



MIDDLETOWN
Rhode Island

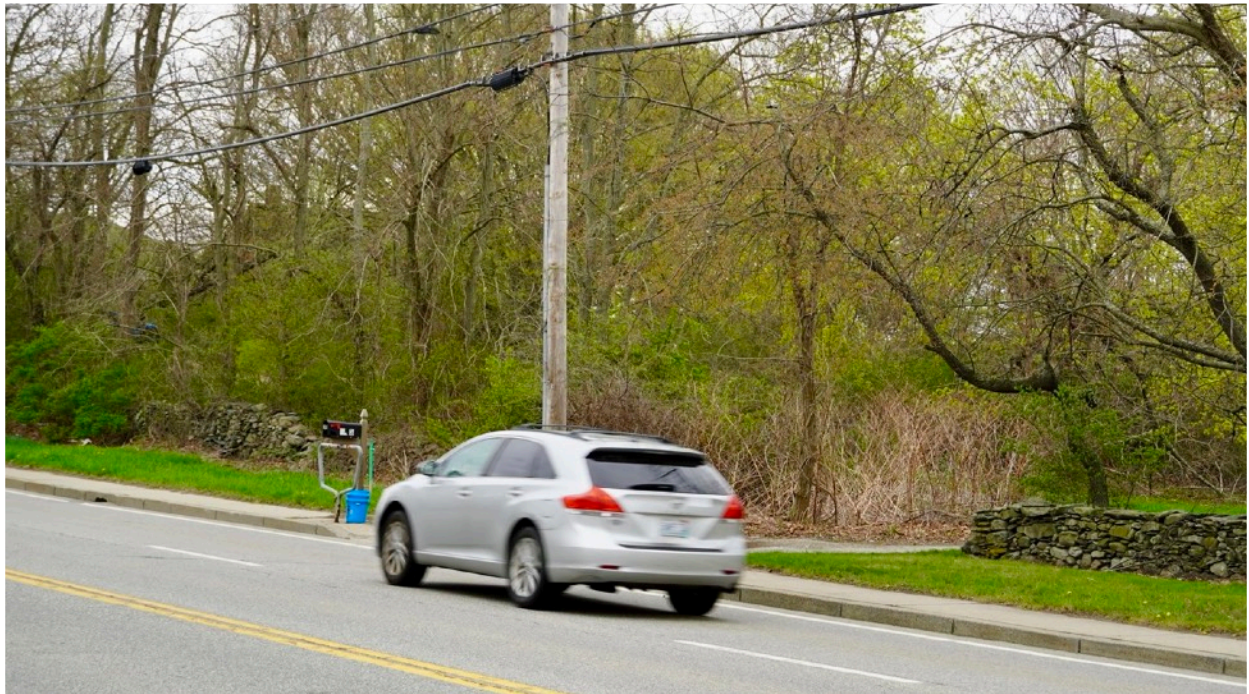
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350 East Main Road, Middletown, RI 02842
(401) 842-6500 | MiddletownRI.com

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CONTACT: Matt Sheley at (401) 842-6543 or msheley@middletownri.com



STATE GRANT TO HELP WITH AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLANNING

MIDDLETOWN, R.I. (NOVEMBER 6, 2023) – The Town of Middletown was recently awarded a state grant to assist with affordable housing.

Town Administrator Shawn J. Brown announced the \$250,000 plan development grant from Rhode Island Housing at Monday's Town Council meeting in Town Hall.

The money would help the town with planning, engineering and design work for 361-393 East Main Road, a 4.5-acre parcel located almost across the street from Town Hall.

In return, the grant further locks Middletown into using the land for only affordable housing, the stated goal of the town when the site was purchased in April.

“We’re very thankful to RI Housing for their support with this grant and other work they’ve done on our behalf,” Brown said. “Adding to our affordable housing stock is one of the top priorities of the Town Council, if not the top priority, and this will help us work towards that goal.”

Council President Paul M. Rodrigues said he wanted the town to do everything possible to make sure the East Main Road site remained “affordable” forever, something Town Solicitor Peter B. Regan said he and his colleagues would look into moving forward.

“I want to make sure we have layers of protection on that property...” Rodrigues said. “Land around here isn’t going to get any cheaper.”

Over the past decade plus, affordable housing has evolved into one of the most significant issues facing Middletown — and other communities across the country.

In addition to the East Main Road project, the town is working to bring new housing units to sites at 26 Oliphant Lane as well as 650 Green End Ave.

Because those projects at the former Oliphant School and Peckham School properties have been in the pipeline longer, they’re further along in the process.

In September, the council approved an architectural and engineering contract for the Oliphant and Peckham parcels, work that would help finish the master planning process and potentially secure outside funding for the reuse of both sites for affordable housing.

Brown said the RI Housing money would help move the East Main Road site to the next phase — reaffirming Middletown’s commitment to affordable housing.

“This is another step in the process,” Brown said. “There are delineated steps we have to take with this and without them, we’re never going to be able to get off the ground. We know that the need is now and we’re working as hard as we can to help fill that need.”

State guidelines specify every community in Rhode Island must attempt to have at least 10 percent of its housing be considered “affordable.”

According to HousingWorksRI, a home is “affordable” when it costs no more than 30 percent of an individual’s gross income. That means someone paid minimum wage would spend no more than \$468 a month for an affordable apartment.

For comparison, a median-income household in Rhode Island would pay no more than \$1,421 a month for housing.

Data shows 4.8 percent of Middletown’s housing is considered affordable. Rhode Island Housing statistics indicate the average price for a two-bedroom apartment in Middletown

in 2021 — including utilities — was \$1,724. That's up \$279 from 2016, when the average price for the same unit was \$1,446.

In the past year plus, Middletown has seen a surge from the private sector to the call for more housing. That includes close to 500 units of new housing that have been proposed or approved in town.

While some of those units are planned for market rates, about 200 are classified as affordable or work force housing. That includes the "Middletown Center" project on 15 underused acres at 600-770 West Main Road, a public-private partnership that includes three-bedroom units, two-bedroom units and one-bedroom units.

Document Link: <https://www.middletownri.com/DocumentCenter/View/9793/NYCU-AH-Grant-2>