

April 2009 Middletown Business Climate Survey Responses

Middletown Business Climate Score: **5.2**

(scale of 1 to 10 with 1 as poor business climate and 10 excellent business climate)

(90% confidence that a 100% response rate would produce a score within the range of 4.1 to 6.3)

Respondent Distribution

Respondents score Middletown's current business climate on a scale of 1 to 10.

	Score	#	%	Quintiles	%
Excellent Bus. Climate	10	0	0%	Top Quintile	8%
	9	3	8%	Upper Middle Quintile	23%
	8	2	5%	Middle Quintile	40%
	7	7	18%	Lower Middle Quintile	15%
	6	7	18%	Bottom Quintile	15%
	5	9	23%		
	4	3	8%	Scored	%
	3	3	8%	8 thru 10	13%
	2	2	5%	4 thru 7	65%
Poor Bus. Climate	1	4	10%	1 thru 3	23%

Revenue compared to last year

	#	%
Revenues are increasing	9	23%
Revenues are remaining the same	10	26%
Revenues are decreasing	20	51%

Workforce in the next six months

	#	%
Workforce increasing	7	18%
Workforce remaining the same	24	60%
Workforce decreasing	9	23%

Actions Currently Being Taken By Local Businesses

	#	%
Taking some sort of action	31	77%
Nothing at the present time	9	23%

	#	%
Reducing inventories	12	30%
Reducing workforce	9	23%
Reducing prices	9	23%
Increasing internet advertising	9	23%
Reducing advertising	8	20%
Increasing staff training	7	18%
Reducing salaries	6	15%
Offering coupons	4	10%
Increasing newspaper advertising	3	8%
Other	13	33%

Other actions:

- Requiring furlough days
- Shared work day program
- Pricing other vendors
- Hunting for the right clients
- VIP customer plan for patron discounts
- Staff reductions possible through attrition
- Personal contact with potential clients
- Fundraising (non-profit)
- Negotiating partnerships with similar organizations
- We are going to hunker down and wait this out. There is no sense advertising to a market that is not buying.
- Looking outside town for business
- Maintaining quality no matter what
- Value added incentives

Biggest Factor Preventing Revenue Growth

General Market Conditions Responses- 18 (45%)

- Interest rates and market mentality of "don't spend and see what happens"
- Lack of new sales.
- No one is buying cars or homes. The individual purchasing power is stagnant. People are afraid of starting businesses due to the market climate.
- Finding long term projects or larger scale projects
- Not enough business activity on Main Street during the evening hours.
- Slow client growth and fiscal spending
- Overall industry trends; not Middletown issue.
- Business environment. Events like Fourth of July fireworks being cancelled. The 4th was always my biggest day of the year.
- The over all business climate
- Lack of customers.

- My customers are broke. Overseas competition.
- Economy and declining business in the Aircraft industries.
- Public lack of confidence in the economy.
- Everyone feeling broke and uncertain.
- Poor economy, all work is going out of the country
- My market only lives in town for 8 months. retirees travel, students/teachers summer off
- Economy, people are reduced to restricted spenders.
- Travel and entertainment spending has been cut back by customers.

Parking Responses- 4 (10%)

- Lack of parking and the meters on Main street.; As well as the overall economy
- Parking
- Customers complain there isn't enough parking and especially parking that should be closer to our business when walking at night.
- Lack of parking

Finding Employees and employee costs Responses- 3 (7.5%)

- Skilled labor
- Finding experienced people to hire
- We can't raise our hourly rates in this climate.

Financing Responses- 3 (7.5%)

- Monies for small businesses for inventory and expansion
- Problems securing financing
- Expansion capital, because the loan program requires that borrowers have good credit, which no small business owners in this climate do.

Available Commercial Space Responses- 2 (5%)

- Lack of available manufacturing space
- Appropriate space

Taxes Responses- 2 (5%)

- Business costs including taxes
- Increases in taxes and CT mandates

Other Responses- 7 (17.5%)

- Lack of corporate travel
- Federal reimbursement rates
- Lack of trucking and manufacturing going on in CT
- Drunks on the street
- Aging population
- No downtown retail traffic except for restaurants. We all remember when the streets were crowded with shoppers. Restaurants are fine but do little for retail traffic.
- the type of clientele that the downtown attracts for walk in business we don't have a "shopping" type of downtown...people come in eat and leave.... we need the stores to get them walking around the people who are out on the street everyday doing nothing but walking up and down asking for change and going to the north end to find others who are doing nothing... to find something else to do....

Local Government Actions To Help Improve Business Climate

Budget & Taxes Responses- 9 (22.5%)

- Keep reviewing expenditures, fight non-funded mandates, fight spending proposals.
- Cut taxes
- Keep taxes down on business
- Reduce government regulations and fees, taxes to high! They need to cut spending just like the private sector is doing.
- Continue to provide good quality services.
- Keep taxes reasonable.
- Lower taxes, opportunity to bid work from the city
- Equitable tax base- fire tax is a disgrace! Keep as line item Flat tax and consolidate the fire houses. Save \$ from administrative overhead of excessive # of firehouses. The inequity of the fire tax as it stands now takes revenue from central district taxpayers who NO BUDGET VOTE. It encourages the neglect of real estate and creates slums to make improvements is to radically increase taxes.
- Control taxes

Parking & Public Infrastructure Responses- 5 (12.5%)

- Move the bus stop, that is in front of Main Street Market, to the bus station, or in front of police station. Get the pan-handlers and unsavory people off Main St. Thereby making it more pleasant and safe to walk around and explore.
- Increase free parking areas
- Provide more parking
- Parking
- Middlesex Hospital/State hospital workers travel in from suburbs-ease commute. Support Portland bridge upgrade, expand to 2 bridges to ease traffic congestion and accident shutdowns.

Grants & Financing Responses- 4 (10%)

- Expand grants to small businesses to be used to stimulate business growth. Change parameters of loan program for the revitalization of Middletown requires that small business owners not need the loan in order to qualify for the loan (e.g., credit checks). p.s. Middletown is already doing a great job; just ideas on improvement.
- Financial grant to maintain our workforce.
- Lobby for banking institutions to give small business money for inventory and expansion.
- More loans and grants for small businesses and microbusinesses.

Public Events Responses- 3 (7.5%)

- Try to involve the community in many various activities that promote the business sector...Sponsor events that brings people together. Promote the sense of unity for the community. Encourage people to buy locally instead of going out of town. Prop up the local image.
- More business to business networking events? Public relations efforts for Middletown businesses? Newsletter/Web? Generally, help increase the connection between businesses? How about financial incentives or other perks to area businesses to encourage keeping business in Middletown?
- Support more events. We were called the "Little New Haven" in CT magazine; why not try some of the events that New Haven conducts like Restaurant Week. We have a

lot of restaurants, why not promote them? New Haven also has the festival of Arts and Ideas. New London has many street festivals that bring many to the city. All Middletown has is Italian or Asian restaurants. Middletown needs to be more receptive to other types of retail. Parking and lighting needs to be improved. I can't put more prominent signage to promote my store yet all of Main Street is covered with lights, most of which are half out, giving the city an unkempt appearance.

Other Policies Responses- 16 (40%)

- Get more involved on a state/fed level for arts & community funding
- Work more closely with the chamber and business leaders to have local money spent locally
- Strongly advocate for improved access into Middletown via better exit and entrance from Route 9 and eliminating the traffic lights on Route 9. This could include an additional bridge from Portland to Middletown
- Procure locally and start a Buy Local campaign to encourage other businesses and consumers to do the same.
- Work with the state to not increase the costs for businesses
- Spend money locally
- Stimulate arts & entertainment
- Lack of available manufacturing space
- Find someone to rent the Aetna building. Sell the Remington Rand. Open more of the river front. Sweep the sand off the roads. Stop charging people for dropping off steel at the recycling center. Bust the drug dealers out of the North End. Condemn Richard Sweet.
- Try and get some retail back here.
- Get the type of business into downtown that will increase the people into town who spend money....we do not have the stores just the restaurants.....people come to eat and leave.....not to mention parking is intimidating....
- Free parking might be nice. Bailout money? But seriously, I'm not sure. People need to feel like they are on steadier ground before my business can again be on steady ground.
- Keep the visuals upgraded. Empty and run down properties in the inner city tend to form peoples opinion's of the city's vibe.
- Assist expansion of Wesleyan, Middlesex Community College summer programs
- Promote all the town has to offer
- If the town does not attract AND retain the mid-boomers currently turning 50, which retains the elderly parents(live near-by for onsite medical care)and retains their children which still flood your schools (peak ages 15-21)the town will slide back to the unattractive abyss of the mid-70's recession with a dead main street from no viable demographic buying market.

Number of emails addresses: 222
Number of dead emails: 29
Number of emails sent: 193
Number of replies: 40
Response rate: 21%