

Plan of Conservation and Development 2014 Draft

III. NEWTOWN IN PERSPECTIVE GROWTH, CHANGE, AND TRENDS

1. 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.

2. 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 effect on a variety of the Town's planning activities.

As shown in Table 1, Newtown has experienced population growth in every decade since 1940. The Town's population has now exceeded 27,000 people, with population growth between 2000 and 2010 recorded by the Census at 2,529 persons or nearly 10.1%. 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. Newtown's population growth between 2000 and 2010 slowed to 10.1% that is about half the 20.5% growth rate experienced between 1990 and 2000.

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
2010	27,560	10.1

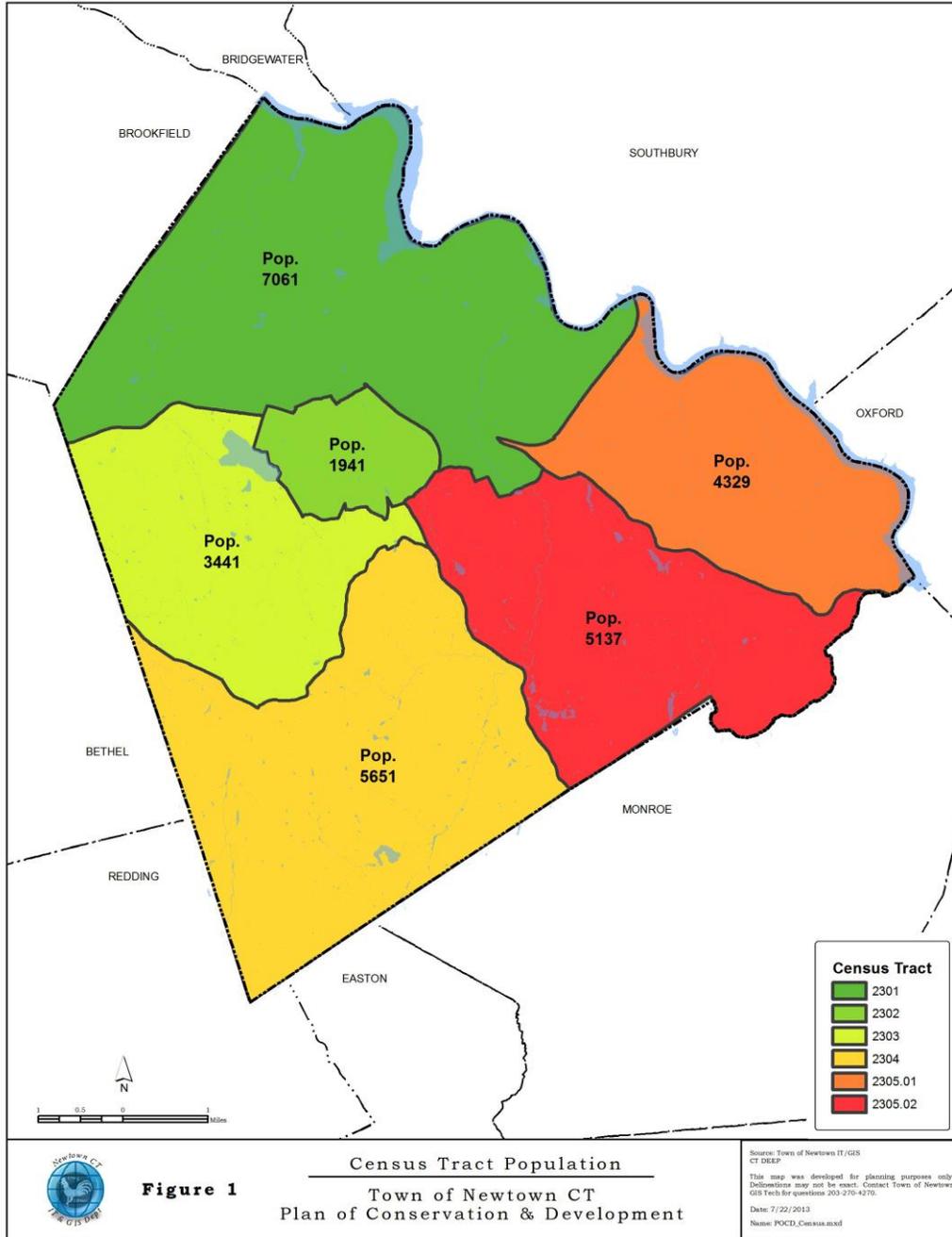
As shown in Table 2 between 2000 and 2010, the majority of the population growth in Newtown continued to occur in the northern and eastern areas of Town, or Census Tracts 2301 and 2305, impacting the Town's educational, recreational and transportation systems, among others. The Census Tracts geography is shown in Figure 1.

Census Tract	2000¹	2010¹	% Change
2301	6,103	7,061	15.7%
2302	1,843	1,941	5.3%
2303	3,425	3,443	0.5%
2304	5,218	5,651	8.3%
2305	8,442	9,466	12.1%
Total	25,031	27,562	10.9%

Data from the 200 and 2010 Census Tract Data recorded by the U.S. Census Bureau.

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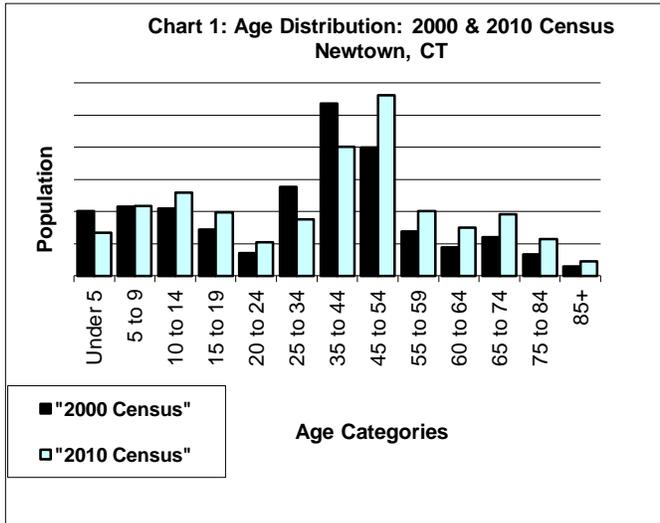
3. POPULATION CHANGES

Newtown's population aged over the decade between the 2000 and the 2010 Census as also occurred during the prior 1990 to 2000 decade. The median age of Newtown's population in 2010 was 42.9 years compared to the median age of 37.5 years in 2000. The population was about equally divided between males and females with only 254 more males than females.

As shown in Table 3, Newtown's median age of 42.9 in 2010 is about the same as those of most adjacent communities, except much younger than the median ages of Bridgewater at 51.3 and Southbury at 49.9 years. The 2010 median age for the State of Connecticut is 40.0. Newtown's Median Age in 2010 was similar to the State average but lower than all of the adjacent communities, with the exception of Bethel.

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Town	Median Age	
	2010	2010
Bethel	18,584	41.8
Bridgewater	1,727	51.3
Brookfield	16,452	43.5
Easton	7,490	45.1
Monroe	19,479	42.7
Newtown	27,560	42.9
Oxford	12,683	43.4
Redding	9,158	46.4
Ridgefield	24,638	43.5
Southbury	19,904	49.9
Trumbull	36,108	43.9
Connecticut	3,574,097	40.0

The Pre-School age population decreased by 33.5% or 677 fewer children under 5 years old between the two censuses. The elementary and middle school age population (ages 5 to 14) increased 12.1% by more than 500 children. The high school age population (ages 15 to 19) increased 37.5% by more than 500 children. The growth in the older children was due both to aging and an influx of families into Newtown. From a planning perspective, these changes in school-aged population impact school enrollment, park and recreation facility planning and youth services planning.

The Town's greatest losses in population occurred in the 25 to 34 years of age and 35 to 44 years of age categories that shrank at a rate of about 36% and 25% respectively or a loss of 2,350 people in total. In contrast, the population in the 45 to 54 years of age and 55 to 59 years of age categories grew significantly by more than 40% for each age group or a total of 2,240 people. Population between 60 and 64 years of age increased almost 68% or by 1492 people between 2000 and 2010. The population in the over 65 year old age category increased by 60.3% or 3,509 people during the last decade. Changes in the Town's elderly population will impact planning for senior facilities, senior housing and senior support services.

In summary, during the past decade Newtown's adult population aged, consequently fewer babies were born. If this trend continues, then the overall population of Newtown will start decreasing over the next few decades. Newtown has benefited from the volunteer efforts and community spirit mindedness of its population thus having sufficient volunteer fire fighters, ambulance association members, and town government board, commission and council members. As the Newtown population ages, volunteers for emergency services will dwindle and the Town may be forced to hire these fire fighting and ambulance association services in the future. Newtown's focus may become providing a Newtown Senior Academy versus the Newtown Youth Academy that exists today and providing rehabilitation facilities for older adults recovering from medical situations.

To revitalize Newtown with younger adults, the Town may decide to attract businesses or industries that tend to hire younger adults and encourage housing construction that is in a attractive price range for younger adults like multi-family housing and open space conservation housing developments that tend to be profitable with smaller housing sizes.

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4. HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

As shown in Table 4, the number of households in Newtown increased by almost 125% or more than doubled from 4,209 to 9,459 between 1970 and 2010. The decade between 1970 and 1980 experienced the greatest change of 36.6% and a numerical increase of 1,541 new households formed. Between 1980 and 1990 the Town added 1,048 households and between 1990 and 2000 Newtown gained another 1,527 households at a growth rate of 22.5% and then slowed from 2000 to 2010 to a growth rate of 13.6% that added 1,134 households. All of Newtown's neighboring communities recorded household increases during the period of 2000 to 2010. Only Oxford and Redding far exceeded Newtown's growth rate while Southbury had about an equivalent growth rate. During the previous decade, Newtown had the highest rate of growth. Such gains are reflective of area residential development trends and an indication of the attraction these communities hold for residential growth. Growth in most of these towns includes construction of the more densely populated active adult communities.

Table 4 Household Change: 1970 to 2010 Newtown, CT		
Census	Households	% Change
1970	4,209	-
1980	5,750	36.6%
1990	6,798	18.2%
2000	8,325	22.5%
2010	9,459	13.6%

Table 5 Occupied Housing Units					
	2010	2000	Change	% Change	2010 Avg Size*
Bethel	6938	6505	433	6.66%	2.65
Bridgewater	735	703	32	4.55%	2.34
Brookfield	6129	5572	557	10.00%	2.68
Easton	2715	2511	204	8.12%	2.90
Monroe	6735	6481	254	3.92%	2.88
Newtown	9459	8325	1134	13.62%	2.83
Oxford	4504	3343	1161	34.73%	2.81
Redding	3470	2918	552	18.92%	2.63
Ridgefield	8801	8433	368	4.36%	3.24
Southbury	8213	7225	988	13.67%	2.33
Trumbull	12,725	11,911	814	6.83%	2.90

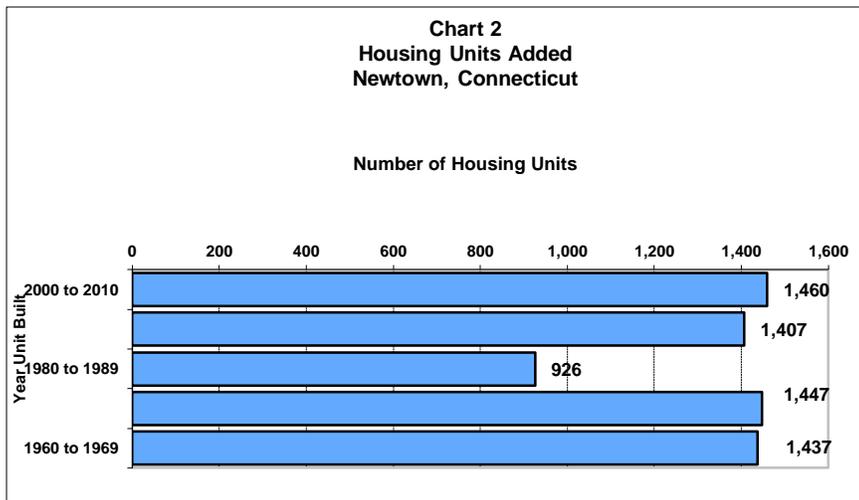
*Average number of people in households of owner-occupied units

The following information shown in Table 5 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, and continued to decrease to 2.83 persons in 2010. 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 2010 State wide average of 2.52, which is about the same as the 2000 State-wide average of 2.53. According to the 2010 Census, Newtown's households containing individuals with children under the age of 18 fell to 40.1% from the 46.1% recorded in the 2000 Census.

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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. In Newtown's case the aging of the population has contributed significantly to the shrinkage of the average household size.



5. HOUSING GROWTH

Sixty-six per cent of Newtown's housing stock was constructed between 1960 and 2010. Housing developed between 1990 and 2010 accounts for 28.5 % of Newtown's housing stock, while 37.9% of the Town's housing was developed between 1960 and 1990. As shown in the accompanying Chart 2, with the exception of the 1980's decade, Newtown has experienced a very constant housing growth rate of between 1,407 and 1,460 dwelling units per decade.

Even though the number of housing units developed over the past decade ending in 2010 is 53 units more than the previous decade ending in 2000, the public perception is that the rate of housing development within the community has decreased during the past decade as the growth occurred primarily in the first half of the decade.

Newtown's housing stock, as described by the 2010 Census, consists of 90.8% single-family detached housing compared to 92.8% recorded in the 2000 Census. Newtown's occupied housing stock is 94.0% owner occupied as recorded in the 2010 Census that has increased from the 91.9% owner-occupied housing stock recorded in the 2000 Census.

Over the past 2 decades the trend has been to the "large lot" nature of housing development, which has resulted in acceleration of 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. Generally the larger houses constructed on the larger lots are purchased by older middle age adults towards the peak of their careers.

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6. DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS AND TRENDS

Current Land Use: The Town of Newtown has total land area of approximately 58 square miles (37,110 acres). The Town includes a diversity of land use types including agricultural, commercial, government, industrial, institutional, open space, residential, transportation, and vacant areas as indicated on the accompanying chart. The data for the chart is derived from the Tax Assessor Codes as included in the Supporting Documents and the corresponding areas are derived from the GIS system. Future POCDs should consider using the same basis so changing land uses in Newtown can be tracked.

The predominant land use in Newtown is for residential housing representing 48% of the land area. Agricultural lands is the second largest land use at 16%. Federal, State, and Town government lands comprise 10% of the land area in Newtown. Transportation, which includes interstate I-84, state and local roads and their respective right-of-ways, makes up 6% of Newtown's land area. About 9% of Newtown's lands lies vacant.

Land Use Trends: Newtown's residential market has traditionally been cyclical, responding to the ups and down of the supporting regional economy and mortgage interest rates. Since the recession began in 2008, housing prices have dropped significantly and as a result foreclosures have risen. The market inventory for homes has continued to increase and is near its peak in 2012. Applications for new single-family subdivisions for construction on the large lots is currently non-existent.

Three EH-10 developments were built in the last decade and a fourth is now under construction. The market may be saturated at this level so future EH-10 developments are not predicted.

Newtown's municipal regulations controlling residential development traditionally have resulted in the creation of large lots supporting single-family detached housing. In anticipation that the future housing needs will be for smaller houses or at least houses with lower maintenance lots, amendments to the regulations have been passed for the Open Space Conservation Subdivision and proposed for a Multi-Family Housing Development.

Several parcels of residential land in the Design Districts have been rezoned to permit both business and residential uses on these lots.

Several industrial sites are vacant, but recently some of the larger buildings are being converted to different uses. One such conversion is for a high tech application that could become a magnet to attract similar or supporting high tech companies.

