

**Art in Middletown:**  
**Evaluating Today and Planning for Tomorrow**

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## ***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***

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### **Purpose**

This project aims to understand the arts needs of the Middletown community for the purpose of developing and adjusting programming to make it more attractive and accessible to Middletown residents. To this end, we investigate specific needs in terms of scheduling, pricing, duration, format, and subject matter of possible programs that community members would participate in. We hope that the information generated by this study will be useful to all Middletown arts organizations and be used as a resource to collaboratively plan the future of the arts in Middletown.

### **Methodology**

In order to gather this information, we conducted a phone survey of closed and open-ended questions using a randomly generated sample of Middletown residents with landline phones listed in the ReferenceUSA database for Middletown, CT. We surveyed a total of 177 Middletown residents with a response rate of 51%.

### **Major Findings**

- Over two-thirds (69%) of Middletown residents identify themselves as arts participants.
- There is a market for expanded arts programming in Middletown.
- Respondents participate in the arts in varied and diverse ways, but the most popular art forms are music, visual arts, and theater.
- People currently participate and express more interest for forms of arts participation where they can be passive observers rather than active creators. Generally, events are much more popular than classes.
- Time, information, and cost are the three biggest obstacles preventing further arts participation. These obstacles are particularly salient for people who are currently involved in the arts.
- Arts participation, needs, and wants vary based on cultural background, age, presence of children in the household, and geographic location.
- Arts attenders tend to go to multiple events, participate in multiple art forms, and visit more than one Middletown arts organization.

## **Recommendations**

- Offer more one-time events where people can engage as observers.
- Target groups that participate infrequently, such as people with children and North End residents, as well as frequent-attenders.
- Offer more arts programming that offer the opportunity to learn about different cultures.
- Offer programs during weekday evenings whenever possible.
- Develop ways for Middletown residents to get information about arts programs easily and efficiently.
- Middletown arts locations should work collaboratively to most effectively meet the arts needs of the Middletown community.

## **Conclusion**

While the majority of Middletown residents are already engaged in the arts, there is a demand for more arts programming. In order to capitalize on this market, arts organizations need to adjust what they offer to meet the needs of Middletown residents. Based on our findings, we believe that Middletown arts organizations need to work collaboratively in order to most effectively increase arts participation in Middletown.

## INTRODUCTION

Community arts centers have been proven to be a significant part of community development and individual growth. Middletown, Connecticut has a diverse group of arts organizations that seek to provide residents with the opportunity to be creative, view performances and exhibits, learn about art and culture, and develop art skills. This research project was developed by a team of student researchers and staff of the Green Street Arts Center to identify the arts needs and interests of Middletown residents in order to 1) help direct future arts programming, 2) identify areas where collaboration could benefit various arts organizations, and 3) create new opportunities for residents to engage in the arts.

In a random survey, we asked about Middletown residents' art participation, what they would like to see more of in Middletown and when, what obstacles and motivations affect their participation, and finally, what people had heard about the Green Street Arts Center. The results show what kinds of events and activities the residents of Middletown want and how Green Street and other Middletown arts organizations can offer programming that will increase arts involvement.

Our data suggest that 69% of Middletown residents identify themselves as arts participants and that there is a market for expanded arts programming in Middletown. Specifically, Middletown residents have more of an interest in activities and events where they can be passive observers (viewing performances, exhibits, etc.) rather than active creators (taking classes, workshops, etc). Respondents participate in the arts in varied and diverse ways, but the most popular art forms are music, visual arts, and theater. Arts attenders tend to go to multiple events, participate in multiple art forms, and attend more

than one Middletown arts organization. These findings provide substantial evidence that Middletown arts organizations can coexist and collaborate, to meet all of the arts needs of the community.

Several obstacles to arts participation were identified, the major ones being time, information, and cost. These obstacles are particularly salient for people who are currently involved in the arts. If programming is developed to diminish these obstacles, those who attend infrequently and frequently would attend more. Therefore, we suggest that programming will be more successful if it is aimed to attract and increase the participation of frequent-attenders and infrequent-attenders, rather than to attract non-attenders.

## **THE ROLE OF THE ARTS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

### *Community Arts*

Community arts centers and projects have been developed throughout the country, in part as a way to encourage community development and economic growth. Arts-based community development is promoted as a way to maintain the integrity of an area, using its unique existing assets to create a sense of collaboration, ownership and identity.

Patricia Shifford and Dorothy Lagerroos (2007, p.2) argue that community arts projects are adaptable to any specific area, and can serve community development with everything from working towards “economic justice for those marginal in the power structure,” to preserving folk arts traditions.

Community art is “that which is rooted in a shared sense of place, tradition, or spirit.” (Cohen-Cruz, 2002, p.1). It is based on the idea that people have a need to express themselves creatively and that creativity can spark social change. According to Seane S. Lowe (2000), any public art that is experiential and inclusive by nature is considered community art. Shifford and Lagerroos (2007, p.3-4) also state that supporters of collaborative arts share the perspective that the arts “assist people to re-establish their connections to... each other [in ways] necessary for a healthy community.” This need for connection to one’s community sparked the community arts movement, which began as a reaction to the Industrial Age. During this time period it became clear that Western colonialism threatened several local cultures around the world, triggering an attraction to the art of non-Western cultures. This is reflected today in arts-based community development’s commitment to cross-cultural understanding. It is believed that citizen

participation in cooperative creativity and art-making enhances the ideals of democracy and civil society. Today, arts-based community development occurs everywhere from prisons to Native American reservations in an attempt to benefit attendees' well-being and way of life.

### ***Goals and Impacts of Community Art***

Current efforts geared towards community development have goals that can be met by community arts. Tom Borrup (2007) cites the goals of community development as building interpersonal relationships within the community, establishing collaboration across social divisions, increasing the citizen's sense of ownership of the space and control over the aesthetics of the area, and developing grassroots leadership. In his research on asset-based community cultural development, Borrup found that these goals were often attained through the various community arts centers that he came across. According to his work, these centers succeed in:

- Consciously building social capital
- Creating a strong, positive sense of space
- Recognizing and engaging the cultural assets of the community
- Uniting disparate parts of the community in constructive ways that build trust
- Engaging in issues that influence or shape community health and well-being
- Positively impacting individual development

### *Social Impact*

Lowe's observation of community arts projects in Colorado showed that the communities that engaged in these projects experienced an increased sense of solidarity and collective identity. Solidarity, or informal connections based on common interest or experience, increased as part of the community art process because the structure of the project gave participants an organized opportunity to interact with each other (Lowe, 2000, p. 366-367). The events also fostered a sense of collective identity, defined as “an expression of the nature of group cohesiveness and the commonality shared among individuals within the group” (Lowe, 2000, p. 374). Different community groups had the chance to identify and express themselves through the symbolic nature of the art projects that functioned as a communicator of culture or as a delineation of shared space (Lowe, 2000, p. 374-77). Community art projects are thought to be particularly effective as community building events because they provide public, structured interactions that use inclusive decision-making, and collaboratively create art and build community (Lowe, 2000). Lowe suggests that “the nature of the creative process is a form of ritual interaction that results in the production of a community symbol that... is sacred. Thus, community art serves as a catalyst for developing community because it is both the setting for group solidarity building and the symbol of group identity” (Lowe, 2000, p. 381).

Solidarity and identity are important to community development and could be the basis for residents to organize themselves to address social problems (Lowe, 2000, p. 382). Community art, therefore, provides the opportunity for community organizing and

development that extends beyond a community art project or center, and provide a setting for positive community development and health.

### ***Economic Impact***

While the arts have been repeatedly shown to aid community development efforts by improving a sense of community and strengthening social bonds across lines of social stratification, the arts are also important to a community's economic situation. Americans for the Arts, a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the arts in America, conducted a comprehensive impact study of nonprofit arts organizations in the U.S. in 2000. The study found that the art industry generates a total of \$134 billion in economic activity and \$24.4 billion in tax revenues every year (Americans for the Arts, 2002, p. 4). Nationally, this activity has resulted in the equivalent of 4.85 million full-time jobs—describing the total amount of labor, not number of employees (Americans for the Arts, 2002, p. 5)—\$89.4 billion in household income, \$6.6 billion in local government tax revenue, \$7.3 billion in state government tax revenues, and \$10.5 billion in federal income tax revenues (Americans for the Arts, 2002, p. 4).

### ***Who Participates in the Arts?***

*The Values Study*, published in 2004 by the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism to explore the meaning and value of arts participation to Connecticut residents, found that people who participate in the arts derive cognitive, socio-cultural, physical, spiritual, and other personal benefits. Although the arts can benefit everyone, people vary greatly in their amount of arts participation for a variety of reasons. Table 1 below describes which groups tend to have high arts participation and what groups tend

to have lower arts participation. Several studies, however, have shown that overall, people who attend arts events and activities and those who don't have similar interests, suggesting that the main reason why people don't participate is a lack of opportunity. This could be caused by economic factors, perceived social boundaries, lack of information, transportation limitations, etc.

**Table 1 Factors Affecting Arts Participation (National)**

<b>Factors that increase one's likelihood of arts participation</b>	<b>Factors that decrease one's likelihood of arts participation</b>
High income	Low income
More education	Less education
Exposure to arts as a child	Lack of exposure to arts as a child
Engagement in civic/community/religious/political activities	Lack of engagement in civic/community/religious/political activities
Being married	Being single
Having children <sup>δ</sup>	No children <sup>δ</sup>
Race is white <sup>δδ</sup> (DiMaggio, 1990)	Race is black <sup>δδ</sup> (DiMaggio, 1990)

<sup>δ</sup> Income through children from Walker et al, 2002.

<sup>δδ</sup> Race and ethnicity have been shown to impact participation; however this result depends on whether art forms match cultural interests (Walker et al, 2002). For example, African Americans are more likely to participate in Afro-American art forms (Dimaggio 1990).

### *The History of the Green Street Arts Center*

In 1997, the Middletown city planning office started discussions with the community about what could be done to revitalize the North End, Middletown's poorest and "last truly urban residential neighborhood" (North End Action Team, 2007). These meetings resulted in the formation of a resident-led advocacy group, the North End Action Team (NEAT). Wesleyan University's Center for the Arts began working with University leaders on plans for opening a community arts center in Middletown in 2001. A feasibility study concluded that an arts center in Middletown would generate increased commercial and economic activity and thus would promote community and residential development. The North End was thought to have the most to benefit from this development because it faced special challenges due to the low average household income of residents (North End Action Team, 2007). The city agreed to rent the building where it is currently located in the North End for \$1 a year. Wesleyan and NEAT then began collaboration to develop the plans for the center, raise funds to renovate the building, and develop programming. The Green Street Arts Center opened its doors in 2005.

Today, Green Street combines the resources of Wesleyan and Middletown to engage the creativity of the community in order to enhance the lives of the people and the environment of the neighborhood. The main principles of the center are 1) to reflect the whole range of visual and performing arts, 2) to uphold the diversity present in the community, and 3) to provide a place for community gathering and celebration.

## METHODOLOGY

Our community partners at Green Street Arts Center wanted to uncover the unmet arts needs of the Middletown population. It was important that our research include as many Middletown residents as possible in order to accurately reflect the diverse needs, desires, and participatory trends of Middletown residents. Keeping these goals in mind, we conducted a phone survey of Middletown residents, the most time-efficient way for us to collect data from a large number of people. We included closed- and open-ended questions in order to capture information that could be quantified and compared between groups without losing the broader picture and story around arts participation provided by qualitative responses.

### *Sampling*

Our sampling frame was a list of Middletown residents with land-line phones from ReferenceUSA (for a consideration of the bias this introduced, see below). From this list we selected the first name on every even numbered page. If someone did not pick up or the selected number was disconnected, we called the number directly following the one selected. We continued in this manner until someone answered the phone. We called each person only once, regardless of whether they picked up. The total number of even pages was 348, meaning that we asked 348 people if they were willing to take the survey. Considering the literature which suggests telephone surveys should expect a 36% response rate (Hembroff et. al, 2005), we expected to obtain approximately 125 completed surveys. Each caller kept a log of how many people she called, how many

picked up, and how many agreed to the interview in order to calculate the response rate, which was 51%. The total sample size was 177.

### *Survey*

We developed the open and closed ended questions for the survey based on suggestions of areas of interest from our community partners at Green Street. (For a copy of the survey, see Appendix A.) To save time, the first question in the survey screened respondent to ensure that they were eligible to participate (confirming that the respondent was over the age of eighteen and a Middletown resident). Next, the survey asked respondents about their current participation in the arts: what they do, if and how they are involved, and where they go. The survey also asked what arts activities or events people would like to see more of in Middletown and what times they could attend such activities. The survey then had respondents evaluate the importance of a variety of motivational factors as well as obstacles to their arts participation. Towards the end, one question asked respondents what they knew about the Green Street Arts Center to determine whether people know about Green Street and its programming, and have accurate information. Finally, demographic information such as geographic location, age, family status, and cultural background were collected so that the arts participation, needs, and interests of different groups could be compared.

### *Data Collection*

During data collection we took a number of precautions to guard against bias and protect the confidentiality of our respondents. We made phone calls from 5:30-8pm on weeknights and, in order to reach subjects who might work nights, on Sunday afternoons from 12:30-4:30pm. During each interview callers read a scripted, uniform introduction identifying themselves as calling from Wesleyan University in collaboration with Green Street Art Center (to read the scripted introduction, see the survey in Appendix A). All callers had copies of the survey and read the survey questions following printed instructions. All respondents were informed that the survey was confidential. Callers recorded the answers by hand while administering the survey. No identifying information was recorded to protect the confidentiality of the respondents. At the end of the survey, respondents were asked if they would like to be added to Green Street's mailing list and were informed that if they agreed, their contact information would be kept separate from their answers to the survey. The data collection phase lasted from March 3rd to April 10th, with each team member spending approximately six hours per week making calls.

### *Analysis*

We analyzed all the quantitative information using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive data were generated for each question and correlations between questions were investigated based on the trends suspected by our group and our partners at Green Street. By coding the answers generated to the qualitative questions we transformed most of these into quantitative information that we could enter into the SPSS software. We ran Chi Square tests of statistical significance to

determine the probability that certain factors are really affecting the population or whether the patterns we noticed are the result of chance.

Statistical significance means that we are 95% (or 90% if the “alpha level” is .10) certain that a pattern we see between two variables is not due to chance. When findings are not deemed statistically significant, we are less than 95% sure that our findings are not the result of chance. Findings that are not statistically significant may still indicate a real and important pattern in the data, which would be statistically significant if we had a larger sample size. For this reason, we included in our report findings that were and were not statistically significant. If a finding is significant at an alpha level of .05 (which means we are 95% sure) we have indicated this with one asterisk (\*), and if a finding is significant at an alpha level of .10 (which means we are 90% sure), this is indicated with two asterisks (\*\*). Thus, findings with one asterisk are highly statistically significant, findings with two asterisks are somewhat statistically significant, and findings with no asterisks are not statistically significant. We remind the reader that a finding that is not found to be statistically significant may still be true; we simply didn’t have enough statistical evidence to feel confident that it is.

### *Limitations*

The format and execution of our survey introduced several biases that may affect our results (for a more detailed explanation of biases, see Appendix B). First of all, we contacted residents via telephone, which excluded populations without a land-line phone. This includes individuals who only have cell phones or are without any telephone. Research suggests that up to 7% of adults in the United States do not have a land line

phone (Blumberg, Luke, & Cynamon, 2006). In addition, we suspect that younger people are using cellphones instead of landlines at disproportionate rates to the rest of the population. Although this is not ideal, we believe that it has not significantly skewed our results given that the percentage of households without landlines is still relatively low.

Our information is also limited to those who were able to complete the survey. During the process of surveying we did not interview individuals who did not speak English. We encountered Spanish, Polish, and Italian speakers and did not have a translated survey or sufficient language ability to accommodate these respondents. According to census data in 2000, 6% of the Middletown population aged five or older speaks English less than 'very well' and 15% of the population speaks a language other than English at home. Studies have shown that recent immigrants participate in the arts at lower rates than non-immigrants or immigrants who have lived in the United States for more than ten years (Walker & Sherwood, 2002). This suggests that people who do not speak English face unique obstacles to their participation in the arts. Our study cannot address these issues because it excluded people who do not speak English very well. Other people were unable to complete the survey due to illness or lack of adequate hearing.

Finally, although we generally followed the written script and questions, we did occasionally deviate from the text in order to facilitate comprehension. For example, callers rephrased questions if they were not understood and asked follow-up questions if the respondent's answer was not clear. Given that we did allow for flexibility, we took a number of precautions to ensure that using different callers did not bias the results. Each

interviewer periodically listened to other interviewers conduct the interview to minimize variation in interview style.

We can't be sure how all these response-bias factors interacted and for which particular demographics our survey might generate more or better information. However, we can get an idea of how representative our survey was by comparing several of the demographic characteristics of respondents to Census data on the population of Middletown.

**Table 2 Demographic Information of Respondents**

	<b>Study Sample</b>	<b>Middletown Population</b>
<b>Age<sup>δ</sup></b>		
Adults	76.3	81.3
Senior Citizens	20.3	18.6
<b>Race<sup>δδ</sup></b>		
Hispanic/Latino	3.6	5.3
Black	10.1	12.3
White	78.6	80.0
Asian	1.2	2.7
Other	6.5	2.0

<sup>δ</sup> Age: The age range for senior citizens in our survey was 62 and over; however Middletown Census data only had information on how many people are 65 and older. This difference may explain why there is a higher percent of seniors in our sample than in the general population.

<sup>δδ</sup> Race: Survey respondents were asked their ethnic or cultural background. Some respondents reported their race while others told us their nationality or ethnicity. In order to compare our data with data from the Middletown census we included people who said Italian, Irish, or another European background as white, even though we cannot be completely sure of their racial background.

As shown in Table 2, the demographics of our sample correspond closely to the Census figures. It is important to note that the Census data for Middletown is from 2000, therefore differences between our sample and the Middletown population may represent

demographic changes of the city over the past seven years rather than a bias in our sample. The only two groups that seem to be significantly underrepresented in our survey are Hispanics and Asians. Although our study does have a number of limitations, overall our sample should accurately represent Middletown residents and provide useful information about their arts needs.

## RESULTS

### *Arts Participation*

When asking respondents whether or not they had participated in the arts in the past year, we tried to keep the question as broad as possible. As Walker (2002) found, defining arts participation according to narrow middle-class standards obscures the involvement of other groups in the arts. By phrasing the question, “Have you participated in any arts activities within the past year?” and then asking a series of follow-up questions about hobbies, participation in arts classes, attendance at cultural events<sup>1</sup> and so forth, we generated information about a broad range of arts participation without imposing a preconceived notion of what counts as involvement in the arts. For the purposes of the discussion in this report, participation will be defined as involvement in either formal (organized events, classes and activities) and/or informal (hobbies) arts.

The majority of those surveyed, 69% (122), had participated in some arts activities within the past year. While we recognize both formal (organized events such as performances, classes, and workshops) and informal (unorganized activities such as personal hobbies) participation as arts participation, we were particularly interested in attendance at formal events and activities, which we’ll call *attendance*. We divided all respondents, whether they participated in informal categories or not, into categories of frequent-attenders, infrequent-attenders, and non-attenders, based on how many *formal* events or classes they had participated in. Frequent-attenders (those who had attended four or more events or enrolled in at least one class in the past year) accounted for 38% (66) of respondents, infrequent-attenders (one-three events and no classes) made up 26%

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<sup>1</sup> Cultural events refer to events, performances, and exhibits which focus on learning or appreciation of an ethnic tradition.



### **Classes, clubs, and organized groups**

Participation in classes, clubs, and organized groups is quite varied, and responses included playing in a band, attending a book club or computer graphics class, and taking a class in culinary arts (see Appendix D for full list of responses). The wide range of answers may indicate openness and interest in non-traditional types of classes and groups organized around the arts, and also may point to a current existence of a wide range of routes for people to participate in the arts. The two most popular categories of classes were in visual arts and music, which may point to areas of greatest interest or simply reflect current available programming.

That being said, compared to other modes of participation, a low percentage of respondents are currently taking an arts class. Few respondents had enrolled in classes, especially in comparison to the number of teachers. Of those surveyed, 20% (36) had participated in a class or organized arts group or club in the last two years. Of those involved in a group or class, 25% (9) were involved as teachers. This imbalance can be appreciated by imagining that if our respondents were broken into classes, there would be one teacher for every three students. This low participation in classes may be related to the large time commitment that classes usually demand, given the finding that time is a major obstacle to arts participation (see Obstacles section).

### **Hobbies**

In addition to organized groups and classes, arts hobbies are an important outlet for people with arts interests to explore their creativity and develop skills in various kinds

of activities. Hobbies are usually done at home or in another informal setting and include a wide range of activities from woodworking to playing an instrument. We gathered data about Middletown residents' arts hobbies in order to further understand their interests in the arts and how they are participating in arts activities.

**Table 4 Most Popular Hobbies**

<b>Hobby</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Arts and Crafts <sup>δ</sup>	10.7
Photography	8.5
Needle Crafts <sup>δδ</sup>	6.8
Plays Instrument	6.8
Creative Writing <sup>δδδ</sup>	5.6
Painting	5.1
Handicrafts <sup>†</sup>	5.1
Design <sup>††</sup>	5.1
Other	5.1
Drawing	3.4
Gardening	3.4
Reading	2.3
Other Visual Art <sup>†††</sup>	2.3
Singing	1.7
Dance	1.7
Culinary	1.1

<sup>δ</sup> Arts and crafts: scrap bookings, collaging, painting miniatures, etc.

<sup>δδ</sup> Needle crafts: sewing, knitting, crocheting, embroidery, quilting, etc.

<sup>δδδ</sup> Creative writing: song-writing, poetry, short story, etc.

<sup>†</sup> Handicrafts: woodwork, metalwork, etc.

<sup>††</sup> Design: interior design, costume design, set design, fashion design, architecture, etc.

<sup>†††</sup> Other visual art: ceramics, sculpture, graphic art, etc.

A substantial amount (46%) of residents reported having at least one arts hobby. Most people with hobbies only have one or two (only about eight percent reported having three or more hobbies). As shown in Table 4, the most popular hobbies are in the arts and crafts category. This is closely followed by photography and then needle crafts and playing an instrument.

### **Other ways of participating in the arts**

Though the categories above reflect the most common ways Middletown residents are involved in the arts, 30 people listed other ways they participate in the arts. Sixteen respondents (9%) participated by contributing to local arts organization through working, volunteering, donating money, or serving as board members.

### **Participation across art forms**

In addition to the diversity of types of arts involvement within our total sample, individuals who had participated in the arts in the last year tended to be involved in two or more art forms (52%) rather than just one (27%).\* This suggests that people involved in the arts in one area also tend to be involved in other forms of art.

## ***Where People go for Art***

### **Locations in Middletown**

As shown in Table 5, Middletown residents attend events and classes at many different local arts organizations. Although only 52% (91) of respondents had visited any of the eleven Middletown locations in the past two years, nearly half (45) of those who

did went to more than three different locations, and 15% (14) went to more than seven. Furthermore, frequent-attenders were almost three times as likely to have visited more than seven of the listed organizations than infrequent-attenders (17% compared to 7%). These statistics demonstrate that the more individuals attend arts activities to begin with, the more likely they are to participate in arts in many different locations.

**Table 5 Attendance at Middletown Arts Locations in Past Two Years**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Percent Attended</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Art Farm	6.8	12
The Buttonwood Tree	18.2	32
Davison Art Center	21.0	37
Green Street Arts Center	17.0	30
Oddfellows Playhouse	25.6	45
Stage Left Dance	3.4	6
Vinnie’s Jump & Jive	10.8	19
Center for the Arts	25.0	44
Wesleyan Potters	29.5	52
Yoga in Middletown	6.8	12
Zilkha Gallery	15.9	28
Other	17.1	30

N=176

**Locations outside Middletown**

Respondents left Middletown for cultural museums, art galleries, plays and musical theater. Some of the most cited specific venues within Connecticut included The Bushnell, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Yale University for theater and art galleries, The Goodspeed Opera House, and New Britain Museum of American Art. The most common destinations were Hartford, New Haven, Boston, and New York City, but

many smaller towns within Connecticut, as well as cities in other regions of the country and internationally, were named.

### ***The Market for Arts in Middletown***

In Middletown, many respondents appreciate the arts programming that already exists. As one respondent stated, “Middletown has a lot to offer.” The majority are actively engaged in art both in and outside of Middletown. Yet, our results indicate there is still a market for further arts programming. Of the 177 survey respondents, 78% (135) indicated at least one art activity they would attend if it were more available in Middletown. Even more telling, 81% of respondents who participate in the arts reported that they fulfill some of their arts needs outside of the immediate Middletown area. 61% attend arts locations in other Connecticut cities, which suggests they are leaving Middletown specifically for the arts. Some respondents stated directly that there is "not a lot of local stuff available" and "all the arts stuff is far away." These findings indicate that there is a demand for more arts programming in Middletown.

Our results suggest that respondents are currently leaving Middletown for arts needs they would prefer to fulfill here. As one respondent told us, “I attend plays in other cities and would go in Middletown if it were more available.” The sentiments of this respondent represent an overarching pattern: arts participation outside of Middletown is highly correlated with expressing a desire for more arts programming within Middletown.\* 63% (83) of people who left Middletown reported at least one event they would attend if it were more available in Middletown, whereas only 37% (39) of people who had not left Middletown for art in the past two years said there is something they want more of in Middletown. Therefore, both what people reported wanting and what

people left Middletown to participate in are good gauges for what types of events Middletown arts organizations should offer.

By far, the most common interests of Middletown residents are visual arts (including crafts), music, and theater. This is supported both by what people said they would attend if it were available in Middletown, and what people left Middletown to find (see Appendix E for data on arts participation outside Middletown).

**Table 6 Art Interests of Middletown Residents<sup>6</sup>**

<b>Art Forms</b>	<b>Percent Interested</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent who left Middletown</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Visual Art	33.1	58	45.8	44
Theater	26.9	47	24.0	23
Music	26.9	47	15.6	15
Musical Theater	10.8	19	--	--
Dance	5.7	10	--	--
Other	18.7	32	14.6	14

<sup>6</sup> This chart is missing data on the number of people who left Middletown for musical theater and dance. Since there were so few people who reported leaving Middletown for these activities quantitative data was not recorded for them. “Percent interested” based on N of 175; “Percent who left Middletown” based on N of 96, an earlier calculation based on only those who indicated they participated in the arts in the last year. See “Additional Limitations (Methods section)” in Appendix B.

Respondents most frequently mentioned wanting more visual art and also left Middletown most often to participate in visual arts activities. Specifically, 12% (21) would like a gallery, exhibit or museum, 8% (15) want classes, and 8% (14) are interested in arts fairs. Several people suggested a large art show that would sell student or professional work. For example, one respondent told us that there should be a “Budding Young Artists Expo...I’d like to see more art shows where you can buy high school and college student’s art. Young people’s art is great and inexpensive.” Another respondent described a possible art show of “art that citizens create for sale in street markets.”

Although more people wanted art exhibits or classes than an art show, we found it noteworthy that so many mentioned such a specific kind of event.

Also, many said they would attend (19%) and frequently leave Middletown for (24%) theater. In addition, 11% of respondents said they wanted more musical theater.

Though fewer respondents leave Middletown for music, the sample indicated that there is just as much desire for music in Middletown as theater. People indicated a wide range of music styles of interest. As one respondent put it, they want “any music concerts except for country.” The types of music people were most interested in were classical (4%) and jazz (5%).

Overall, respondents were more interested in being passive attenders than active attenders in the arts: 53% of respondents described wanting more activities where they could passively observe. Only 15% of respondents told us they wanted to be actively involved in creating or performing art. As Table 7 illustrates, this pattern hold true across all the most popular forms of art. People may be hesitant to make more long-term commitments, such as enrolling in a class or joining a group, because of a lack of time, which was reported as the greatest obstacle to participation (see Obstacles section).

**Table 7** **Passive Versus Active Participation in the Arts**

<b>Art Forms</b>	<b>Percent Interested in Passive Participation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent Interested in Active Participation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Visual Art	20.0	35	8.5	15
Theater	18.6	33	0.0	0
Music	17.6	31	2.3	4
Musical Theater	9.0	16	0.6	1

### *Motivations*

In order to determine what motivates residents to attend arts activities, we asked respondents to rank the importance of different factors on a scale of very important (1), somewhat important (2), and not important (3). Thus, in the following results the smaller the average score, the more important that factor is to respondents. As shown in Table 8, respondents said that all of the listed motivators for attendance are at least somewhat important and should be taken into account.

**Table 8 Overall Motivations for Arts Attendance**

<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Value</b>
The opportunity to learn about a different culture	1.47	Very Important
The opportunity to learn about your own culture	1.55	Somewhat Important
The reputation of the organization	1.81	Somewhat Important
Friends or family members are planning to attend	1.82	Somewhat Important
The opportunity to socialize	1.87	Somewhat Important
The reputation of the artist	1.90	Somewhat Important
The opportunity to be active	1.93	Somewhat Important
No charge for events	2.06	Somewhat Important

Respondents ranked the opportunity to learn about one's own and different cultures as the two most important motivators for participation. When asked which cultures they are interested in, respondents gave a wide array of answers. The most cited cultures of interest were Hispanic and African, though as shown in Table 9, the greatest concentration of answers falls in the "other" category. The large size of the "other" group is due to the fact that, in addition to those cultures shown below which were frequently

mentioned, there were over twenty cultures in which only a handful of people expressed interest (for a complete list of cultural groups included in “other,” see Appendix F). Most cultural categories were created directly from survey responses; however, for a few categories we aggregated smaller cultural interests. For example, the category for interest in Hispanic culture includes Central or South American, Spanish, or Caribbean cultures. Interest in Native American cultures range from wanting to learn about native groups from Connecticut to Mayan and Aztec civilizations. Overall, respondents are very interested in learning about a wide range of cultures.

**Table 9 Cultures of Interest**

<b>Culture</b>	<b>Percentage Interested</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Other	38.8	47
Hispanic	12.4	15
African	11.6	14
Native American	9.1	11
Italian	8.3	10
African American	5.1	9
Irish	5.1	9
Indian	4.5	8
Middle East	4.0	7

## *Obstacles*

Understanding residents' interests is a first step in increasing arts attendance, but it is also important to consider the obstacles that act as barriers to attendance. Thus, a main question regarding Middletown residents' arts participation is what exactly keeps people from attending events and activities? Which of these are avoidable? Table 10 reviews the main obstacles reported.

**Table 10**                      **Obstacles to Arts Participation**

<b>Obstacle</b>	<b>Percent of respondents</b>
Time	55.5
Lack of information	32.4
Cost	12.7
Other	12.7
Transportation	11.0
Lack of interest	8.7
Having children	6.9
Disability	5.8
Parking	4.0
Unwelcoming environment	2.9
Distance	1.2

Most obstacles were reported more often by infrequent and frequent-attenders than non-attenders. This indicates that attenders are more aware of factors that limit their participation and attendance, and would attend even more if these obstacles were removed. While these obstacles may reduce participation, they do not seem to completely prevent it (see Appendix H for information about the impact of obstacles on participation).

Lack of interest is the only obstacle that was reported more often by non-attenders than attenders, indicating that a main reason why people don't participate in the arts at all is due to a general disinterest rather than other more avoidable obstacles. This obstacle was mentioned by 9% of respondents.

The greatest obstacle reported was a lack of time, with 56% of the survey population reporting it as a limiting factor. This is consistent with the finding that Middletown residents are less likely to attend classes than they are to attend events because classes take more time than one-time events. While this is a hard obstacle to work around when designing arts programming, it could mean that workshops and one-time events might be more accessible to this population.

About a third of those surveyed reported lack of information as a major obstacle. Some found out about events after they occurred, while others reported that they simply didn't know where to find information about events in the area.

In terms of cost, it seems that people are willing to pay for arts, but want it to be affordable. Though respondents ranked no charge for events as the least important motivational factor, 13% still stated that the cost of art events was prohibitive. Cost may also be more important to some population groups than others, as discussed later in the Participation Factors by Demographic Groups section.

Having children can be an obstacle to attendance if the program is inappropriate or uninteresting for children or doesn't offer a place for children to be taken care of during the program. This obstacle could also mean that respondents feel that having children takes up too much of their time, leaving little room for arts participation.

A small number of respondents reported a lack of access to arts events for various reasons. Transportation was reported as an obstacle by about a tenth of those surveyed, which includes those who don't have a car or easy access to adequate public transportation. Some respondents reported having a disability which limits their mobility and/or ability to leave home. Some activities are hard for this group to participate in, and handicap accessibility may be an issue for them. High cost or lack of parking and distance were also mentioned by some. These obstacles were named by fewer than 5% of those surveyed.

A few respondents reported feeling unwelcome at arts activities or events for various reasons. One respondent felt that arts events and activities had a "snobby environment" and another reported that "access to Wesleyan [Center for the Arts] in Middletown is restricted [in that you] have to go with someone in the Wesleyan Community." It is notable that some feel unwelcome based on class or affiliation differences.

### *Time Preferences*

Given that time is the most frequently reported obstacle, scheduling is an important factor in increasing arts participation. In order to make arts programming accessible to the greatest number of people we asked respondents what days and times were best for them to take a 90 minute class. Table 11 shows the general preferences indicated. Clearly, the time when most people are available is weekday nights. Since the numbers and demographics of people who want classes Monday through Thursday are so similar, we merged weekdays into one category. The next best time appears to be

weekdays or Saturday during the day, leaving Sunday, especially during the morning and evening, as the least popular time. The scheduling preferences of certain demographic groups deviated slightly from this general pattern. For a discussion of these differences see sections on Households with Children and Age below.

**Table 11** **Time Preferences**<sup>δ</sup>

	<b>Monday-Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
Morning	11.6	8.5	15.3	6.7
Afternoon	14.0	9.8	12.3	9.8
Evening	47.6	28.7	8.0	4.3

<sup>δ</sup> Multiple answers possible; total will be more than 100%

### *Participation Factors of Demographic Groups*

Some of the data collected demonstrate particularly significant patterns and differences along demographic lines. The following sections highlight the most notable differences and patterns between respondents with or without children, by different age groups, by cultural group identification, and by neighborhood.

### **Frequency of Attendance**

Our results suggest that efforts to increase the arts participation of infrequent- or frequent-attenders may be more successful than attempts to program for non-attenders. As displayed in Table 12, fewer infrequent and frequent-attenders said they do not participate in the arts because they're not interested. Also, compared to non-attenders, a higher percentage of infrequent and frequent-attenders listed at least one art program they would participate if it were more available.

**Table 12**                      **Obstacles and Wants by Frequency of Attendance**

	<b>Percent that said lack of interest is an obstacle</b>	<b>Percent that reported at least 1 arts activity they would attend</b>
Non-attenders	14.6	70.5
Infrequent-attenders	4.5	86.7
Frequent-attenders	6.1	78.5

Additionally, both infrequent and frequent-attenders were more likely than non-attenders to list three or more obstacles. These findings suggest infrequent and frequent-attenders are interested in art and want to participate, but their involvement is limited by certain factors. Given that infrequent and frequent-attenders are an important audience for arts organizations looking to increase their attendance rates, the following discussion examines the unique wants and needs of arts attenders.

*Infrequent-Attenders.* Infrequent-attenders expressed some particular desires that should guide programming aimed at increasing arts participation. We found that infrequent-attenders are especially interested in visual art and music.\* As Table 13 reports, infrequent-attenders said more often than either frequent or non-attenders that they would attend visual art and music events if they were more available in Middletown.

**Table 13**                      **Art Wants by Frequency of Attendance**

	<b>Percent that Want Visual Art</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent that Want Music</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Non-attenders	21.3*	13	17.7*	11
Infrequent-attenders	43.5*	20	39.1*	18
Frequent-attenders	37.9*	25	27.3*	18

Also, in response to a question about what motivates their attendance at arts events and activities, we found that socializing is important to infrequent-attenders. The less frequently respondents attend organized arts events, the more likely they were to rank socializing as an important motivation for their attendance (as indicated by a lower number).

**Table 14 Importance of Motivations by Frequency of Attendance**

	<b>Frequent- attenders</b>	<b>Infrequent- attenders</b>	<b>Non-attenders</b>
Very Important	Different Culture (1.52)	Different Culture (1.36)	Socializing** (1.47)
	Own Culture (1.57)	Own Culture (1.52)	Org's Reputation (1.50)
Somewhat Important	Friends/Family (1.68)	Friends/Family (1.79)	Own Culture (1.53)
	Org's Reputation (1.80)	Active (1.86)	Different Culture (1.58)
	Artist's Reputation (1.87)	Socializing** (1.88)	Friends/Family (1.68)
	Socializing** (1.98)	Artist's Reputation (1.91)	Active (1.79)
	Active (2.03)	No Charge (1.93)	No Charge (1.95)
	No Charge (2.18)	Org's Reputation (1.95)	Artist's Reputation (2.00)

*Frequent-attenders.* The reported motivations and obstacles for frequent-attenders suggest changes that can be made to increase the participation of this group. Compared to other groups, the artist's reputation is more important to frequent-attenders. Frequent-attenders may have more knowledge about the arts and therefore be more adept at evaluating the artist.

Besides time, which was the largest obstacle for all groups, the main obstacle which limits the involvement of frequent-attenders is lack of information. As displayed in

Table 15, frequent-attenders report not having information as an obstacle more often than non-attenders and infrequent-attenders.

**Table 15 Lack of Information by Frequency of Attendance**

	<b>Percent reported lack of information as obstacle</b>
Non-attenders	26.2
Infrequent-attenders	31.8
Frequent-attenders	37.9

This finding is especially striking considering that frequent-attenders are probably exposed to information about events more than any other group. As one respondent explained, "some wonderful events occur and you find out about them after, even if you are looking in the right places. Not having information is a huge problem in Middletown." Making information more readily available could increase the participation of frequent-attenders as well as other groups. One respondent confirmed this suspicion, stating "If I hear about [arts events] I would definitely go."

### **Households with Children**

Our findings suggest that people with children may be a good group to target in programming. Given national studies indicating that people with children participate in the arts more frequently (Walker et al, 2002), it is surprising that in Middletown, having children does not predict participation in arts activities, as those with and without children have similar rates of participation

However, people with children tend to be more interested in arts events and activities and indicated arts programs they want to see more of than people without children. Only two percent of those with children reported a lack of interest in arts programming and people with children are more likely to indicate arts activities they would attend if it were more available in Middletown (85%), compared to only 74% of people without children.\*\* This result suggests that there is not enough arts programming geared towards families to meet the demand. This is further supported by the finding that 25% of people with children indicated a desire for more children's events and activities in Middletown.

Additionally, people with children reported a high interest in theater and dance. Of people with children, 32% said they would attend theater compared to 23% of people without children, and 15% of people with children said they would attend musical theater compared to 6% of people without. About twice as many people with children (9%) said they would attend dance than those without (4%). Thus, it appears that more theater (including musical theater) and dance programs should be geared towards people with children.

Almost twice as many people with children attend classes than people without children. That being said, lack of time is more often an obstacle for people who have children (68%) than those without (50%). This suggests one-time events and classes that accommodate family's childcare and scheduling needs may increase participation.

## Hobbyists

Our findings suggest that people with hobbies (hobbyists) are an important group to target for increased attendance. Hobbyists are interested in the arts, participate in the arts, and indicate more arts activities that they would like more of than respondents without hobbies (non-hobbyists). Understanding how people engage in art on their own may be a good way of learning what kind of organized arts classes and events they would attend if they were more available.

Almost three times as many hobbyists (24%)\* as non-hobbyists (8%)\* reported taking a class in the past year, and 86%\* of hobbyists had attended at least one arts event in the past year compared to only 37%\* of non-hobbyists. Hobbyists also tend to have a clear idea of what kind of arts programming they want to see more of in Middletown. 92% of hobbyists reported something they would participate in if it were more available compared to about 33%\* of people without hobbies. What hobbyists want can be a good indicator of areas where Middletown does not offer enough organized activities and could indicate direction for further programming.

**Table 16**      **What Hobbyists and Non-Hobbyists Want**

	<b>Hobbyists</b>	<b>Non-Hobbyists</b>
Want Visual Arts and Crafts (%)*	49.5	20.1
Want Theater	31.6	23.0
Want Music	29.1	17.6
Want Musical Theater	12.7	9.3
Want Classical Music	5.1	4.1
Want Jazz Music	5.1	3.1

δ For a more expansive list of what kinds of events and activities Hobbyists want, see Appendix J.

## Age Groups

At the end of the survey respondents were asked to identify their age range based on approximately 10-year intervals we read to them. These intervals were created by our Green Street partners based on their observations of differences in arts engagement between age groups. The only age groups whose arts needs deviated from the general patterns were the oldest (62 and over) and the youngest (18-25) respondents.

*Senior Citizens.* Our results suggest that senior citizens (those over the age of 62) are less interested in participating in the arts than younger groups. Only 58% (21) of respondents over 62 years old participated in the arts last year, compared to 73% (97) of those age 61 and younger.\*\* Similarly, seniors are less likely to want additional arts programming.\* 42% (15) of seniors said there was nothing they would attend if it was more available or gave no answer to this question. Our findings are consistent with a nation-wide study that also found that seniors participate in the arts less frequently (Hendon, 1990). Overall, it seems that targeting seniors may be somewhat less effective in expanding arts participation compared to other groups.

Lack of interest, disability, and price may explain seniors' low rates of participation. While time is the greatest obstacle for every age group of Middletown residents, including senior citizens, 22% of respondents over the age of 62 are simply not interested in arts programming, which is much higher than the overall average in Middletown of 6%. One woman explained, "I'm an old lady and I don't care for that stuff anymore." Also, a disability prevents 17% of this age group from attending arts events and activities, compared to only about 3% of the rest of the population. A few senior respondents directly told us that "being elderly" and limited mobility due to age are

obstacles. In addition, people over 62 were more likely to say that no charge for events is an important factor for them (See Appendix I for full ranking of cost as a motivational factor by age). In short, some seniors simply don't want to participate in art, while the participation of others is restricted due to health related or economic limitations.

If arts organizations do offer programs for seniors, they should be aware that their arts interests are different than those of other age groups. Seniors are especially likely to prefer events to classes.\* Only 3% of respondents 62 or over took a class in the past year, and only 7% of seniors said they want more classes in Middletown. Although respondents 62 and over have the lowest attendance of any age group at all art events, they are more likely to go to music performances than any other type of event. As for what time of day to schedule programming, weekday nights were also the most popular time of seniors, but by a much slimmer margin. On Monday through Thursday about the same percentage of seniors prefer afternoons (25%, 8 respondents) and evenings (28%, 9 respondents).\*

*18 – 25.* Like seniors, people under 35, and especially people under 26, are more likely to say no charge for an event is an important motivating factor for their participation compared to people 35-61 years old (See Appendix I). This finding is not surprising given that, according to the 2000 Census, people in the 35-61 age group have the highest income, and therefore would find cost to be less of an obstacle.

## Cultural Background

Respondents were also asked to state the cultural or ethnic group that they most strongly identified with. The question was open ended, and the most popular responses were used to create the categories discussed in this section. There were several ways that cultural background correlated with participation patterns.

**Table 17 Arts Participation by Cultural Background**

<b>Cultural Background</b>	<b>Percent Total Participation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Total</b>
Black	43.8	7	16
Hispanic	50.0	3	6
Irish <sup>δ</sup>	84.6	11	13
Italian <sup>δ</sup>	81.0	17	21
Other European <sup>δδ</sup>	81.0	17	21
White <sup>δδδ</sup>	70.4	57	81

<sup>δ</sup> Irish and Italian categories include both those who identified as only Irish or Italian, as well as those who reported a second identity. Therefore a few individuals may be counted twice, and the total number of participations adds up to more than 100%.

<sup>δδ</sup> Other European category is composed of all who identified with one or more European-descent that was not Irish, Italian, or White. If Irish or Italian was one of more than two European-descents

<sup>δδδ</sup> White category is composed only of respondents who self-identified as White, and does not include those who identified only with other traditionally white groups like Italian and Irish.

*Black.* Respondents who identified as Black reported the lowest rate of overall arts participation, with 44%, and were less likely to be frequent-attenders (19%). Notably, however, this group has the highest rate of attendance at cultural events.

Though learning about cultures was the most important motivating factor for respondents across the board, this was especially true for Black respondents. Their mean ranking for “learning about a different culture” was 1.22, compared to an overall figure of

1.47 (1 is very important, 3 is not important). Similarly, their mean ranking of “learning about your own culture” was 1.33, compared to 1.55 overall.

*Irish.* 85% of Irish-identified respondents said they participated in the arts; 69% are frequent-attenders (the highest rate of any cultural group for both categories). They had particularly high attendance at theater and visual arts events.

*Italian.* Participation rates among Italians were also high (81%) though only 38% were frequent-attenders. Also, like Irish respondents, Italians had notably high attendance rates at visual arts events.

## **Neighborhood**

We asked respondents to identify the elementary school closest to them in order to get an idea of what neighborhood they lived in. Although the school district lines in Middletown group together diverse communities of people, knowing people's neighborhood can help direct programming and get an idea of geography-specific obstacles.

Table 18 calls attention to a population with a high rate of participation in the arts, but who do not frequently attend organized events or classes. The Macdonough neighborhood (the North End) shows the highest rate of participation (over 90% surveyed), but the second to lowest ratio of frequent-attenders (27%), and the highest of infrequent-attenders (54%). It is possible that residents of this area could be successfully targeted to attend more in the arts, since the interest (the main obstacle to lack of arts participation) exists.

**Table 18 Arts Participation by Closest Elementary School**

<b>Closest Elementary School</b>	<b>Percent participated</b>	<b>Percent Frequent-attenders</b>	<b>Percent Infrequent-attenders</b>	<b>Percent Non-attenders</b>
Macdonough	90.9	27.3	54.5	18.2
Wesley	87.5	62.5	18.8	18.8
Moody	78.9	47.4	31.6	21.1
Lawrence	75.0	25.0	25.0	50.0
Snow	66.7	44.4	22.2	33.3
Farm Hill	64.3	39.3	10.7	50.0
Spencer	57.9	36.8	21.1	42.1
Bielefield	53.3	33.3	20.0	46.7

One way to target residents of this neighborhood is through more focused dissemination of information. Lack of information, the second most commonly reported obstacle for Middletown residents, is reported more frequently by Macdonough-area respondents (42%) than other neighborhoods (35% overall). This indicates that perhaps not enough arts advertising reaches this area. There was also a problem of misperception about the activities available; one adult from the North End said that “people don’t show up [to Green Street] from my neighborhood” because “people know about Green Street but they don’t know about the information that has to do with them.” This evaluation is supported by other survey respondents who didn’t know that Green Street offered anything other than an after-school program. Another North End respondent told us “people need more encouragement to get them in the door.”

### *Green Street Arts Center*

While 18% of all respondents had attended The Green Street Arts Center at least once in the last two years, the highest rate of attendance by far came from respondents in the North End; 42% of those in the Macdonough school neighborhood had visited the center. This can be explained by higher rates of awareness of Green Street within the immediate neighborhood than in the rest of Middletown, as discussed below and the proximity to the center, as well as the self-proclaimed mission of Green Street to serve the North End.

Overall, 60% of respondents had heard of Green Street, but awareness varied heavily by age and geography. The youngest and oldest respondents had the highest rates of awareness, while those in the 26-34 and 35-49 year old groups were much lower (see Table 19).

**Table 19**      **Age and Awareness of Green Street Arts Center**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Percent Heard of Green Street Arts Center</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Total</b>
19-25	75.0	6	8
26-34	36.4	8	22
35-49	52.3	23	44
50-62	65.0	39	60
Over 62	72.2	6	36
Total	59.9	103	177

Also notable were how rates of awareness varied depending on where respondents lived. Those in the neighborhoods of Macdonough, Farm Hill, and Bielefield elementary schools were the most likely to have heard of Green Street, with awareness rates ranging from 80% to 85% for each (See Appendix G).\* Given that these are three of the closest

schools to Green Street, this implies that proximity is linked to awareness. The most common ways of finding out about Green Street are through newspapers and then word of mouth (Table 20). Residents of the immediate neighborhood may be more likely to pay attention to newspaper articles focused on events in their neighborhood, and are thus more likely to read about Green Street in the newspaper. Additionally, in areas where people are more aware of Green Street because of proximity, people are more likely to hear about it through word of mouth. Other important ways people hear about it include flyers and affiliations with connected organizations or institutions, like Wesleyan.

**Table 20                    How Informed About Green Street Arts Center**

<b>Communication Method</b>	<b>Percent Informed</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Newspaper	37.9	39
Word of mouth	28.2	29
Flyer at school	4.9	5
Flyer at work	3.9	4
Other flyer	11.7	12
Wesleyan online (email or website)	3.9	4

Many people who reported an awareness of Green Street, however, were hesitant to offer an impression of it. Although 60% said they did know of Green Street, over two-thirds of this group said that they had not heard anything especially positive or negative about it. It may be that some respondents felt they didn't know enough or couldn't back up the impressions they had, and were therefore hesitant to report an opinion, or were fearful of saying anything negative to surveyors who identified themselves as working for Green Street in the beginning of the survey.

Of those who did report a specific impression, the vast majority (78%), had heard only positive things, compared with 8% (4) who reported hearing only negative things; 14% (7) had heard mixed accounts of Green Street. Many of those who reported hearing generally good things, however, couldn't remember anything specific. Many respondents, aware of the after-school program and classes for children, thought of Green Street as a space focused on youth. One person stated, "I always thought about it for young children, but I never thought about it for myself."

Also common was a memory of Green Street's beginning, and Wesleyan's role in its development. Some remember reading articles about it early on but "haven't heard anything since reading about it opening in the newspaper." Several people highlighted its work of integrating the Wesleyan and Middletown communities through student involvement.

Most negative comments related to cost and safety concerns about the North End location. But others who commented on the location called it "challenging," and viewed Green's Street's placement in the North End as a good thing. As one respondent put it: "[It is] bringing good to the community, bridging gaps and bringing new people into my area; it's a beautiful thing."

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### *What Programming to Offer*

We recommend creating more one-time events where people can be observers. There is a higher demand for events, performances and exhibits than classes. Respondents enroll in classes much less frequently than they attend events. Furthermore, the classes the respondents take cover such a broad range of interests that it would be difficult to program to. In addition, respondents generally did not feel that there was a need for more classes in Middletown. Given that time commitments and cost are some of the biggest obstacles for Middletown residents, one-time events may be more popular than long-term classes or groups. Offering one-time events may also be a way to develop audience and increase overall attendance, thereby increasing class attendance as well.

The follow are specific recommendations based on our findings about current arts participation, hobbies, wants, motivations and obstacles. Hobbies appear to be a particularly good gauge for what arts programming would be successful since we found that people with hobbies are more likely to attend arts events and take arts classes. Specifically, people with visual arts and music hobbies are more likely to be involved in organized art and music programming. Specific recommendations include:

#### **Visual Arts**

- Art exhibits, especially photography exhibits.
- An arts show where art work is sold. This event could be an opportunity for multiple arts organizations to work together.
- Needle craft classes or groups.

## **Music**

- Music concerts, especially jazz or classical music.
- Outdoor concerts.
- For senior citizens, a low cost music series during weekday afternoons or evenings at a handicap accessible venue.

## **Theater**

- Theater performances.

## **Cultural Programming**

- Hispanic.
- African.
- Native American.

## **Combined Art Form Programming**

- Programming that combines multiple art forms.

## **Classes**

While we found that there is less of a demand for arts classes in Middletown, people with children and hobbyists are more likely than people without children and non-hobbyists to attend classes, indicating that classes will most likely be better attended if geared towards these groups.

- Additional classes for parents and children to take together.
- Offer day care or a class for children at the same time as adult classes.
- Classes for people with hobbies. Popular hobbies are visual arts and crafts, particularly photography, and music.
- Activities that have a low time commitment, such as workshops.

### ***What Time to Offer Programs***

1. Weekday evenings
2. Weekday or Saturday afternoons

### ***Targeting Infrequent-attenders***

Our findings suggest that infrequent-attenders are interested in the arts but are not participating to their full potential. The following recommendations suggest how to attract infrequent-attenders in general as well as how to attract specific demographic groups that attend infrequently:

- Offer events that allow for socializing.
- Offer visual art events.
- People in the North End are mostly infrequent-attenders. Lack of information is a cited obstacle for these populations. Therefore, more advertising should be geared towards this geographic location. Also, visual arts is the most popular way for people from the Macdonough neighborhood to be involved in the arts, so advertising for visual arts activities should especially target this neighborhood.
- Adults who live in a household with children are also more likely to be infrequent-attenders. This group expressed a particular interest in classes. Classes targeted to this group should make arrangements for childcare by having parent-child classes, or by scheduling classes so that parents can drop their children off, go to their own class, and then pick their children up, or simply by offering child-care.

### *Targeting Frequent-attenders*

Frequent-attenders are also a group that, despite high current participation in the arts, listed some obstacles whose removal may increase their participation in the arts.

- At each Middletown Arts location, place flyers for other arts organizations. Our data suggest that especially for frequent-attenders, arts organizations shouldn't consider each other competition and instead will benefit by informing people already involved in the arts about other events and programming that are currently offered.
- Bring in artists whose names or reputations are well known on a local or national scale.

### *Advertising*

One-third of respondents said that not having information prevents them from participating in the arts. In light of this finding, we recommend increased advertising. More advertising should be focused on the Macdonough and Lawrence neighborhoods in particular since they had high rates of listing lack of information as an obstacle. Specific recommendations for advertising are:

- Articles about arts activities and organizations in the newspaper as often as possible.
- Occasional free events or open houses by arts organizations to get people talking.
- Joint advertising for arts events between different arts organizations such as weekly or monthly newsletter or postcard.

### *Collaboration*

It would be advantageous for arts organizations to support each other's programming and to work together in the dissemination of information about current programming and events. This is important because the more frequently individuals participate, the greater number of art forms they are likely to be involved in and arts locations they are likely to attend. This means that individual arts locations are not really competing for the attendance of specific patrons: a resident who attends a certain type of event at one location is likely to also attend events at others (and would be increasingly likely to do so if they had more information about them).

## CONCLUSION

The arts participation survey confirmed the value of the arts for Middletown residents. Over two-thirds of respondents currently participate in the arts in some way, and data regarding the different arts forms, locations, and ways that people participate reflect the array of ways residents incorporate the arts into their lives, while indicating ways that arts organizations can enhance and improve arts opportunities in Middletown. Respondents participate in the arts through classes, events offered by arts organizations, and personal hobbies. Participation ranges across many art forms, the most popular of which fall into the categories of visual arts, music, and theater. These three also yielded the highest demand for more programming. Participation in various types of activities and forms of art was sometimes informed by various demographic factors including families with children, age, cultural background, and geographic neighborhood.

In addressing obstacles to participation, though time, lack of information about events, and cost were named most frequently, the data demonstrate that those who are more frequently-attending arts are more conscious of obstacles and more likely to identify them than non-attenders. The only stated obstacle that is linked to non-participation is a lack of interest.

Inquiries about what kinds of arts opportunities respondents would like to see more of yielded a wide range of possibilities for developing further programming. It was determined that the most important motivating factor to attending arts events is the opportunity to learn about one's own or a different culture. Also, there is an overall higher interest in observation-based activities than participation-based ones; for example, viewing an art exhibit, a concert, or a play are in higher demand than taking a class in any

of those areas. This may be related to the greater time commitment of participation-based activities, given the high percentage of respondents who listed time restraints as a major obstacle to arts participation.

The information contained in this report identifies gaps in Middletown arts programming that, if filled, can increase community engagement in the arts. We hope that all Middletown arts organizations will use this information to collaboratively plan the future of the arts.

## Appendix A - Survey

### Green Street Arts Center Programming Survey

*(INTERVIEWER: READ ALL BOLD TYPE QUESTIONS AND DO NOT SAY OUTLOUD INSTRUCTIONS IN ITALICS.)*

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm conducting research for Wesleyan University. I'm not selling anything. We are studying arts programming as part of a partnership with the Green Street Arts Center. Do you think you could spare a few minutes of your time to help us with this important study? *(IF YES, CONTINUE.)*

Are you a resident of Middletown, age 18 or over? *(If yes, continue)*

Great. First, let me assure you that your name will not be recorded or used and you will not be contacted as a result of taking this survey.

The most helpful thing for us is for you to take your best guess even if you're not sure it's the right answer. Okay?

1. Great. Here's my first question: Have you participated in any arts activities within the past year? This includes things like taking a class, visiting a museum, playing music or writing a story.

*(CIRCLE ANSWER)*                      YES    NO

2. Have you attended any arts or cultural events, performances, or exhibits presented by an arts organization in the past 12 months?

*(If yes,) how many arts or cultural events have you attended? (check one)*

\_\_\_\_\_ 1-3    \_\_\_\_\_ 4-6    \_\_\_\_\_ 7-9    \_\_\_\_\_ 9 or more

What were they?

Genre (e.g. photography)

type of event (e.g. exhibit)

_____	_____	P	O	T
_____	_____	P	O	T
_____	_____	P	O	T
_____	_____	P	O	T
_____	_____	P	O	T

*(IF YES to #1 OR #2, CONTINUE. IF NO TO BOTH, SKIP TO QUESTION 4, then 8)*

3. a) Have you participated in any arts classes, clubs, or organized groups in the past 12 months? (If yes,) What kind and how were you involved?

genre (e.g. dance)

kind (e.g. salsa)

_____	_____	P	O	T
_____	_____	P	O	T
_____	_____	P	O	T
_____	_____	P	O	T
_____	_____	P	O	T

b) Do you have any arts hobbies that you do on your own? (If yes,) What kind?

_____	P	O	T
_____	P	O	T
_____	P	O	T
_____	P	O	T
_____	P	O	T
_____	P	O	T

c) Are there any other ways that you participate in the arts?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What kinds of arts and cultural activities or events would you or your family be likely to participate in if it were more available in Middletown?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. I'm going to read off some different Middletown arts locations, can you please tell me if you have visited them in the past two years by answering yes or no? (*read off locations and check each place the respondent has visited, if questioned, give information about location*)

- Art Farm** (outdoor performances, locations vary)
- Buttonwood Tree** (Main Street)
- Davison Art Center** (Wesleyan)
- Green Street Arts Center** (Downtown Main Street)
- Oddfellows Playhouse** (Washington St. / Route 66)
- Stage Left Dance** (above Its Only Natural, downtown Main Street)
- Vinnie's Jump & Jive** (Main Street)
- Wesleyan's Center for the Arts** (Wesleyan)
- Wesleyan Potters** (South Main Street/ Route 17)
- Yoga in Middletown** (Main Street)
- Zilkha Gallery**(Wesleyan)
- Are there others I haven't mentioned?:** \_\_\_\_\_

6. **Have you visited any arts locations outside of Middletown in the past two years?**  
*(circle): YES / NO*

*(If yes, without details) Where have you visited?* \_\_\_\_\_

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7. I'm going to read you a list of statements, please rank how important each item is in affecting how likely you are to attend an arts or cultural activity, on a scale of

Very Important / Somewhat Important / Not Important

*(circle the level of importance as VI (very important), SI(somewhat important), or NI(not important) next to each question)*

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| <b>The reputation or achievements of the artist or teacher</b>           | <b>VI-----SI-----NI</b> |
| <b>The reputation of the organization offering the performance/class</b> | <b>VI-----SI-----NI</b> |
| <b>Your friends or family members are planning to attend</b>             | <b>VI-----SI-----NI</b> |
| <b>The opportunity to socialize</b>                                      | <b>VI-----SI-----NI</b> |
| <b>The opportunity to be active</b>                                      | <b>VI-----SI-----NI</b> |
| <b>No charge for events</b>  | <b>VI-----SI-----NI</b> |
| <b>The opportunity to learn about a different culture</b>                | <b>VI-----SI-----NI</b> |
| <b>The opportunity to learn about your own culture</b>                   | <b>VI-----SI-----NI</b> |

(if they answer Very important or somewhat important to the last two questions, follow up with: ) **Which cultures are you interested in learning about?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**8. What are the biggest obstacles that prevent you from attending arts activities? These could be things like cost, transportation, time or not having information.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**9. If you were to take a 90min class what are the three best times and days of the week for you?**

1. M T W R F Sat Sun TIME \_\_\_\_\_
2. M T W R F Sat Sun TIME \_\_\_\_\_
3. M T W R F Sat Sun TIME \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Have you heard anything about the Green Streets Arts Center?**

(circle): YES / NO

(If yes, without detail): **How did you hear about it?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Have you heard anything especially positive or negative about it?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**11. What is the closest elementary school to you?** \_\_\_\_\_

**12. Please indicate your age range. (Read off categories and check which applies)**

\_\_\_19-25 \_\_\_26-34 \_\_\_35-49 \_\_\_50-62 \_\_\_Over 62

**13. How many people in your household are under the age of 18?** \_\_\_\_\_

**14. Would you mind indicating your cultural or ethnic background? (If yes, ) What is it?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**15. Thank you for taking part in our Arts Participation Survey. Would you like to be added to the Green Street Arts Center's mailing list? If so, your name will not be connected to any of the answers you have given to this survey. (If yes, record name, address, email on separate sheet.)**

## **Appendix B - Additional Limitations (Methods section)**

As with almost all surveys, our study could be biased by who is available and willing to take the survey. This limitation could bias our results if the people who happened to be home when we called were systematically different than the people who were not home. For example, people who work nights and weekends may have different experiences and desires for art programming than people who work days. Although we tried to avoid omitting this population by calling both on week nights and weekends, we still did not reach people who were occupied during both these time periods.

Thus there is bias in who owns a landline phone, who is available to answer the phone, who is physically able to take the survey, and lastly who agrees to take the survey. Some people are more predisposed to being willing to take a phone survey, due to a variety of factors including personality characteristics and time availability. In addition, we announced our Wesleyan University and Green Street Arts Center affiliation and the purpose to study arts participation in the introductory paragraph. This introduction may have swayed certain types of people in different ways. For instance, people connected to or sympathetic to either of these organizations or the arts may have been more interested in the survey and thus more likely to respond. Aside from the identifying characteristics we as researchers announce, our "positionality" or background may influence the information we collected (Mullings, 1999). Our voice cues, conversational styles, and speech patterns may suggest aspects of our identity and shape the responses we receive. For instance, all of the members of our group are white and female from middle class backgrounds. In so far as these characteristics are identifiable they may have shaped callers willingness to relate to us and their assumptions about what

types of definitions of arts we were operating with and what types of answers we were looking for.

As researchers we also introduced some biases through several inconsistencies in our practice. After our first round of calling we made a change in our methodology. Originally instead of doing every other page of the reference USA printouts, we were doing every page. After administering calls and examining our actual response rate, we re-evaluated how many pages we would need to get our desired number of interviews. We decided to change in our methodology and began calling one name from every other page. We had divided the last names into different groups, with a section for each researcher, and thus in four of the sections there was some minor over-representation of people with last names at the beginning of each of these sections. Additionally, there was some misunderstanding on the part of one group member at the beginning of surveying. For a few hours, instead of going to the next page after receiving a response (either positive or negative) from the caller, she only went to the next page after someone agreed to an interview. People in this section of the phone book had a greater chance of being called. This may result in some over-representation of people with last names in one particular section of the phone book. Though these methodological mistakes introduce some error, we don't believe that they create any significant biases in our research findings.

One last note: Table 6 (p. 57) combines two different calculations made at different times in our work. As we wrote in the footnote there, the percentages for those who left Middletown to attend particular events was calculated on a smaller N (96), determined by a more restrictive definition of arts participants. While combining these

two data sets in one table introduces some confusion, and, we realized in retrospect, both should have been calculated using the more inclusive definition used throughout the rest of the report, the comparison seemed important enough to report anyway.

## Appendix C – Survey Respondents by Demographic Group

### Percent of Respondents by Neighborhood

Neighborhood	Percent	Frequency
Farm Hill	15.8	28
Moody	10.7	19
Spencer	10.7	19
Snow	10.2	18
Wesley	9.0	16
Bielefield	8.5	15
Mac Donough	6.8	12
Lawrence	4.5	8
Missing/Don't know	23.7	42

### Percent of Respondents by Households with Children

	Frequency	Percent
Households with Children	59	33.3

Households without Children	109	61.6
Missing	9	5.1

## **Appendix D – Full List of Arts classes/organized clubs or groups**

### **Classes:**

Beading  
 Ceramics  
 Creative writing class  
 Computer graphics  
 Instrument lessons (Flute, guitar, piano)  
 Kung fu  
 Martial arts  
 Music/sound  
 Photography  
 Salsa dance  
 Visual arts

### **Clubs and Groups:**

Bookclub  
 Acting (in theater)  
 Child/parent activity group  
 Girl Scouts  
 Props/costume design workshop  
 Chamber music performance group  
 In a band (Rock, Jazz)

### Appendix E - Most Popular Art Forms Outside Middletown and Where

<b>Art form</b>	<b>In CT (%)</b>	<b>Out of CT (%)</b>	<b>Both (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>	<b>Total Frequency</b>
Visual Art	15.3	9.0	6.2	30.5	54
Theater	7.3	3.4	2.3	13.0	23
Music	6.8	1.1	0.6	8.5	15

## **Appendix F – Other Cultures of Interest (Motivation Section)**

Australian  
Asian (general)  
Baltic  
Cambodian  
Canadian  
Chinese  
Czechoslovakian  
Eastern European  
English  
Far Eastern  
French  
German  
Greek  
Indonesian  
Japanese  
Judaism  
Korean  
Northern European  
Philippine  
Pacific Asian  
Polish  
Portuguese  
Russian-American  
Scottish

Swedish  
 Swiss  
 Spanish  
 Thai  
 Tibetan  
 New Zealand  
 Wales

**Appendix G – Awareness of Green Street Arts Center by Neighborhood**

Neighborhood	Heard of Green Street		Haven't Heard of Green Street	
	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency
Farm Hill	85.7	24	14.3	4
Macdonough	83.3	10	16.7	2
Bielefield	80.0	12	20.0	3
Snow	72.2	13	27.8	5
Moody	57.9	11	41.2	8
Wesley	50.0	8	50.0	8
Spencer	47.4	9	52.6	10
Lawrence	25.0	2	75.0	6

## Appendix H – Impact of Obstacles on Participation

<b>Stated Obstacle</b>	<b>Percent Participated</b>
Stated time as an obstacle	70.8
Did not state time as an obstacle	68.0
Stated cost as an obstacle	72.7
Did not state cost as an obstacle	69.1
Stated children as an obstacle	83.3
Did not state children as an obstacle	68.6
Stated lack of interest as an obstacle	40.0*
Did not state lack of interest as an obstacle	72.4*
Stated lack on information as an obstacle	74.5
Did not state lack of information as an obstacle	67.2

## Appendix I – Age and Importance of No Charge for Events

Age	Average Rank of Importance of No Charge for Events <sup>δ</sup>
18-25	1.83
26-34	1.94
35-61	2.13
62 and over	1.95

δ 1 is very important, 3 is not important.

### Appendix J – How Hobbyists Want to Participate in Arts

		<b>Hobbyists</b>	<b>Non-Hobbyists</b>
<b>Want Visual Arts and Crafts (%)*</b>	General <sup>δ</sup>	5.1	3.2
	Classes	12.7	5.3
	Activities	1.3	0.0
	Fair	15.2	2.1
	Exhibit/Museum	15.2	9.5
	Total	49.5	20.1
<b>Want Theater</b>	General <sup>δ</sup>	10.1	6.3
	Observer	21.5	16.7
	Total	31.6	23.0
<b>Want Music</b>	General <sup>δ</sup>	11.4	3.1
	Classes	3.8	1.0
	Observer	13.9	13.5
	Total	29.1	17.6
<b>Want Musical Theater</b>	General <sup>δ</sup>	1.3	1.0
	Classes	1.3	0.0
	Observer	10.1	8.3
	Total	12.7	9.3
<b>Want Classical Music</b>	General <sup>δ</sup>	0.0	1.0
	Classes	1.3	0.0

	Observer	3.8	3.1
	Total	5.1	4.1
<b>Want Jazz Music</b>	General <sup>δ</sup>	1.3	0.0
	Classes	2.5	0.0
	Observer	1.3	3.1
	Total	5.1	3.1

δ The category “General” denotes a response that indicated a general interest in the art form noted, without specifying any further.

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