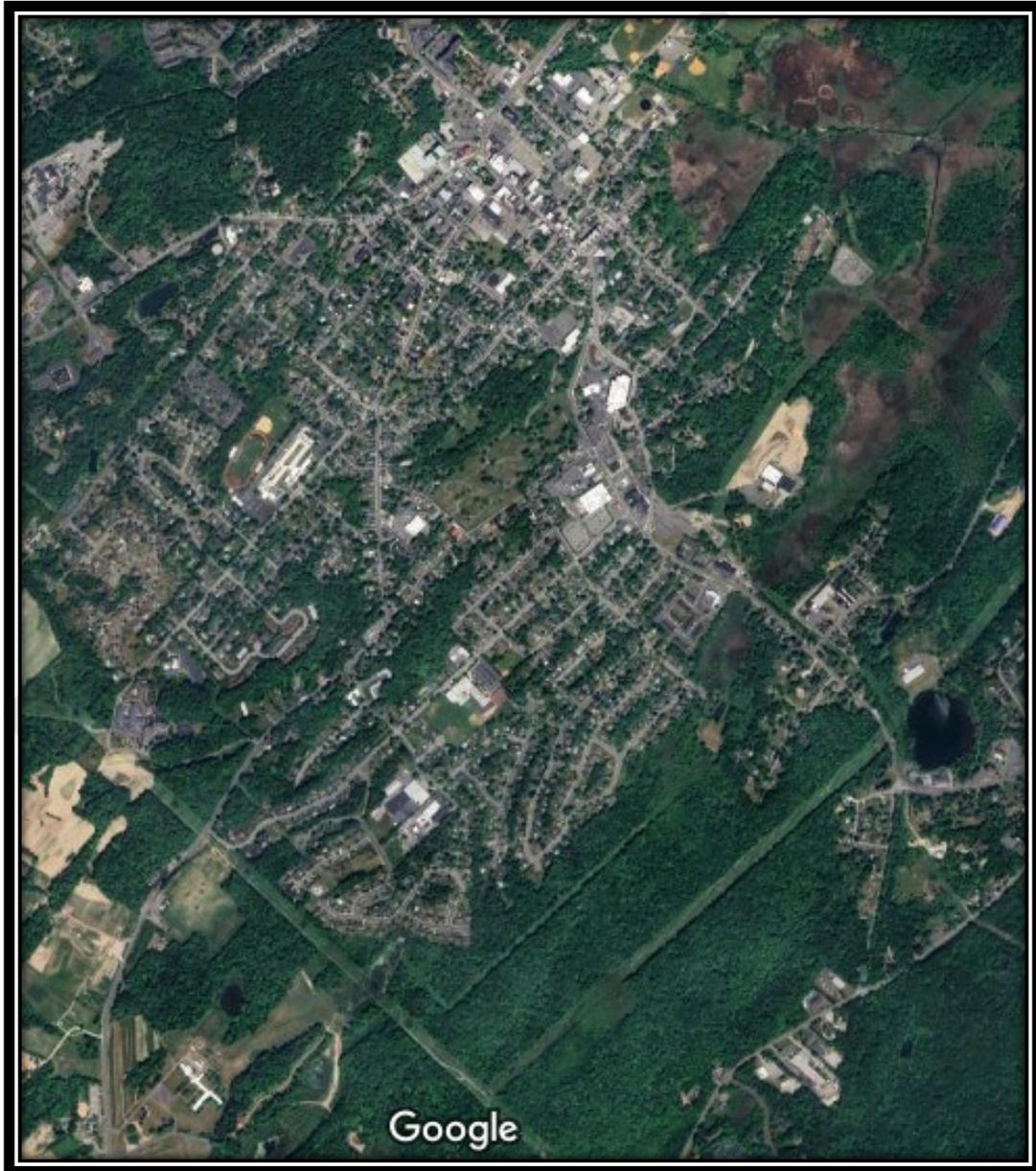


**Plan Endorsement Recommendation Report
For The Town of Newton**



This document is a recommendation report prepared by the Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA) as staff to the State Planning Commission (SPC) based on input or partner agencies, Town of Newton (Town), Sussex County and members of the public. OPA will post this report and other materials related to Town of Newton Plan Endorsement petition on our website. You can contact our office by email regarding petitions for Plan Endorsement by providing contact information, including name, organization, address and e-mail address to ospmail@sos.nj.gov

Documents, such as Master Plan, Re-examination Report, Zoning and Land Use Maps, etc. submitted by the Town of Newton can be found here:

<https://www.nj.gov/state/bac/planning/plan-endorsement/petitions/>

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INTRODUCTION

The Town of Newton (hereafter Newton or Town) in Sussex County received Regional Center Re-authorized through a State Planning Commission resolution on May 15th, 2013 and expired May 15th, 2023. The Town first had its Regional Center endorsed in 1993.

The Town is currently working through the Plan Endorsement Process, and is a pilot for our expedited re-endorsement process, aimed to incentivize and acknowledge the past and current work of municipalities following comprehensive planning consistent with the State Plan. The Town’s interest in pursuing formal Plan Endorsement was discussed on September 12th, 2023 at a prepetition meeting with representatives from the state agencies and the Town. Newton’s primary objective for seeking Plan Endorsement and Regional Center Designation is to continue to align its local planning goals and objectives with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (State Plan).

This report contains findings and conclusions concerning consistency of the Town’s plans with the State Plan. The review of the petition is based on information submitted by the petitioner and information otherwise available to OPA.

Adopting a resolution in support of Plan Endorsement of their plans will demonstrate that they are taking appropriate steps to plan for the sustainable future by addressing their infrastructure, economic development, housing, open space, environmental, and resiliency concerns.

BACKGROUND

The Town of Newton initiated the Plan Endorsement (PE) process with a pre-petition meeting with OPA and relevant State Agencies on September 12th, 2023. The Town then appointed its Plan Endorsement Advisory Committee by resolution #149-2023 on May 8th, 2023. Newton submitted their Municipal Self-Assessment (MSA) to OPA on February 26, 2024. OPA and our State Agency partners responded with an Opportunity and Constraints Assessment (OCA) on May 5th, 2024. Following the OCA the MSA was authorized by the Town via resolution #201-2024 on 07/15/2024.

OPA, Newton, and our State Agency partners achieved a consensus in regards to the requirements in the Plan and Implementation Agreement (PIA). The town’s Planning Board adopted the PIA and proposed State Plan Policy Map amendments at their January 27th planning board meeting via resolution #66-2025. The PIA includes items that OPA and our State Agencies believe will achieve consistency with the State Plan, as well as the updated Plan Endorsement Guidelines, which address State priorities for environmental justice and climate resiliency, including amendments to the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL).

CHRONOLOGY

Event(s)	Date	Notes
The Forestry Stewardship Plan	10/2012	Prepared by the Appalachian Forestry Service

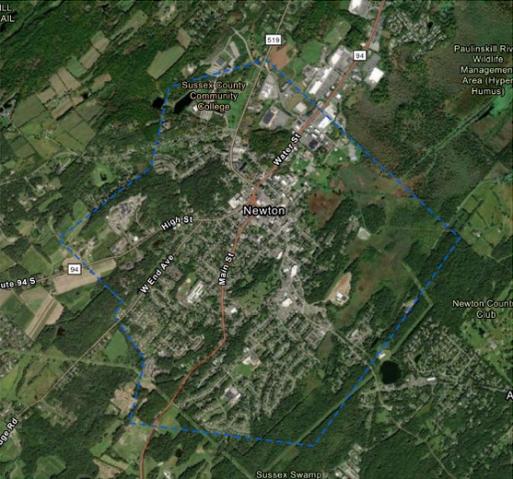
Master Plan	2008	Reexamined in 2019 and Updated in 2023
Natural Resource Inventory	2023	
Conservation Element	2023	
Open Space and Recreation Plan	2023	
Town Center Designation	05/13/2013	
Water Restriction Ordinance	12/9/2013	
Form-Based Code Zoning	2012	15 Zones—six (6) main Transect Zones and nine (9) Special Districts.
Zoning Map	2014	Amended 10-27-2014 by Ord. No. 2014-19
Adopted Sussex County Waste Water Management Plan	2017	
Neighborhood Preservation Program	2023	Supported by DCA
Revised Housing Element & Fair Share Plan	2016	
Affordable Housing Status Updates	2018 – 2023	Approval of Resolution #248-2023, Resolution #148-2022, Resolution #186-2021, Resolution #79-2021, Resolution #248-2018
Land Use Land Cover	2020	
Land Use Plan Element	2019	
Sussex County Strategic Growth Plan	2014	
Sussex County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Action Plan	2021	Authorization and Letter to Participate, August 16 th 2020
Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan Amended	June 2019	
Community Forestry Management Plan	2018 – 2022	Recommended by Shade Tree Advisory Commission
Water and Sewer Connection Fees Ordinance	04/10/2023	Ord. #s 2023-6
Municipal Self-Assessment	02/26/2024	
Opportunity and Constraints Report	05/07/2024	
Plan and Implementation Agreement	01/27/2025	Approval of Resolution #66-2025
PIC Approval	TBD	
SPC Adoption	TBD	

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Town followed Plan Endorsement guidelines and requested a waiver for Step 5 of the Plan Endorsement process, Conducting Visioning Sessions. The Town had sufficiently demonstrated an intent for public participation through the number of public meetings that have been held in the past 5 years. Newton was granted a waiver request on July 31st, 2024 to waive Step 5 of the Plan Endorsement process.

LOCATION & REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Town of Newton is located in the Northwestern part of the state. Newton is located in the Ridge and Kittantiny Valley Region, situated west of the Highlands Region. Bordering municipalities include Hampton Township to the north, Andover Township to the south and east, and Fredon Township to the west. The Town has a land area of 3.36 square miles. According to Newton’s MSA Report, the Town is proximate to major transportation corridors including U.S. Route 206, Route 94, and Spring Street. Newton is part of Sussex County, New Jersey’s sixth smallest county based on resident population and fourth largest county based on total area. The community’s proximity to Paulins Kill and the Pequest River, tributaries of the Delaware River, along with its proximity to New York City have defined Newton since its



founding in 1864. The Town’s evolution into the downtown-oriented, residential community that exists today has followed a pattern similar to other historic industrial Skylands communities in the State. Newton was a strategic location for communication and supply lines during the American Revolution. It was also a hub for mail, freight, commerce, and education. The completion of the Morris & Essex Railroad extension in 1854, drew many other apparel industrial businesses. The first major factory was built in 1873, the Merriam Shoe Factory, and in the early 1900’s more factories followed, making Newton a “boom town” in New Jersey. Within Newton, there is a delicate balance between historic preservation, economic development, and

the built environment. While the Town is largely developed with residencies and shops, it still maintains its historic character and natural environment.

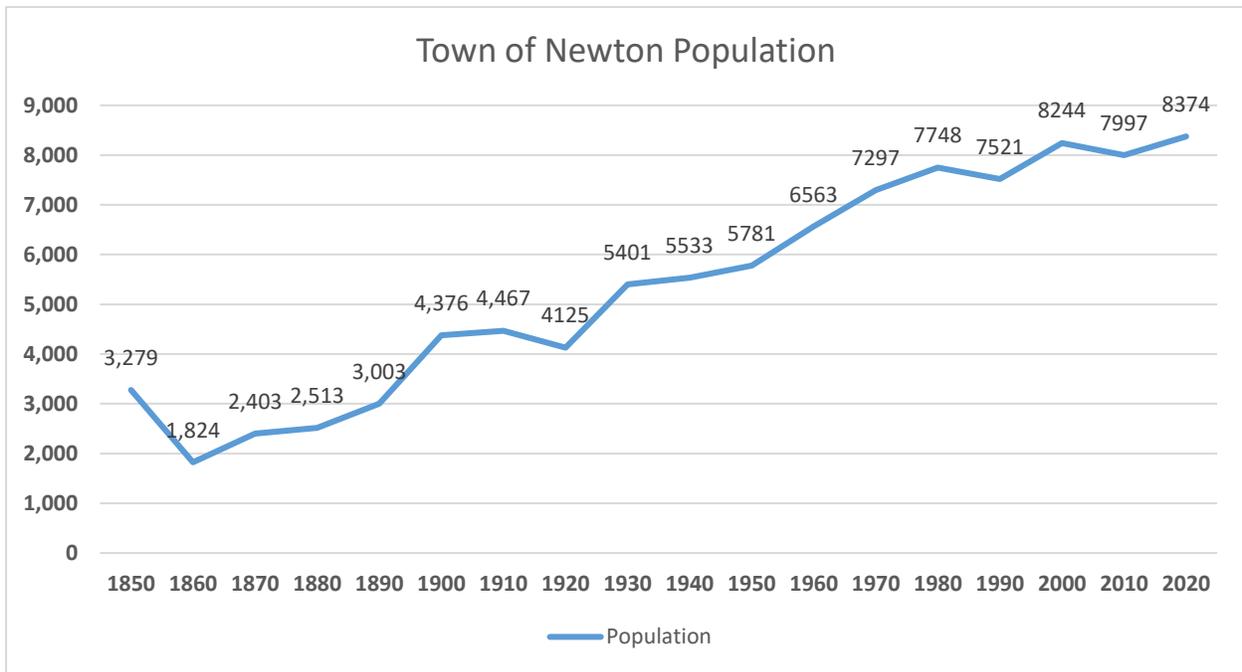
	Town of Newton	Sussex County
Land Area (sq. mile)	3.38	518.5
Population	8,374	144,221
Households	3,439	57,328
Average Household Size	2.44	2.60
Population Density (Persons/ Sq. Mile)	2,478	278
Housing Units	3,687	62,709
Home Ownership Rate	58.6%	85.0%
Median Household Income	\$73,679	\$114,316
Per Capita Income	\$38,866	\$56,471
Persons Below Poverty Rate	15.0%	4.9%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2023 American Community Survey 5 –Year Estimates

DEMOGRAPHICS AND TOWN OF NEWTON FUTURE

The Town’s population been in-flux over the past several decades. In 1990, the population was 7,521, increasing to 8,244 in 2000, then declining to 7,997 in 2010 and then increasing to 8,374 in 2020, with a median age of 41.9. According to the 2023 American Community Survey, the median household income was \$73,679, an increase from \$66,763 in 2020.

The Town’s demographic profile mirrors many Sussex County communities with stagnant populations. Recent demographics in Newton are fairly similar to the rest of Sussex County.



INFRASTRUCTURE

Water

Newton’s primary source of its potable water is from the Morris Lake/Sparta Reservoir, situated in Sparta Township atop Sparta Mountain, approximately 7.5 miles from the town. This reservoir has been the town’s primary water supply since the early 1900s.

The majority of Newton is connected to the municipal water system. According to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s Bureau of Water Systems Engineering (BWSE), the Newton Water and Sewer Utility (PWSID #: NJ1915001) possesses an adequate supply of potable water to accommodate all pending projects that have received BWSE approval.

Waste Water Treatment

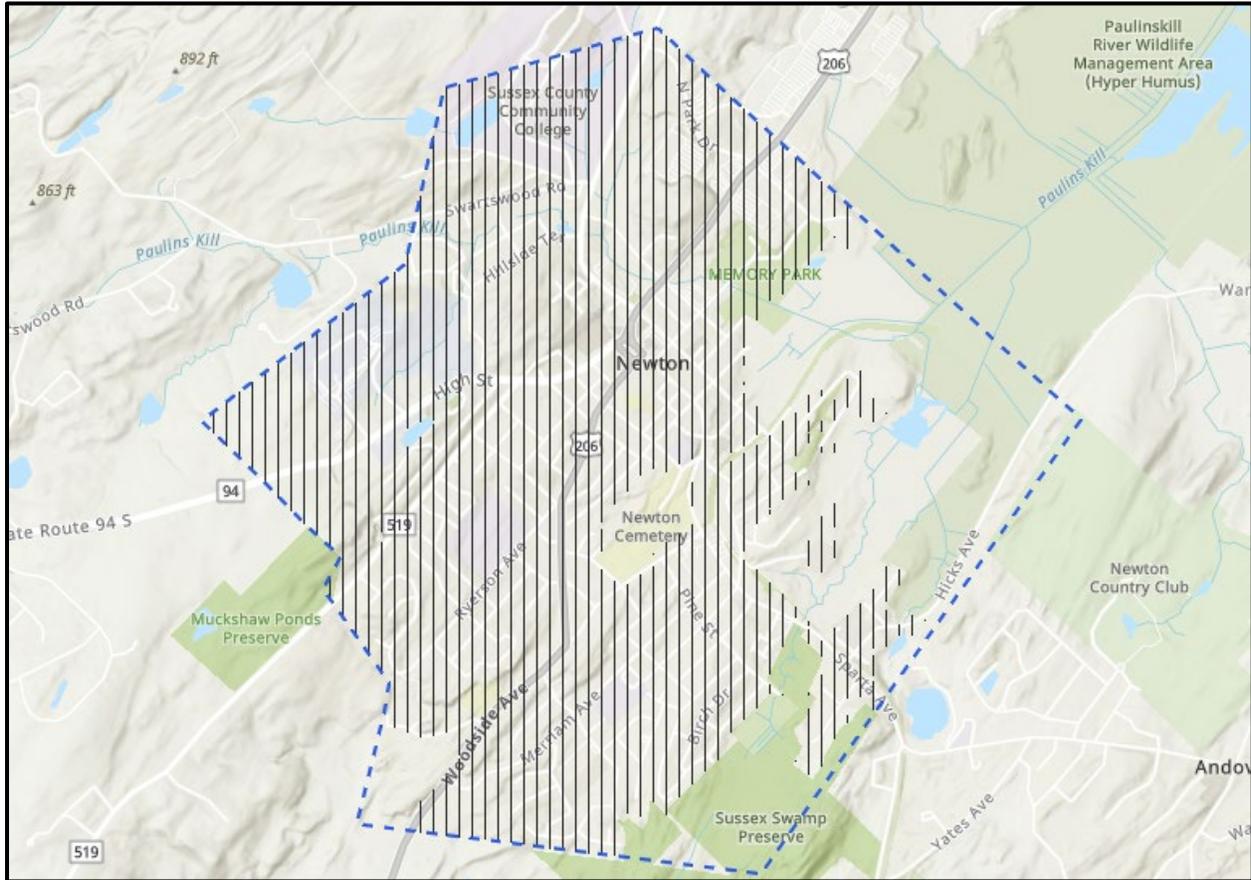
The infrastructure to collect and convey sanitary wastewater within the municipality is owned and operated by the Newton Sewer Department.

Based on the existing flow of 1.02 million gallons per day (MGD) and a New Jersey Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NJPDES) flow of 1.4 MGD, the Town of Newton Wastewater Treatment Plant currently has a remaining capacity of 380,000 gallons per day (GPD).

The Town is actively engaged in the pursuit of monitoring plant flows, continuing the annual sewer collection system inspection and inflow/infiltration correction program, tracking the Town population, and monitoring properties development status. Additionally, the Town is pursuing the tracking of new

development proposals or modifications to existing proposals to be prepared for potential future requirements for additional wastewater capacity.

Sewer Service Area



Water Quality Management Planning

The Town of Newton is included as part of the overall Sussex County Wastewater Management Plan (WMP). The WMP was submitted by Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Sussex in December 2017 and was submitted to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection in June 2015 for their review. The Sussex County WMP will be resubmitted for their review. The Sussex County WMP is an integral component of the Sussex County Water Quality Management Plan. The WMP assess the adequacy of existing wastewater treatment alternatives to meet population growth projections, and proposes solutions where deficits are discovered. The WMP ensures that sewer service is not extended into environmentally sensitive areas. This is done through the adoption of a Sewer Service Area map. The WMP identifies public water supply areas and identifies the water supply needs associated with proposed development.

TRANSPORTATION

Circulation

According to Sussex County, as of May 2010, the town had a total of 28.75 miles of roadways, of which 21.18 miles were maintained by the municipality, 4.47 miles by Sussex County and 3.10 miles by the New Jersey Department of Transportation.

Public Transportation

The Town of Newton offers two modes of public transportation as outlined in its Circulation and Transportation Element of the Master Plan. The nearest rail station is located 12 miles south in Netcong.

Buses

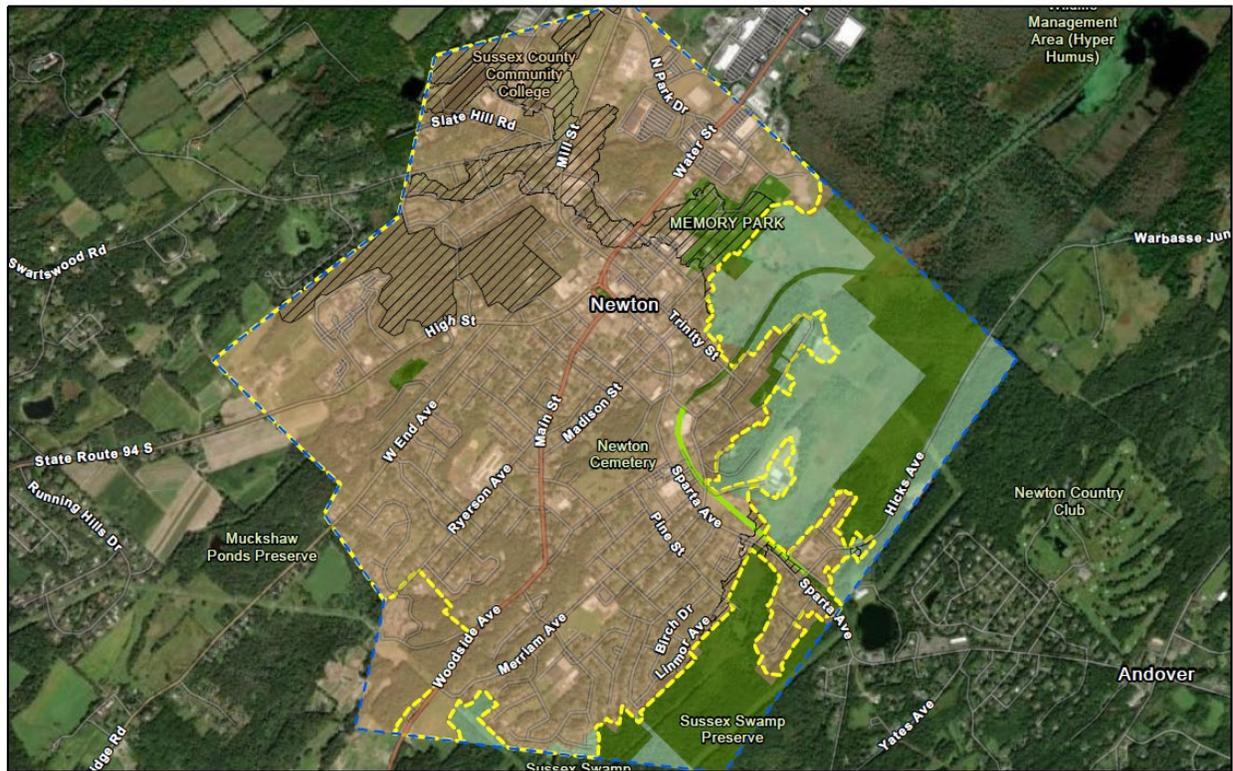
Bus service is provided by Sussex County Transit and Sussex County Para-Transit, which provide four countywide bus routes and transportation services for seniors and individuals with disabilities. Additionally, the Skylands Connect bus provided by Sussex County connects Newton to neighboring municipalities such as Sparta, Hamburg, and Sussex. Furthermore, the Town has a single park-and-ride facility situated on South Park Drive, administered by Lakeland Bus. This facility provides service to New York City, with stops at Rockaway Mall, Dover Transit Station, Denville, and Parsippany. Bus Service reduces the dependence on personal automobiles.

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STATE PLAN POLICY MAP

Proposed Mapping

The following map shows the proposed map amendment for Town of Newton's portion of the State Plan Policy Map.



11/15/2024

- | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Sussex County Boundary | Newton Rail Trail | Parks & Natural Areas |
| Newton Boundary | Planning Areas - proposed | World Imagery |
| Center - proposed | Rural/Env. Sensitive Pl. Area | Low Resolution 15m Imagery |
| CES - proposed | Env. Sensitive Planning Area | High Resolution 60cm Imagery |

High Resolution 30cm Imagery
Citations
9.6m Resolution Metadata

1:31,147

County of Sussex, NJ, data.pa.gov, New Jersey Office of GIS, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS.

Summary of Proposed Map Amendments

Planning Area	Label	Past Acreage	Proposed Acreage
PA 4B	Rural/Environmentally Sensitive	265	288
PA 5	Environmentally Sensitive	1,900	1,598

Center Designation	Past Acreage	Proposed Acreage	Change in Acreage
Regional Center	1,645	1600	-45
CES	0	245	245

STATE PLAN GOALS REVIEW

Goal #1: Revitalize the State’s Cities and Towns

Newton's Strategic Vision Plan outlines a comprehensive vision for a community where residents’ desire to live, work, and feel connected. This pedestrian-friendly vision seeks to create viable development opportunities that support diverse housing options and provide additional services and amenities for the entire community. This vision serves as the cornerstone for Newton's revitalization efforts. Specific goals include improving the condition of buildings and hardscape in the downtown, fostering a vibrant downtown, and enhancing the quality of life in the downtown. By leveraging its existing assets, Newton has successfully revitalized its town core, contributing to the growth of local and regional housing, economic, and cultural markets.

Sustainability has also played a pivotal role in Newton's planning processes. The 2019 Master Plan Reexamination Report added two goals to the original 17 from the 2008 Master Plan, reflecting a renewed focus on sustainability concerns and initiatives. The 2019 Master Plan Reexamination Report added two goals promoting sustainability:

- a) To encourage municipal policies and development that considers smart growth strategies including the consideration of potential locations to install electric vehicle charging stations; storm resiliency with respect to energy supply, flood-prone areas, and environmental infrastructure; and environmental sustainability;
- b) To promote and encourage an interconnected green infrastructure network in development and redevelopment throughout the Town to mitigate stormwater runoff and flood hazard, improve groundwater quality, and provide social, recreational, public health, and economic benefits

Goal #2: Conserve the State’s Natural Resources and Systems

Newton completed a comprehensive Master Plan Update in 2023, which included a Natural Resource Inventory (NRI), Conservation Element, and Open Space and Recreation Plan. The NRI serves as a foundation for identifying and preserving existing environmental and cultural resources. The updated data will be utilized to conduct a vulnerability analysis and a Climate Change-Related Hazard Vulnerability Assessment, which is a mandatory component of the next update to the Town's Land Use Element of the Master Plan. Collectively, the goals of the Conservation Element and Open Space and Recreation Plan address local vulnerability and resiliency issues

Goal #3: Promote Beneficial Economic Growth, Development and Renewal for All Residents of New Jersey

Newton seeks to foster diverse and contemporary economic drivers that benefit not only the town, but also Sussex County and New Jersey as a whole. Newton boasts a significant mix of small- and large-scale businesses within its boundaries. The Town offers diverse housing options for families of all income levels, as well as a variety of mom-and-pop stores, unique dining establishments, and shopping experiences. Newton maintains strong communication with all local businesses through its Community Development Office. The town actively seeks funding opportunities to assist small business owners in various ways, including grants for façade improvements.

Goal #4: Protect the Environment, Prevent and Clean Up Pollution

Newton completed a 2023 Master Plan Update, which included a Natural Resource Inventory (NRI), Conservation Element, and Open Space and Recreation Plan. The NRI provides a foundation for identifying and preserving the existing environmental and cultural resources. The updated data will be used to complete a vulnerability analysis, as well as a Climate Change-Related Hazard Vulnerability Assessment, which is required during the next update of the Town's Land Use Element of the Master Plan. In addition, the goals of the Conservation Element and Open Space and Recreation Plan collectively, address local vulnerability and resiliency issues. Lastly, the 2019 Master Plan Reexamination Report added two (2) goals and objectives, which reflect renewed sustainability concerns and initiatives.

Goal #5: Provide Adequate Public Facilities and Services at a Reasonable Cost

Nearly all of Newton's current and projected population and development growth will have access to essential public infrastructure, including water, sewer, roads, electricity, and natural gas utilities. Newton prioritizes the preservation of its existing transportation infrastructure over the construction of new roads. A recent example of this commitment is the funding received to create sidewalks along Mill Street.

The town offers numerous public facilities and services, such as Memory Park, Pine Street Park, Summit Avenue Park, Newton Square, Newton Dog Park, firehouses, municipal buildings, a courthouse, a pool, a police department, and a recycling center. Notably, the public parks and pool are free for residents.

Goal #6: Provide Adequate Housing at a Reasonable Cost

Newton offers a diverse range of housing options at affordable prices. The Town completed a 2023 Affordable Housing Status Update, which outlined various actions to further fulfill its affordable housing obligations.

In a declaratory judgment issued by the Superior Court of New Jersey, Law Division, SSX-L-418-15, on May 27, 2016, the Town of Newton was found to be in compliance with its constitutional obligations for affordable housing and to provide realistic opportunities for low- and moderate-income housing.

Goal #7: Preserve and Enhance Areas with Historic, Cultural, Scenic, Open Space and Recreational Value

Newton is currently updating its historic inventory and has designated historic districts within the town, including those listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places as well as locally designated historic sites.

The 2023 Master Plan Update included a Conservation Element and Open Space and Recreation Plan. Newton has also been actively supporting and implementing public art initiatives through the Neighborhood Preservation Program of the Department of Community Affairs.

A recent notable example of NPP implementation was a 60-foot by 14-foot mural designed by the Olmsted Mural Group and painted by hundreds of volunteers in the community.

Goal #8: Ensure Sound and Integrated Planning and Implementation Statewide

Newton maintains consistency with the SDRP in its efforts to ensure sound and integrated planning. In the eight Redevelopment Studies and Plans prepared by the Town McGuire Redevelopment Area; Hicks Avenue Redevelopment Area; Paterson Avenue Redevelopment Area; Diller Avenue Redevelopment Area; Merriam Gateway Redevelopment Area; Sparta Avenue Redevelopment Area; 121 Water Street Redevelopment Area; and the Armory ShopRite Redevelopment Area. These Redevelopment Studies and Plans aim to balance economic development, sustainability, and smart growth, while establishing a stable flourishing neighborhood Newton is pursuing Plan Endorsement in order to have consistency with the State's goals and policies and County Plans. The Town of Newton Governing Body approved the Planning and Implementation Agreement (PIA) on January 27th via resolution #66-2025, which includes the Township completing the PIA items in a timely manner.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Based on the work the Town of Newton has supplied, actions taken and committed to complete, it is OPA's recommendation that the State Planning Commission adopt the Resolution for Plan Endorsement

PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION AGREEMENT

See attached PIA