

# Middletown Walkable Community Workshop

September 29, 2021



Town of  
*Middletown*  
Delaware

**WILMAPCO**

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For more information on Walkable Community Workshops, visit:

<http://www.wilmapco.org/walkable/>

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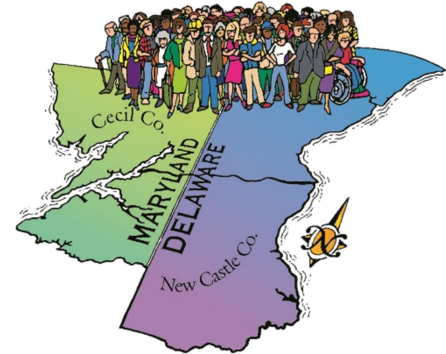


## Introduction

### Who is WILMAPCO?

The Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Cecil County, Maryland and New Castle County, Delaware. We are charged with planning and coordinating transportation investments for the Wilmington region.

The Wilmington region is home to more than 660,000 residents, most of whom (84%) live in New Castle County. Wilmington, a financial hub supporting a population just over 70,000, serves as the principal city. Urbanized development stretches outside of Wilmington along the I-95 corridor, from the Town of Elkton to the Pennsylvania border. Natural and rural landscapes, sprawling suburbs, and small towns blanket the rest of the region.



WILMAPCO's mission is to create the best transportation plan for the region, one that meets all the requirements mandated by the Federal Clean Air Act and its Amendments (CAAA) and the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act.

### About the Workshop Series

WILMAPCO's *2050 Regional Transportation Plan* calls for improving quality of life, efficiently transporting people, and supporting sustainable economic development and goods movement. Making our communities more walkable achieves all of these goals.

WILMAPCO was selected for the Walkable Community Workshops (WCW) program – part of the *National Center for Bicycling & Walking* – to work directly with communities. Walkability considers how well an area facilitates safe foot traffic. The WCW program seeks to ensure that people of all ages and abilities can walk, as well as bike, easily, safely, and regularly.



## Why Walkable Communities are Important

**We are all pedestrians.** Whether we think so or not, we are all pedestrians. We may walk to work, walk for exercise, walk to do errands, or simply walk from the car to the store. We all need safe facilities for walking.

**Walking is crucial to give those who don't drive a travel choice.** Many in our region are too young to drive, have a permanent or temporary disability which prevents them from driving, have no access to a car, or choose not to drive. In Middletown, Delaware, 28% of the population is under age 18, 16% are 65 or older, and 11% of the population has a disability (2019 American Community Survey). Many people in these population groups need to walk in order to lead active and independent lives.

**Walkable communities are healthier communities.** North Americans' waistlines are getting wider, triggering a rise in related illnesses including heart disease and diabetes. In Delaware, 34% of adults are obese; 75% of adolescents do not engage in the recommended amount of physical activity for any given week; only 49% of adults get the recommended amount of physical activity; and 27% of adults engage in no leisure-time physical activity at all (according to the Centers for Disease Control, 2019). Pedestrian-friendly communities make it easier for people to integrate physical activity into their daily lives.

**Everyone benefits from walkable communities.** Even if you don't enjoy walking, you still benefit from living in a walkable community. More people walking and bicycling reduces overall levels of vehicular congestion, which benefits drivers too. Less driving also reduces air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. There are also economic benefits with walkable communities, including higher property values and greater sales in commercial areas.





## Walkable Community Workshops

A WCW is typically a three-hour session that includes an educational presentation on what makes a community walkable, a walking audit of a specific area, and a mapping session, where participants engage in brainstorming solutions. Focusing on a particular area's walkability, participants study sidewalks, pathways, inviting streetscape, crosswalks, destinations, etc. The process gives everyone the tools for making a community walkable and provides realistic next steps that can be used to achieve their goals.

There are **three main parts of a workshop:**



**Part 1** – The presentation reviews topics such as sidewalk design, crosswalks, traffic calming, community design, and other tools that communities need to create a walkable environment.



**Part 2** – The walking audit gives participants a chance to survey the area, identify issues and think about how to apply what they learned from the presentation. Getting out and walking is key to illustrating the challenges that people face when pedestrian facilities are not available.



**Part 3** – In the mapping exercise, people share ideas for improving walkability. Participants end the session by committing to specific next steps to continue the process started at the workshop.

## Background

Middletown is located in southern New Castle County, Delaware and is home to 23,192 people, according to the 2020 Census. Established in 1861, Middletown is celebrated for its historic architecture and dense, walkable downtown core, centering on the intersection of Main and Broad Streets. Main Street is lined with shops, restaurants, and a public plaza, and many residents live within a short walking distance. Downtown Middletown is supported by Middletown Main Street, a nonprofit organization committed to community development and historic preservation.

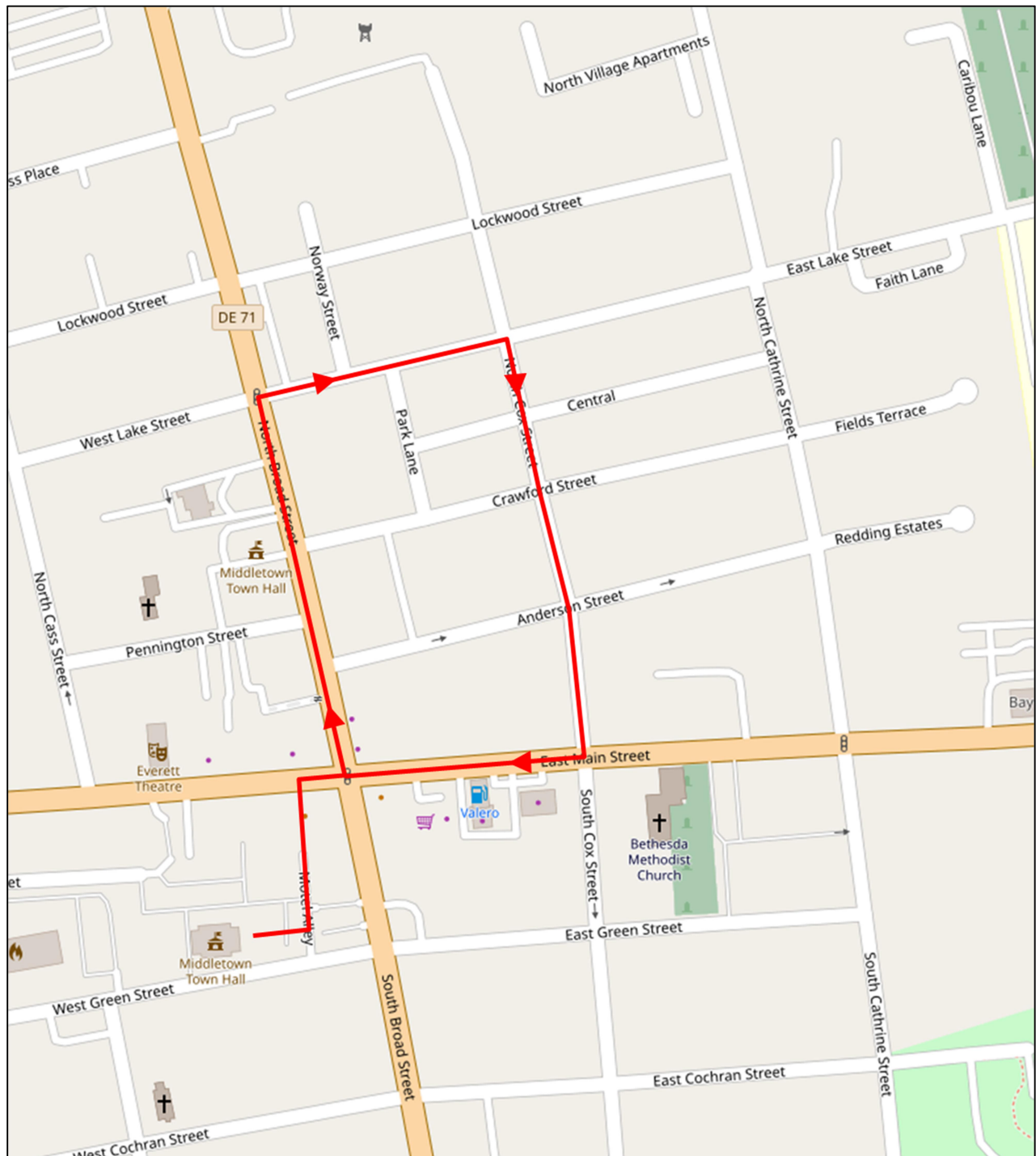
A Walkable Community Workshop was previously held in Middletown in 2014. The 2014 Middletown WCW Report is available at <http://www.wilmapco.org/walkable>. While the recommendations proposed in that report continue to be supported, this 2021 report is entirely new, focusing on a different walking route and a new set of recommendations.

The 2021 Middletown Walkable Community Workshop was held on September 29 at the Town Hall. It was attended by 13 people, including residents, town officials, and WILMAPCO staff. The walking audit route (shown on the following page) began at the Town Hall, headed north on an alley to Main Street, and proceeded north on Broad Street, east on Lake Street, south on Cox Street, west on Main Street, then through the public plaza back to Town Hall.

After the walking audit, the group participated in a mapping exercise, where they took a broader look at all areas within the town to identify solutions to improve walkability throughout Middletown.



The public plaza at Broad and Main Streets.

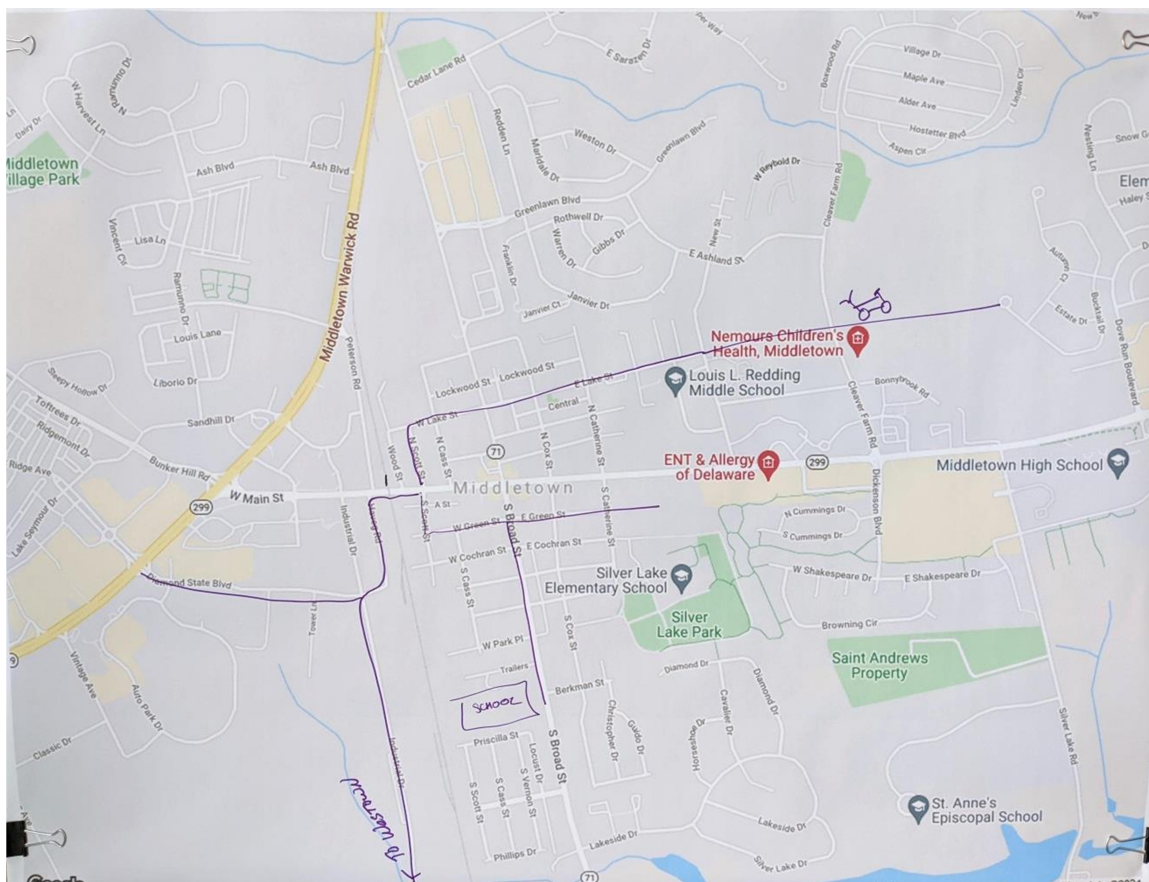


Walking Audit Route

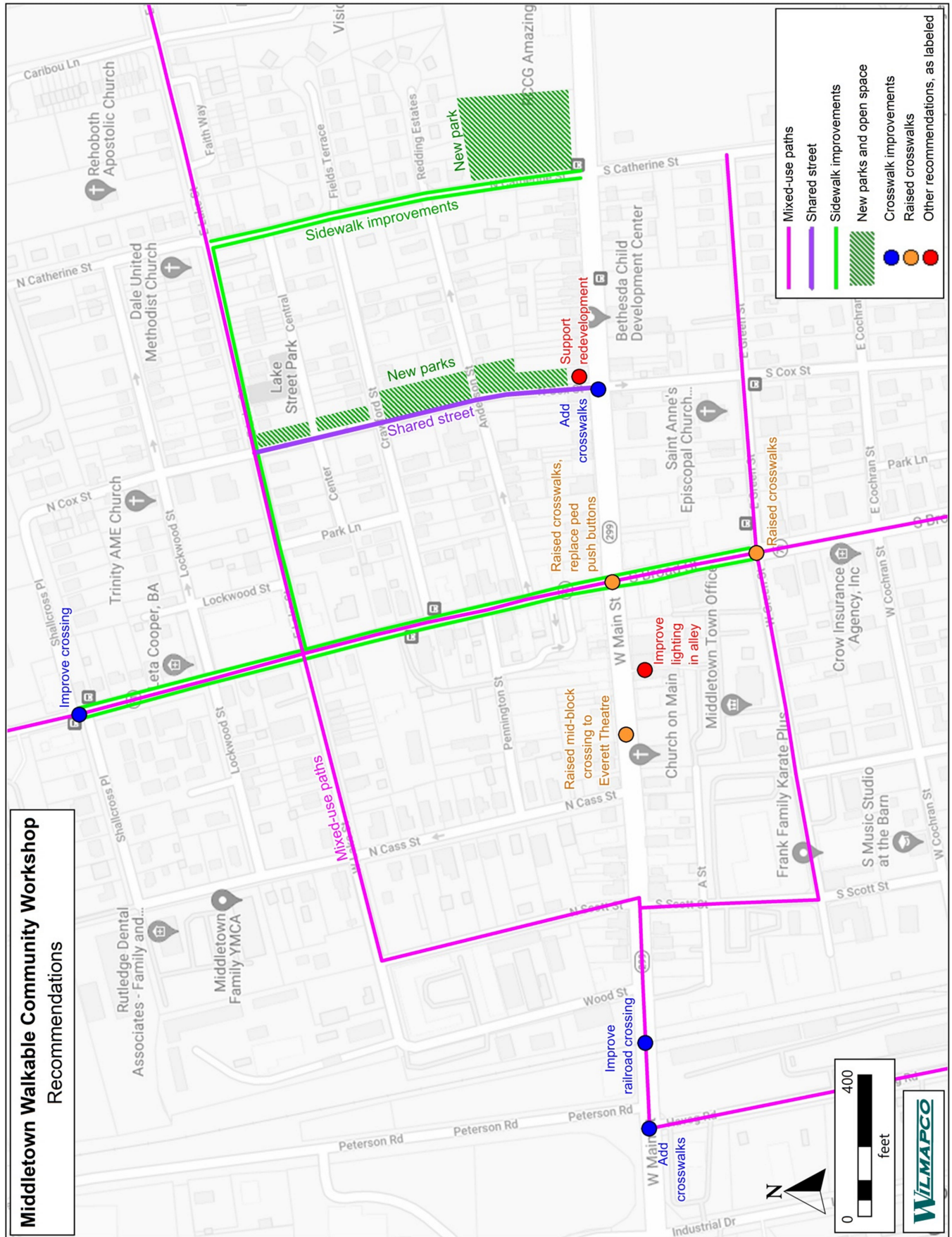


During the mapping exercise, participants split into two groups to discuss challenges to walking around town and share ideas to improve walkability, resulting in the maps below and on the next page. These ideas included building a network of mixed-use (walking and biking) paths, improving sidewalks, improving pedestrian crossings, creating new open spaces, and other ideas to enhance the walking experience on Main Street and beyond.

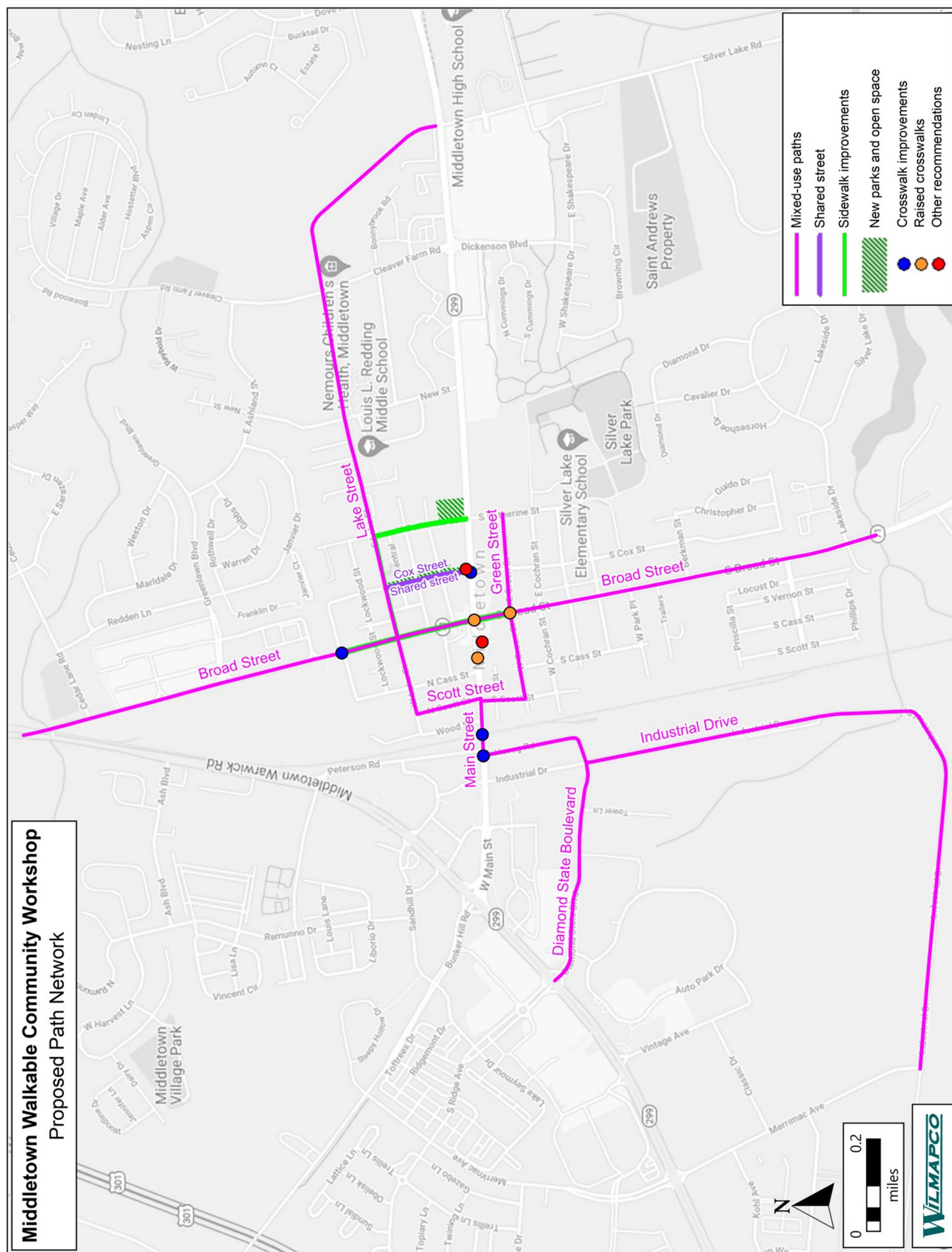








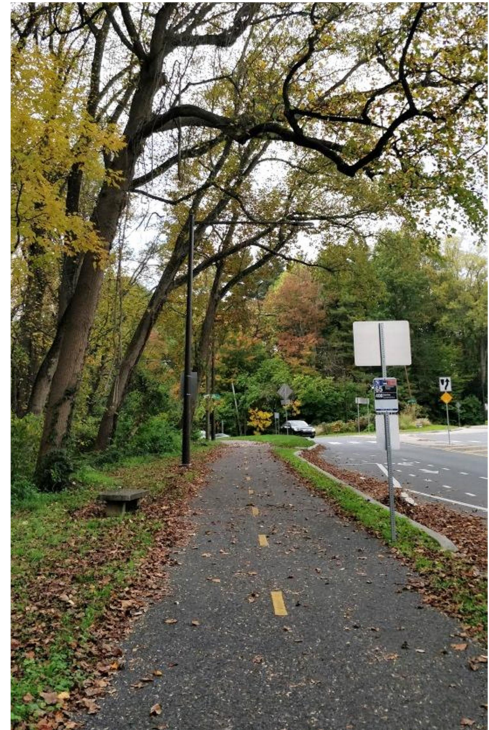




### Proposed Path Network

The group proposed a network of mixed-use, walking and biking paths, as shown on the map on page 11. These paths include:

- Broad Street, within the town boundaries
- Lake Street, from Scott Street to Main Street, including its planned extension
- Scott Street, from Lake Street to Green Street
- Green Street, from Scott Street to Catherine Street
- Main Street, from Scott Street to Haveg Road
- Haveg Road, from Main Street to Diamond State Boulevard
- Diamond State Boulevard, from Haveg Road to Middletown Warwick Road
- Industrial Drive, from Diamond State Boulevard to Merrimac Avenue



A mixed-use path on Walnut Lane,  
Philadelphia, PA.

Mixed-use paths are built on or alongside roads, are fully separated from traffic, are paved, and can accommodate two-way walking and biking traffic.

Generally, mixed-use paths are only needed on one side of a road, but can be built on both sides if sufficient right-of-way exists, especially on wider roads that are difficult or unsafe to cross with destinations on both sides.

These paths would enhance safety, convenience, and accessibility for people walking, biking, and rolling, providing connections to and between destinations throughout town.

One of the proposed southbound routes could potentially be extended to Wiggins Mill Road, on which a path is recommended in the [Townsend WCW report](#). This would create a continuous path connection between these two towns, just 3-4 miles apart.

When the group walked on Lake Street, they noted that the roadway is excessively wide and underutilized, presenting an opportunity for a road diet. In addition, much of the sidewalk on Lake Street is in disrepair and too narrow for more than two people to walk side-by-side. A road diet could involve narrowing the roadway to upgrade the sidewalk and install a mixed-use path. The group also noted the opportunity for more greenery, which could be used to separate the mixed-use path from parked cars and motorized traffic. This road diet would help to calm motorized traffic, which would reduce the risk of crashes and make the street more comfortable for people walking and biking.





Lake Street, facing east from Park Lane. While the roadway is wide and underutilized, the sidewalk is narrow and requires upgrades to meet ADA standards.



The Indianapolis Cultural Trail is fully separated from traffic by greenery and stormwater management features. (Source: Rundell Ernstberger Associates via [pedbikeinfo.org](http://pedbikeinfo.org))



### Improvements to Cox Street

After walking on Lake Street, the group continued south on Cox Street. Cox Street is narrow, lacks sidewalks for much of its stretch, and functions like an alley, abutting several homes' driveways and backyards. Due to its narrow width, low traffic volumes, and low traffic speeds, it is comfortable and safe to walk in the street. A dedicated mixed-use path is not appropriate on Cox Street, as there is insufficient right-of-way and no need for separation from traffic, but the street could function as part of the town's path network by upgrading it to a shared street.



Cox Street, facing south from Anderson Street.

Shared streets incorporate features that enhance the walking and biking experience while still allowing vehicle access. These features can include textured pavement, benches, and planters, which can create an inviting walking atmosphere and reinforce that pedestrians are prioritized. Signage at the entrances on Lake Street and Main Street can indicate that it is a shared street and encourage walking and biking. In addition to textured pavement, tactile warning strips, like those on ADA ramps, can alert drivers that they are entering a shared street.



A shared street or "woonerf" in the Netherlands. This street incorporates textured pavement, speed bumps, benches, and greenery. (Source: Alchetron)

The group also recommended creating new public open spaces on the east side of Cox Street. This would require property acquisition, but it would improve access to open space in a central location in town and further encourage the use of Cox Street as a shared street. Without property acquisition, the town could work within the existing right-of-way to create a more inviting atmosphere for passive recreation by installing benches and planters.

### Sidewalk Improvements

The group noted the need for sidewalk improvements at the following locations:

- Broad Street, from Shallcross Place to Green Street
- Lake Street, from Broad Street to Catherine Street
- Catherine Street, from Lake Street to Main Street, particularly in front of the new library

All sidewalks should be continuous, free of obstructions, and meet ADA requirements. Mixed-use paths can take the place of sidewalks, but if they are built alongside sidewalks, existing sidewalks should still be upgraded to meet these standards. These standards are a bare minimum for a comfortable walking route, which can be further enhanced by greenery and sidewalk furniture, like benches.

When the group walked on Broad Street, they noted a section of sidewalk that has been uplifted by tree roots, posing a challenge for people with disabilities. The group agreed that preserving the tree is very important for maintaining a pleasant walking environment, so sidewalk repairs should be done without displacing trees. If a mixed-use path is built in the roadway of Broad Street, it would serve as a fully ADA-compliant route.

The group noted several sections of Lake Street that lack sidewalks and curb ramps. These infrastructure gaps should be addressed to ensure a continuous walking route, especially for people with disabilities.



This section of sidewalk on the east side of Broad Street, just south of Lake Street, has been uplifted by tree roots.



Sections of Lake Street lack sidewalks and curb ramps, forcing people with disabilities to move into the street.



### Improved Pedestrian Crossings

The group recommended the addition of crosswalks at the following intersections:

- Main Street and Cox Street
- Main Street railroad crossing
- Main Street and Haveg Road/Peterson Road
- Broad Street and Shallcross Place

They also recommended the installation of raised crosswalks at these locations:

- Broad Street and Main Street
- Broad Street and Green Street
- Main Street at Everett Theatre (mid-block crossing)

At a minimum, high-visibility, piano-key style crosswalks should be used to direct pedestrians to safe crossing locations and make drivers more aware of people crossing the street. Raised crosswalks double as speed bumps, helping to calm traffic and further increase the visibility of these crossings. Raised crosswalks should be level with the sidewalk, indicating that pedestrian traffic is prioritized at these locations.

There are currently no safe, legal crossings across Main Street between Broad Street and Industrial Drive. A raised, mid-block crossing across Main Street at the Everett Theatre would help fill this long gap, making it safer to access destinations on both sides of Main Street. The addition of crosswalks at Cox Street would fill in a similar gap between Broad Street and Catherine Street.



A raised crosswalk with high-visibility, piano-key style crosswalk paint (Source: NYC DOT)



### New Public Park

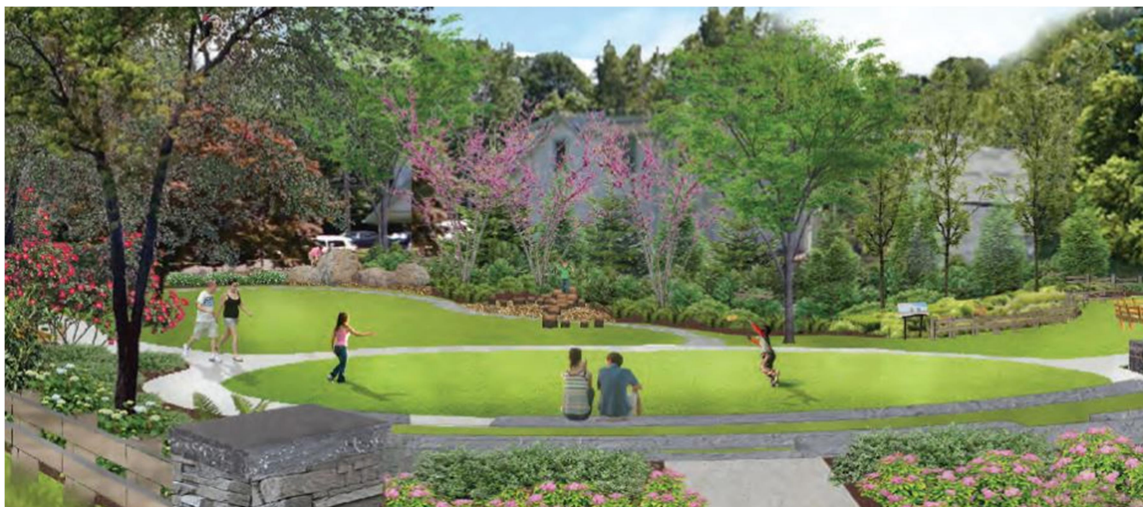
At the northeast corner of Main Street and Catherine Street is a vacant lot. This lot, at 201 East Main Street, is owned and maintained by Bayhealth Medical Center, whose building is located next door. The group suggested that this would be an ideal location for a public park. It is at the east end of the Main Street business district and is directly across the street from the future site of the Southern New Castle County Library.

The town should seek acquisition of this property. If Bayhealth Medical Center is unwilling to sell this property, the town should coordinate with them to designate this lot as a privately owned public open space. This could create an opportunity for amenities that would be beneficial to visitors and patrons of the library, the medical center, and other Main Street businesses.

Potential park features could include benches and tables for reading library books or waiting for an appointment, a fountain, plaza, or paths connecting through the park and to the medical center. This park could help support Main Street businesses and encourage walking in downtown Middletown.



The vacant lot at 201 East Main Street (Source: Google)



A rendering of a soon to open park at 5<sup>th</sup> and Broomall Streets in Media, PA (Source: Media Borough)

## Improvements to Main Street

The group recommended several improvements to Main Street to enhance the walking experience, including:

- Add flower pots and lane markings to help calm traffic and improve aesthetics
- Standardize signage for downtown district shops
- Improve access into historic storefronts
- Improve lighting in alley between 22 and 24 W. Main Street
- Rehabilitate condemned buildings, improve facades, and support redevelopment

Walking should be comfortable, safe, and inviting at all hours of the day. At a minimum, ensuring all streets have sufficient pedestrian-scale lighting can improve personal safety and encourage businesses to stay open later in the evening. Higher pedestrian traffic at night can further improve safety by having more eyes on the street.

Some of these ideas contribute to creating a sense of place. This creates an identity for a neighborhood or district, which enhances the feeling of community and encourages residents and visitors to walk. Middletown's Main Street already has a strong sense of place, but it can be further enhanced by prominent and thematic signage for businesses and increased greenery. Improving facades and supporting redevelopment of abandoned buildings can invite more businesses to locate on Main Street and encourage more people to walk the corridor.



Pedestrian-scale lighting (Source: Alta Planning and Design)



Shoulder markings and textured pavement can help calm traffic by narrowing the perceived width of a street (Source: Alta Planning and Design)

During the walking audit, the group observed high traffic speeds, loud traffic noise, long distances between crosswalks, and long wait times to cross the street, underscoring a need for traffic calming. In addition to the proposed crosswalk improvements on page 16, solutions such as bolder painted lines for shoulder markings, textured pavement, and increased greenery can help calm traffic, making a safer and more comfortable walking experience.

Parklets (or streeteries) are temporary or permanent expansions of sidewalk space into parking lanes. Converting parking spaces into parklets can help expand outdoor seating for dining establishments, offer a place for people to relax and rest their feet, enhance the sense of place, and help to calm traffic.





Downtown Visions offers a facade improvement program for businesses in Wilmington, DE (Source: Downtown Visions)



Textured crosswalks and street murals can help calm traffic and enhance the sense of place (Source: Highland Park Neighborhood, Rochester, NY)



Parklets can expand seating options for individual businesses, be shared by multiple businesses, or can serve as public spaces for an entire neighborhood (Source: Philly Voice)



### **Pedestrian and Bicycle-Friendly Development**

Pedestrian and Bicycle-Friendly Development is a form of efficient land use, i.e. Complete Communities or Smart Growth. It refers to policies that result in development that encourages trips by walking, biking, and transit.

This type of land use can help provide easier access within places, improve transportation choices, create more livable communities, and reduce public service costs. These land use patterns go by many different names — Complete Communities, Traditional Neighborhood Development, Transit Oriented Development, Walkable Communities, etc. — but all use a similar toolbox of policies. Strategies include:

- Mix land uses.
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
- Build connected, walkable, bike-friendly neighborhoods.
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
- Support the rural landscape by preserving open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas by promoting clustered and compact building design.
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective.
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.



Davidson's Rural Area Plan (Source: [www.cnu.org](http://www.cnu.org))



## Next Steps

The Town of Middletown has plans for an extension to Lake Street, which will continue east from its current terminus at New Street and turn south to Main Street, at the intersection with Silver Lake Road. The town should ensure that the planned extension incorporates the streetscape improvement and beautification recommendations in this report. When the existing section of Lake Street is upgraded, it should match the extension and provide continuous and safe walking and biking infrastructure.

In addition to Lake Street, the town has plans to make improvements to North Cox Street and should consider the recommendations on page 14. These recommendations, as well as all other ideas in the report, constitute public feedback and reflect the needs and desires of the community.

The town should seek acquisition of the vacant lot at 201 East Main Street or coordinate with Bayhealth Medical Center to develop a public park. Further public outreach should be conducted when planning public spaces to determine which types of park features best meet the community's needs.

While many of these improvements can be completed by the town as part of routine paving and resurfacing projects, larger projects may require additional funding. Funding for the recommended improvements can be pursued through several mechanisms, including the Capital Transportation Program (CTP), the Community Transportation Fund (CTF), and the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), which includes Safe Routes to School (SRTS).

WILMAPCO, in coordination with DelDOT, administers the Safe Routes to School program in this region. This program can provide limited funding for walkability improvements near schools, including working with staff, faculty, and students to determine the best improvements to meet each school's needs.

Community members are encouraged to think about which of the recommendations are most important and to work with New Castle County, DelDOT, WILMAPCO, and local elected officials to begin addressing some of the issues discussed during the workshop.

### **Funding and Implementation Resources**

#### *FUNDING PROGRAMS AND CONTACTS*

##### **Town of Middletown**

Town of Middletown is a good starting point for most recommendations from the Walkable Community Workshop. Town Hall can be contacted at (302) 378-2711.

## DelDOT

DelDOT administers the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). TAP offer funding opportunities to help expand transportation choices and enhance the transportation experience, formerly known as the Transportation Enhancements (TE) Program. TAP Activities must relate to surface transportation. Eligible projects most related to Walkable Communities include:

- Construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorized forms of transportation
- Construction, planning, and design of infrastructure-related projects and systems that will provide safe routes for non-drivers, including children, older adults, and individuals with disabilities to access daily needs
- Safe Routes to School programs (<http://www.wilmapco.org/saferoutes/>)

In Delaware, TAP projects require a twenty percent funding match and the maximum funding amount is \$1 million.

The Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements Program funds the design and construction of pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Funds can support projects too costly for the TAP program.

### *Delaware Transportation Alternatives Program Coordinator*

Mike Hahn, DelDOT Planning & TAP

Delaware Department of Transportation, PO Box 778, Dover, DE 19903

Tel: (302) 760-2131

Email: [MichaelC.Hahn@delaware.gov](mailto:MichaelC.Hahn@delaware.gov)

## State Elected Officials

Community Transportation Fund (CTF) funding provides a fixed amount of funds annually to each State Senator and House Representative to be used as they and their constituents believe is best for transportation improvements within their district. Legislators may also fund their own project ideas and they have the option of banking a portion of their yearly CTF budget for up to three years in order to fund a larger transportation improvement.

[https://deldot.gov/Publications/brochures/pdfs/ctf\\_brochure.pdf?cache=1630086607516](https://deldot.gov/Publications/brochures/pdfs/ctf_brochure.pdf?cache=1630086607516)

## Pop-Up Demonstration Projects and Quick Build Pilot Projects

Temporary projects to test potential designs are effective at soliciting community feedback and avoiding costly design mistakes. Projects may last anywhere from less than an hour to many months. Some suggested approaches include:



- Local governments should establish a process for collaboration between agency staff and the public, which encourages community pop-up requests and establishes parameters for acceptable designs, permitting, and organizational partners.
- Communities should proactively pursue demonstration projects and direct them to locations with the greatest needs. Equitable distribution of projects should engage a variety of communities and financially support these diverse projects to level the playing field.
- Engaging the community will bring fun, energy, and creativity to the planning process. Residents, local organizations, and businesses are also effective partners at getting the word out about the demonstration.
- Evaluate the tested design, collecting information like speeds and volumes of bicycles, pedestrians, and vehicles. Also, seek out community feedback.
- Use information gained to adjust the project's design and pursue more permanent implementation.

Supported by the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), Living Lab is a research collaborative among the Institute for Public Administration, Biden School of Public Policy & Administration, and the Landscape Architecture program at the University of Delaware (UD). It seeks to catalyze community-driven, active transportation pop-up demonstrations that test the viability of long-term built-environment improvements and placemaking initiatives in Delaware.

University of Delaware Living Lab - <https://living-lab-1-udel.hub.arcgis.com/>

### Other Useful Links

- Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks - [www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle\\_pedestrian/publications/small\\_towns](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/publications/small_towns)
- Designing for All Ages & Abilities - [nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/designing-ages-abilities-new](http://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/designing-ages-abilities-new)
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center - [www.pedbikeinfo.org](http://www.pedbikeinfo.org)
- League of American Bicyclists - [www.bikeleague.org](http://www.bikeleague.org)
- National Center for Bicycling and Walking - [www.bikewalk.org](http://www.bikewalk.org)
- Federal Highway Administration - [www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle\\_pedestrian/index.cfm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/index.cfm)
- Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) - [mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov](http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov)
- NACTO Urban Street Design Guide - [nacto.org/usdg](http://nacto.org/usdg)
- WILMAPCO - [www.wilmapco.org/walkable](http://www.wilmapco.org/walkable)