



TOWN WANTS
ARPA INPUT



LOWER
AQUIDNECK
IMPROVEMENTS



CARDI'S
STEPS UP FOR
SCHOOL



DUNE
WORK
PAYS OFF

MIDDLETOWN TODAY

American Rescue Plan & Middletown

We Want To Hear Your Ideas

Do you have a great idea for how the Town of Middletown should spend its American Rescue Plan Act money?

Or how about a request for funding for an eligible project for some of the close to \$5 million federal dollars to help the community recover from the impacts of COVID-19?

Either way, the Town wants to hear from you. Starting today, the Town is accepting suggestions and applications for the money at <https://mdl.town/ARPAIdeas> online. The deadline for filing a form with the Town is Friday, Dec. 17

“It’s not every day we get about \$5 million from the federal government to use how we see fit,” Town Administrator Shawn J. Brown said. “This is an opportunity for the Town of Middletown to do something special, something that will have a lasting positive impact on the community and we want to hear what everyone has to say.”

Earlier this year, President Joe

Biden said federal dollars would be pushed down to each community across the country to assist with COVID-19 recovery. A short time later, Middletown learned it was in line for about \$4.75 million of that funding.



INPUT MATTERS

Let Middletown Know How Best To Spend Its American Rescue Plan Money

<https://mdl.town/ARPAIdeas>

Contrary to what some have said, the ARPA is not providing “free money” to use anywhere on anything.

Instead, there is a strict set of guidelines that outline what the funding can be used on. Among those include work that benefits public health, reverses negative economic impacts, helps those disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, improves infrastructure and replaces lost revenues.

should happen with the ARPA funding. Those sessions are planned for Nov. 1 and Dec. 6 at 6:30 p.m. in Town Hall, 350 East Main Road.

From there, the council is expected to submit a list of its recommended priority projects to the Planning Board for review on Jan. 3, 2022. Then, the Planning Board will check the compatibility of those recommendations with the Town’s comprehensive plan and send its results back to the council on Feb. 7, 2022.

Next, it will be up to the council to set its final list of projects to be done in Middletown using ARPA funds. The deadline to obligate the ARPA funds is Dec. 31, 2024, with all the ARPA money needing to be spent by Dec. 31, 2026.

As part of the process, the federal government will be reviewing the Town’s use of the funding to make sure there’s a full accounting.

The town administrator Brown said he was excited about the process and pleased it’s drawing so much interest

“From everything I’ve seen and heard, there’s a lot of buzz about how we’re going to use our funding and what we’re going to do,” Brown said. “This is a real opportunity for us to do something lasting for Middletown that will make a true difference in the community.

Without input from everyone, Brown said the process will not be as rich and complete as it can be. For those who don’t want to fill out an online form, use the attached document and submit it to the Finance Department at Town Hall or drop it in the “Payments” box by the entrance to the northern side of the building.



For a complete set of the guidelines, visit <https://mdl.town/ARPARules> online.

For a quick overview of the Town’s ongoing ARPA campaign, visit <https://mdl.town/ARPAVideo> online.

According to the current schedule, the plan is for the Town Council to hold two public hearings to get input from residents and others on what they think



MIDDLETOWN
Rhode Island

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

TOWN OF MIDDLETOWN

350 East Main Road, Middletown, RI 02842

(401) 842-6500 | MiddletownRI.com

September 27, 2021

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN IDEA FORM

Recently, the Town of Middletown received word we were in line to get about \$5 million in federal money to help with the recovery from COVID-19. With that in mind, we’re looking for ideas for how best to use this funding. Among the eligible projects include work to help public health, offset negative economic impacts, services to those most effected by COVID-19, infrastructure upgrades and similar efforts.

Have an idea? Fill out the application below and mail it care of the Finance Office, 350 East Main Road or drop it anytime in the “Payments” box outside Town Hall. All forms are due no later than Dec. 17, 2021. Thanks for your participation.

Name: _____ Address: _____
Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

In the space below, outline your ideas about how Middletown should use the ARPA money and how this project most benefits the Town. For more information, visit <https://mdl.town/ARPA> online.



Remaking A Neighborhood

Town Council Approves New Hotel Room Cap, Other Limits To Keep Lower Aquidneck Avenue Special

There's a new cap on the number of hotel rooms allowed in lower Aquidneck Avenue neighborhood.

Concerned about the potential overdevelopment of the beachfront area near the Newport city line, the Town Council okayed new language at a recent meeting that restricted the number of rooms to 260.

The limit was based on the number of rooms currently in the area as well as those part of pending applications before Town boards and committees. Previously, Town ordinances did not specify the number of hotel rooms allowed in the district. Nineteen short-term rental rooms in the area were removed from the equation by the council because they are permitted and overseen through a separate process.

The item was included as part of new overlay ordinances unanimously approved by the council to provide a uniform set of standards for development in the lower Aquidneck Avenue area.

"I personally don't want to see hotel after hotel after hotel," council President Paul M. Rodrigues said. "That's not what we want to see. This is made to help enhance the businesses and help bring people down there. It's unique because it's near the beaches."

The future of the area – also known as the Atlantic Beach District – has been a subject of frequent discussion for close to 20 years.

That interest spiked with the redevelopment of several properties in the zone, which had been home to beach cottages and "Mom & Pop" businesses and transformed into hotels and similar large-scale hospitality businesses.

Those moves have been applauded by some who say Middletown should do everything it reasonably can to capitalize on the area without overcommercializing it. Others respond the Town is giving the green light to too much growth in too small of an area, costing the community some charm.



Connected to this conversation is talk about burying the utility lines to improve the look and feel of the neighborhood as well as other upgrades. Those haven't gotten off the ground to date because of the cost of that work, most recently projected to cost about \$17 million to \$20 million.

Town Administrator Shawn J. Brown said local resident Melissa Welch briefed the Middletown Economic Development Advisory Committee about an alternative option available to the community. Instead of spending \$20 million or doing nothing with utilities, Welch said there were quality options available to the Town that could improve the safety, look and feel of the area without having to spend so much.

Brown said representatives with MEDAC were slated to meet this week with National Grid about the utilities issue. He expected to report back to the council on that item at the group's next meeting on Oct. 4.

The discussion about the future of the lower Aquidneck Avenue area was on full display Monday night. Some approached the council, saying more needed to be done to limit overdevelopment of the neighborhood. Others countered what the council was pushing forward could hurt their property rights and might restrict what they could do with their land in the future.

After a lengthy discussion, the council said it was clear something needed to happen and they believed the Planning Board's recommendations were the best fit. They also pledged to work on repairing the sidewalks, which were a frequent cause for concern Monday night.

Brown said the Town had about \$480,000 in money set aside to do

improvements to the lower Aquidneck Avenue area. In coming weeks, he said the Town would also be seeking funding through the state Department of Transportation and other sources.



Cardi's Steps Up For Forest Avenue School Teachers' Lounge Gets A Needed Upgrade For Free

Sometimes, you never know what's going to result from an email.

Arriving in July as the new principal of Forest Avenue School, Lisa Birkett said most of the building was in excellent shape, clean and ready for opening day on Sept. 8 -- minus one area.

She said the teachers' lounge on the second floor of the school looked dated, worn and in need of some serious TLC.

Enter Cardi's Furniture & Mattresses to the rescue. Birkett said after she emailed Cardi's through the "Donations" section of their website, the Swansea, Massachusetts furniture store got back in touch the next morning, asking how they could help. Within days, a delivery from Cardi's was on the way and the

teachers' lounge was outfitted with all new furniture -- at no cost to the school or town.

"I couldn't believe it, when they said they were going to donate everything to us," Birkett said. "I just wrote thinking maybe they could help and they were really, really great. They delivered everything and set it up and now the lounge is a much nicer, welcoming place."

Based on what she's heard, Birkett said the new furniture has brightened everyone's day. That's especially important, she said, given all the obstacles teachers are dealing with these days from COVID-19.

"I've heard from a number of teachers who said it was a nice surprise to open the year," Birkett said. "We all know that teaching is hard enough and it's important to have a nice space to take a couple minutes for yourself and we have a big 'Thank you!' to Cardi's for that."

More these days than ever before, "extras" like furniture for the teachers' lounge, field trips and even some in classroom programming aren't covered by the annual education budget anymore.

As a result, businesses like Cardi's and community organizations like school Parent Teacher Groups, sports booster

clubs and the Middletown Education Collaborative step up to fill the gaps.

Superintendent Rosemarie Kraeger said the support of the community – and

volunteers – goes a long way to helping make Middletown schools among the best around.

"I can't say this enough – our community groups and volunteers really help make everything tick," Kraeger said. "Without them, I don't know where we'd be as a district. We're truly, truly appreciative for everything they do."

And the same goes for Cardi's and other businesses. Cardi's operates a mattress store at 1235 West Main Road, next to the BMW of Newport dealership.

"This isn't the first time that Cardi's has stepped up and

helped us out," Kraeger said. "That's the kind of business they are and they understand how important it is to give back, especially these days."

"Every time I walk by and see teachers and our staff in (the lounge), it brings a smile to my face," Birkett added. "We want to help make Forest Avenue School the best it can be and Cardi's helped us make that a reality for the teachers' lounge."



Dune Work Pays Dividends

Federal Funding After Superstorm Sandy Helps Harden Beach Area

When Tropical Storm Henri and remnants of Hurricane Ida were projected to strike, the Town of Middletown went on alert.

Motor vehicle travel through low-lying areas and by the beaches was restricted. Signs went up warning people to be careful and messaging was pushed out for everyone to stay sheltered in place.

At the same time, there was a sense of curiosity for some Town employees too, centering on the question: Would the dunes at Second Beach stand up to Henri and Ida?

It was an important inquiry because Henri and Ida were the first major storms forecasted to batter the Sachuest Point Road beach since the dunes were strengthened using Superstorm Sandy resiliency money.

“If you look at the dunes, there’s no question they held up,” said Will Cronin, the Town’s Operations & Facility Manager who oversees the beaches. “With storms like Henri where it was predicted to hit during an astronomically high tide, we would have had sea water spill into the parking lot with the old layout, but not this time, thanks to the changes made through the Sandy grant.”

Every summer, tens of thousands of people from across Middletown – and the globe -- visit Second Beach to enjoy its scenic vistas, soft sand and rolling surf. Year after year, the beach is recognized as one of the nicest anywhere on the East Coast.

But when major storms hit, they can cause damage and interrupt the normal

operation for days. This ends up costing the Town and community significant revenues.

When Superstorm Sandy struck Rhode Island in late October 2012, it decimated many beachfront locations across the Ocean State. Middletown was spared major damage, minus the destruction of Sachuest Point Road southeast of the Sachuest Beach Campground.

In the wake of the storm, about \$3.4 million in federal Superstorm Sandy resiliency money was awarded to make the beach area more storm proof. The Town’s Congressional delegation – led by U.S. Sen. Jack Reed – was instrumental in securing funding.

One of the projects that resulted was to beef up the dunes. In addition to acting as a buffer between the

ocean and the parking lot on Sachuest Point Road, the dunes protect two Newport Water Department reservoirs in the area.

In the past during major storms, seawater would rush up the paths cut through the dunes and bring water, sand and debris with it. This would cause quite a bit of damage, tying up Public Works department crews for days with the resulting cleanup, taking them away from other important work.

To combat that problem, plans were on the boards to build new structures over the dunes. As a result, patrons could access the beach, but the dune network could grow uninterrupted. Eventually, those plans were shelved after concerns were raised.



Instead, the Town opted to augment the crowned height of the paths to the beach. That way, if sea water reached the dunes, it could naturally prevent storm surges from breaching the dunes, causing erosion and depositing sand, rocks and debris into the parking lot and beyond.

This move was in keeping with a new Town strategy at the time to keep things as “natural” as possible and “leave it where it lays” instead of fighting Mother Nature.

For years, the Town removed sand from the pathways to make it easier for guests to walk onto the beach. Instead, the Town placed Mobi-mats down in each pathway to improve access for everyone, including those with disabilities.

The Town also “doglegged” the last 15-20 feet of each pathway as it led to the beach, creating another barrier to prevent seawater from rushing right through each walkway. In the off season, beach fencing was also realigned to allow more sand to build up in each pathway to help the dunes grow and thrive.

“There are no guarantees when Mother Nature is involved and the wrong storm at the wrong tide could cause plenty of problems for us,” Cronin said. “Saying that, so far, from everything we’ve seen, the dune work and other Sandy resiliency projects have definitely paid off.

“The dunes are the lifeblood of any beach and because of this work, our dunes have a better chance to survive and thrive than they did before. It also means less maintenance work for our beach staff, so they’re freed up to get to other important projects. When you look at it, it’s really a win-win situation for everyone.”



Tax Appeal

**REAL & TANGIBLE PROPERTY TAX
APPEALS DUE DEC. 10**

FORMS AVAILABLE WEEKDAYS 8 AM-4 PM
IN TOWN HALL & ONLINE AT
[HTTPS://MDL.TOWN/APPEALS](https://mdl.town/appeals)

 **MIDDLETOWN**
Cape Island