

2026

MIDDLETOWN TOWNSHIP COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Prepared by Julia French & Liz Martin
Communications Intern | Public Information Officer



Table of Contents

Background	3
Purpose	4
Guiding Principles	5
Best Management Practice	6
Communications Goals	7
Public Engagement	8
Community Communications Survey	11
Project List	16
Stakeholders & Audiences	17
Communication Planning Process	18
Public Participation Spectrum (IAP2)	19
Community Engagement Considerations	20
Performance Measures	21

BACKGROUND



Effective communication is essential to maintaining transparency, accountability, and public trust. Middletown Township is committed to providing residents, businesses, and community stakeholders with timely, accurate, and accessible information while creating meaningful opportunities for two-way communication. By listening to community feedback and sharing information proactively, the Township can better respond to resident needs and encourage greater participation in local government.



This Communications Plan establishes a **framework for consistent, proactive communication** across Township departments. It supports the Township's mission by promoting transparency, highlighting programs and services, encouraging community engagement, and ensuring residents have access to reliable information.



This plan **supports Township initiatives** by improving how information is shared, promoting community engagement, and communicating priorities such as:



Supporting economic development and a vibrant local business community.



Enhancing transparency and public access to information.



Investing in quality infrastructure, parks, and public facilities.



Promoting public safety and a high quality of life.



Practicing responsible stewardship of Township resources.



Strengthening partnerships with community organizations and neighboring municipalities.

PURPOSE

This communications plan serves as a guide for Township staff to communicate consistently, proactively, and effectively with residents, businesses, community partners, and the media. It establishes common goals, responsibilities, and best practices to ensure communications are coordinated, accurate, timely, and aligned with the township's mission and brand.

CORE COMMUNICATIONS FUNCTIONS

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Share timely, accurate Township information.

MEDIA RELATIONS

Coordinate with local news and media outlets.

STRATEGIC COMM.

Plan communications supporting Township priorities.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Encourage resident participation and two-way dialogue.

BRAND MANAGEMENT

Encourage consistent branding and messaging.

INTERNAL COMM.

Keep employees informed across departments.

CRISIS COMM.

Deliver timely emergency information.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Inform the public about Township policies and services.

DIGITAL COMM.

Website, social media, e-newsletters, and e-mail updates

GUIDING PRINCIPLES



LEAD COMMUNICATIONS THROUGH PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Communications should be proactive, coordinated, and aligned with Township goals. Planning ahead ensures information is timely, accurate, and delivered through the most effective channels.



COMMUNICATE WITH CREATIVITY, INNOVATION, AND PURPOSE

Provide accurate, transparent, and easy-to-understand information using a consistent voice, visual identity, and messaging across all Township communications.



SHAPE AND SHARE OUR COMMUNITY'S NARRATIVE

Highlight Township services, accomplishments, projects, events, and the people who make Middletown a great place to live, work, and visit while strengthening the Township's brand and reputation.



STRONG THEMES VERSUS SCATTERED MESSAGE

A communications and engagement program built on strong themes is more effective than a program with scattered and unrelated messages.



PROMOTE DECENTRALIZED COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Effective communication is a shared responsibility across the Township. Staff are encouraged to share timely, accurate information within their areas of expertise to support transparency and public engagement.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

These Best Management Practices guide how Middletown Township communicates with the community every day. They reflect our commitment to transparency, consistency, accessibility, and engagement in all communications.



1. COMMUNICATE EARLY AND OFTEN

- Announce projects before work begins.
- Provide updates during implementation.
- Share final outcomes when projects are complete.
- Avoid communicating only when problems occur.



2. ACCURACY BEFORE SPEED

- Verify information with the responsible department.
- Obtain appropriate approvals before publishing.
- Correct errors quickly and transparently if they occur.



3. USE MULTIPLE COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

No single channel reaches every resident. Share important information through multiple channels:

- Website
- Social Media
- E-News
- Press Releases
- Email
- Public Meetings
- Digital Signature (future)
- Print when appropriate



4. SPEAK IN PLAIN LANGUAGE

- Avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Write for an eighth-grade reading level when possible.
- Explain why something matters to residents.
- Use visuals whenever appropriate.



5. BE CONSISTENT

- Follow Township branding standards.
- Use approved logos, fonts, and colors.
- Maintain a consistent tone and voice.
- Use standardized templates whenever possible.



6. MAKE COMMUNICATIONS ACCESSIBLE

- Follow ADA accessibility guidelines.
- Use captions on videos.
- Provide alternative text for images.
- Consider language needs when appropriate.
- Design content that works on mobile devices.



7. ENCOURAGE TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

- Invite questions and feedback.
- Conduct surveys when appropriate.
- Attend community events.
- Explain how public input influenced decisions.



8. DEPARTMENT COLLABORATION

- Departments notify the Public Information Officer early.
- Department Liaisons provide project updates.
- Communication are coordinated before public release.
- Subject further experts review technical information.



9. PREPARE FOR CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

- Designate official spokesperson.
- Release verified information quickly.
- Update residents regularly as information changes.
- Use all available channels during emergencies.



10. MEASURE AND IMPROVE

Review and evaluate communications regularly to improve our impact.

- Website analytics
- Social media engagement
- E-News performance
- Survey participation
- Public feedback
- Media coverage

GOALS



INCREASE AWARENESS OF TOWNSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES, SERVICES, PROGRAMS AND ISSUES.

- Develop and implement proactive, multi-channel communications campaigns to educate residents about Township services, programs, projects, and responsibilities.
- Create clear, accessible, and engaging content that helps residents understand Township operations, initiatives, and community issues.
- Expand the Township's digital communications through the website, social media, email newsletters, and video to increase reach and engagement.
- Strengthen community outreach and partnerships by leveraging events, local organizations, schools, businesses, and media to amplify Township messaging.

ENHANCE MIDDLETOWN TOWNSHIP'S BRAND IMAGE AND PERCEPTION.

- Develop and distribute Township brand guidelines to ensure consistent branding and messaging.
- Monitor brand use by departments, partners, and third parties for accuracy and compliance.
- Replace outdated letterhead, envelopes, business cards, and other branded materials.
- Update Township logos and branding across websites, signage, vehicles, facilities, and communication platforms.

IMPROVE COMMUNITY OUTREACH, INVOLVEMENT, AND ENGAGEMENT.

- Expand opportunities for two-way communication by encouraging resident feedback through surveys, public meetings, online engagement, and other interactive platforms.
- Increase community participation by promoting Township events, public meetings, volunteer opportunities, and recreation programs through coordinated outreach efforts.
- Strengthen relationships with community partners including schools, businesses, nonprofits, civic organizations, and neighboring municipalities to broaden engagement.
- Enhance public participation by making engagement more accessible through a mix of in-person and digital opportunities that reach diverse audiences.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT CORE PRINCIPLES



At Middletown Township, meaningful public engagement is built on collaboration, transparency, and trust. Middletown Township is committed to creating opportunities for residents, businesses, and community partners to share ideas, provide feedback, and help shape the future of our Township.

INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION

Create welcoming and accessible opportunities that encourage residents, businesses, and community stakeholders to participate in Township decision-making.

COLLABORATION

Strong partnerships between residents, Township officials, community organizations, businesses, and regional partners create better solutions and strengthen the community.

OPEN COMMUNICATION

Provide timely, accurate, and understandable information while clearly communicating how public input will be used throughout the engagement process.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Demonstrate how community input influenced Township decisions and report engagement outcomes whenever possible.

MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

Encourage respectful two-way dialogue by listening to community perspectives, considering diverse viewpoints, and fostering constructive conversations.

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

In addition to the Public Information Officer, the Township relies on staff across all departments to support communication efforts. This plan establishes Communication Liaisons within each department to strengthen coordination and improve stakeholder engagement.

a. **Liz Martin – Public Information Officer:** emartin@middletownbucks.org

b. Department Liaisons' information

- Parks and Recreation- Alexandra Kissinger: akissinger@middletownbucks.org
- Building and Zoning- Madison Vanzant: mvanzant@middletownbucks.org
- Public Works- Matt Pashley: mpashley@middletownbucks.org
- HR- Melissa Gargan: mgargan@middletownbucks.org
- Finance- Mary Hendershot: mhendershot@middletownbucks.org
- Police- Melissa Robison: mrobison@mtpd.org
- Fire- Riley Collins: rcollins@middletownbucks.org

BRANDING

Maintaining consistent branding across all communications strengthens recognition, supports transparency, and reinforces Middletown Township's identity. The Branding Sheet attached below provides the standards for all Township communications.



Futura

Allura

COMPREHENSIVE BRANDING GUIDE



COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

The Township uses a variety of communication channels to reach residents, businesses, visitors, and stakeholders with timely and accurate information.



PRINT

- Quarterly Township Newsletter
- Personalized Letters
- Postcards
- Utility Bill inserts (e.g. Real Estate Tax)



DIGITAL

- Township Website: Middletownbucks.org
- E-Mail
- Billboards
- Monthly Township E-Newsletter
- Online Township Calendar
- QR Codes
- Social Media
 - Facebook: Middletown Township, Bucks County
 - Instagram: @middletownbucks
 - YouTube: Middletown Township, Bucks County
 - TikTok: @middletownbucks



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- Township-Hosted events
 - Groovin at the Gates
 - Earth Day
 - Holiday Open House
 - Township Hosted Events
- Township Meetings
- Phone Calls
- Polls and Surveys
- Pop-up and special events



MEDIA

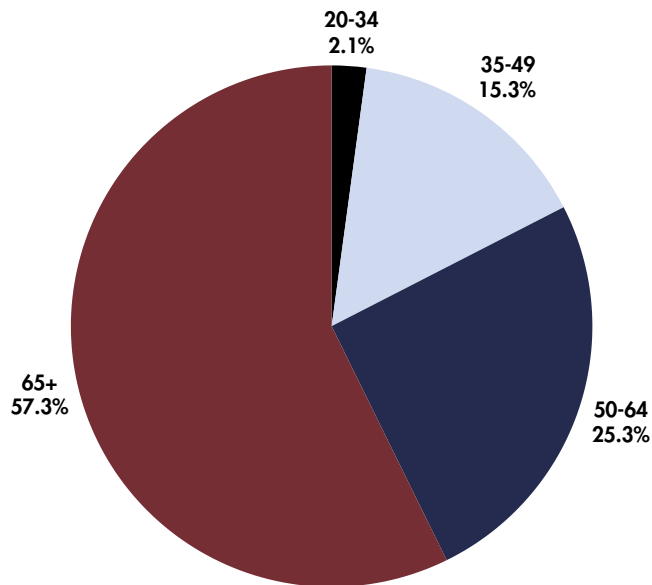
- Press Releases
- Media opportunities
- Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

COMMUNICATIONS SURVEY (2026)

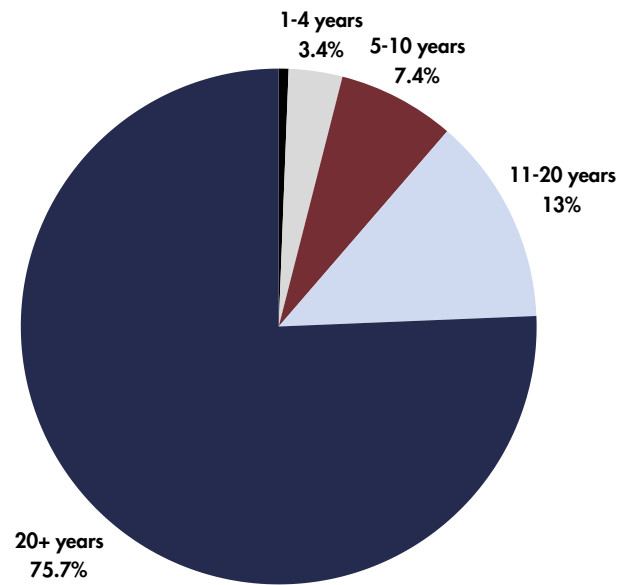
To better understand the communication preferences of Middletown Township residents, a survey was conducted. It was distributed through social media, the Township E-Newsletter, email, the Township website, and at the June Board of Supervisors meeting.

A total of 653 responses were recorded, enough to see trends emerge.

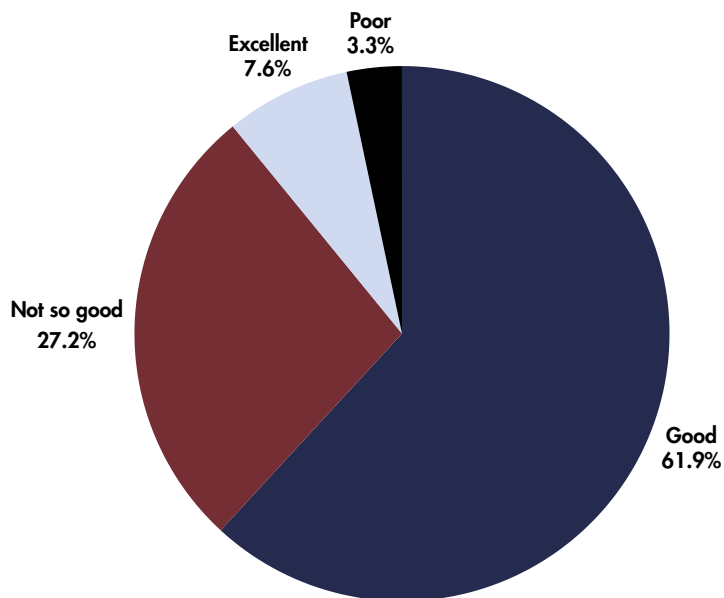
What is your age?



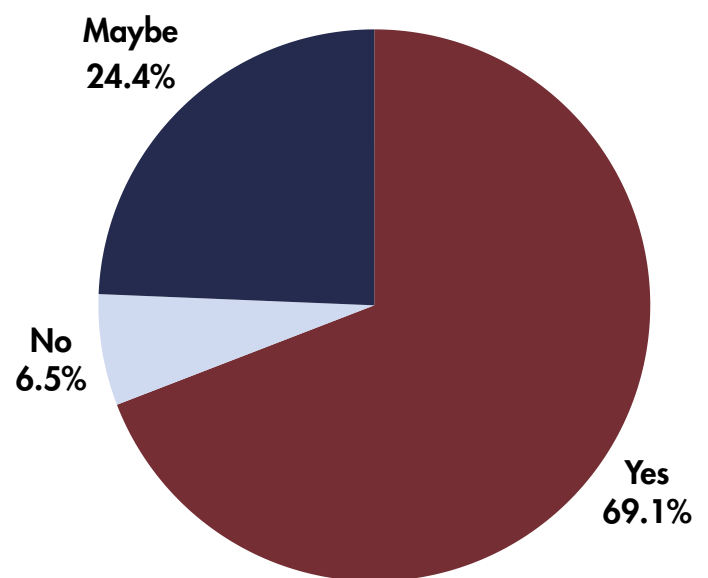
How long have you lived in the Township?



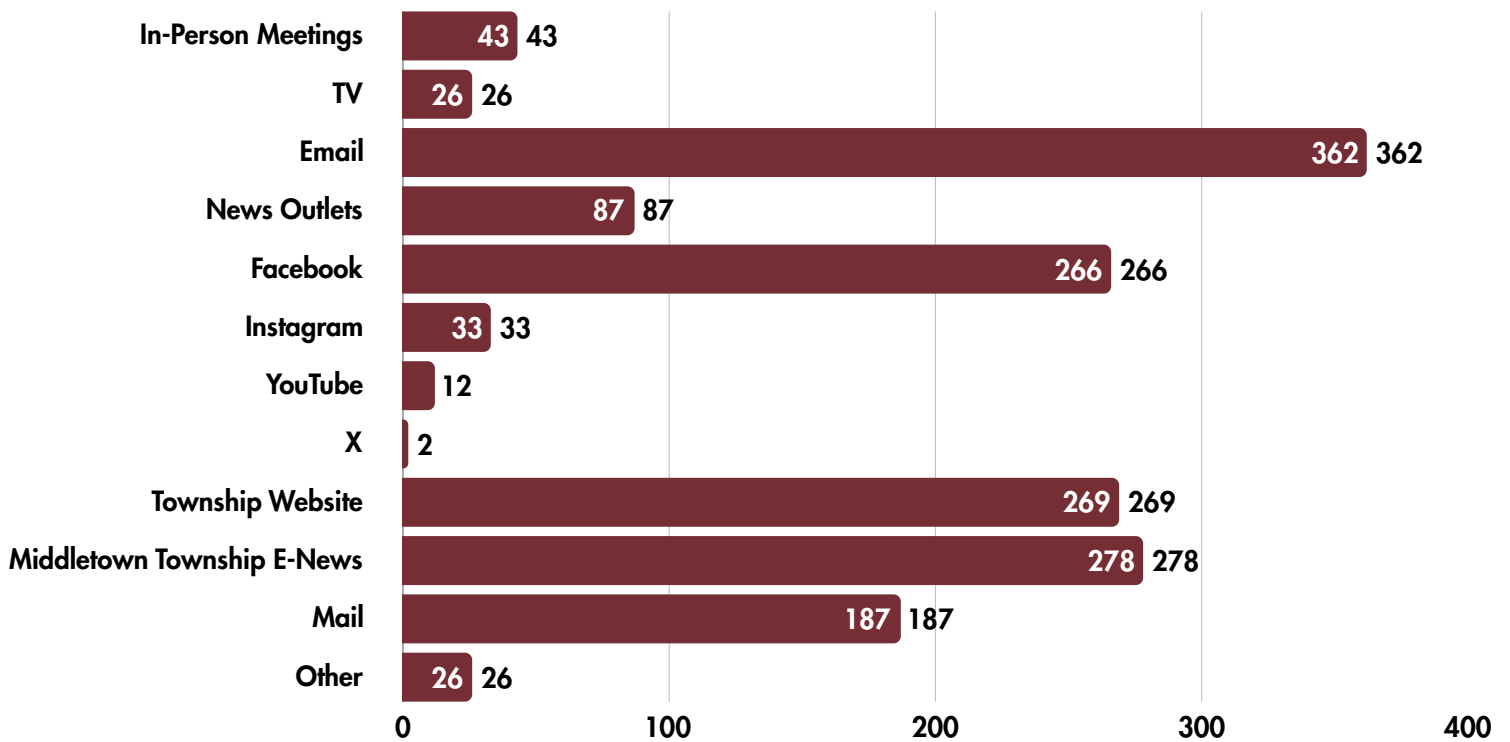
Overall, how good of a job does Middletown Township do in communicating with you?



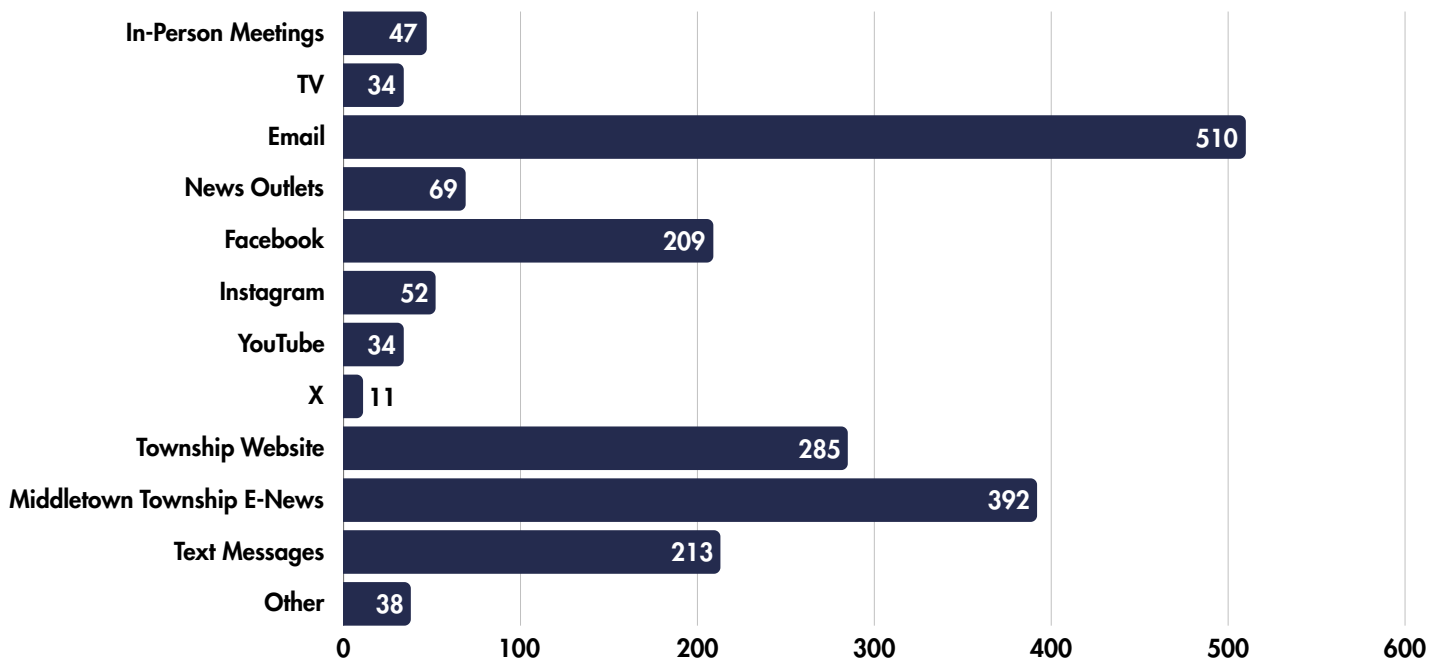
Do you trust the accuracy of the information you receive from Middletown Township?



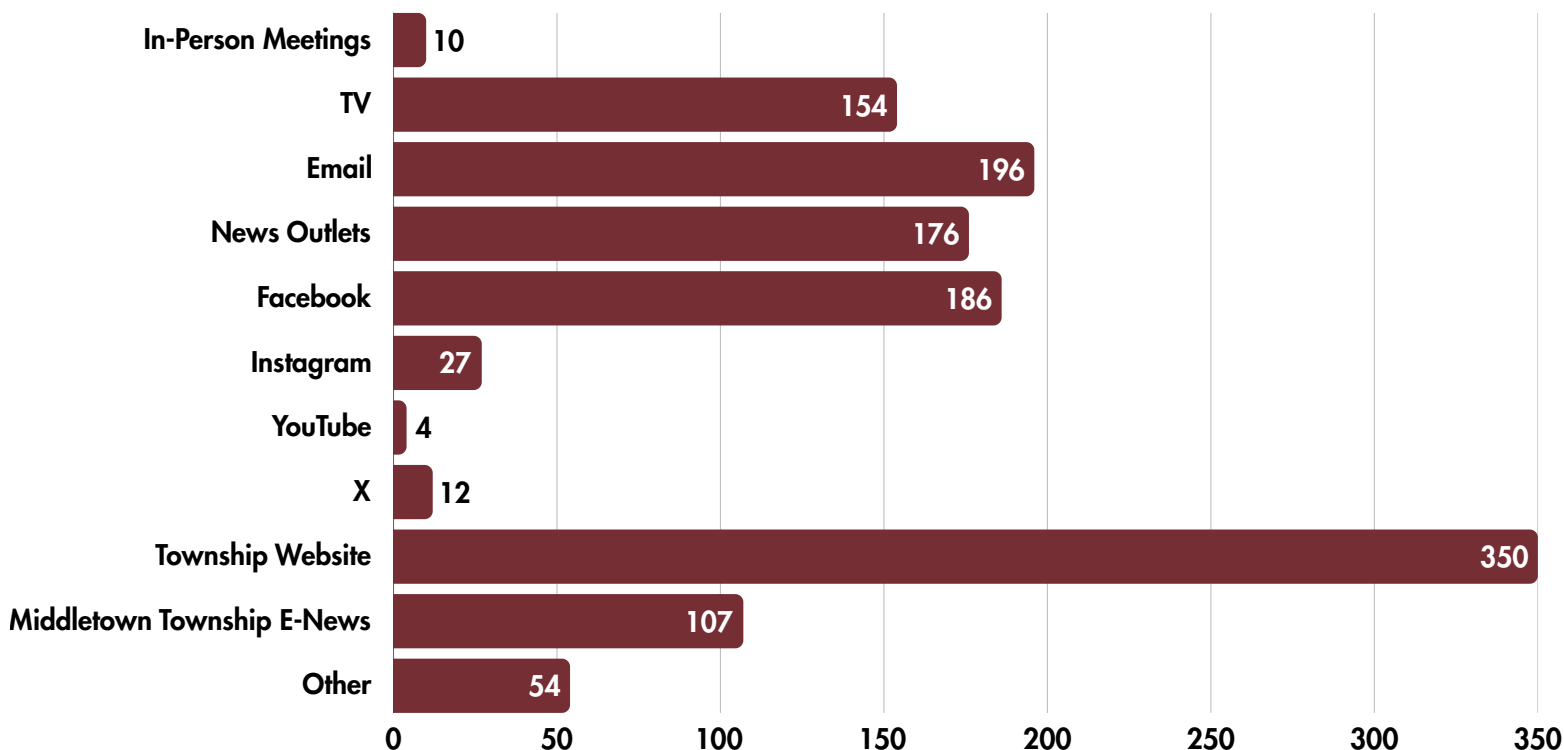
How do you currently receive Township information? (Choose all that apply)



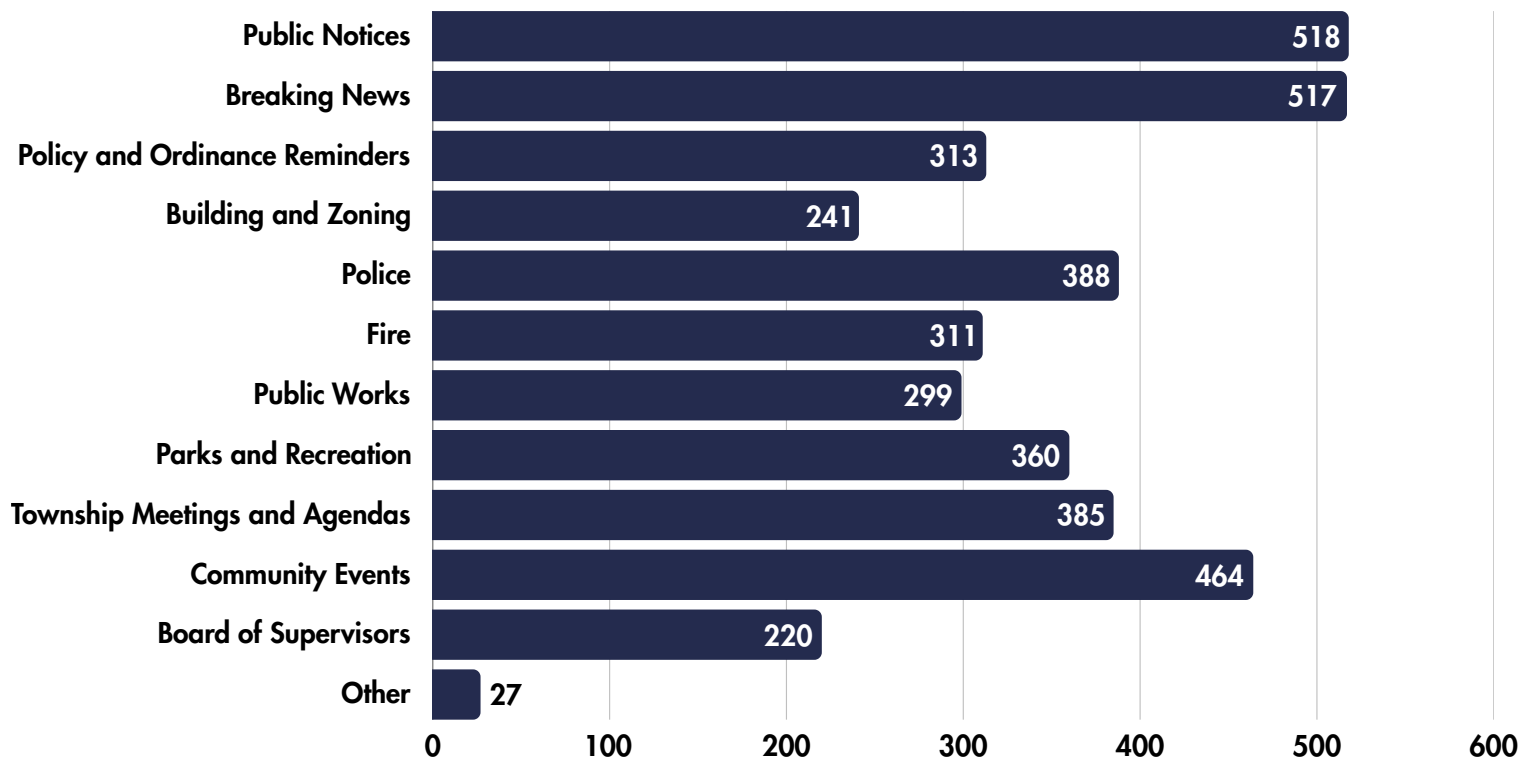
How would you prefer to receive Township information? (Choose all that apply)



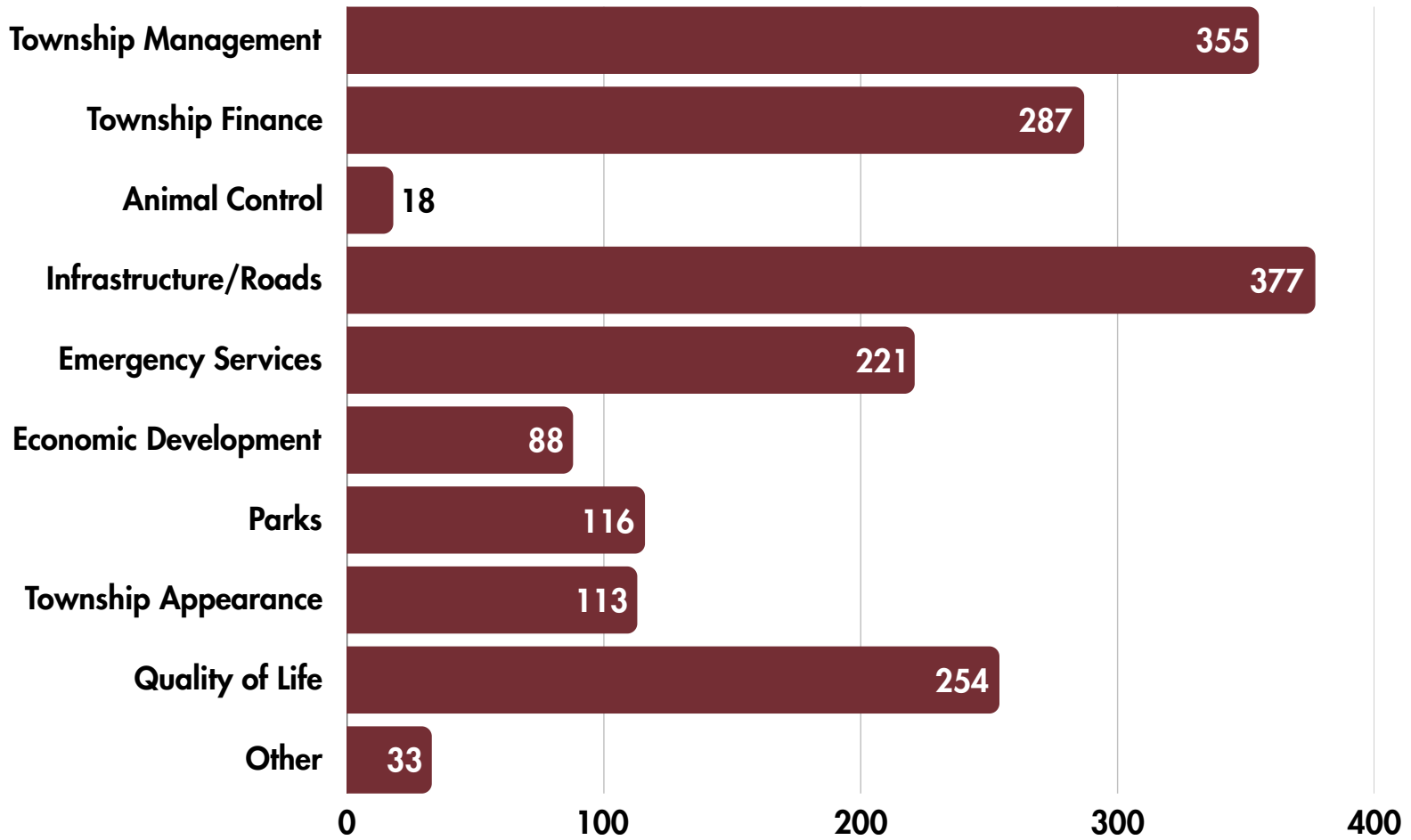
If there were ever a crisis in Middletown Township, where would you turn first for information?



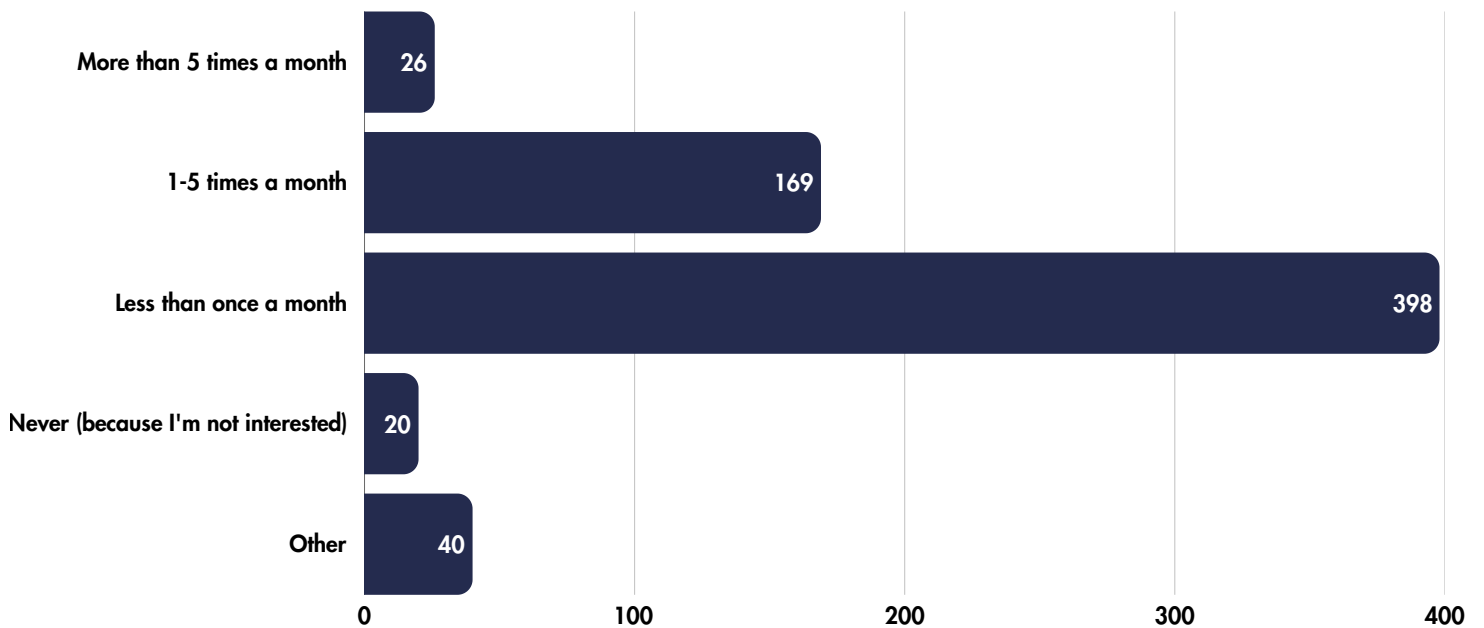
What types of information are you most interested in? (Choose all that apply)



What local issues would you say are your highest priority?



Middletown Township has a website that presents a variety of information about the community. How frequently do you visit the website?



OPEN-ENDED FEEDBACK



WHAT RESIDENTS VALUE MOST

Residents consistently described Middletown Township as:

- Safe and welcoming community
- Beautiful parks and open spaces
- Well-maintained neighborhoods
- Convenient location
- Responsive Police, Fire & EMS services
- Strong sense of community pride
- Dedicated Township staff committed to quality service



OVERALL THEME

Residents expressed a strong appreciation for Middletown's high quality of life and take pride in calling the Township home.



COMMUNICATIONS FEEDBACK

Residents would like to see:

- More frequent email updates
- Earlier notice of Township meetings and development projects
- Improved website information
- Livestreamed or televised public meetings
- Expanded text alert options
- Greater transparency and proactive communication

OTHER RECURRING TOPICS



PROJECT LIST



- Provide communications and public engagement support to the Township Manager, Board of Supervisors, and all departments.



- Coordinate media relations and respond to media inquiries.



- Implement communications plans for Township initiatives, projects, and programs.



- Plan and facilitate public engagement opportunities, including meetings, surveys, and community outreach.



- Redevelop Township website to increase resident transparency and distribute reliable information.



- Create and manage digital content, including social media, videos, photography, press releases, and website updates.



- Promote and support Township events and community initiatives.



- Maintain the Township's brand standards and communications materials.



- Coordinate communications during emergencies and other time-sensitive situations.



- Monitor communication performance and public engagement to improve outreach efforts.



- Support additional communications and public engagement initiatives as needed.



- Redevelop and distribute new resident and business information packets.



- Design consistent email signatures to support cohesion among Township employees.



- Redevelop Township logo to enhance branding across websites, signage, vehicles, facilities, and communication platforms.

AUDIENCE STAKEHOLDERS

Knowing the audience is key to any communications and engagement effort.



INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

- Township Board of Supervisors
- Township Manager
- Township Employees
- Boards and Commissions



OTHER GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

- Community Groups
- Elected and Appointed Officials
- Federal Government
- Legislators
- Military
- Nearby Jurisdictions
- Neighborhood Groups
- News Media
- State Government



EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

- Arts Organizations
 - Artists at the Barn
- Businesses & Employees
- Residents
- Community Partners
 - TMA Bucks
 - Middletown Community Foundation
 - Bucks County Free Library
- Cultural Organizations
- Day Care Providers
- Economic Developers
- Ethnic Groups
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Higher-education Institutions
 - Cairn University
- Media
- Non-profit Organizations
- Places of Worship
- Prospective Residents
- Public and Private Primary and Secondary Educational Institutions
 - Neshaminy School District
 - The George School
 - Newtown Friends
 - Queen of the Universe
- Relators
- Seniors
- Volunteer Groups
 - Parkland Fire Company
 - William Penn Fire Company
 - Penndel Fire Company
 - Langhorne-Middletown Fire Company
 - Penndel-Middletown Emergency Squad
- Sports/Outdoor Groups
- Tourism Organizations
 - Visit Bucks County
 - Visit PA/Pennsylvania Tourism Office
- Township Residents
- Visitors
- Youth Groups



INFLUENCERS

- Community Groups
- Elected and Appointed Officials
- Legislators
- Neighborhood Groups
- News Media

COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING PROCESS

1



PLANNING

The Public Information Officer works with department staff to develop a project-specific communications plan that identifies:

- Purpose and objectives
- Key messages
- Target audiences
- Communication methods and timeline
- Roles and responsibilities
- Success measures

2



REVIEW & APPROVAL

Department leadership reviews the communications plan to ensure messaging is accurate, consistent, and aligned with Township priorities before implementation.

3



IMPLEMENTATION

The Public Information Officer coordinates outreach using the Township website, social media, newsletters, media relations, events, and other communication channels while departments provide subject matter expertise and project updates.

4



EVALUATION

Project outcomes and communication efforts are evaluated using performance metrics, public feedback, and engagement data. Lessons learned are used to improve future communications and community engagement initiatives.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM (IAP2)



Communications and engagement plans for Middletown Township are developed collaboratively between Township departments and the Public Information Officer. Each plan follows a consistent framework while being tailored to the goals and needs of the specific project, ensuring clear communication, transparency, and meaningful public engagement.



Middletown Township adapted the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum and uses it to help determine how to best engage the public on topics and opportunities.

THE IAP2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

← INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION →				
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/ or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternative and the identification of the preferred solution.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.



This spectrum is adapted from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum® to reflect Middletown Township's approach to community engagement.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS



Community outreach events, including public meetings, open houses, workshops, and Township events, provide residents with opportunities to learn, ask questions, and share feedback. Middletown Township is committed to open communication and works collaboratively across departments to create meaningful public engagement opportunities.

Having the ability to attend a meeting is a privilege. Engagement should be designed to reduce barriers to participation, including:

- Accessibility (physical and virtual)
- Translation Needs
- Technology
- Timing

HOW MANY MEETING OPTIONS SHOULD BE PROVIDED?

- Virtual
- In-person
- Hybrid (virtual and in-person)

WHAT SPACE WILL ACCOMMODATE AUDIENCE?

- Public Hall
- Township park facilities
- Neighborhood gathering places
- Middletown Senior Center
- Community Park Barn

OTHER WAYS TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK

- Phone
- In Writing (Letter or Email)

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



Middletown Township will measure the success of its communication and engagement efforts using both quantitative data and qualitative feedback, refining performance measures as the program evolves.

Number Of:

- Online Newsletter Subscribers
- Online Surveys Completed
- Direct Mailings Sent
- Press Releases Sent
- Media Opportunities
- Public Service Announcements
- Participants in Township Community Engagement Opportunities

Social Media Analytics:

- Audience size: Number of followers per channel and overall
- Total engagement: Follows, likes, comments, shares, direct messages, reach, impressions, engagements, video views, etc.

Intangibles

- Reputation/Brand Management
- Building Township trust and credibility
- Crisis Management and Outcomes
- Audience Awareness
- Audience Action

Other

- Media coverage based on press releases
- Print Newsletter
- Community survey results
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts

This Communications Plan is intended to be a living document and should be reviewed annually. Updates may be made as Township priorities, communication technologies, and community needs evolve.

Adopted August 10, 2026

