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## **Newtown is poised for growth and has several development sites ready to go**

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Located in northeastern Fairfield County, Newtown has readily available commercial and industrial properties at interchanges 9, 10 and 11 along Interstate 84. CT Rtes. 6, 25, 34 and 302 provide excellent access to neighboring communities in Connecticut, New York and Massachusetts. Newtown is readily accessible for commuters and air travel and is within an hour commute to Connecticut's lower Fairfield, Hartford and New Haven Counties. These transportation corridors combine nicely with our community resources offering ease of access for workers, services and for shipment of goods to and from their markets. Newtown continues to successfully attract residents and companies who recognize the benefits of this infrastructure and the proximity of our area to resources within the state. As we emerge from the economic challenges of the past few years, Newtown is poised for growth and has several development sites ready to go.

In addition to having several shovel ready commercial sites in Newtown, there are a number of municipal and state projects underway that will provide additional incentives for locating here. Plans to realign Edmond Rd. with Commerce Rd. combined with two commercial developments on Church Hill Rd. will transform Rte. 6 at Exit 10 off I-84 into a clean and welcoming gateway into Newtown. The planned redevelopment of two vacant lots on Church Hill Rd. combined with the road realignment creates benefits beyond aesthetics as the road work will improve the safety of the Rte. 6 corridor. An additional bonus will be the several acres of land that become attractive for commercial development on Edmond Rd. At the same time, the 23 acres of land that is available for development in the Newtown Technology Park, businesses along Church Hill, Commerce Rd. and Edmond Rd. will also benefit from the traffic improvements. The new gateway will be a welcoming sight for business owners, visitors and residents who enter Newtown en-route to commercial centers in the borough and Sandy Hook Center.

Over the winter, the Economic Development Commission worked with Newtown's administration and land use agency on a couple of initiatives meant to attract business development. The administration is reviewing its policies that will expand Newtown's Business Incentive Program and has approved a Fast Track Permitting Process that reduces the time it takes for development approvals. The commission is also working with the Fairfield Hills Authority on the redevelopment of the Fairfield Hills campus. Several buildings upon the campus are slated for demolition this summer which will open the site for new uses. A couple of new buildings are planned and infrastructure and streetscape upgrades are underway. New developments include construction of a new 15,000 s/f ambulance facility that will house the Newtown Volunteer Ambulance Associate (NVAA). A second project involves the conversion of a former staff housing duplex into an office building for the Newtown Parent Connection (NPC). A third building has been selected for conversion into a Children's Museum. The NVAA and NPC projects should break ground this summer. Plans for the

Children's Museum are underway and has the support of the town's administration. The museum will likely be another anchor tenant for the campus.

The commission's staff is working with Newtown businesses and the Newtown Chamber of Commerce on a May kick off for a Buy Local campaign. The initiative, The Newtown Way - buy local first is gaining local momentum. Businesses are helping to educate residents and businesses alike of the economic benefits that can be gained when doing business locally. Planning for a second wave involving buy local - business to business is underway. The Newtown Way campaign encourages residents, merchants and companies to buy local first before going out of town or to the Internet for goods and services that can be found locally.

The commission also appointed a special committee following the receipt of a State of CT grant for a business assistance program. To date the program provided financial assistance to about 30 small businesses in Newtown and Sandy Hook that were impacted by the 12/14 tragedy. Funds have been disbursed directly to businesses that experienced business interruptions from the traffic congestion and gridlock that occurred in the community. A second phase of business assistance will address the ongoing needs of the Sandy Hook business community where the impact of the tragedy continues to have an effect. Fortunately we have community support to address ongoing business assistance needs and the Sandy Hook Streetscape project that will give the area an aesthetic boost. The streetscape project involves realigning the main intersection, upgrades to the traffic signal and new sidewalks, stone walls, curbing, lighting, crosswalks and landscaping. The streetscape extends the revitalization work started several years ago in this historic business hamlet. Newtown welcomes visitors and residents to Sandy Hook where you can visit the many small shops and restaurants for an enjoyable and unique experience.

Finally, work is progressing on the Hawleyville sewer extension where large tracts of privately owned land await development. This area of Newtown has several projects already approved and the potential to attract major development. Hawleyville sits directly off I-84 at Exit 9.

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