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Issue 127/September 2022

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Middleton Review

Magister factotum: George Zens

Mailing address: P.O. Box 620644

Middleton, WI 53562-0644

Contact: George Zens

(608) 516-4464

middletonreview@gmail.com

World Headquarters: 3710 Marigold Circle, Middleton

(by appointment only - preferably not, though)

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THE MONTH IN REVIEW

City referendum; ‘tactical urbanism’; creek corridor

By GEORGE ZENS

City referendum: The fruits of dithering

With 4 votes to 3, the Middleton city council decided, on August 2, to ask voters to approve exceeding the property-tax levy cap by \$770,000 through a November 9 referendum. Voted in favor: Kathy Olson (district 1), Lisa Janairo (district 6), Dan Ramsey (district 7) and Randall Crow (district 8). Voted against: Katy Nelson (district 3), Emily Kuhn (district 4) and Luke Fuszard (district 5). Kendra Wochos (district 2) was absent. The three who voted against the motion did so not because they were against a referendum, but because they wanted to ask for more money, namely \$1 million. A motion to hire a public relations firm to help convince voters to vote ‘yes’ on the referendum question was approved unanimously.

The votes were preceded by a discussion that illustrated some of the defining characteristics of Middleton city councils past and present: delaying the inevitable, abdicating on tough decisions, being penny-wise and pound-foolish. It also did not help matters that city staff threw a wrench into the operation by changing the focus of the referendum.

The referendum issue has been a topic of discussion in city hall for several years, including at city council level. Finance director Bill Burns has issued regular warnings about a looming shortfall in the general fund (from which operating costs are paid), forcing the city to either cut costs or increase revenues (or both). While the property tax levy does go up every year, the rate of these yearly increases is limited by state law to the increase in ‘net new construction’, with - and city officials can’t stress this enough - no adjustment for inflation. The city council’s practice has traditionally been to muddle through with one-time stop-gaps and other temporary measures (the city’s finance department is actually quite ingenious at finding those), and while the possibility of a levy-cap referendum cropped up regularly at budget time, and council members just as regularly acknowledged the need for more city staff, and praised city staff for all its hard work, and pledged all their support for city staff, they lacked the courage of their public convictions, and their support routinely stopped just short of actual substantive and sustainable help.

This tradition of dithering and nail-biting and indecision is in marked contrast to the school board, which is quite shameless in asking taxpayers for more money, and which, in the best tradition of its financial profligacy, will not only be asking taxpayers in November for a whopping extra \$25 million to cover operating expenses, but is apparently gearing up for

another referendum after that, maybe as early as April of next year.

The referendum discussions in city hall regularly centered around the need for more staff, especially police officers, and police chief Troy Hellenbrand warned the council - again - that without more officers, his department would have to start cutting back on community engagement and on responding to service calls. According to him, the number of officers has not kept pace with the increase in population, and, at 1.7 per 1000, Middleton currently has the lowest ratio of police officers to residents in recent memory, significantly below the national average of 2.4 per 1000.

Previous discussions therefore revolved mostly about how many police officers and/or dispatchers should be added to the department, and which other departments should also get additional staff (the parks department and the public works department cropped up regularly, as did, much more recently, the need for a communications specialist).

City staff, however, abruptly changed the focus of these discussions with the three referendum-scenario proposals it submitted to the council on August 2. At the center now was not the need for more police officers and other staff, but for pay increases for existing employees: 4%, at a cost of \$400,000, no matter the total referendum amount. At a \$500,000 amount (the lowest scenario), that would have left just \$100,000 for more staff, or one police officer. At the approved amount of \$770,000, the pay increases are still the bulk of the extra money, and it was only at \$1 million that more money would actually have gone to increasing staffing levels than to pay raises.

Human resources manager Brian Wolhaupter justified this new approach with the difficulties the city experiences in retaining existing employees and in recruiting new ones.

The \$770,000 proposal would add two police officers, a parks crew member and a ‘communications/management analyst’. The \$1 million proposal, besides the \$400,000 for the 4% pay increase, would have added three police officers, a police dispatcher, a parks crew member, the ‘communications/management analyst’ and a part-time ‘HR [human resources] generalist’. This last position would most likely, following long-established albeit unspoken bureaucratic practice, in a year or two have been the subject of a request for an upgrade to a full-time position. The human resources manager position itself was only created a little over a year ago, and the request for the HR generalist follows the ‘universal law of public administration’: The number of administrators in a bureaucracy increases proportionally to the number of other administrators

available to administer them.

Some of the council members were visibly confused and uncomfortable with the 4% pay increase, and it took a concerted effort by Brian Wolhaupter and Bill Burns to convince them of the need for it. Although, ‘need’ is a flexible term in this context, as apart from the police department’s staffing shortage (the numbers of which are based on a 2018 outside staffing study), there seems to be a fine line between needs and wants. And although the difference between needs and wants was brought up a few times during the discussion, the council members spent most of their time trying to second-guess what amount residents would accept, instead of establishing what is really needed and taking that to the voters.

They will have an uphill battle convincing voters anyway, not only because the city referendum will compete with referendum questions from the school district (as mentioned), but also because they won’t have much time left to make their case before November 8 - and never mind the fact that many people vote early anyway.

In what amounted to a barely veiled criticism of the old council (six of whose nine members, including mayor Guridip Brar, are also on the current council), newish city administrator Brian Gadow (he started his job in May) put it bluntly when he said that in order to give a public relations firm enough time to properly inform the public and try to convince residents to vote ‘yes’, the referendum decision should have been made in March already.

Then on Tuesday, August 16, the Middleton city council unanimously adopted the official resolution (2022-40) ‘authorizing the scheduling of a referendum related to exceeding property tax levy limits’, which states in its conclusions that, one, ‘beginning in 2023 the city of Middleton may exceed its current levy limit by a total of 3.9%, resulting in a levy of \$20,551,229 for the purpose of providing additional police department, parks and communications staffing and employment cost increases, and on an ongoing basis, include the increase of \$770,000 to the city levy for each fiscal year going forward’, and, two, ‘that this resolution shall not take effect until such time as the electors of the city of Middleton approve a referendum containing the following question: “Under state law, the increase in the levy of the city of Middleton for the tax to be imposed for the next fiscal year, 2023, is limited to 2.5%, which results in a levy of \$19,781,229. Shall the city of Middleton be allowed to exceed this limit and increase the levy for the next fiscal year, 2023, for the purpose of additional police, parks, communications staffing and employment cost increases by a total of 3.9%, which results in a levy of \$20,551,229, and on an ongoing basis, include



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the increase of \$770,000 for each fiscal year going forward?" Answer 'yes' or 'no'.

At the same meeting, the council also approved spending up to \$45,000 to hire a public relations firm to convince voters to vote 'yes'. That money will come from the contingency fund, drawing it down to about \$26,000, an uncomfortably low level that should have council members and senior city staff praying that no expensive emergency will occur between now and the end of the budget year.

Meanwhile, the Dane county board, by a wide

margin, rejected a proposal by Dane county executive Joe Parisi and Dane county sheriff Kalvin Barrett to schedule a November referendum asking voters for an additional \$10 million for the chimerical Dane county jail project.

That means that city of Middleton voters will have two referendum questions on their ballots, namely the city's \$770,000 annual request and the Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District's \$24.9 million four-year one.

Zoning code: An emerging nightmare

If an early glimpse at preliminary documents is any indication, Middleton's zoning code could soon become a lot more complex and confusing.

Last year, the city decided to pay consultants Vandewalle & Associates, \$100,000 to rewrite the zoning code. There is little doubt that Middleton's zoning rules are out of date and in need of an overhaul, and the intent was to make the code more flexible, and thus allow for a greater variety of housing and mixed uses, among others. However, those who thought that 'more flexible' would mean 'simpler' will most likely be disappointed. It seems that the consultants have interpreted their brief to mean the opposite, and instead of opening up zoning to allow for more development options and flexibility, they are compartmentalizing and codifying it even more, thus making it more rigid.

Granted, only five pages have been released so far, the land-use table and the bulk dimensions table, but already the possibilities for government overreach and micro-management look staggering.

Thus the number of zoning districts will increase from 11 to 26, and the number of regulated land-uses within those districts explode correspondingly. Middleton's current zoning ordinance is 128 pages long, and, just based on the proposed number of new districts, the new version could easily weigh in at more than 300 pages when all is said and done.

What seems pretty certain already is that it is only a matter of time before the planning department will ask to hire more staff to assist the zoning administrator in administering the new code.

On August 9, the plan commission got a first look at the tables mentioned earlier, and, according to city staff, 'planning staff intend to provide project updates and opportunities for commissioner input at various plan commission meetings over the next few months, with the goal of welcoming public feedback on draft ordinance language this fall'.

NIMBYs and YIMBYs and everybody in-between should start paying attention now, because, between the zoning administrator and the building inspector, nobody in Middleton will be allowed to move a flowerpot in their yard without government approval.

'Tactical urbanism': The guerrilla warriors from the planning department

According to Wikipedia, 'tactical urbanism', also commonly referred to as 'guerrilla urbanism', 'pop-up urbanism', 'city repair', 'D.I.Y. urbanism', 'planning-by-doing', 'urban acupuncture', and 'urban prototyping', is a low-cost, temporary change to the built environment, usually in cities, intended to improve local neighborhoods and city gathering places. It is often citizen-led but can also be initiated by government entities. Community-led temporary installations are

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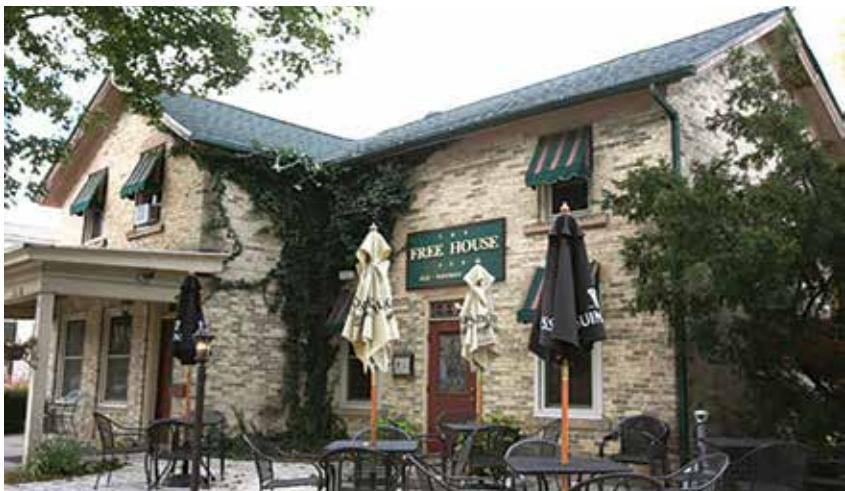
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often intended to pressure government agencies into installing a more permanent or expensive version of the improvement.

In this case, the guerrilla warriors from the city of Middleton's 'planning and community development department' have installed a traffic circle at the intersection of Elmwood Avenue and Middleton Street, and narrowed the roadway on Elmwood Avenue mid-block between Bristol Street and Park Street by 'bulbing out' the curb (both pictured on page 11). The goal, as explained on a sandwich board set up next to the traffic-calming installations, is 'to calm traffic and improve the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists'. The measures are in 'response to Elmwood Avenue residents' concerns about the way drivers are using the street'.

If successful, the temporary installations could eventually be replaced with permanent structures.

Pheasant Branch: A light at the end of the creek corridor

Four years after heavy rains and subsequent flooding rearranged streambanks and damaged trails and bridges in the Pheasant Branch Creek Corridor and Conservancy, it looks like restoration and reconstruction work might be about to begin. On August 16, the Middleton city council awarded three bids for repairs: To Drax for the Pheasant Branch Creek Corridor from the 'confluence pond' on Deming Way to Century Avenue (\$846,200), to Resource Environmental Solutions for the area north of Century Avenue (\$387,500), and to Janke General

Contractors for bridges and trails (\$2.339 million).

The process took so long because FEMA works very slowly, and the city is relying on the federal government to help fund at least part of the work, although it is still not clear how much it will contribute (reimburse, actually; the city has to advance the funds).

According to city staff, the total (current) cost for the reconstruction of the trail and bridges in the creek corridor is \$2.514 million (the construction bid mentioned above plus \$175,000 for 'construction related services', like engineering and supervising costs), and funding would come from several sources, including a \$900,000 Dane county grant, an estimated \$200,000 to \$400,000 reimbursement from FEMA and the state of Wisconsin, as well as up to \$1.4 million in general capital borrowing. TIF district #3 would provide a temporary advance of funds until the other funding sources are sorted out.

The streambank repairs will be funded through the storm water utility 'pending FEMA funding determination'.

Meanwhile, 'trail closed' signs and barriers have been set up at all trail access points between Deming Way and Parmenter Street as a prelude to the start of construction (pictured at the Parmenter Street bridge).

Century Avenue: To be or not to be safer

Motorists traveling east on Century Avenue are not allowed to make left turns onto Old Creek Road anymore. Following a recommendation by the public works committee from 2017 (!) - and they

say FEMA works slowly - the council approved the corresponding ordinance in August - five years later. The recommendation was made at the time over fears of impending traffic chaos due to the Stagecoach Trail apartment building, even though a) left turns onto Old Creek Road have nothing to do with Stagecoach, and b) traffic chaos never ensued. The latter point can obviously only be made with the benefit of hindsight, which makes it unclear why the director of public works decided to act upon the recommendation now, five years later. (It seems he had stashed it away in some drawer, and came across it during spring cleaning.)

Presumably though, left turns into the Stagecoach parking lot are still allowed, as indeed they are into all driveways along Century Avenue (unless a median makes it impossible). The new interdiction therefore introduces an element of unpredictability into the flow of traffic that, instead of increasing traffic safety, might have the opposite effect.

Some Old Creek Road residents are also not happy with the new measure. It seems that they are pretty much the only ones making those left turns from Century (it does indeed not make much sense for anyone else), and they will now be forced to make a detour. According to them, the real safety issue is with the high speeds by motorists who use Old Creek Road as a shortcut from Pheasant Branch Road to Century, and the other way around.

Trails: A five-year maintenance plan

In the past, the pedestrian, bicycle and transit committee has regularly put in budget requests to repave some of the city's trails, notably the North Fork Trail along Deming Way, and just as regularly the finance committee removed them again. This annual ritual will now be a thing of the past, as ped-bike has handed over responsibility for trail maintenance to the parks and recreation department. The latter, in consultation with the city's public works department, has decided to create a five-year trail maintenance plan, similar to the five-year street improvement plan. Trails built or last paved before 2018 will be analyzed to determine the extent of the required repaving work, while newer trails will be sealed to slow down wear and tear.

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DRIVeway THRIFTDWELLERS

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THE REMEDY

**Schedule is subject to change. Follow us on Facebook for the latest updates and any cancellations due to weather.

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Middleton Optimist Club: Boy Scout Troop 940



On Wednesday, August 17, members of Boy Scout Troop 940 spoke to the Middleton Optimist Club. The scouts received a grant from the Optimists to help support their most recent camping venture, and presented numerous highlights from their year of public service and monthly club activities. Pictured left to right are Steve Britt, Carol Maki, William Kussow, David Kussow, Jan Cermak, Ron Berman, Kristi Warriner and William Benton.

Photo courtesy of MIDDLETON OPTIMIST CLUB

Middleton-Ionic Masonic Lodge: Donation to the fire district



On Saturday, August 20, members of the Middleletion-Ionic Masonic Lodge presented the Middleton fire department with two 'fire suppression tools', compact, powerful fire extinguishers that generate an environmentally-friendly expanding aerosol mist of up to 5,300 cubic feet, thus smothering a fire in less than a minute. The donation was made possible 'through the generosity of masons throughout the state, and the Wisconsin Masonic Foundation'. Pictured (from left to right) are Cruz Gracia (District 7 Grand Lodge of Wisconsin), Ryan Mayrand (Middleton lodge), John Ertl (Middleton lodge), Sam Ferguson (Middleton lodge), Brad Subera (Middleton fire department), and Richard Nelson (Middleton lodge).

Photo by GEORGE ZENS

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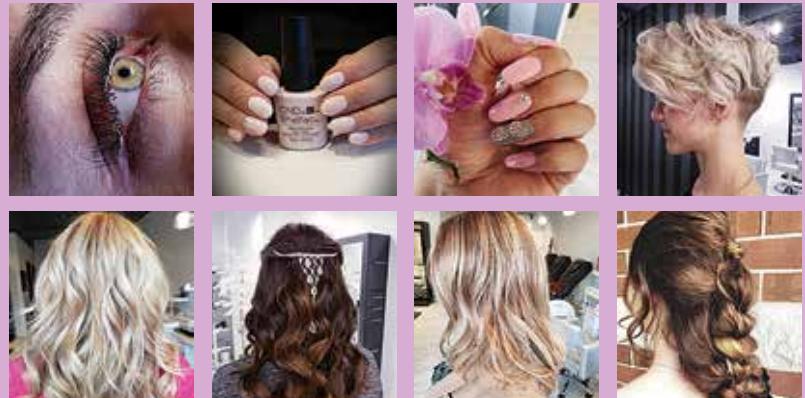
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SUSTAINABLE CITY PLAN

A blueprint for a green Middleton?

On August 16, the Middleton city council approved the 2022-2024 Sustainable City Plan, ‘a three-year plan for helping Middleton live up to the city leaders’ vision of a sustainable city (...).

This plan focuses on actions from the city’s 2021 Comprehensive Plan, with ways to measure our progress on each action.’ The final version takes into consideration

feedback from other committees, some of which questioned the financial impact of some actions required to meet the plan’s goals, as well as from (fourteen) community members.

The committee recommends that the city take a series of actions between now and the end of 2024 to help move the city and the community as a whole towards its vision of sustainability ten years from now in seven distinct

areas: energy, greenhouse gas emissions, food, land use, transportation, waste generation and management, and water. Besides the recommended actions, the plan also lists how progress towards meeting the goals will be measured.

From the Sustainable City Plan (the indicators in parentheses refer to the City Comprehensive Plan):

Actions for 2022-2024

1. Energy

Vision: Middleton is a “net zero” city that meets or exceeds the goal of obtaining 100% of its energy needs from clean renewable sources by 2050.

Actions related to energy will have the greatest direct impact on achieving the city’s goal of relying on 100% renewable energy by the year 2050. The city itself is already well on the way to meeting the targets for reducing energy use and using renewable energy sources to meet the electricity and all-energy needs for city operations.

At the end of 2021, after installing three new solar arrays on city buildings and structures, the city obtained an estimated 50% of its electricity from renewable sources. On a community-wide scale, data aren’t currently available for estimating any reduction in energy use, meeting electricity needs, or meeting all energy needs. One of our planned actions is to identify ways to get the data we need on a community level.

In 2022-2024, the following energy-related actions will help Middleton move closer to the 2030 targets for energy.

Partner with Dane County and other agencies to administer equitable energy efficiency programs for homeowners, renters, and businesses that reduce both energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions. Middleton will prioritize assistance to those who need it the most and for those who have been historically excluded from economic opportunities due to a legacy of unjust policies and racism. (Green City 1A)

In 2021, the city approved a project that will bring energy efficiency upgrades and possibly the installation of solar power arrays at a small number of existing multi-family housing developments in Middleton. This project involves a partnership with Elevate Energy and Sustain Dane working with city staff.

We’ll measure our progress by tracking the number of dwelling units converted, the estimated reduction in electricity usage, and the estimated percentage of electricity usage from renewables.

Finish converting all street lights to LED to cut current electricity used and reduce carbon emissions. (Energy Plan 2)

As recommended in Middleton’s 2020 Municipal Energy Plan, all the city-owned street lights have been converted to LEDs. While this is a great achievement, those lights make up only 20% of street lights in the city. Of the remaining 80%, either MGE or Alliant owns

the lights (25%) or maintains them (55%). In 2022-2024, we’ll negotiate with the utilities to make the switch to LEDs for these street lights.

We’ll measure our progress by tracking the number of street lights converted, the total reduction in electricity usage, and the estimated percentage of electricity usage from renewables.

Install solar arrays on Golf Course Clubhouse, Well #6, and Well #8. (Energy Plan 4)

In late 2021, Council approved installing new solar arrays at the Golf Course Clubhouse, Well #6, and Well #8. Once installed, the arrays will reduce electricity consumption at these facilities by approximately 30%. The new arrays will be installed in 2022.

We’ll measure our progress by tracking the installation of all three arrays and the total percentage of electricity usage from renewables.

Middleton will create a 20-year city fleet replacement schedule that incorporates zero emissions vehicles, and prioritizes converting police vehicles to hybrids or electric vehicles (EVs). (Green City 1D and Energy Plan 3)

In early 2021, the city had committed in the Comprehensive Plan to replace the current fleet over a 20-year period and to incorporate zero-emissions vehicles in the process. In late 2021, following up on this action and responding to input from residents, the city’s transportation department prepared a five-year rolling replacement schedule for vehicles and equipment and submitted it for review by city committees and the Common Council. In our comments on this first edition of the five-year plan, the Sustainability Committee expressed appreciation for the staff looking for ways to decarbonize the fleet, recommending EVs and hybrids for some of the replacements, and being willing to evaluate EVs and other more sustainable options as they become increasingly available on the market. We look forward to this process continuing each year and our city fleet gradually shifting away from fossil fuel-powered vehicles and equipment.

We’ll measure progress by the number of internal-combustion-engine vehicles replaced by EVs and hybrids; the number of gas-powered items of equipment replaced by electric models; and the estimated percentage of energy usage from renewables.

Implement municipal policies for data tracking, benchmarking, ensuring efficient building operations, purchasing sustainable products, and establishing new construction design guidance for municipal buildings. (Energy Plan 5)

In many ways, this is one of the most important actions for us to complete in 2022-2024. Having a system for gathering, storing, and analyzing data is necessary so that we can record current levels of energy use, compare them to our usage in 2018 (called the

Sustainable City Plan: 2022-2024

"benchmark"), and track the impact of all the energy-related actions in this plan as we make progress on them.

Middleton has an approved **Sustainable Purchasing Policy**. The section on Waste Generation and Management includes an action related to updating and reaffirming the city's commitment to sustainable purchasing, especially when spending taxpayer dollars on vehicles and equipment.

Although part of the recommendation in the Energy Plan, establishing new construction design guidance for municipal buildings will not take place in the time period covered by this edition of the Sustainable City Plan. City staff developed **Sustainability Goals for the Civic Community Campus**, which were approved in February 2020. Those goals are an excellent model for guidance for construction design of future city buildings.

We'll measure our progress by the installation of a new energy-tracking system; the percentage of data entered into the system; the posting of publicly available dashboards on the city's website; and Council's adoption of the Sustainability Goals for future municipal building construction or upgrades.

The city will support robust electric charging infrastructure in the city including requiring that new multi-family housing developments include charging stations.

(Green City 1F)

Making the transition from internal combustion-engine vehicles to electric models is already happening throughout the country. More auto manufacturers are offering EVs in response to consumer demand. Prices will gradually decrease as the technology improves and more models become available. To help move Middleton in the direction of EVs, we need to make sure we have the charging infrastructure available. As stated in the Comprehensive Plan, Middleton will partner with MGE to install charging stations to serve city fleets on city-owned property, as well as throughout the community to serve residents and visitors. Another goal is to make sure all new housing and office development projects — including those benefiting from tax-incremental financing — include charging stations for electric vehicles.

In addition to charging stations in fixed locations, we'll explore the possibility of constructing movable solar parking pads. To increase the environmental benefits of the charging stations, the city will incorporate new solar arrays and batteries into their design to increase the likelihood of vehicles being charged on solar power instead of electricity generated by fossil fuels. We'll also explore "group buys" for home charging infrastructure similar to how group buys currently make it easier and more affordable for homeowners to install solar panels.

We'll track our progress according to the number of charging stations constructed for city-owned vehicles and for community use; the number of mobile solar pads constructed; the

Sustainable City Plan: 2022-2024

total charging capacity installed for both city and general use; Council's adoption of charging infrastructure as a requirement for new buildings; and the launch of charger group buys to benefit Middleton residents.

Middleton will partner with MGE to pilot and plan for future microgrid networks that can connect to one another to reduce risk, increase resiliency, and optimize energy distribution. (Green City 1I)

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, microgrids are localized grids that can disconnect from the traditional grid to operate on their own. Microgrids allow communities to be more energy independent and withstand emergencies that cause power outages. Because they can operate even when the main grid is down, microgrids can help make communities more resilient by avoiding outages and reducing the time it takes to restore the main grid after an outage.

Microgrids also improve our ability to incorporate solar and other "distributed energy sources" into the grid. Relying on more local sources of energy is important because it reduces the amount of energy lost in transmission and distribution. This increased efficiency means less wasted energy. Microgrids are considered the future of energy distribution and are an important step toward a modern, clean energy future. To build this resiliency into our local system, Middleton will work with MGE and other partners and will apply for grants from the federal government and other sources. One project is currently underway in 2022 to create a microgrid at the Middleton Police Department by adding battery storage to the building's existing solar array.

We'll achieve progress by setting up one or more microgrids for city buildings (including the Police Department) and preparing a feasibility study for a community-scale microgrid in Middleton's industrial district.

The Sustainability Committee along with stakeholders and City elected officials will develop and adopt Net Zero Building Guidelines for new construction. (Green City 1C)

Wisconsin state law prohibits cities like Middleton from requiring buildings to exceed state building codes. We can, however, provide guidelines for energy, water, waste, and biodiversity standards we would like developers to meet on a voluntary basis. Fortunately, many developers and home builders are willing to adopt highly energy efficient designs because they save money on energy costs in the long run.

The Sustainability Committee will recommend Net Zero Building Guidelines that will serve as a roadmap for architects, developers, and businesses who are building from the ground up or doing major renovations where net zero carbon can be achieved. We'll use the Sustainability Recommendations for the proposed Community Campus plan as a starting

Sustainable City Plan: 2022-2024

point. We'll work with stakeholders from throughout the city to create a workable set of guidelines that our community can support.

We'll measure our progress by drafting and seeking Council's adoption of recommended Net Zero Building Guidelines.

Incentivize building design towards energy use targets that exceed commercial building code, and work with community stakeholders on a voluntary benchmarking and energy use reporting program. (Green City 1B)

As noted above, we can't require buildings to exceed state building codes. We can, however, encourage commercial building owners and users to conduct voluntary energy benchmarking to identify ways to improve energy efficiency, adopt energy-saving practices, and reduce costs. We can encourage benchmarking by providing financial incentives, recognizing businesses for their energy-related accomplishments, and making tax-incremental financing available only to developments that agree to conduct energy benchmarking.

Energy benchmarking will be required for city-owned buildings. In addition, the city will work with diverse stakeholder groups to draft a voluntary energy benchmarking program for commercial buildings and other government-owned buildings.

We'll measure our progress by the establishment of a benchmarking program for city-owned buildings; the development, with stakeholder involvement, of a voluntary energy benchmarking program for other buildings; Council's adoption of a policy requiring energy benchmarking for new developments that receive TIF incentives; and a reduction in energy consumed in buildings enrolled in either the city or the voluntary program.

Middleton will continue to embrace and incentivize clean and local energy from renewable sources such as wind, solar, geothermal and DERs (distributed energy resources). (Green City 1J)

Middleton has done an excellent job installing solar arrays as sources of electricity for city operations. Many residents and businesses have also been "early adopters" of solar power. To achieve our 2030 targets, though, we'll need to significantly increase the number of homes and businesses that install solar. In 2022-2024, Middleton will continue to participate in solar group buys that can greatly reduce the cost of solar panel installation for homeowners. We'll publicize these opportunities through a variety of ways, including neighbor-to-neighbor campaigns. We'll also explore options to provide financial incentives for Middleton residents who need assistance to take advantage of solar for their homes.

We'll measure our progress by the number of new or expanded arrays installed on houses and other buildings and the total kW installed.

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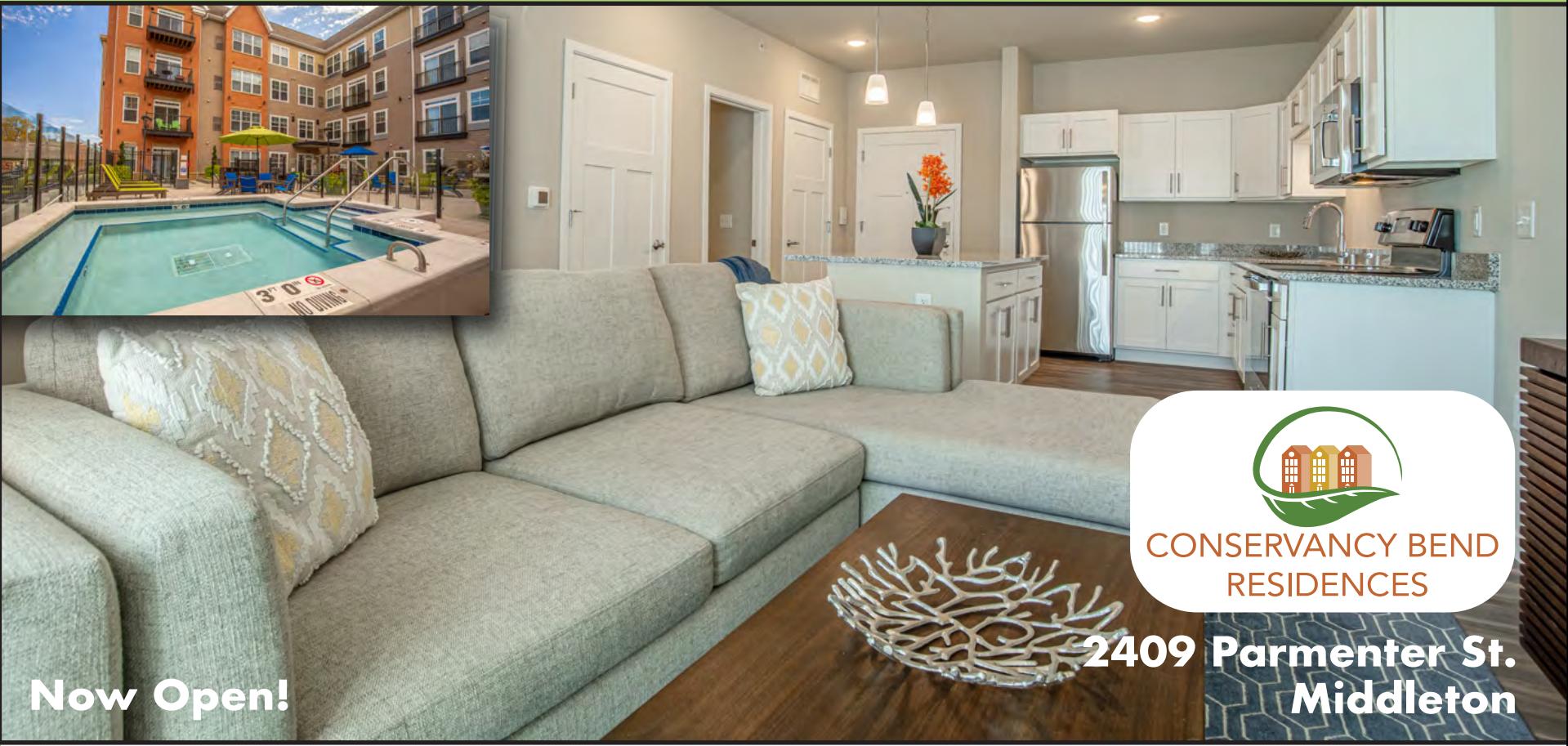
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Middleton will collaborate with Dane County to utilize Renewable Natural Gas (RNG) processed at the Dane County Landfill and eventually establish an RNG filling station in Middleton. (Green City 1G)

Dane County operates the nation's first processing facility to take methane gas from landfills, clean it, and convert it into renewable fuel to use for operating both large and small vehicles. The biogas cleaning facility, as it's called, has also given farmers an economic incentive to build new manure bio-digesters to convert the waste from dairy farms into renewable fuel. This win-win situation can reduce methane emissions, reduce the need for gasoline to run vehicles, and increase income for farmers. By reducing the amount of manure spread on land, it also protects surface water from nutrient pollution that comes from runoff into our lakes and streams.

We'll achieve progress by preparing a feasibility study for establishing at least one RNG filling station in Middleton.

2. Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions

Vision: As a responsible city on a planet where climate change imperils life as we know it, Middleton is cutting its greenhouse gas emissions citywide to meet or exceed the goal of net zero by 2050.

Our energy-related actions will go a long way toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions from city operations as well as from homes, businesses, and other buildings. Producing and using energy aren't the sources of all greenhouse gas emissions, however. This new section of the Sustainable City Plan addresses non-energy sources of greenhouse gasses.

Adopt policies and practices to 1) make the shift to alternatives to hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HFC) refrigerants, 2) avoid leaks from refrigerants, and 3) collect and properly dispose of refrigerants at end of life. ([Project Drawdown](#))

Refrigerants are used in refrigerators and air-conditioning equipment. Older types of refrigerants are harmful to the environment because these chemicals are very powerful as greenhouse gasses. Replacing these old refrigerants and improving the way we manage the ones currently in the environment will help us reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, collecting old appliances that contain refrigerants will help us reduce emissions by making sure that refrigerants are disposed of properly. As we work to enact a new city policy, we'll also explore the option of collecting appliances from residents and offering financial incentives to reduce the cost of properly disposing of these old appliances.

We'll measure our progress by Council's adoption of a policy on refrigerant management; public education activities; conducting an audit of municipal buildings to identify air conditioning systems and appliances with high global warming potential, or GWP, and recommend recapture or replacement, as appropriate; adding a section on refrigerants to the revised Sustainable Purchasing Policy; and studying the need for and feasibility of a refrigerant capture program in Middleton.

Launch and maintain a yearly Resilient Landscapes Initiative on a neighborhood scale to help residents take actionable steps in their yards and gardens that will improve biodiversity, habitat, reduced stormwater runoff, soil health, and promote a stewardship ethic throughout the city. (Green City 2F)

Making Middleton sustainable will require help from everyone — city leaders, staff, residents, businesses, industries, nonprofit groups, the faith-based community — literally everyone. The Resilient Landscapes Initiative is an opportunity for residents to take action in their own yards and on their own grounds to adopt sustainable landscaping practices.

Whether installing a rain garden or rain barrel, converting existing landscaping to native plants, replacing traditional Kentucky bluegrass lawns with low-maintenance varieties, or restoring prairie on their own lands, everyone who owns a home, rental property, or a

commercial building has a chance to participate. Doing so will shrink the city's carbon footprint by reducing the need for energy-intensive lawn and landscape maintenance, as well as by providing a "carbon sink" in the form of more deep-rooted, long-lived native plants. Other side benefits include creating habitat for birds and pollinators, reducing the use of pesticides and fertilizers, and reducing the amount of stormwater runoff that enters our streams and lakes.

As part of a larger regional effort, the Resilient Landscapes Initiative in Middleton will involve educational activities and may include incentives and recognition for adopting specific practices. One aspect of Resilient Landscapes will be "No-Mow May," first observed in Middleton in 2022 as a way to help pollinators find food in the critical early part of the growing season.

We'll measure our progress by designing and launching a Resilient Landscapes Initiative; annual observance of No-Mow May with associated educational activities; and developing a method for collecting data on participation in Resilient Landscapes and calculating impacts.

Support and maintain native plantings, restoration practices, and broaden invasive species control beyond conservancies and parks by collaborating with state and local agencies as well as private landowners. (Green City 4C)

Native plantings have the same benefits no matter where they are. Replacing traditional landscaping with native plants at the Middleton Public Library and City Hall are good examples of the type of change that could help Middleton reduce its carbon footprint if adopted in other areas.

We have an opportunity with the city's revision of the zoning ordinance to encourage and promote landscaping with native plants on private property, including residential and commercial. In addition, the city can explore ways to help residents and homeowners associations convert some or all of their traditional landscaping to lower maintenance native landscaping. The Caneel Corner Conservancy in Middleton Ridge/Misty Valley, for example, is a great example of what's possible when the city supports efforts by private landowners to "extend the conservancy." This "pocket prairie" adds beauty to the neighborhood and trail, creates habitat for birds and pollinators, helps rain and other precipitation infiltrate into the ground instead of running off, and stores carbon.

We'll measure our progress based on the area of land that is converted from traditional lawn and landscaping to native plants and no-mow varieties of grass; and the number of "pocket prairies" that the city helps private landowners create, as well as the area of land they represent.

3. Food

Vision: Middleton is a producer and consumer of foods that sustain the health of people without compromising the health of our environment.

The food we produce and consume has a major impact on our health as individuals and on the health of our environment. We recognize the importance of producing food sustainably from local sources as a way to protect the environment, support agricultural producers and the people they employ, and reduce transportation impacts. We also understand the need for all Middleton residents to have access to affordable, healthy foods. Food waste as a cause of greenhouse gas emissions is covered in the section on Waste Generation and Management.

While the Sustainability Committee will be focusing on energy-related actions in 2022-2024, we believe there would be great value in other city entities carrying out the following actions from the Comprehensive Plan:

Preserve the long-term viability of community gardening by using zoning or other regulatory tools to designate specific lands within the city for agricultural use.

(**Land Use 1G**)

Support local community and school gardens and food pantry gardens taking care to serve populations that disproportionately are affected by food insecurities.

(**Green City 8A**)

4. Land Use

Vision: Middleton's land use pattern promotes compact development, protection of natural resources, a range of housing options, mobility, and economic growth in order to maintain an exceptional quality of life.

Our green spaces are important and contribute to making Middleton a great place to live. In vision panels that took place as part of the city's strategic planning effort in 2021, many people mentioned green spaces as one of the things they value most about Middleton. Natural spaces, such as restored prairies, act as "carbon sinks" that remove carbon dioxide from the environment. It takes a long time to preserve and protect natural resources, so we need to act before land is lost.

The Sustainability Committee will not take direct action on land use in 2022-2024. Instead, we'll collaborate with and support other city committees, commissions, and boards that have jurisdiction over lands and land use in Middleton. Our priorities in 2022-2024 will be to help move the city forward on two specific actions from the Comprehensive Plan related to natural resources:

Increase connectivity between Middleton's public lands, adjacent communities, and other regional open spaces through land acquisition and/or trail easements that create green corridors. (Green City 3D**)**

Preserve the role of wetlands, prairies, savannas and woodlands as essential components of the hydrologic system and valuable wildlife habitat. Protect shoreline and floodplain areas accordingly. (Green City 6B**)**

Both actions are critical to take now while land is still available. An excellent potential opportunity to carry out both actions would be to connect the Pheasant Branch Conservancy to the Graber Pond Conservancy Area to the west. Such an expansive, long-term project would add to our city's highly valued green spaces, increase habitat for birds and pollinators, store carbon in trees and deep-rooted native plants, increase our capacity for stormwater management, and provide recreational, educational, and health and wellness opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages. It would also have the additional benefit of conserving land for possible future use as farmland.



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Sustainable City Plan: 2022-2024

5. Transportation

Vision: Middleton's transportation system is safe, reliable, convenient, affordable, efficient, and less reliant on single occupancy vehicles to reduce environmental impact, promote active lifestyles, and enhance prosperity for all people regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation.

According to the 2020 Dane County Climate Action Plan, "the transportation sector is responsible for approximately 30% of all the carbon emissions released in Dane County." We need to be able to move around, from our homes to workplaces, to visit family and friends, and attend other activities. Driving personal vehicles is the main way people get around in Middleton today. To be more sustainable and reduce our impact on the environment, we need to reduce the number of trips we make in cars that use internal-combustion engines. This means increasing our reliance on electric vehicles, public transportation, bikes, walking, and other low-carbon transportation options. It also means making an effort to plan new development so that it's easier for people to walk, bike, or use public transportation to get to work, buy groceries, and take part in other activities.

Because our focus in 2022-2024 is energy, the Sustainability Committee won't directly take any actions related to transportation as part of this plan. We will, however, lend our assistance to efforts by others — for example, the Public Works Committee and the Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transit Committee — to begin or even complete transportation-related actions identified in the Comprehensive Plan. We recommend making the following actions priorities for the city in 2022-2024:

Update the [Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan](#) to increase linkages between existing and new neighborhoods to encourage walking and biking throughout the community. ([Land Use 1F](#))

Prepare a "Vision Zero" Action Plan. ([Transportation 2A](#))

Establish or welcome shared micro mobility systems in Middleton, particularly a bike sharing system that can integrate with Madison's BCycle. ([Transportation 3D](#))

Restructure Middleton's transit service to integrate with Bus Rapid Transit. ([Transportation 4A](#))

Complete a network of bicycle lanes and paths linking all city neighborhoods to accommodate all types of bicyclists. ([Transportation 3A](#))

Promote active transportation solutions that enhance health and quality of life. ([Transportation 1E](#))

Sustainable City Plan: 2022-2024

6. Waste Generation and Management

Vision: Through incentives and policies, Middleton is reducing the generation of waste by recycling, reusing, and composting material to keep physical resources cycling within the local economy, and sustainably disposes of the waste that is generated.

Middleton generates a lot of waste. We recycle a lot of material through weekly curbside collection along with our garbage. For items that can't be recycled curbside, residents have the option of dropping off a variety of recyclables at the Middleton Recycling Center, which diverts a fair amount of what would otherwise wind up as waste. In 2022-24, we'll focus on further reducing the amount of waste that winds up being put in a landfill.

Establish a food composting pilot city-wide. ([Green City 5D](#))

Food waste is well known to be a major source of greenhouse gas emissions for several reasons. Food that is wasted and not eaten requires a lot of effort and energy to grow and transport, so all the emissions generated through that process could have been avoided. Also, food that isn't consumed produces methane when it rots. Like the chemicals in refrigerants, methane is a powerful greenhouse gas — 26 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Composting food waste at home or through weekly collections can reduce the amount of food waste entering our landfills and, as a result, the amount of methane entering the atmosphere. Collecting food waste for composting is also an option for schools, businesses, and public places.

The 2021 Comprehensive Plan includes the goal of conducting a pilot composting program for city buildings. We think we can move beyond just a pilot and go for a more ambitious goal.

We'll achieve progress by setting up composting capacity at all city buildings; completing a feasibility study for curbside composting for residents; establishing a policy to require composting in new commercial developments receiving TIF assistance; encouraging composting in existing commercial and industrial settings; and supporting efforts by MCPASD to offer composting in schools. We'll also measure the number of tons of waste collected through any program that is developed through city action, incentives, or support.

Update the city's 2017 Sustainable Purchasing Policy and work with city departments to help them follow it. ([Council Directive, December 2021](#))

In 2017, the city adopted a Sustainable Purchasing Policy to "promote the purchase of environmentally-preferable and locally-sourced products." This policy is important to help us reduce the amount of waste we generate and to make sure we're buying materials, products, and equipment that don't have a significant negative impact on the environment.

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Unfortunately, in 2021, we learned that the purchasing policy had rarely been used at all and had never been used to evaluate new vehicle purchases. Council directed us to review the policy and recommend any needed changes for making it a better policy, especially for evaluating new vehicles and equipment.

We'll measure our progress by completing our review and recommendations; Council adopting recommended changes to the purchasing policy; training for city staff on how to follow the policy; and evidence that departments followed the policy in preparing their annual budget proposals.

7. Water

Vision: *Middleton has an abundance of clean water, including surface water and groundwater resources, and supports policies to achieve regional balance between water used and water returned to the aquifer. Middleton keeps harmful substances out of all water resources and also works to minimize the impact of flooding on new and existing developments.*

A sustainable city treats its water resources like a treasure, and spends time and money to protect that treasure. Surface waters like Lake Mendota, Pheasant Branch, and our many kettle ponds are what we see, but what makes our lives and our economy possible here in Middleton is our groundwater. Middleton is a partner in the Yahara CLEAN Compact, whose plan "Renew the Blue" has 10 strategies for achieving the goals of clearer lakes, open beaches, and fewer "blooms" of toxic cyanobacteria. Achieving these goals will require investment not just in our Lake Mendota shoreline but in the entire watershed to keep excess nutrients out of surface waters.

Because this plan focuses on actions the Sustainability Committee will take in 2022-2024 to move us closer to meeting our 100% renewable energy goals, we aren't including any water-related actions in this edition of the plan. We commit to collaborating with the Water Resources Management Commission; Plan Commission; Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Commission; Stormwater Utility Board; and Conservancy Lands Committee to help Middleton follow through on our commitments under the Yahara CLEAN Compact. Some possible actions for these committees, commissions, and boards from the Comprehensive Plan include:

Revise the Zoning Ordinance and other relevant codes to promote the reduction of impervious surface areas in order to improve on-site water infiltration. ([Land Use 4B](#))

Support innovative Green Infrastructure (GI) practices in all land use decisions. ([Land Use 4C](#))

Make critical improvements to stormwater management infrastructure and mitigation practices to increase floodplain protection and avoid widespread damage in the event of extreme rain events. ([Economic Development 7D](#))

Reduce runoff and prevent flooding by maximizing upstream water infiltration and evapotranspiration during increasingly frequent large storm events. ([Green City 2B](#))

Incentivize new development to maintain 100% or more (predevelopment) rainwater runoff volume control on site. ([Green City 2C](#))



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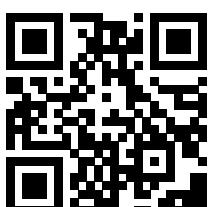
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TERRACE AVENUE PAVILION/CAPITAL BREWERY Middleton Book Fair



More than two dozen vendors who participated in the second annual Middleton Book Fair that took place on Saturday, August 13, on Terrace Avenue at Capital Brewery, and was attended by over 300 visitors. Planning is already underway for a third edition next year.



Photos by GEORGE ZENS

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National Mustard Day



With games, entertainment and tastings, people celebrated mustard, the 'greatest (condiment) of all times', during National Mustard Day that took place on Saturday, August 6, on Hubbard Avenue in Middleton.



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FIREMEN'S PARK NEIGHBORHOOD Good Neighbor Festival



With a new route for the parade on Franklin Avenue and a slightly more open layout at Firemen's Park, as well as an interdiction for politicians to participate in the parade, this year's Good Neighbor Festival (from Friday, August 26, until Sunday, August 28) saw changes that will most likely be debated for some time to come. Meanwhile, most people, participants and visitors, had fun.



Photos by GEORGE ZENS









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