire year's worth of our proactive, tax-levy-funded effort to pave more than 200 lane miles of deteriorated City streets. We created a long-needed and efficiently-designed means to replace, relocate and fully fund the construction of four new fire stations in support of our first-responders.

We also received the first half of over \$18.9 million in federal "American Rescue Plan Act" grant funding and passed a multi-year budget for its prioritized and transformative expenditure.

We saw increased revenues and modest gains to fund critically-needed staffing, and we began an exciting partnership with our friends in Warren County and the Warren County Port Authority to bring economic vibrancy and substantial private investment back to the iconic Towne Mall Galleria.

In this report, you'll find those highlights and more, capturing a reflection of the efforts by your City of Middletown team in the past year. Together, we'll keep pursuing the opportunities that move us forward.



Sincerely,

James M. "Jim" Palenick
City Manager

The City of Middletown continues work to prioritize and allocate \$18.9 million in funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

- State Route 4/Oakland revitalization
- Manchester/Snider/Swallens property redevelopment
- Vail School site redevelopment
- Towne Mall redevelopment
- Premium pay for City employees
- Transformative economic development opportunities
- Middletown Visitors Bureau assistance

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Caring for Middletown

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued throughout 2021, Middletown Health Commissioner Jackie Phillips and her team of seven employees worked hard to keep the city's nearly 51,000 residents, employees and visitors as healthy as possible.

January 2021 marked the department's first vaccine distribution with more than 2,100 doses administered to first responders in the first six weeks of the year. As eligibility and availability of the vaccine became more widespread, more than 10,300 doses were distributed through the end of the year.

And while the pandemic didn't stop, neither did the other focus areas for public health: flu season, winter storm safety, and education for the general health and wellness of our community.

Middletown is deeply grateful for the dedication, patience and resilience of our health department and all first responders who continue to serve our community despite so many challenges and ever-changing situations.

Thank you!



2021: COVID-19 BY THE NUMBERS

10,323

vaccines administered

231

vaccine clinics held

8,691

total cases of COVID-19

136

COVID-19 related deaths



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Expanding Endeavors and Regional Business Support

As businesses large and small continued to deal with pandemic-related challenges, the City of Middletown Economic Development team expanded its support for businesses of all sizes.

Middletown Small Business Alliance (MSBA) launched in August to provide resources, training and networking opportunities for small businesses. Membership is free for any business in Middletown with fewer than 35 employees. There are currently 75 members.

Sixty-one businesses in Middletown, including Phoenix Metals, Access Envelope and Magellan Aerospace, opened or expanded in 2021.



Phoenix Metals:

Phoenix Metals will complete a \$15 million expansion project, increasing the scale of a new location in MADE Industrial Park. Twenty new positions will be created within three years of completion, adding to 59 existing employees. Construction began in early 2021.

Access Envelope:

In partnership with the city's Economic Development Department, Access Envelope moved operations from outside of the city to 2931 Terry Drive in Middletown. The company produces various types of envelopes and received a \$15,000 small business grant to upgrade its facilities.

Magellan Aerospace:

Magellan Aerospace earned a \$61 million dollar missile contract with the US Navy. The company produces and develops integrated structures for aircraft exhaust systems.



Towne Mall Redevelopment Project

The City of Middletown held its inaugural Business Appreciation Breakfast and Economic Development Update in late October. At the event, City Manager Jim Palenick and Economic Development Director Chrix Xeil Lyons announced plans for Towne Mall's \$100 million redevelopment project.

The Towne Mall Redevelopment project aims to transform and maximize the mall into a community and entertainment destination. Communal areas, greenscapes and multi-purpose planning will be used to create a unique and vibrant gathering space for visitors and residents.

K-1 Speed will be a destination indoor electric go-karting track and the first piece of the Master Plan developed by RINKA. California investor and mall owner George Ragheb signed the 40-mile exclusive contract with K-1 Speed, offering residents of the region another destination to connect and have fun.

Warren County Port Authority and the City are working to bring an indoor, multi-sheet ice rink facility for youth hockey, figure skating and exhibitions. Other projected activities include a bike sharing program, performance spaces, splash pads and a walkable streetscape.

Plans for the Towne Mall redevelopment project also include a transit hub, office space, residential developments and apartments. All projects will be designed to maximize the city's economic redevelopment goals.

DESIGN DRIVERS:

1. Optimize arrival experience
2. Provide walkable destinations
3. Repurpose existing structure
4. Create outdoor gathering space
5. Mixed use neighborhood

Towne Mall by the Numbers

200

medium density residential development / apartments

37.6 miles

43 minutes to Cincinnati

25.9 miles

33 minutes to Dayton

Accessible

by **Red** and **Blue** transportation lines

Follow along with Middletown business initiatives on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter @Middletownbiz, and visit choosemiddletownOH.org for more information.

MIDDLETOWN REGIONAL AIRPORT (MWO)

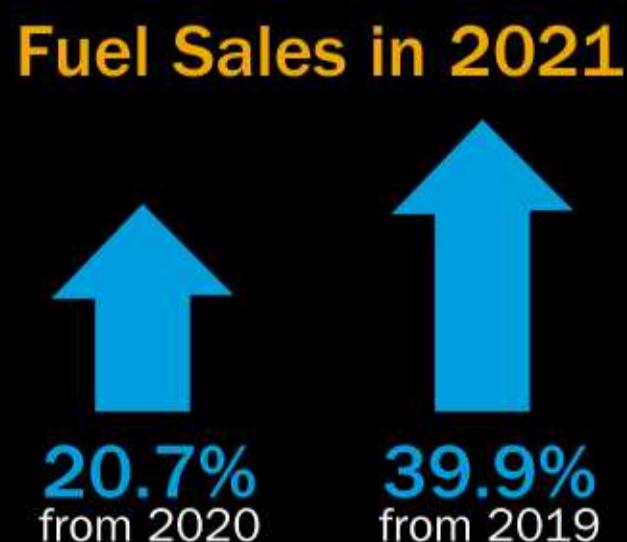
Central to the Journey

The Middletown Regional Airport/Hook Field (MWO) continued to play an important role in the future economic development of Middletown, Butler County and the surrounding communities.

MWO's existing infrastructure and space for the development of new hangars and runways, provide immense potential to support economic growth for not only Middletown, but the entire region.

2021 saw increased traffic at Hook Field, due in part to quality customer service. Quick response to inquiries and follow-through on commitments was key to growing as part of the broader aviation industry.

In 2022, a new FBO (fixed-base-operator) provider will manage fuel sales and flight line service. The airport will also welcome a new professional management team to oversee day-to-day operations and big-picture planning.



PUBLIC SAFETY (POLICE)

Serving and Protecting Middletown

In 2021, the Middletown Police continued work to improve operations while fostering a community of excellence.

The department committed to CLEE (Certified Law Enforcement Executive) Certification in 2021. CLEE is an educational program designed to help officers improve executive and leadership qualities.

Middletown expanded its Community Oriented Policing (COP) program with the addition of two officers. Begun in 2020, COP allows officers to lead community relations efforts and partner with community members to assess and solve problems.



The department also added a traffic officer in 2021 to help ensure efficient operations of traffic patterns.

The department received an especially notable commendation at the 2021 North American Police Work Dog Association Conference. Middletown police officer Dennis “Denny” Jordan and his K-9, Koda, earned the Valor Award for their efforts during an August 2020 shootout.

The duo also received numerous other recognitions for this incident.

The City of Middletown is proud of Denny and Koda for their bravery and commitment to serving the community!



PUBLIC SAFETY (FIRE)

2021 was a year of planning and looking toward the future for the Middletown Fire Department. In May 2022, voters will decide on a levy to provide funding to build four new fire stations. The existing fire stations are not up to current safety standards and unable to keep pace with the needs of our growing City.

City Council determined the optimal locations for proposed new stations based on a variety of factors, including minimizing call response times, limiting disruption to neighborhoods, ability to effectuate proper site and building design, and minimizing cost while maximizing value.

Using a similar “economies of scale” approach that the City leveraged in the success of the recent paving project, the City hopes to build four new stations with kitchen and dining facilities, a fitness center, and sleeping quarters. The amenities will prioritize the health and safety of the brave women and men who protect the city.



The City Council approved four new locations, three of which were city owned and one acquired from Atrium Medical Center. The total building costs are estimated at \$16.8 million.

The proposed levy will appear on the May 2022 ballot and if it passes, the new facilities would be completed and occupied in 2024.

To learn more, visit
MiddletownFireStations.com



STATION 81

built in 1953
68 years old

STATION 85

built in 1965
56 years old

STATION 82

built in 1977
acquired in 1997
44 years old

STATION 83 (HQ)

built in 1977
44 years old

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Building for the Future

Comprehensive Plan Update

Throughout 2021, collaborative work continued on the City's Comprehensive Plan to create an aspirational guidebook with input from the steering committee, City staff, Planning Commission, City Council, and Middletown's citizens and stakeholders.

These groups, in conjunction with the departments of Economic Development, Public Works and Public Safety, are creating a plan aimed at the thoughtful, practical implementation of infrastructure (transportation, parks, public safety stations) and land use.

The plan provides a road map for enhancing the cultural and economic vitality of our community through strong public-private partnerships and community leadership.

The Planning Commission approved the Comprehensive Plan in February 2022. Once adopted in mid-2022, the Comprehensive Plan will help guide day-to-day decision-making, short-term actions, and longer-term initiatives to achieve the community's vision.

The plan is intended to be a living document, and will be updated and amended as needed to reflect progress made, changing conditions in Middletown and the region, and the evolving needs of the community.

Department Restructuring and Addition of Code Enforcement Division

The Code Enforcement Division was relocated to Development Services in September 2021, allowing Building Inspections, Planning and Zoning, and Code Enforcement to more effectively coordinate efforts related to property maintenance. In 2022, five designated code specialists will manage five areas of the city, allowing officers to develop relationships with residents and streamline processes.

A.T.H.O.M.E. Oakland Neighborhood Infill Construction

As part of the City's ongoing revitalization efforts, we are working to partner with home builders who want to participate in our mission to build new single-family housing in Oakland Neighborhood.

The City is investing resources to create a successful, marketable Oakland neighborhood that will attract first-time homebuyers, empty nesters, and those who want to support and enjoy downtown local businesses, restaurants, and the arts.

The aim for this neighborhood is to expand its pedestrian amenities and offer high quality multi-family housing and mixed uses on the former Vail School Site. The top priority is to add owner-occupied housing in this neighborhood.



PUBLIC WORKS

Pardon Our Progress!

In November 2020, the citizens of Middletown voted to approve a 1 mil, \$31.3 million paving levy to repair deteriorating roads throughout the city. Because of historically low interest rates and a highly competitive bid process, Middletown was able to secure an additional \$4 million in paving.

With additional funding from the Ohio Department of Transportation and previously allocated City funds, more than \$51 million in paving will be completed. Through 2021, more than 80 of the anticipated 200 lane miles planned have been completed, with the remainder scheduled for completion by 2023.

In October 2021, Ohio Department of Development Director Lydia Mihalik visited the City of Middletown Water Treatment Plant to present a Water Infrastructure Grant of \$1.125 million to help build a new tank and pumping system. This investment supports the City's commitment to essential infrastructure that supports the well-being of its residents.



Additional improvements within City limits include the transformational Central Avenue Redevelopment work, which features reconstruction of 0.56 miles of Central Ave. between Canal St. and University Blvd. Work is expected to begin in early 2022 and will include:

1. Full-depth pavement replacement
2. Utility replacements/upgrades (water, sewer and storm sewer)
3. Pedestrian upgrades including new sidewalks and enhanced crossings
4. Streetscape improvements (paver amenity strip with decorative street furnishings including benches, bike racks, trash receptacles, street trees and landscape planters)
5. Traffic signal upgrades at Canal St. and Clinton St. intersections
6. Decorative LED street light upgrade

This \$6.6 million project is made possible by funding from a federal grant from the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments, as well as sewer, water and storm sewer funds. Work is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2022.

\$31.3 million

Voter-approved paving levy

\$51 million

project total in paving funds

80 lane miles

completed in 2021

200 lane miles

planned for repaving through 2023

FUTURE PROJECTS & PLANNING



Building Toward New Opportunities

In 2022, the City will continue to move forward and seize every opportunity to build upon past efforts. Massive street re-paving and reconstruction will continue, including the complete reconstruction of the downtown portion of Central Avenue.

Additional projects underway for 2022 include:

- Beginning the phased redevelopment of the State Route #4 and Oakland neighborhood, including the introduction of the first new housing units in years. Multiple other housing and mixed-use economic development projects are expected to break ground. Also along State Route #4, plans are underway to assemble, remediate and prepare 57 acres of former heavy industrial lands to a new job-producing campus for light manufacturing.

- A partnership with the Middletown City School District and the City marks a massive and joint commitment to rebuild and expand the Robert (Sonny) Hill Community Center to better serve our youth and their families. The state-of-the-art community center will provide long-needed and desired recreational, social and cultural opportunities.

The center will impact generations to come with offerings for youth services (after-school mentoring, boys and girls clubs, preschool, STEM, recreational and creative spaces), family resources (baby pantry, health clinic, community garden, housing support, advocacy and mental health providers), and career/workforce resources (entrepreneurship center, micro-credentialing, senior center, workforce training and placement).

Support for the center:*

\$4,000,000

committed from
Middletown City Schools

\$2,100,000

committed from
City of Middletown

\$350,000+

received from private
donors and businesses

*as of February 2022





City of Middletown Council

Pictured Left to Right - Zack Ferrell, Talbott Moon, Mayor Nicole Condrey, Vice Mayor Monica Nenni, Rodney Muterspaw

City Council meets on the first and third Tuesdays of each month in Council Chambers at the City building at 5:30 p.m. and streamed live via the City's YouTube channel.

Keep in touch!



Find us on social media or online at:

CityofMiddletown.org



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