



SUMMER
2024

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MIDDLETOWN, OHIO
Butler & Warren Counties

One Donham Plaza
Middletown, Ohio 45042

www.cityofmiddletown.org

Letter from the City Manager

MAKING MIDDLETOWN A BETTER PLACE



PAUL LOLLI
City Manager

Middletown,

I first want to thank you for taking the time to read our first edition of Middletown NOW. This has long been a communications initiative of the city in an effort to widen our reach in how we distribute news and information to our residents. Not everyone is on social media or reads the newspaper, so it's on us to find new and innovative ways of reaching all Middletonians, not just some.

You'll also find that this is not your typical newsletter. In addition to news and updates, there are stories of real people in our community – people who make an impactful effort every single day to make Middletown a better place. That's not always easy to do in today's world, but these people do it through their love and passion for the city we all call home.

Making Middletown a better place is not just for our residents or business owners. It's a question I challenge city staff with as they go about their week, "How can we make Middletown a better place?" It's at the heart of what I and all of city staff do when we show up every day to work for you. Everyone from our public works employees to our police officers, our firefighters to our finance department and everyone in between.

BUT HOW DO WE MAKE MIDDLETOWN A BETTER PLACE?

This summer, we have several exciting projects that have had or will have groundbreaking celebrations. Renaissance Pointe is expected to move dirt this summer and kick off a project that will completely reshape and revitalize the I-75 corridor in the city. The mixed-use development will be anchored by a new arena/event space, while also including shops, restaurants, and residential units. This will create a destination development in Middletown with lasting positive economic impacts for generations.

Also breaking ground this summer are the renovations to the Robert "Sonny" Hill Jr. Community Center. These improvements and enhancements will benefit our children through programming and activities that educate their minds and enrich their lives. This center has changed lives for generations and will continue to do so for decades to come.

We held a town hall in May to come up with solutions on making our city safer. Violence is never the answer and never the solution. I'm incredibly proud of how our community's residents, business owners, leaders, and advocates came together, driven by a love and passion for Middletown, to have an honest discussion about where our city is headed. Solutions to issues, like violence, only work when a community comes together to make it happen. I'm honored to live and work for a city that does that like Middletown.

Making Middletown a better place doesn't need to be extravagant projects, either. It could be as simple as filling a pothole on one of our roads or handing you a birth certificate after the arrival of your little one. It could be sending water to your home or planting new trees in a park to improve our urban forestry. Doing all of these things and more is what drives our city staff to wake up in the morning and come work for you.

As you read this newsletter, I hope you feel a similar sense of pride in your community. One of the many things that makes this city great is the people. And when we bring people together, we can accomplish anything – including making Middletown a better place.

See you around, Middletown!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul Lolli".

PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATES

Middletown Division of Police

City Manager Paul Lolli has appointed Lt. Malcolm Tipton and Sgt. Earl Nelson to the positions of deputy police chiefs. Lt. Tipton joined the Middletown Division of Police in 2008, was promoted to sergeant in 2017 and lieutenant in 2022. Sgt. Earl Nelson has been with the Middletown Division of Police since 2005, when he began as a patrol officer. Nelson was promoted to sergeant in 2017. Lt. Tipton and Sgt. Nelson will join the deputy chief ranks with Deputy Chief Andy Warrick, a longtime Middletown Division of Police veteran, who is currently serving as acting chief of police.

Middletown Police held its annual Casting with a Cop event on May 18, bringing out dozens of kids for a day of fishing with officers. Casting with a Cop is a special event where officers nominate a child to participate with whom they've had an interaction within the community. The goal is to teach them, bond with them, offer any guidance that they may need, and show them a great day of fun.



Lt. Malcolm Tipton



Sgt. Earl Nelson



Middletown Division of Fire

Significant progress is being made on the new Middletown Division of Fire stations across the city, most notably the new fire headquarters at the corner of Yankee Rd. and Cherry St. as well as the replacement for Station 82, located at Ohio 122 and Atrium Blvd. Those two stations are projected to be finished by the end of 2024. The replacements for Stations 81 and 85 will be completed by mid-2025.



Medical staff from Atrium Medical Center and the City of Middletown Division of Fire were the recipients of Ohio's first Pediatric Save Award, given by the Ohio Emergency Medical Services for Children (Ohio EMSC) State Partnership Program. The award, recognizing clinical excellence by EMS responders and Emergency Departments during pediatric emergencies, was presented at the inaugural Ohio EMS for Children Conference earlier this year in Columbus. This year's recipients from the City of Middletown Division of Fire and Atrium Medical Center provided critical care to twins born prematurely at home and their mother.



**NATIONAL NIGHT OUT
IS BACK AND BETTER
THAN EVER AT SMITH
PARK ON JULY 30TH
FROM 5PM TO 9PM!**

Come enjoy a night of food, fun and kid-friendly activities by the Middletown Division of Police!



PUBLIC WORKS UPDATES

MIDDLETOWN SET TO EMBARK ON URBAN FORESTRY PROJECTS

Middletown was recently awarded a \$300,000 Forestry Grant from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODRN) that will go towards planning and management of the city's urban forest, along with tree removal and planting projects of public trees. More than \$5.6 million were allocated across the State of Ohio as part of this grant program.

Middletown's proposed projects include a city-wide public tree inventory and risk assessment, and the development of an urban forestry management plan. All "on-the-ground" public tree projects proposed by the grant will take place in the 13 underserved census tracts within city limits as identified by the federal Council on Environment Quality's CEJST (Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool.) On-the-ground public tree projects include addressing high-risk trees through removal and pruning, new tree plantings for each tree removed, and pruning and training of young and mature trees.



All projects are expected to be completed by April 1, 2028.

"SAFE STREETS AND ROADS FOR ALL" GRANT TO MAKE MIDDLETOWN ROADS SAFER FOR GENERATIONS

Middletown will soon be developing a comprehensive safety action plan, thanks to a \$200,000 Safe Streets and Roads for All grant that was awarded to the City, in addition to a \$50,000 match from the City of Middletown.



The comprehensive plan will evaluate Middletown's current roads and transportation systems, including those who drive, walk, and bike in the City. An analysis

of accident information will help inform the City of trends that affect the safety of streets in Middletown. A consultant will then review the data and assess high-risk locations and specific safety needs.

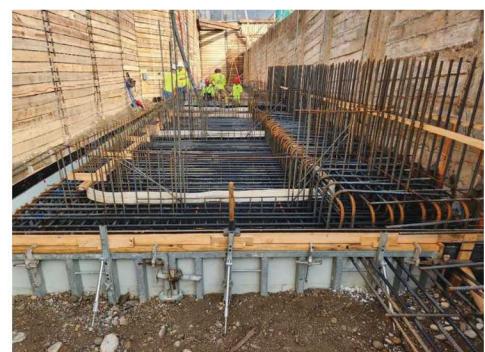
This will take a community effort. Part of developing the plan will also include input from stakeholders such as the general public, public safety, the Ohio Department of Transportation and neighborhood associations. The final plan will call for specific projects aimed at making Middletown streets safer, with a goal of zero fatalities.

PROGRESS MOVING ALONG FOR CSO BASIN PROJECT

If you've driven along N. Main Street across from the City Building, you likely noticed a large hole in the ground. That hole will soon be home to a 5.1 million gallon combined sewer overflow (CSO) basin that will help limit the combined sewer overflows into the Great Miami River during large rain or snow events.

The basin is a project set forth by the City of Middletown to achieve the city's goal of following the highest environmental standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The project is still on track for completion in 2025.

Once the basin is complete and covered, there will be landscaping done on top to form a public park for the city to enjoy recreation and community. Active recreation facilities, an event lawn, and pavilion are all being considered for the park.



Upcoming EVENTS

June & July Arts in the Parks (10am-1pm) / Rotating Parks all Summer

MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI
Cool Critters Outreach	Painting & Crafting	Yoga	Kickball & Cook Outs	Field Trips

July

- 3rd Fireworks at Smith Park
- 4th Parade (10am-Noon) / Downtown Middletown
- 8th-14th Burger Week / Restaurants Across Middletown
- 7th Farmers Market (10am-2pm) / Middletown Transit Station
- 12th Movie in the Park: Super Mario Bros. (7pm-10pm) / Goldman Park
- 19th- 20th The Ohio Balloon Challenge (Noon-10pm) / Smith Park
- 21st Farmers Market (10am-2pm) / Middletown Transit Station
- 26th Food Truck Friday: Luau Theme (5pm-9pm) / Sunset Park
- 27th Thunderfest Cruise-In (11am-4pm) / Downtown Middletown
- 30th National Night Out (5pm-9pm) / Smith Park

August

- 4th Farmers Market (10am-2pm) / Middletown Transit Station
- 9th Movie in the Park: Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (7pm-10pm) / Maple Park
- 16th Food Truck Friday: Back to School Theme (7pm-10pm)
Band: Live Past Life / Sunset Park
- 18th Farmers Market (10am-2pm) / Middletown Transit Station
- 24th Hops in the Hangar (4pm-9pm) / Middletown Airport

September

- 1st Farmers Market (10am-2pm) / Middletown Transit Station
- 14th Middletown Comic Expo / Miami University - Middletown
- 15th Farmers Market (10am-2pm) / Middletown Transit Station
- 28th Hispanic Heritage Festival (Noon-5pm) / Downtown Middletown

CITY EVENTS

Farmers Market

The Middletown Farmers Market is in full swing and is a vibrant community gathering space where local farmers, artisans, and consumers come together to celebrate fresh, seasonal, and sustainably produced foods.

This year's market offers fresh fruits, vegetables, homemade baked goods, and unique handcrafted items, all directly from the producers.

Visitors can also expect a food truck serving up coffee, ice cream and lunch!



Middletown FARMERS MARKET
EST. 2023

Sundays 10am - 2pm

June 2nd & 16th **July** 7th & 21st **August** 4th & 18th **September** 1st & 15th

55 S. Broad Street | Middletown, Ohio

Movies in the Parks

For the 8th year, Middletown's free family-friendly Movies in the Park event transforms an ordinary evening into a magical community experience, where families, friends, and neighbors gather under the stars to enjoy a film together in one of Middletown's many parks!



This outdoor event provides an accessible and inclusive entertainment option, breaking down barriers and fostering a sense of unity. The event has a savory and a sweet food truck option for purchase. In addition, the City has partnered with local churches, who are providing free snacks during the movies and fun activities before the movie starts!

Food Truck Friday

Food Truck Friday and Concert events are vibrant celebrations that bring together a foodie dream and live music, creating an unforgettable experience for attendees. These events feature a diverse array of food trucks offering a variety of cuisines, from gourmet burgers and tacos to artisanal ice creams and ethnic specialties, ensuring there's something to satisfy everyone. The concert, often showcasing local bands and musicians, enhances the festive atmosphere, turning a casual meal into a rockin' experience. Come hungry!



Economic DEVELOPMENT

MIDDLETOWN ON A ROLL WITH NEW BUSINESSES!

Several new businesses have planted their flag in Middletown with several ribbon-cuttings and grand openings happening all across town in the first half of 2024. The businesses are diverse and bring new retail and industry options to the city.

Sports, steel, comic books, and eateries are just a few of the types of businesses that residents and visitors can now find in Middletown. Many ribbon-cuttings and grand openings were hosted or attended by The City of Middletown in the first half of 2024:

Crooked Dog Comics

1373 Central Ave.

The Yard Sports Development

3711 Commerce Dr.

PrimeTime Fieldhouse

800 Second Ave.

Waffle House

3455 Commerce Dr.

Fry Steel Company

1211 Hook Dr.

Brenda's City Café

1 Donham Plaza (City Building)

Cancun Mexican Restaurant

3350 Village Dr.

Irie Smoothie Café

3429 Pendleton Cir.

Michael's Craft Store

4601 Roosevelt Blvd.

Premier Pain Treatment Institute

4701 Central Ave.

CLEVELAND-CLIFFS INVESTS IN MIDDLETOWN FOR GENERATIONS

The City of Middletown is excited to see a massive economic impact from the Cleveland-Cliffs announcement this spring regarding the \$2 billion investment into Middletown Works aimed at reducing carbon emissions.



The \$500 million grant awarded by the United States Department of Energy to Cleveland-Cliffs' Middletown Works facility will go towards a hydrogen-ready direct reduced iron plant and two electric melting furnaces that will allow the mill to maintain its existing raw steel production capacity of approximately three million net tons.

The plant will have the flexibility to be operated by natural gas, which would reduce carbon emissions by 50 percent, or a natural gas-clean Hydrogen hybrid, which would reduce carbon emissions by 90 percent.

This process will reduce steel production costs that will amount

to a \$450 million annual savings for Cleveland-Cliffs, while also positioning Middletown Works as the most advanced, lowest GHG-emitting integrated iron and steel facility in the world.

Economically, the project will secure the existing 2,500 jobs at Middletown Works while also adding several hundred new jobs to the plant. The designing and building of the state-of-the-art manufacturing facility will bring nearly 1,200 construction jobs to Middletown during the construction phase.

“IF YOU’RE LOOKING TO BE A NEIGHBOR, COME TO MIDDLETOWN”



SELF-DESCRIBED GYPSY FINDS NEW PURPOSE AFTER STROKE

By: Clayton Castle

Heather Gibson is a familiar face in the City of Middletown. The joyful smile and friendly personality radiate from the doors of Triple Moon Coffee Company as she lives her dream in her hometown. But like every story, there were bumps and bruises along the way.

Born and raised in the Amanda area of Middletown, Gibson is Middletown through-and-through. After graduating from Monroe High School, however, she left for a little bit to live a “gypsy” lifestyle, as she describes it.

“In my travels, before I came back to Middletown, I was everywhere,” Gibson recalled. “I lived in the Virgin Islands, I lived in Miami, I lived in Fort Lauderdale.”

It wasn’t long though until Gibson returned to Middletown to take care of her mother and ended up buying a house in Amanda - a community that Gibson is passionate about because “it’s home.”

“I wanted to be a part of the community and building it up and helping it into its future.” Gibson said.

Years later, she found herself as the general manager of a cabinet-making business in Miamisburg. Gibson was in the cabinet business for over 20 years before the opportunity presented itself to follow her dream of opening up a coffee shop - a dream she developed while on the road living as a gypsy.

“Everywhere I would go, I would land myself in coffee shops. I loved coffee, but I loved the environment. Coffee shops, to me, were always a sense of community.”

Fast forward to 2015. Middletown began its Downtown revitalization after the Great Recession. Businesses started taking up shop in Downtown and people with dreams began fulfilling them in Middletown. Armed with a dream and a drive, Gibson wanted in on the action.

“I had been Downtown and saw this building and it was empty but it said ‘Coming Soon,’ ” Gibson said. “But I looked in the windows and I was like ‘This is perfect, this is exactly what I wanted.’ ”

That building was the old Olde Towne Medicine and Sundries building on the corner of S. Broad St. and Central Ave. Gibson returned a month later and the ‘coming soon’ sign was no longer in the building.

“Basically, what I did was, I left and I said to the universe, to God, whatever you want to call it, and this is the truth, I said ‘You know, this is always what I’ve wanted to do and for

some reason or another, the timing has never been right. I feel like the timing now might be better, but you've got to let me know, and you know you gotta slap me in the face because I don't take subtle hints,'" Gibson recalled.

That was at 10 in the morning. By 3:30 in the afternoon, she returned home to her partner, Michelle, standing with a piece of paper in her hand. It was her retirement payment from AK Steel, who wanted Michelle to cash it out.

"Is it enough to open up a coffee shop?" Heather asked Michelle.

"It's enough to buy equipment," Michelle responded.

And thus, Triple Moon was born. With the sense of community in mind, Heather beams with pride when she looks out at all the people of the coffee shop and sees community.

"I believe that in creating something here, I did want to create a space for community and that means everyone in it," Gibson said. "No matter who they love, how they worship, what their skin color is, what their nationalities are, everybody. I wanted that and it was organic. It just happened."

Gibson recalls one of the first moments of true community at Triple Moon happened about a month into it being open. There was a church group meeting in the back room and a pagan group meeting in the front room at the same time. What started as something simple in separate rooms turned into a magical experience later in the day.

"At the end of the night, before it was all said and done, they were literally all together sitting in a big circle in the middle of the coffee shop and having discussions," Gibson recalled. "There was a guy playing guitar and they were singing songs together in a circle. That's when I knew that this is so needed in this community."

Community is at the heart of everything Heather Gibson does. And the same community in which she invests so much in is the same community that isn't afraid to rally around her. It's been nine years since that fateful day when Gibson opened the doors to Triple Moon. Despite living the dream, adversity struck in the most heinous way.

It was in July 2023 when Heather's life was turned upside down. As she was getting set for another day at the coffee shop – the place where her community rallied day in and day out – Gibson had a stroke. She was taken to the hospital and Triple Moon shut down for several days.

"It was scary, the stroke," Gibson said. "It really made me consider a lot of things. It made me consider what I was doing, what I was not doing, what I was passionate about, what I was putting on the back burner."

Heather was paralyzed and unable to speak for a short time. She had, and continues to have, weakness in her right arm. But trust in her team allowed Triple Moon to reopen – even if their physical and spiritual leader wasn't there.

"They picked up that spoon and ran with it," Gibson said. "I know for a fact how fortunate I am that I have a team that was able to continue Triple Moon, to continue the

philosophy, and continue the great vibes, the great coffee, and the community."

It was the same community that visits her coffee shop that rallied around her in the wake of the stroke. Gibson says she was humbled by all of the love and support in the months since. And it's that community that she continues to fight for and advocate for – despite the stroke.

While she may not be fully recovered yet or working behind the bar at Triple Moon, Gibson is continuing her advocacy for the Amanda area as a representative on a sewer/septic system task force created by the City of Middletown to find solutions for the aging infrastructure in the area. She speaks strongly in meetings and isn't afraid of voicing her opinion and fighting for the residents – her neighbors.

"Amanda is where I grew up. It finally feels like an opportunity to really have people hear what we have to say," Gibson says of the task force. "I love that people are coming together now and actually having hard discussions about that community."



Gibson speaks passionately when she talks about Amanda. She and her neighbors are what she calls "front porch people."

"We watch out for each other," Gibson says. "Everyone keeps their porch lights on. If someone has messed around, you better believe that someone will call here (to Triple Moon) looking for me because someone might be at my house that they don't know."

It's another kind of community that Gibson takes pride in – the generational families that call Amanda home.

"You've got people who are there and it's a passion," Gibson says. "People are passionate about that community."

Community. That's what Heather Gibson is all about. It's the diverse community that has kept her in Middletown and drives her advocacy for the city she calls home – a home that is continuing to grow and revitalize.

"Come grow with us," Gibson said. "If you're looking to become a neighbor, come to Middletown."

HEALTH MINUTE

By: Jackie Phillips Carter, Middletown Health Commissioner

IT'S SUMMERTIME, TIME TO GET MOVING OUTSIDE!

Let's talk health! All parts of health!

The health of an individual is based on mental, physical, spiritual, financial and more. Regular physical activity helps improve your overall health, fitness, and quality of life. It also helps reduce your risk of chronic conditions like **obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, many types of cancer, depression and anxiety, and dementia**.

The majority of our healthy lifestyle tips can start with one simple step... **Get up, get out and get going!**

Most of our waking hours are spent inside with artificial lighting conditions and reduced sunlight exposure. This lifestyle disconnects us from our circadian rhythms and leads to a decline in mood and poor sleep quality.

A study of over 500,000 people showed that each additional hour spent outdoors significantly lowered odds of becoming depressed. Greater sunshine exposure each day also reduced antidepressant usage, greater happiness and lower neuroticism. It also increases Vitamin D.

Vitamin D is called the "sunshine vitamin." Vitamin D is made in the skin when it's exposed to sunlight. Sun exposure is by far the best way to boost vitamin D levels, particularly because very few foods contain significant amounts.

When your skin is exposed to sunlight, it makes Vitamin D from cholesterol. The sun's ultraviolet B (UVB) rays hit cholesterol in the skin cells, providing the energy for Vitamin D synthesis to occur. Vitamin D instructs the cells in your gut to absorb calcium and phosphorus — two minerals

that are essential for maintaining strong and healthy bones.

Vitamin D has many roles in the body and is essential for optimal health. Low vitamin D levels have been linked to serious health consequences, including: osteoporosis, cancer, depression, muscle weakness, and death.

It's important to note that the sun's UVB rays cannot penetrate through windows. So, people who work next to sunny windows are still prone to Vitamin D deficiency.

And since it's the summer, don't forget sunscreen! The importance of sunscreen includes:

- Protection against harmful UV rays: Sunscreen helps prevent sunburns, skin irritation, and skin damage caused by UV radiation.
- Reduced risk of skin cancer: Consistent use of sunscreen lowers the risk of developing cancerous cells.
- Prevention of premature signs of aging: Sunscreen helps prevent wrinkles, hyperpigmentation, and dark spots.
- Limit time in the sun, especially between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when the sun's rays are most intense.
- Wear clothing to cover skin exposed to the sun, such as long-sleeved shirts, pants, sunglasses, and broad-brimmed hats.
- Use broad spectrum sunscreens with SPF values of 15 or higher regularly and as directed.
- Reapply sunscreen at least every two hours, and more often if you're sweating or swimming.

Finally, it's important to **hydrate, hydrate, hydrate!** The best rule of thumb is when you exercise, drink to thirst and hydrate your body with plain water and, as needed, a sports beverage.

Happy Summer and Happy Moving!

CITY COUNCIL

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Vice Mayor	Zack Ferrell
Councilmember	Paul Horn
Councilmember	Steve West
Councilmember	Jennifer Carter

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Asst. City Manager	Ashley Combs
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Systems Director	Troy Anderton
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CITY OF MIDDLETOWN SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES

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