

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This update of Newtown's Plan of Conservation and Development is the result of the dedicated efforts of many Newtown residents and town staff who have worked to craft a document that can be used to guide future municipal actions and policies. Newtown's updated Plan of Conservation and Development proposes a vision of Newtown in 10 years and a series of goals and action recommendations to manage change toward the achievement of this vision.

The Plan evolved from the development of 10 technical planning memoranda that focused on a variety of topics including Newtown's expanding population, past land development patterns, the importance of preserving Newtown's community character, natural resources and open space, parks and recreational facilities, community facility needs, the need to grow Newtown's non-residential tax base and transportation issues. Each planning memoranda identifies key community concerns which became the focus of specific goals and implementation recommendations.

The Plan of Conservation and Development contains a Generalized Future Land Use Plan, to be used as an advisory and policy-guidance tool to direct the Town's future efforts to manage change. Key to the successful implementation of this Plan is the use of Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, design guidelines and/or implementation techniques that explicitly enable the achievement of the overall Vision through the implementation of the Plan's many recommendations.

The following is a sampling of Plan goals. Each goal is backed-up with an Action Agenda that specifies recommended actions and assigns responsibility for implementation.

Community Character:

- Maintain the scenic characteristics of Newtown's "Pastoral and Rural Areas,"
- Preserve the mixed-use functions and enhance the visual appearance of Newtown's commercial corridors and Villages.
- Preserve Newtown's historic sites and archeological resources.

Conservation and Natural Resources.

- Continue to preserve and protect Inland Wetlands and Watercourses from potential sources of contamination or development.
- Achieve and protect high water quality classifications throughout Newtown.
- Regulate development and storm water management activities within flood hazard areas to protect life and property and to preserve the natural storm retention functions of the watershed.
- Protect prime agricultural land resources and promote agricultural uses.
- Conserve and protect natural systems and their functions in order to maintain indigenous wildlife and plant life.

Open Space

- Achieve the preservation and protection of Newtown's key natural resource features.
- Newtown will achieve or exceed the State's goal for 21% open space.
- Enhance opportunities for passive recreation.

Housing

- Strive for a more balanced supply of housing types that will accommodate the housing needs of

Newtown residents and those working in Newtown.

- Manage residential development to enhance Newtown's present community character.

Economic Development

- Grow Newtown's commercial property tax base at a rate at least equal to the Town's growth in its residential tax base.
- Increase the inventory of viable economic development sites.
- Prioritize the clean-up and re-use of Newtown's brownfield sites.
- Facilitate the maintenance and development of agricultural businesses in scale with Newtown.

Community Facilities

- Strive for a more organized and efficient approach for municipal office buildings.
- Define long range school facility requirements.
- Maintain and support recreational facilities for townspeople of all ages.
- Provide sufficient space for the operations of the Newtown Senior Center.
- Maintain the capacity of Newtown's public sewer system.
- Continue to provide for a high level of police, fire and emergency services.

Transportation

- Achieve the appropriate functional classification of State roads in Newtown.
- Alleviate areas of congestion and address safety issues.
- Improve opportunities for pedestrian circulation.
- Initiate "fixed route" bus service in Newtown on a trial basis.
- Maximize rail mobility opportunities.

This Plan is not a static document. The Action Agenda section of the Plan was formatted with a "Status" feature to enable the annual evaluation of progress made in accomplishing specific plan recommendations. This will enable an annual report to the community on the status of the Plan.

II. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

A. WHAT IS A PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT?

The purpose of a Plan of Conservation and Development is to record the best thinking of the Town as to how Newtown should continue to evolve in the future and to give direction to both public and private elements of change. Chapter 126, Section 8-23, of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that a planning and zoning commission “*prepare, adopt and amend a plan of conservation and development for the municipality*” at least every ten years.

Newtown’s Plan of Conservation and Development offers a Vision of the community and provides guidance for municipal decision making. The process of updating the POCD enables public participation in shaping the future of the Town and provides an opportunity to prioritize goals and implementation strategies and to set the course to achieve the Vision of Newtown.

While future oriented, Newtown’s Plan of Conservation and Development reflects the goals and objectives of a community at a certain point in time and provides guidance for municipal decisions affecting the Town’s conservation and development.

Newtown’s updated POCD responds to the 1995 amendments to the State’s General Statutes that increased the emphasis on conservation in municipal plans and to incorporate reference for greenway protection. In 2001, the Statute was further amended to include referral of updated and amended POCD’s to the local legislative body for review and comment prior to adoption by a Planning and Zoning Commission.

B. THE PROCESS OF UPDATING NEWTOWN’S PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT

In early 2002, the Newtown Planning and Zoning Commission began the process of reviewing and updating the Town’s 1993 Plan of Development. During the past year and one half, the Newtown Planning and Zoning Commission caused the preparation of 10 planning memoranda, that included the following topics: Demographic Overview, Development Patterns and Trends, Community Character, Open Space, Conservation and Natural Resources, Parks and

Updating Newtown’s POCD What is Legally Required?

As defined by Connecticut General Statutes, the POCD shall:

- Be a statement of policies, goals and standards for the physical and economic development of the municipality;
- Show the (Planning and Zoning) Commission’s recommendations for the most desirable use of land for residential, recreational, commercial, industrial, conservation and other purposes and for the most desirable density of population in the municipality;
- Promote...the coordinated development... and the general welfare and prosperity of its people;
- Make provision for the development of housing opportunities, including multifamily dwellings...for all residents of the municipality and the planning region...;
- Promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing...and encourage the development of housing which will meet the housing needs identified in the regional housing plan and the State’s Plan of Conservation and Development;
- Consider...the use of cluster development;
- Take into account the State’s Plan of Conservation and Development and note any inconsistencies...with said State Plan.

Recreation, Community Facilities, Housing, Economic Development, and Transportation. Each of these plan elements provided background information, existing conditions, maps and photographs, an analysis of changes since the completion of the 1993 Plan, and a discussion of issues, goals and recommended implementation strategies. These individual plan elements serve as technical background for the contents of this Plan and are included in the appendix of this document.

In addition, the Commission prepared and executed a Community Planning Survey to gain input from Town residents on their attitudes and desires toward growth and change in Town and prepared a special planning study to investigate the feasibility of implementing Open Space Conservation Subdivisions as a means of conserving more of Newtown open landscape and preserving elements of the Town's community character. The planning memoranda, the Community Planning Survey and the analysis of Open Space Conservation Subdivisions were posted on the Town website for citizen review and comment. Because of the extent of the information provided, these individual plan elements serve as technical background for the contents of this Plan.

As part of the process of updating the POCD, the Planning and Zoning Commission received input from Town departments and commissions. Each of the planning memoranda, the Community Planning Survey and the analysis of Open Space Conservation Subdivisions were discussed by the Commission during regularly scheduled meetings of the Commission. In addition, the Commission conducted a Public Planning Workshop on Updating Newtown's Plan of Conservation and Development to generate and benefit from public input and to encourage full participation on a variety of planning issues.

The key components of the updated Plan of Conservation and Development include a description of past growth and change within Newtown as it relates to future trends, a Vision Statement of what is desired for Newtown in 10 years and a description of the actions required to achieve this Vision, with an assignment of responsibilities for implementation. Important community issues are discussed, goals are described and strategies to achieve the goals are recommended. An assessment is made of the resources required to achieve implementation and responsibilities for implementation activities are assigned.

Community goals and objectives are established as a means to present clear and concise direction to guide future conservation and development actions. These goals take into consideration the recommendations of previous Town plans, the information compiled from planning and existing condition analyses; reports and study elements presented during the Plan of Conservation and Development Update process; existing land use patterns; future projections and community input.

Updating Newtown's POCD What is Legally Required?

The Connecticut General Statutes require that the preparation of the POCD shall consider the following:

- The need for affordable housing;
- The need for protection of existing and potential public surface and ground drinking water supplies;
- The use of cluster development and other development patterns to the extent consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity of the municipality;
- The State and Regional Plans of Conservation and Development;
- Physical, social, economic and governmental conditions and trends;
- Energy efficient patterns of development, renewable energy and energy conservation;
- The needs of the municipality including: human resources, education, health, housing, recreation, social services, public utilities, public protection, transportation and circulation, and cultural and interpersonal communications.

The identified goals will serve to guide Newtown's conservation and development activities over the next ten years and beyond.

III. NEWTOWN IN PERSPECTIVE: *GROWTH, CHANGE AND TRENDS*

A. INTRODUCTION

To plan for the future of Newtown, it is important to understand how the Town evolved to its current state and to recognize and comprehend the magnitude and character of the forces of growth and change that are likely to act upon the Town in the foreseeable future. This information provides the basis for developing plans that will enable the achievement of the Vision for the Town's future.

The following provides a summary description of the demographic and physical changes that have taken place in Newtown, followed by a description of likely trends given current market forces and municipal regulatory and investment practices. Plan Memorandum #2, Demographic Overview, provides a full examination of this subject.

B. POPULATION GROWTH

The understanding of demographic and socio-economic trends, characteristics and forecasts is important to the process of updating Newtown's Plan of Conservation and Development. This information provides indications of trends and changes that have an affect on a variety of Town planning issues.

As shown in Table 1, Newtown has experienced population growth in every decade since 1940. The Town's population has now exceeded 25,000 people, with population growth between 1990 and 2000 recorded by the Census at 4,250 persons or nearly 20.5%, making Newtown one of the fastest growing Town's in Connecticut. Putting this growth in perspective, numerical growth in the Town's population over any one decade was most dramatic between 1960 and 1970, when Newtown grew by 5,568 persons. Still, Newtown's population growth between 1990 and 2000 was greater than the total growth experienced between 1970 and 1990.

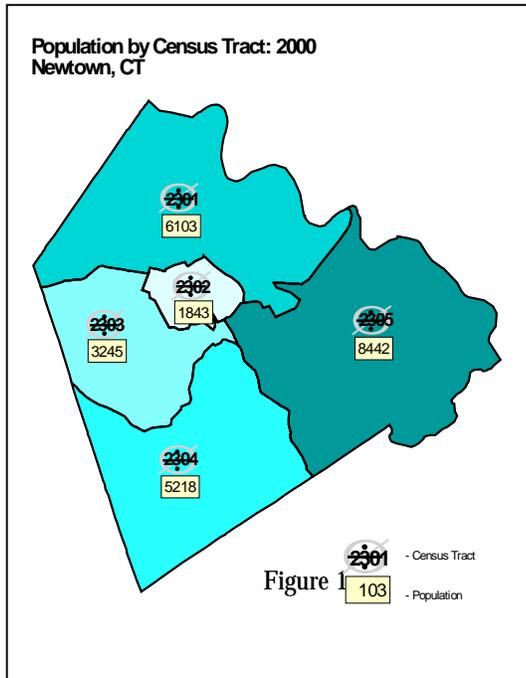
Census	Population	% Change
1880	4,013	-
1890	3,539	-11.8
1900	3,276	-7.4
1910	3,021	-7.8
1920	2,751	-8.9
1930	2,635	-4.2
1940	4,023	52.7
1950	7,448	85.1
1960	11,373	52.7
1970	16,942	49.0
1980	19,107	12.8
1990	20,779	8.8
2000	25,031	20.5

From a regional perspective, Newtown is located in one of the fastest growing areas of Connecticut and between 1990 and 2000 the rate of population growth in Newtown exceeded that of the eight adjacent communities.

Between 1990 and 2000, 75% of the population growth in Newton occurred in the northern and eastern areas of Town, in Census Tracts 2301 and 2305, impacting the Town's educational, recreational and transportation systems, among others.

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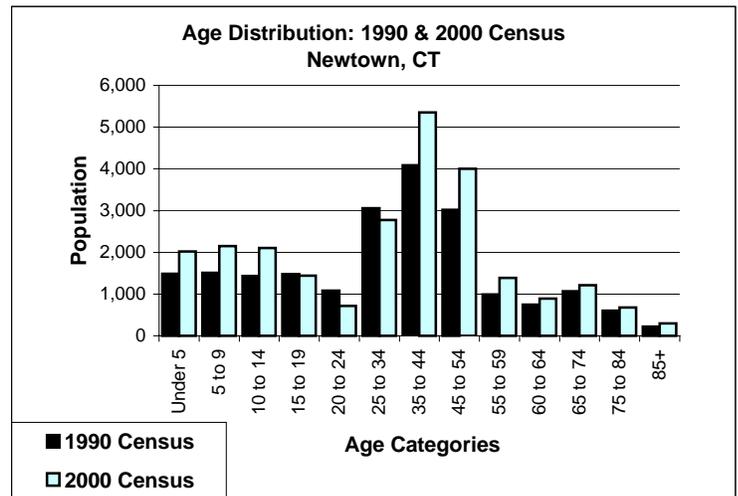
C. POPULATION CHANGES



Similar to most communities in the Connecticut, Newtown's population aged over the decade between the 1990 and the 2000 Census. Pre-School aged population increased by 36% or 538 children between the two censuses. The elementary and middle school aged population (ages 5 to 14) increased by more than 1,300 children. From a planning perspective, these changes in school-aged population impact school enrollment, park and recreation facility planning and youth services planning.

Chart 1

The Town's greatest loss in population occurred in the 20 to 34 years of age cohorts while population in the 35 to 54 years of age cohorts grew significantly and population over 60 years of age also increased between 1990 and 2000. Changes in the Town's elderly population will impact planning for senior facilities, senior housing and senior support services. Newtown's Median Age in 2000 (37.5) was similar to the State average but lower than all of the adjacent communities, with the exception of Bethel.



D. HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

As shown in the accompanying table, the number of households in Newtown almost doubled from 4,209 to 8,235 between 1970 and 2000. The decade between the 1970 and 1980 Census recorded the greatest percentage and numerical increase when 1,541 new households were formed in the Town. Between 1980 and 1990 the Town added another 1,048 households to reach the 1990 count of 6,798. Between the 1990 and the 2000 Census the Town of Newtown gained another 1,527 households (22.5%). All of Newtown's neighboring communities recorded household increases during the 1990's, but at a lower rate of growth. Bethel gained 330 households (5.3%), Bridgewater gained 49 households (7.5%), Brookfield gained 633 households (12.8%), Easton gained 337 households (15.8%), Monroe gained 1,055 households (19.4%), Oxford gained 529 households (18.8%), Redding gained 148 households (5.3%) and Southbury gained 1,016 households (16.4%). Such gains are reflective of area residential development trends and an indication of the attraction these communities hold for residential growth.

Census	Households	% Change
1970	4,209	-
1980	5,750	36.6%
1990	6,798	18.2%
2000	8,325	22.5%

The following information is offered to put changes in the average size of Newtown households over time into context. In 1960, Newtown's average household size was 4.51 persons per household. By 1970 the average had dropped to 3.47 persons, in 1980 it was 3.32 persons, in 1990 it was 2.94 persons and in 2000 it was 2.90 persons per household. While average household sizes have decreased, Newtown and many of its adjacent communities, continue to have a relatively high average household size when compared to the State-wide average of 2.53. Larger household sizes are reflective of Newtown as a young family-oriented community. According to the 2000 Census, 46.1% of Newtown's households contain individuals with children under the age of 18.

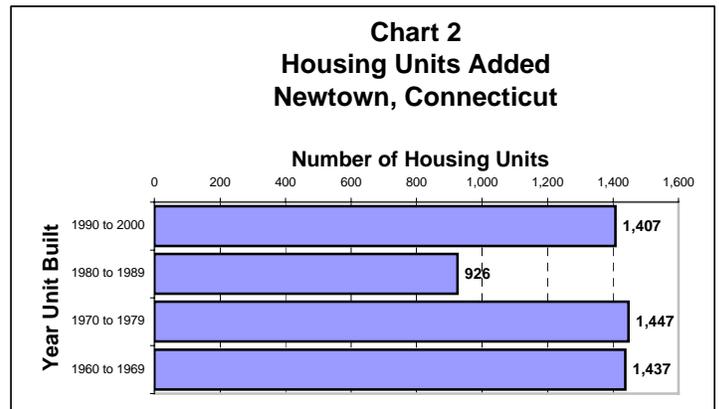
Drops in average household size have occurred throughout the country over the past several decades as the dynamics of our nation's households have changed. Household sizes have tended to

decrease as a result of an increase in single person households, an increase in divorce and separations, the tendency for young professionals to delay marriage and families, and an increase in the number of elderly who remain in their own homes as opposed to residing with family or moving into group quarters.

E. HOUSING GROWTH

Sixty-one per cent of Newtown’s housing stock was constructed between 1960 and 2000. As shown in the accompanying chart, with the exception of the 1980’s decade, Newtown has experienced a very constant rate of housing growth of between 1,407 and 1,447 dwelling units per decade. Housing developed between 1980 and 2000 accounts for 27.1 % of Newtown’s housing stock, while 33.5 % of the Town’s housing was developed between 1960 and 1980.

Even though the number of housing units developed during the past 20 years is 550 units less than the previous 20 years, the public perception that the rate of housing development within the community has increased during the past two decades is probably due to the “large lot” nature of housing development, which has resulted in an acceleration in the amount of land consumed by residential development on a per house basis. Historically, residential development in Newtown has taken the form of single family detached, owner occupied housing. Newtown’s housing stock, as described by the 2000 Census, consists of 92.8% single family detached housing and 91.9% of Newtown’s occupied housing stock is owner occupied.

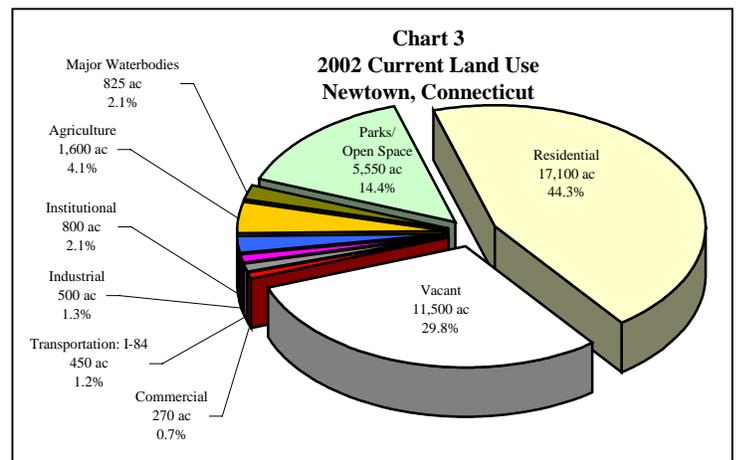


F. DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS AND TRENDS

Current Land Use- The Town of Newtown has total land area of approximately 60.4 square miles (38,644 acres). The Town includes a diversity of land use types including residential, industrial, commercial, institutional, agricultural and open space, as indicated of the accompanying chart. This chart also indicates that a significant portion of the Newtown remains vacant.

The predominant land use in Newtown is single family detached housing on relatively large lots. Between 1980 and 2001, 14,068 acres, representing 38% of the Town, was subdivided into 2,608 lots for single family detached housing.

Land Use Trends: Newtown is located within a rapidly growing region, by Connecticut standards, and is recognized in the residential marketplace as an attractive place to live. It can be reasonably anticipated that Newtown will continue to face cyclical development pressures



to meet the market demands for additional single family detached housing in northern Fairfield County.

Newtown has a large inventory of privately owned vacant land estimated at 11,500 acres (which does not include 1,350 acres of privately held agricultural land) and the 40 year trend of developing single family detached housing in Newtown is likely to continue during the next ten years. The pace of residential development in Newtown will be determined by a combination of market forces for single family detached housing and municipal regulatory practices as they affect the price of a finished building lot.

The residential market has traditionally be cyclical, responding to the ups and down of the supporting regional economy and mortgage interest rates. Newtown's current municipal regulations controlling residential development result in the creation of large lots supporting single family detached housing. While the cost of new housing in Newtown has risen steadily, housing costs in Newtown remain significantly below the cost for comparable housing in lower Fairfield County, where an important portion of the housing market demand originates. As long as the demand for single family detached housing persists in this area of Connecticut, Newtown, with an ample supply of privately owned vacant land and good locational attributes, can anticipate being the focus of residential development activity and the demand for population supporting highway commercial uses will follow the expansion of the residential base.

IV. NEWTOWN VISION STATEMENT

NEWTOWN IN 10 YEARS

The purpose of the Vision Statement is to provide a commonly agreed to understanding of what life should be like in Newtown in 10 years. This statement leads to an understanding of the types of actions Newtown will need to undertake during the coming decade to achieve these goals.

Vision of Newtown in 2013

The goal of the Town of Newtown is to protect and enhance its picturesque, rural, historic New England setting and attributes. The architecture and landscaping of all types of properties will be designed to protect the image of a rural and historic town. Over the next ten years various town agencies will work in concert to maintain a suitable variety of homes for it's citizens taking into account varying lifestyles and economic capabilities while providing and developing equal recreational activities and facilities for everyone. We will work together as a town to promote and protect open space, farmland and trails throughout the town always maintaining an environmentally active position protecting our aquifers, wetlands and other ecologically sensitive areas. Education for Newtown's children will continue to excel in quality and efficiency. Newtown will succeed in attracting commercial businesses at a rate equal to its growth and the design of the town's roads and traffic patterns will enhance business development while minimizing traffic congestion for the residents.