



Cultivating Middlebury

A PROFILE OF OUR COMMUNITY TODAY

As a community, we have been known as “makers”, ones who thrive on the entrepreneurial spirit to cultivate ideas and then turn those ideas into reality. This spirit is exhibited through a wide diversity of; Amish businesses, Town Center merchants, and multi-national manufacturers. As a community, we have a strong sense of belonging, pride, family values, and a commitment to excellence in education. The planning process is meant to build upon these strengths. To understand where we are going, it is important to understand where we are at. The community profile outlines where Middlebury is today. It will highlight the strengths, opportunities, and challenges in various key components, or focus areas, of the community. It is organized by the following six Focus Areas:

1. **Town Center**
2. **Land Use and Development**
3. **Transportation and Infrastructure**
4. **Parks, Trails, and Community Enhancements**
5. **Marketing and Communications**
6. **Education**

The origin of these Focus Areas came through the development of the 2011 Comprehensive Strategic Plan and was deemed essential to remain for the organization of this Middlebury 2030 Comprehensive Plan. Prior to the kickoff of this Plan, it was expressed by the Middlebury Town Manager and community leaders involved in the development of the 2011 Strategic Plan to organize these six Focus Areas into individual “Focus Groups” with representation from field professionals, Town Department Superintendents, Town Council members, business leaders, and community organization leaders who were deemed as experts and individuals with an invested history in one or more of these Focus Areas.

The desire and intent for this organizational structure of Focus Groups were to guide and advise the Steering Committee and the Town of Middlebury on what is working well in these Focus Areas and the major challenges and shortcomings the Town should address to enhance Middlebury’s quality of life and vibrancy. The identification of the successes, needs, and challenges from experts within the Focus Areas came from a series of Focus Group Workshops and individual Group meetings and through this method, provided greater insight and guidance in the creation of an actionable plan with priority transformative strategies (identified in the next two sections of this Plan) that will enhance Middlebury’s quality of life, the vibrancy of underutilized properties, resiliency in the local economy, and communication amongst community stakeholders and organizations. This will better prepare and guide the Town through future growth and development to ensure community and economic development initiatives are reflective of the community’s vision and values.

The formation of the Focus Groups can also streamline the implementation efforts by alleviating the pressure on the Town of Middlebury from being the sole responsible entity and make an immediate progression on building the vision into reality in a shorter timeframe with multiple Focus Groups working simultaneously

to effectively manage and implement their set of transformative strategies. Outlined on the subsequent pages are the assets, the aspects and features that have greater potential to be refined and enhanced, and the major challenges related to the six Focus Areas.



TOWN CENTER

Middlebury's Town Center has been a long-standing community asset as being one of the first areas platted in the incorporation of the town limits. The Town Center serves as Middlebury's downtown and represents a mixture of development patterns and uses with Main Street/SR 13 and Warren Street serving as the main intersection. The scale of buildings within the four blocks of the main intersection range from single story to three-story buildings. The uses that are northbound of the intersection are an auto service station and a gas station/convenience store. The southbound uses range from dining, shopping, a bank, and professional offices. Radiating from the four blocks are single-family homes, religious institutions, the Middlebury Township Fire Department, Middlebury Parks, Middlebury Community Public Library, Middlebury Community Historical Museum, and other commercial businesses. The Town Center has the greatest potential to create a unique identity and sense of place to truly offer a vibrant, walkable live-work environment with a denser development pattern to integrate a mixture of housing choices and local businesses that can appeal to many new individuals, families, entrepreneurs, local artisans, and makers.



ASSETS

- Successful local businesses from entrepreneurship spirit
- Strong leadership from the Chamber of Commerce and business owners
- Presence of community facilities such as public parks, public library, and Historical Museum
- Middlebury's section of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail is located on the edge of the Town Center and provides a connection for users to the Town Center
- The Town Center parks serves as the gathering hub for community events and festivals



OPPORTUNITIES

- A strategy from the 2011 Comprehensive Strategic Plan was to develop a branding initiative with input from the Middlebury community; this created a new Town logo and tagline, and a signage and wayfinding plan
- Several properties have been identified for infill redevelopment and could be developed with a mixture of denser housing choices and local businesses
- The Town Center has generated momentum following the adoption of the 2011 Comprehensive Strategic Plan by creating stakeholder Focus Groups to guide improvement efforts and development recommendations, and the Town would like to see redevelopment efforts first be focused in the Town Center to frame its identity and enhance its vibrancy
- Coordination with INDOT to capitalize on the planned infrastructure projects to improve underground utilities, the flow of traffic on SR 13/Main Street, and continuing the enhancement of the Main Street streetscape



CHALLENGES

- Lack of a shared vision or identity for the Town Center
- Need for additional local dining and shopping opportunities
- Need to evaluate the parking conditions and utilization in the Town Center to determine parking deficiencies and appropriate strategies to enhance the parking system
- Retention of local businesses
- Traffic congestion and heavy truck traffic on SR 13 makes crossing Main Street difficult, unsafe for pedestrians, and an unacceptable level of noise
- Financial commitments to upgrade aging commercial buildings and homes

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT



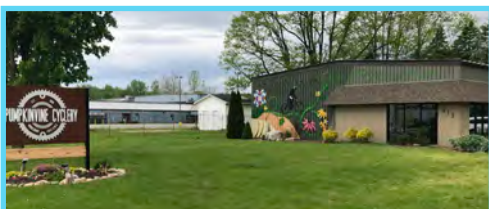
The Land Use & Development focus area represents Middlebury's built environment, its residential communities, and the local economy - the major employers, economic partnerships, and economic development. This focus area is seen by community leaders and Town officials as a major anchor for Middlebury's prosperity and resiliency to hardships. It is reflective of Middlebury's identity and roots of being known as a "Makers" community with the entrepreneurial spirit that accelerated and drove the initial growth of the community. Middlebury is home to several successful entrepreneurs who took their dreams of one day owning their own company to make a difference in their world and community they lived in.

With leading RV manufacturers in the world like Jayco and Coachmen, Middlebury has been a welcoming and attractive place to "do business." Supporting the local economy are the citizens of Middlebury who occupy the various residential communities. Middlebury's residential communities consist of the original-older homes in the Town Center with many subdivisions outlining the Town Center and employment areas. The types of homes are primarily single-family detached homes with several multi-family complexes.



ASSETS

- The long-standing success of major employers like Jayco, Coachmen, Lozier Store Fixtures, Das Dutchman Essenhaus, and entrepreneurs supports a strong tax base and opportunities for capital investments
- Middlebury has a history of being a Makers Community with a strong entrepreneurial spirit
- Middlebury's high-quality public green spaces, trail network, and Middlebury Community Schools appeals to new families and businesses





OPPORTUNITIES

- Elkhart County is working on improving its broadband infrastructure to install dark fiber along major corridors to better serve its communities like the Town of Middlebury and increase private investment for economic growth
- The Town is planning to extend public utilities on the west side of Town along US 20 and can provide opportunities for new commercial development
- Coordination with INDOT to capitalize on the planned infrastructure projects to improve underground utilities and the flow of traffic on SR 13/Main Street
- Several properties in key areas like the Town Center and employment centers may provide opportunities for redevelopment for new housing and jobs
- The Town has a local Chamber of Commerce and has discussed of also creating a Merchant’s Association to increase the services and accommodations for local businesses and entrepreneurs
- Strong momentum to implement the Elkhart County Vibrant Communities Action Agenda



CHALLENGES

- Lack of communication of the Town’s vision to key stakeholders and Town Boards and planning needs not to restrict to only the town limits
- Need for a plan of action to properly guide extensions of the municipal boundaries and public infrastructure systems to accommodate future economic development opportunities
- Need to preserve Middlebury’s sense of place and small-town values while allowing modest and sustainable future growth
- Need to ensure major centers of the Town are connected through proper transitions in land uses, the character of development patterns, and attractive streetscapes
- The Town’s major industry sector focuses heavily on manufacturing and needs to encourage diversifying to include additional sectors to broaden its job market and remain strong through economic crises
- Ensure major employers and local businesses are retained and continue to do business in Middlebury
- Limited spaces for retail businesses in the Town Center, at gateways, and along major corridors
- Need to attract an anchor grocery store and expand its housing choices to include affordable options and multi-family units
- Encourage property owners to develop a sense of community pride and ownership to maintain their properties to enhance the appeal of the community’s image
- Financial commitments to upgrade aging commercial buildings and homes



TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

The Transportation & Infrastructure focus area details the backbone structure that supports the movement of the community and livability. Middlebury has major transportation routes, US 20, SR 13, and the Indiana Tollroad that have served as catalysts for economic development for private investors-businesses and entrepreneurs to conveniently locate in the movement of their goods and services. These routes also make way for Middlebury's tourism for visitors

to stop in the community to dine at the popular Das Dutchmen Essenhaus, shop at a downtown retail store, and to enjoy its high-quality parks and multi-use trails. This focus area also reflects the Town's public services with high-quality infrastructure systems that provide the community with quality drinking water, sanitary sewers, well-maintained streets, sidewalks, and trails. These infrastructure systems also support community and economic growth to attract new individuals, families, and businesses to call Middlebury home and retention as well.



ASSETS

- The Trails of Middlebury multi-use trail network adds to the community's attractiveness and quality of life
- High-quality services from Town Departments like Public Works, Streets, Water, Wastewater, Police and Fire



OPPORTUNITIES

- Major transportation routes of US 20 and SR 13 provide economic development opportunities
- Strong partnerships with regional and state entities to capitalize on planned transportation and infrastructure projects like the installation of the dark fiber broadband infrastructure, upgrading the Town's public utilities, and road reconstruction projects of US 20 and SR 13
- INDOT's Community Crossings Program provides tremendous opportunities to properly maintain local streets and improve road conditions, where needed





CHALLENGES

- Extensive upgrades are needed for the Town's water and wastewater infrastructure systems
- Ensure Police and Fire have adequate equipment and personnel to retain its high-quality community protection services and adequately respond to emergency situations
- Need for a more centralized location of the Town Hall and Police station as they feel disconnected from the Town Center
- Coordinate proper traffic flow during road reconstruction projects
- Key intersections in the Town Center and along SR 13 need to improve existing pedestrian crossings with high-visible marked crossings and add high-visible mid-block crossings associated with the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail
- Traffic congestion and heavy truck route on SR 13 makes crossing Main Street difficult and unsafe for pedestrians
- The need to add Amish buggy and bicycle lanes in the Town Center



PARKS, TRAILS, AND COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENTS

Middlebury's quality of life amenities including parks, trails, community library, community historical museum, tree canopy and entertaining community events create the memorable attributes that make the Middlebury community special. These are significant contributors to the economic development of the community by retaining residents and businesses as well as drawing tourism, new residents and new businesses.



The Middlebury Community Library is a cornerstone of the community giving people the opportunity to find jobs, explore medical research, experience new ideas, and get lost in wonderful stories, while at the same time providing a sense of place for gathering. The library is supported in many ways by the Friends of the Middlebury Public Library.

The Middlebury Community Historical Museum collects, preserves, and presents Middlebury's history for the education and enjoyment of present and future generations. The museum is a wonderful place for people of all ages providing both fun and education.

There are numerous events throughout the year in our community appealing to residents and visitors. The Then and Now Committee sponsors educational events such as the Literary Carousel and fun times like the annual Pumpkin Race. The Park Department's annual Riverfest celebration recognizes the importance of fresh water in our community. Parks Summer Fun program is a tradition in Middlebury for children 12



years and younger. Both the Museum and Library host events for people of all ages. The Town's Summer and Fall Festivals bring the community together with fun and entertainment that sees thousands of residents and visitors. These events are an opportunity for people from all walks of life to gather providing opportunities for participation, volunteering, and building a sense of belonging.

The Tree Board plays an important role in preserving and improving our tree canopy and planting trees throughout town at the annual Arbor Day celebration.



The Middlebury Park and Recreation Department and Board provide 10 quality parks and multi-use trails plus facilities for recreation, organized sports, and entertainment. Parks intend to preserve, protect and promote the natural environment through responsible stewardship of natural and economic resources. The resources of the department are enhanced by an active Friends of the Middlebury Parks organization.



The Trails of Middlebury is a multi-use trail system whose backbone is the Middlebury section of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail connecting Middlebury to Goshen and Shippshewana. It is the responsibility of the Park Department to maintain and improve the Town's section of this trail. The Pumpkinvine Nature Trail is a nationally recognized regional trail that attracts thousands of users annually from all over the nation. Two other trails; the Wayne Street and Ridge Run Trails help connect trails to our school campus, Das Dutchman Essenhaus, Town Center as well as many of our communities and churches. Woodland walking trails in Riverbend and Olde Mill Parks provide access into nature with boardwalks allowing visitors to get into the woods and wetlands.



A short section of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail is designated as the "Learning Corridor". This section is from the Little Elkhart River to the location of the former Middlebury Railroad Station. It includes several historical interruptive signs, the museum, several gardens including the annual Quilt Garden and the Krider World's Fair Garden.

Krider World's Fair Garden is a historical, botanical garden that began as a display garden for Krider Nurseries. At the 1933-1934 Chicago World's Fair and because of this exhibit; a mail order nursery business took root and prospered through the middle of the 20th Century. It was through mail order that the Krider Nurseries grew and offered both to American and to overseas customers' botanical wonders such as the thorn-less rose known as the Festival Rose. The Gardens was given to the town by the Krider and Wesdorp families, and has been constantly improved keeping the character of the garden as designed in the 1930's. It a national destination for many visitors and the crown jewel of our park system.



ASSETS

- The most important asset are the people supporting parks, trails and community enhancements. The majority of these being volunteers giving thousands hours of their time and thousands of dollars in donations.
- Working committees, such as Park's, Riverfest, and Landscaping committees specialize in specific projects. This multiplies the Park Department's effectiveness and reach by approximately ten fold.
- The Friends of the Parks and Friends of the Middlebury Community Library include approximately 200 individuals and businesses.
- Established volunteer boards direct these organizations giving their asset of diverse experiences and skills.
- The Park Department is capable of and has been successful securing grants, and partnering with the Friends of the Parks organization to procure financing has multiplied our available assets.
- High quality services provided by the staff of the Park Department and Community Library.
- The support of the people who came before us that had the commitment to provide for facilities like the library and museum, plus setting aside the property for future development of park land.
- State recognized destinations like the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail and Krider World's Fair Gardens.
- Park Department communications directed by a board member get the parks message to the community through the monthly inMiddlebury magazine and news releases.
- The Park Master Plan updated every five years details plans to direct our assets to complete objectives. This plan was updated with over 325 individuals providing input and support in early 2020.
- Presence of a local Arts Council to incorporate public art in public parks and along the trails adding to Middlebury's uniqueness and attractiveness





OPPORTUNITIES

- The Pumpkinvine Nature Trail and Krider World’s Fair Gardens are nationally recognized that attracts thousands of users and visitors annually and from all over the nation, adding to Middlebury’s tourism
- The Pumpkinvine Nature Trail provides off-road access to regional communities like the City of Goshen and the Town of Shipshewana, making it possible for individuals to safely commute to work by bicycle
- Krider World’s Fair Gardens provides a unique setting to host wedding ceremonies, high school Prom photos, and other entertainment gathering occasions
- Strong community and Town Government support to invest in developing the Trails of Middlebury and for the operations of the Park Department
- Strong community partnerships between the Town, community organizations, and committees
- Expand the Town’s Parks Department environmental education programs
- Middlebury’s Tree City designation expands opportunities to apply for grants and enhance the value of its urban forestry
- The appropriate recognition of volunteers
- The support from the Town, Boards, and staff for the implementation of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan



CHALLENGES

- Ensuring the long-term financial support to implement the Parks Master Plan and proper maintenance of Middlebury’s high-quality parks, trails, and recreational amenities
- Acquiring additional funding sources to complete the Trails of Middlebury
- There are several residential areas in Middlebury that do not have a neighborhood-scale park or access via an off-road trail to Middlebury Parks and the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail
- Ensuring proper communication and awareness of the Park Department’s sustainable and environmental initiatives, and land preservation efforts



MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

The Marketing & Communications focus area represents Middlebury's cultural and tourism initiatives and support to its local businesses and entrepreneurs to excel, thrive, and accelerate business growth and productivity. Middlebury's Chamber of Commerce is a great asset to its business community and support for entrepreneurs to start-up their businesses. This focus area is also reflective of the Town's ability and initiatives to advertise (market and communicate) and showcase the uniqueness of Middlebury's quality of life and the various high-quality amenities Middlebury has to offer to attract new residents, visitors, and businesses to the community. Local artisans and crafters also have opportunities to showcase their skills and workmanship with Middlebury having a local Arts Council.



ASSETS

- Presence of a local Arts Council and the Middlebury Chamber of Commerce
- The long-standing success of major employers like Jayco, Coachmen, and the Das Dutchman Essenhaus, and entrepreneurs supports a strong tax base and opportunities for capital investments
- Middlebury has a history of being a Makers Community with a strong entrepreneurial spirit
- Middlebury's high-quality public parks, multi-use trail network, and Middlebury Community Schools appeals to new families and businesses
- High-quality services from Town Departments like Public Works, Streets, Water, Wastewater, Police and Fire



OPPORTUNITIES

- Middlebury has a local Art Council that is pursuing to become a designated 501(c)(3) non-profit organization
- More younger families are moving to the Middlebury community to enroll their children into Middlebury Community Schools
- Strong support for sustainable agriculture practices and agricultural community



CHALLENGES

- Expanding and encouraging volunteerism from locals and youth to feel “connected” to their community and develop a sense of community pride
- A need to have a cohesive branding strategy and marketing package to communicate Middlebury is a business-friendly community and enhance the appeal from the virtual - online - front door perspective
- Limited presence and proper utilization of social media as a marketing tool
- A lack of a centralized community calendar to properly organize and communicate details of festivals and events
- Limited staff for the Middlebury Chamber of Commerce
- Lack of a centralized tourism department to adequately manage marketing and tourism efforts
- Financial commitments to upgrade aging commercial buildings and homes
- A need to encourage more community involvement and an organized volunteer database



EDUCATION

The Education focus area represents another one of Middlebury’s appealing assets, Middlebury Community Schools. For any size community - urban or rural - one of the most attractive and anchoring assets a community must have are progressive quality schools. Middlebury Community Schools, along with the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, are the top-rated aspects that draw new families and businesses to Middlebury. Middlebury is seeing growth in population and school enrollment as more families are relocating to the community to be within the Middlebury Community School district. Additionally, school enrollment is increasing as more students are transferring from other school districts in Elkhart County. Middlebury Community Schools excels in preparing students for college and entering the workforce, academically and socially. Northridge High School provides many opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy spectating a range of sporting events and live performances including the highly successful and nationally acclaimed Northridge Northern Lights.





ASSETS

- Northridge High School adds to Middlebury’s quality of life by offering residents and visitors the opportunity to enjoy sporting events and live performances from the premier show choir and nationally acclaimed Northern Lights
- Middlebury Community Schools is a top-rated public school system that does well preparing its students for college and entering the workforce
- Middlebury’s high-quality public parks, multi-use trail network, and Middlebury Community Schools appeals to new families and businesses



OPPORTUNITIES

- More families are moving to Middlebury and enrolling their children into Middlebury Community Schools



- Northridge High School offers certification classes for adults and students in advanced manufacturing and CPT
- Northridge High School offers students apprenticeship and internship opportunities to gain early experience in careers of their interests
- The Middlebury Community School Administration is exploring ways to establish a mentoring program, known as the Adults Reaching Middlebury Students (ARMS) to help all types of students excel academically and socially and suicide prevention
- Strong partnerships with the Horizon Education Alliance and Ivy Tech Community College



CHALLENGES

- The Town needs to expand its housing options and include affordable housing to help younger families who need financial assistance and want to locate and enroll their children into Middlebury Community Schools



- Encourage more local businesses to participate in Northridge High School’s apprenticeship and internship program
- Need for individuals to volunteer as a mentor to support the ARMS mentorship program
- Need for the Middlebury Community School Administration to increase community awareness and advertisement of the various education and training programs