

City of Middletown



Downtown Housing Charrette Findings & Downtown Visual Preference Survey Results

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Executive Summary

The results of the charrette and visual preference survey reveal that participants are comfortable with a denser downtown, with buildings 3 to 5 stories tall. The greatest desire to improvement is east of Main Street not just connecting Main Street to the river but filling in the parking lots with new mixed-use development. Downtown should also become greener: street trees should be planted at regular intervals on all downtown blocks, planters with seasonal plants should be incorporated, and pocket-parks or public spaces should be developed or improved. Safety, walkability, and bike friendly improvements should also be a driver for how development is carried out.

"Proud's" & "Sorry's" Exercise

The "Proud's and Sorry's" exercise asked participants to record what they are proud of when thinking about downtown and what they are sorry about when they are thinking about downtown.

The goal of this exercise is to boil down what the exact strengths of an area are and what are the weaknesses. After knowing these creating a plan to enhance the market appeal of an area can begin to take shape.

"Prouds"

The results from the lists of things that participants were proud about the downtown were divided into three categories: Character, Community and Traditions.

Character: things that contribute to the overall character of Middletown (e.g.)

- Historic
- Character/Architecture (5)
- Mix of building styles/facades (5)
- Street trees (3)
- Mix of Uses (2)
- No high-rises (2)
- Stamp Concrete
- Sidewalks (1)

Community: facilities and services that contribute to the quality of life for residents (e.g.)

- Library (5)
- Riverfront (5)
- Hospital (3)
- Police Station (2)
- Bus Station (1)

Traditions: things that contribute to the overall feeling in the community and its place in time and space (e.g.)

- The Arts and Entertainment (7)
- Friendly Diverse Community (7)
- Pleasant/Attractive Main Street Atmosphere (6)
- Restaurant Mecca (6)
- Specialty Stores (5)
- Walkable Downtown/Main Street (4)
- Sense of progress (2)
- Wesleyan (1)
- Few Vacant Storefronts (1)

"Sorrys"

The results from the lists of things that participants were sorry about the downtown were divided into three categories: Deficiencies, Irritants and Threats.

Deficiencies: things that do not exist which could enhance the community (e.g.)

- Lack of connection to river (8)
- Not enough retail or boutique retail (5)
- Not enough housing for all economic levels especially upper-end (5)
- Not bike friendly (3)
- Lack of pedestrian access to downtown (3)
- Not enough parking (2)
- No trolley (1)
- Need a supermarket (1)
- No Downtown school (1)

Irritants: situations that complicate or inhibit the quality of life for residents (e.g.)

- Downtown aesthetic theme is not cohesive (6)
- Poorly maintained or designed buildings (e.g. Rivers Edge)(3)
- Low-end stores and limited shopping hours (2)
- Traffic on RT 66 (2)
- Poor or Unattractive Business signage (2)
- Too many restaurants in mix (1)
- Under used parking (1)
- Ugly city hall (1)
- Entryways into Middletown (17, RT3, 66) gateways are unattractive (1)

Threats: things that threaten to change what residents perceive as the existing or desired character of Middletown (e.g.)

- Has a perception of not being safe (5)
- Empty or blighted buildings (4)
- Changes to Historic structures (2)
- Ripping out bigger trees (1)

Conclusions

Participants were proud of the historic character of the downtown, its walkable and attractive setting with access to a wide variety of restaurants and public amenities such as the library and arts institutions. The downtown's proximity to the river was also highly valued.

Participants were sorry that the downtown while having many positive attributes still seemed like an island with limited access to the surrounding neighborhoods and those corridors leading to the downtown were unattractive. The downtown's lack of connection to the river was considered a significant drawback. The participants noted that the quality of some stores, their façades and their signage were low quality, not matching the historic quality of its setting.

Downtown Mapping Exercise

The participants of the charrette were divided into four teams and were each given a section of the downtown and asked to draw on a map what they would change, add, or remove to that area to improve it. The four areas were:

- 1) The blocks bound by Rapallo Aveune, Main Street Court Street, and DeKoven Drive;
- 2) The blocks bound by Spring Street, Pearl Street, Washington Street and Main Street;
- 3) The blocks bound by Court Street, Main Street and Union Street and DeKoven Drive; and,
- 4) The Blocks bound by Washington Street, Broad Street, Old Church Street and Main Street.

Map 1- Study Area Map

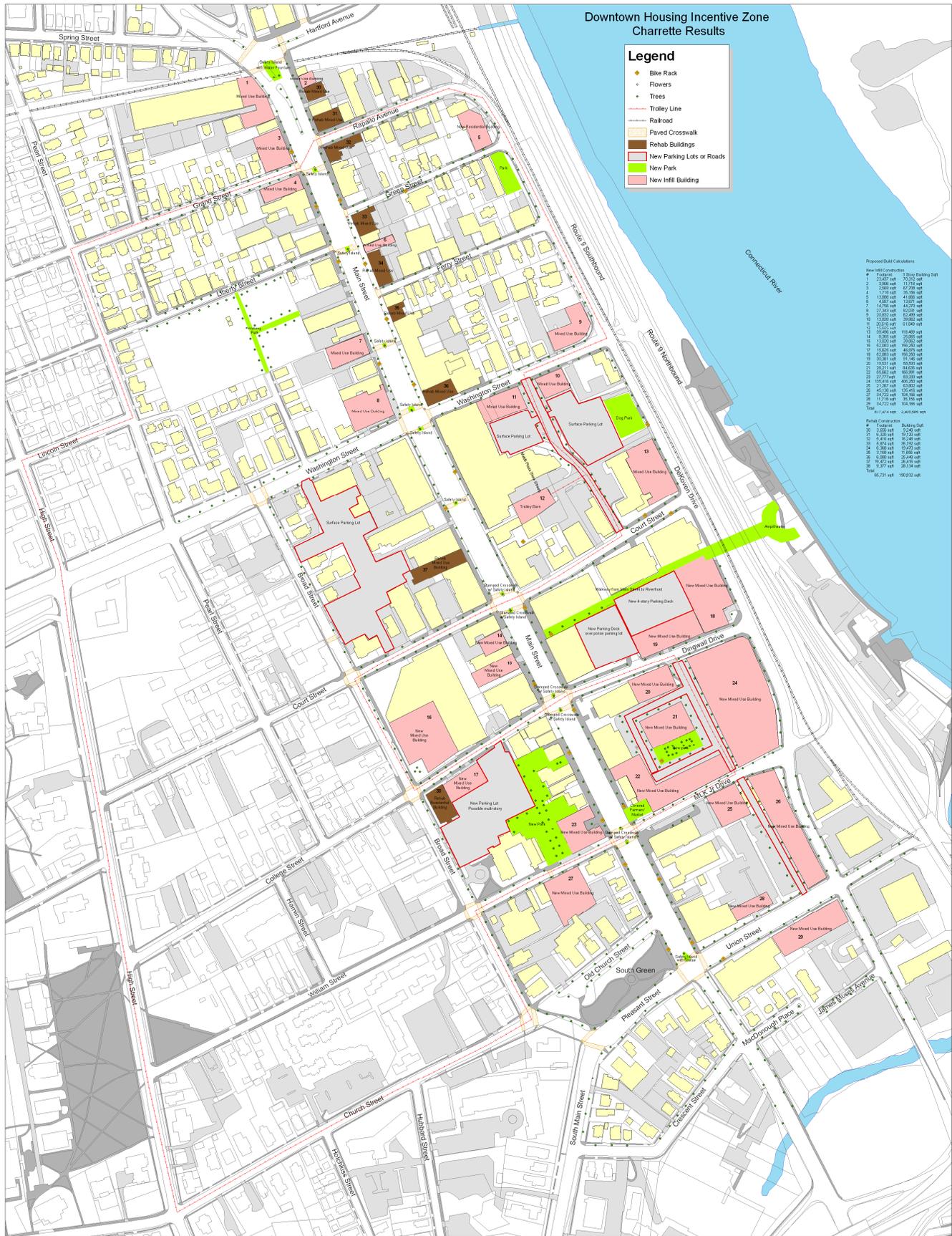


Mapping Exercise Conclusions

The participants, while in separate groups developed ideas along the same general themes, of increasing density with infill buildings, rehabilitation of the large underutilized buildings. Improve the public spaces to be more pedestrian and bicycle friendly, with new green space areas interspersed throughout the downtown and develop a strong connection to the river with an arcade over the highway. Create more coherent parking sites instead of the patchwork of public and private parking lots and create new streets within the Metro Square and Inn at Middletown blocks.

Comparing the existing building square footage, commercial and residential, developing the charrette result would double the density of the downtown with increasing the current 2,916,253 sqft by 2,596,517 sqft. to a total of 5,512,770 sqft.

Map 2- Combined Concept Map



Existing Development

- Total Land Area- 84 acres
- Total Building Area- 2,916,253 sqft.
- Total Commercial Building Area- 2,333,458 sqft.
- Total Residential Building Area- 582,795 sqft.
- Total Number of Residential Units- 660 units (average size- 986 sqft.)

New Infill Construction

#	Footprint	3 Story Building Sqft
1	23,437 sqft	70,312 sqft
2	3,906 sqft	11,718 sqft
3	2,569 sqft	67,708 sqft
4	1,718 sqft	35,156 sqft
5	13,888 sqft	41,666 sqft
6	4,557 sqft	13,671 sqft
7	14,756 sqft	44,270 sqft
8	27,343 sqft	82,031 sqft
9	20,832 sqft	62,499 sqft
10	13,020 sqft	39,062 sqft
11	20,616 sqft	61,848 sqft
12	15,625 sqft	
13	39,496 sqft	118,489 sqft
14	8,355 sqft	25,065 sqft
15	13,020 sqft	39,062 sqft
16	52,083 sqft	156,250 sqft
17	15,625 sqft	46,875 sqft
18	52,083 sqft	156,250 sqft
19	30,381 sqft	91,145 sqft
20	19,531 sqft	58,593 sqft
21	28,211 sqft	84,635 sqft
22	55,662 sqft	166,991 sqft
23	27,777sqft	83,333 sqft
24	135,416 sqft	406,250 sqft
25	21,267 sqft	63,802 sqft
26	45,138 sqft	135,416 sqft
27	34,722 sqft	104,166 sqft
28	11,718 sqft	35,156 sqft
29	34,722 sqft	104,166 sqft
Total	817,474 sqft	2,405,585 sqft

Rehab Construction

#	Footprint	Building Sqft
30	3,656 sqft	9,248 sqft
31	6,320 sqft	19,120 sqft
32	5,416 sqft	16,248 sqft
33	5,874 sqft	35,192 sqft
34	6,368 sqft	19,470 sqft
35	3,168 sqft	11,656 sqft
36	6,080 sqft	25,448 sqft
37	19,472 sqft	26,416 sqft
38	9,377 sqft	28,134 sqft
Total	65,731 sqft	190,932 sqft

Downtown Visual Preference Survey Findings

The Department of Planning Conservation and Development also conducted a survey to get a sense of the aesthetic preferences of people who live, work or visit Middletown. A Visual Preference Survey is a limited tool and it has its flaws, mostly because you ask people to provide subjective response to something that provides only limited information, a picture of the front of a building. However, we believe that the results, can be helpful to starting a discussion that can guide further investigation.

163 responses were received through the online survey form after soliciting people to participate through the department's weekly email newsletter, asking professional planners throughout the State to participate through a planners email listserve, and direct invitations to 300 randomly selected residents of the area.

The results are interesting, all of the top scoring buildings are historically maintain buildings, while the bottom scoring buildings generally not considered historic or have not been maintained to the small standard.

The structures were aggregated by area, either section, block or streetscape. The areas were only coded on the accompanying maps if the area scored higher than 6 or lower than 4, in order to compare the extremes. The downtown area was divided into five sections, North End east of Main Street, North End west of Main Street, South End east of Main Street, South End west of Main Street and south of Union and Pleasant Streets. The good news is that no section of downtown scored below an aggregate score of 4. South End west of Main Street and south of Union and Pleasant Streets both score over 6. Looking only at city blocks, the only poor performing block is the block between Rapallo Avenue and Green Street. The only block that performed well outside of the South End west of Main and South of Union and Pleasant Streets was the block west of Main street between Liberty Street and Washington Street. Looking at streetscapes not a single streetscape along Main Street scored below a 4. However the following five streetscapes did score below 4 and then are all east of Main Street: north side of Rapallo Avenue, South side of Green Street, South side of Ferry Street, Melilli Plaza and Dekoven Drive between MLK Way and Union Street.

The results were also broken down by building and property elements to see if any particular aspects are responsible for a favorable or unfavorable rating.

One of the most striking results was the different between 1 story buildings and those with 3 to five stories. A 1 story building on average received a score of 2.5 where as 3-5 stories buildings range from 5.9 to 7.2. Over 5 stories, the score dropped back down to 3.2.

Roof styles were broken down by eight styles that were presented in the survey. The lowest scoring style is a flat roof without any detail or ornamentation. Having a flat roof would like result in a 66% chance of being ranked in the bottom quartile.

The percentage of a façade taken up by windows resulted in being a positive or negative for a building's attractiveness. Those with less than 50% windows score on average 4.4. Those with greater than 50% of the façade made up windows scored on average 6.6.

Buildings with or without front yards generally scored the same, except those with paved front yards, which score on average a 4.1.

The location of does seems to have an effect. A façade with no door scores lower than those that do, and facades without a door in the center or multiple doors in symmetry score lower those that do have a door in the center or multiple doors in symmetry.

Street trees located in front of a building score significantly higher than those without. In fact 60% of the bottom quartile ranked buildings do not have street trees, versus the 16% in the upper quartile that do not have street tree.

Little scoring difference found between: attached and detached structures; buildings with or without dormers; buildings with same or different 1st story and upper story themes; mixed use buildings or single use buildings; buildings with or without bay windows; buildings with or without porches; buildings with or without awnings; and buildings with or without shutters.

Top 10 and Bottom 10 ranking properties

10 Highest Scores

1) Photo # 8461 Main St 8.7



2) Photo # 85151 Main St 8.7



3) Photo # 6573 Main St 8.7



4) Photo # 2049 Main St 8.7



5) Photo # 74533 Main St 8.5



10 Lowest Scores

100) Photo # 68 725 Main St 1.9



99) Photo # 60 50 Green St 1.9



98) Photo # 2515 Main St 2.0



97) Photo # 96 Main St/ Crescent St 2.3



96) Photo # 18 57 Ferry St 2.4



6) Photo # 2370 Main St 8.3



95) Photo # 43 71 Ferry St 2.4



7) Photo # 35489 Main St 8.3



94) Photo # 56 31 Green St 2.5



8) Photo # 6629 Crescent St 8.3



93) Photo # 59 44 Green St 2.7



9) Photo # 4849 Crescent St 8.2



92) Photo # 16 25 Green St 2.7



10) Photo # 64 179 Main St 8.1



91) Photo # 93 1 Melilli Pl 2.8



Area Scores

<u>Study Area</u>	<u>Score</u>	
East of Main St / North of Washington St		4.9
East of Main St / South of Washington St	5.1	
West of Main St / North of Washington St	5.6	
West of Main St / South of Washington St	6.5	
South of Union St and Pleasant St	6.8	

Block Scores

<u>Block</u>	<u>Score</u>	
North of Rapallo Ave Block	5.9	
Rapallo Ave / Main St / Green St / DeKoven Dr Block		3.8
Green St / Main St / Ferry St / DeKoven Dr Block	4.2	
Ferry St / Main St / Washington St / DeKoven Dr Block		5.5
Washington St / Main St/ Court St / DeKoven Dr Block		4.8
MLK Jr Way / Main St / Union St / DeKoven Dr Block		6.1
South Main St / Pleasant St / Main St Ext / Crescent St		6.8
Williams St/ Broad St / Old Church St / Main St		7.8
College St / Broad St / William St / Main St		7.0
Court St / Broad St / College St / Main St	5.3	
Washington St / Broad St / Court St / Main St		6.1
Liberty St / Pearl St / Washington St / Main St		6.3
Grand St / Pearl St / Liberty St / Main St		5.8
Spring St / Pearl St / Grand St / Main St		4.0

Streetscape Scores

<u>Streetscape</u>	<u>Score</u>	
Main St north of Rapallo Ave	6.2	
Rapallo Ave, North side		5.3
Green St North Side	3.1	
Main St, east side between Green Street and Rapallo Av		4.9
Green St, South Side	2.6	
Main St, east side between Green Street and Ferry St		5.0
Ferry St, north side	4.4	
Ferry St, south side	3.8	
Main St, east side between Ferry St and Washington St		6.7
Washington St, east of Main St, north side	5.3	
Alsop Ave	5.1	
Main St, east side between Washington St and Court St		5.4
Melilli Pl	2.8	
Court St, north side	4.3	
Main St, east side between MLK Jr Way and Union St		7.5
DeKoven Dr, west side between MLK Jr Way and Union St		3.4
Crescent St	7.6	
South Main St, east side between Crescent St and Pleasant St		5.4
MacDonough Pl		7.0
Main St, west side between William St and Old Church St		8.7
Old Church St	6.5	
Main St, west side between College St and William St		8.0
Broad St, east side between College St and Church St		4.5
Main St, west side between Court St and College St		5.1
Court St, north side between Main St and Broad St		5.0
Main St, west side between Washington St and Court St		6.3
Main St, west side between Liberty St and Washington St		6.3
Main St, west side between Grand St and Liberty St		5.8
Main St, west side between Spring St and Grand St		4.0

Map 4- Area Scores Map

GREEN- 6.0 or greater

RED- 4.0 or less



Map 5- Block Scores Map

GREEN- 6.0 or greater

RED- 4.0 or less



Map 6- Streetscape Scores Map

GREEN- 6.0 or greater

RED- 4.0 or less



Score by Number of Stories

	<u>Score</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Top 25</u>	<u>Bottom 25</u>
1 Story	2.5	5	0	5
2 Stories	5.3	27	4	7
2.5 Stories	5.9	16	5	3
3 Stories	5.9	35	11	7
3.5 Stories	7.6	1	1	0
4 Stories	6.0	11	2	1
5 Stories	7.2	3	2	0
Over 5 Stories	3.2	2	0	2

Detached/Attached Scores

	<u>Score</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Top 25</u>	<u>Bottom 25</u>
Detached	5.5	53	15	16
Attached	5.6	47	10	9

Roof Style Scores

	<u>Score</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Top 25</u>	<u>Bottom 25</u>
Cross Gabled	5.7	11	3	1
Detailed Flat	6.4	35	12	1
Flat	3.8	18	1	12
Front Gable	4.9	12	3	5
Gambrel	7.0	1	0	0
Hip Roof	6.2	3	0	0
Mansard Roof	6.9	7	3	1
Side Gables	5.2	13	3	5

Dormer Scores

	<u>Score</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Top 25</u>	<u>Bottom 25</u>
Without Dormers	5.4	84	19	2
With Dormers	6.4	16	6	23

Theme Scores

	<u>Score</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Top 25</u>	<u>Bottom 25</u>
1 st story and upper stories same theme	5.3	52	12	19
1 st story and upper stories different theme	5.9	48	13	6

Window Scores

	<u>Score</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Top 25</u>	<u>Bottom 25</u>
Façade is made up of less than 50% windows	4.4	36	3	15
Façade is made up of 50% windows	5.9	38	11	8
Façade is made up of greater than 50% windows	6.6	26	11	2

Building Use Scores

	<u>Score</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Top 25</u>	<u>Bottom 25</u>
Mixed-Uses	5.9	47	13	17
Single-Use	5.3	53	12	8

Frontyard

	<u>Score</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Top 25</u>	<u>Bottom 25</u>
Landscaped	5.9	27	9	6

Paved	4.1	10	1	6
Courtyard	8.3	1	1	0
None	5.6	62	14	13

Baywindow

	Score	Total	Top 25		Bottom 25	
Baywindow	6.6	11	4		0	
No Baywindow	5.4	89	21		25	

Porch

	Score	Total	Top 25		Bottom 25	
2-story Porch	4.3	2	0		1	
Balcony	3.4	1	0		1	
Small Porch Entrance	5.7	17	5		5	
Full-Front Porch	5.2	10	3		3	
None	5.7	70	17		15	

Awning

	Score	Total	Top 25		Bottom 25	
Fixed Awning	5.7	12	3		3	
Movable Awning	6.4	11	5		1	
No Awning	5.4	77	17		21	

Doors

	Score	Total	Top 25		Bottom 25	
Located in center of façade	6.2	27	10		5	
Multiple Entrances on façade	5.7	42	12		10	
Entrance located off center on façade	4.9	28	3		9	
No entrance located on façade	5.0	3	0		1	

Shudders

	Score	Total	Top 25		Bottom 25	
Shudders	6.3	7	2		1	
No Shudders	5.5	93	23		24	

Street Trees

	Score	Total	Top 25		Bottom 25	
Street tree located in front of building	6.2	57	21		10	
No street tree located in front of building	4.8	43	4		15	

Rank Listing of the Photos

Rank	Photo #	Street Address	Average Score
1	84	61 Main St	8.7
2	85	151 Main St	8.7
3	65	73 Main St	8.7
4	20	49 Main St	8.7
5	74	533 Main St	8.5
6	23	70 Main St	8.3
7	35	489 Main St	8.3
8	66	29 Crescent St	8.3
9	48	49 Crescent St	8.2
10	64	179 Main St	8.1
11	12	497 Main St	8.1
12	88	49 Crescent St	8.0
13	47	Crescent St/McDnggh Pl	7.9
14	19	179 Main St	7.8
15	36	601 Main St	7.6
16	46	203 Main St	7.6
17	57	62 Main St	7.6
18	31	682 Main St	7.5
19	25	360 Main St	7.5
20	34	480 Main St	7.4
21	62	329 Main St	7.4
22	69	14 Church St	7.3
23	52	504 Main St	7.3
24	44	193 Main St	7.3
25	51	484 Main St	7.3
26	92	46 Washington St	7.2
27	7	460 Main St	7.1
28	33	630 Main St	7.0
29	1	1 Macdonough Place	7.0
30	72	594 Main St	7.0
31	50	22 Main St	7.0
32	45	315-2 Main St	6.9
33	95	423 Main St	6.9
34	99	631 Main St	6.8
35	87	2 Main St	6.6
36	100	695 Main St	6.5
37	38	54 Washington St	6.5
38	71	472 Main St	6.4
39	90	386 Main St	6.2
40	5	332 Main St	6.1
41	77	646 Main St	6.1
42	58	635 Main St	6.0
43	11	13 Alsop Ave	6.0
44	30	15 Crescent St	5.9
45	83	33 Ferry St	5.7
46	26	422 Main St	5.7
47	81	613 Main St	5.6
48	3	70 Broad St	5.6
49	76	22 Church St	5.6
50	94	575 Main St	5.6
51	42	363 Main St	5.5
52	78	642 Main St	5.5
53	9	530 Main St	5.5
54	91	40 South Main St	5.5
55	86	102 Court St	5.5
56	82	353 Main St	5.4

57	15	58 Green St	5.4
58	98	570 Main St	5.3
59	4	178 Court St	5.3
60	6	50 Rapallo Ave	5.3
61	22	106 Court St	5.2
62	13	454 Main St	5.2
63	97	438 Main St	5.2
64	89	148 College	5.1
65	63	233 Main St	5.1
66	32	17 Alsop Ave	5.1
67	73	668 Main St	5.0
68	80	5 Alsop Ave	4.9
69	53	710 Main St	4.8
70	55	50 Washington St	4.8
71	27	194 Court St	4.8
72	41	67 Ferry St	4.5
73	17	339 Main St	4.4
74	40	60 Ferry St	4.4
75	21	6 Alsop Ave	4.4
76	10	44 Washington St	4.1
77	70	388 Main St	4.1
78	75	36 South Main St	3.9
79	39	58 Washington St	3.7
80	24	711 Main St	3.5
81	8	111 DeKoven Dr	3.4
82	54	656 Main St	3.2
83	79	578 Main St	3.1
84	29	578 Main St	3.0
85	67	639 Main St	2.9
86	28	40 Broad St	2.9
87	61	22 Green St	2.9
88	37	46 Green St	2.9
89	49	324 Main St	2.8
90	14	40 Green St	2.8
91	93	1 Melilli Pl	2.8
92	16	25 Green St	2.7
93	59	44 Green St	2.7
94	56	31 Green St	2.5
95	43	71 Ferry St	2.4
96	18	57 Ferry St	2.4
97	96	Main St/ Crescent St	2.3
98	2	515 Main St	2.0
99	60	50 Green St	1.9
100	68	725 Main St	1.9