



## **Newtown welcomes visitors and residents for an enjoyable and unique experience**

June 24, 2013 - Spotlights

Located in northeastern Fairfield County, Newtown, CT has a diverse selection of available commercial and industrial properties at interchanges 9, 10 and 11 along Interstate 84. The Interstate along with CT Routes 6, 25, 34 and 302 provide excellent access to neighboring communities in Connecticut, New York and Massachusetts. Newtown is convenient for commuters and air travel and is less than an hour drive to lower Fairfield, Hartford and New Haven Counties. These transportation corridors provide ease of access for workers, services and for shipment of goods to and from their markets. Newtown continues to 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.

Work is progressing on the Hawleyville sewer extension where large tracks 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.

Newtown has several shovel ready commercial sites and 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 Rt. 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 Rt. 6 corridor. An additional bonus will be the several acres of land that will become available for commercial development on Edmond Rd. 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.

Earlier this year, the Economic Development Commission, Newtown's administration and land use agency worked together on initiatives meant to attract business development. Newtown's Fast Track program streamlines the permitting process to 45 days from submission. The economic development and land use staff will work one on one with applicants to help fast track their project and bring it through the land use review boards. The EDC also updated Newtown's Business Incentive Program to align it with the state program thereby providing additional bonuses for commercial development projects and for manufacturing businesses. Newtown passed a resolution to participate in Connecticut's C-PACE program which provides financing alternatives for eligible energy upgrades made to existing commercial and industrial properties.

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. Infrastructure and streetscape upgrades are underway and should be completed soon. A ground breaking for the construction of a new 15,000 s/f ambulance facility that will house the Newtown Volunteer Ambulance Associate (NVAA) will occur in coming weeks. The conversion of a former staff housing duplex into an office building for the Newtown Parent Connection (NPC) is also planned while a third building is slated for renovation into a Children's Museum. The NVAA and NPC projects should break ground this summer. Fundraising by the not for profit EverWonder group is underway for the Children's Museum. The museum will be the third anchor tenant for the campus joining the Newtown Youth Academy and the Newtown Municipal Center. The campus is a multi-use property owned by the municipality and has several development plots available for lease.

The Commission's staff is working with Newtown businesses and the Newtown Chamber of Commerce on the second phase of a Buy Local campaign. The initiative, The Newtown Way - buy local first is gaining local momentum with businesses pitching in to emphasize the economic benefits that are gained when doing business locally. 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 second phase involves a business to business plan.

The Commission completed the first phase of its business assistance program funded by a State of CT STEAP grant. 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. The second phase will address the ongoing needs of the Sandy Hook business community. Fortunately we have community support to address ongoing business assistance needs and the Sandy Hook Streetscape project is well on its way to completion. 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 village. Newtown welcomes visitors and residents to its small village centers where you can visit the many small shops and restaurants for an enjoyable and unique experience.

Elizabeth Stocker, AICP, is Newtown's director of economic and community development and president of the Connecticut Economic Development Association (CEDAS), Newtown, Conn.

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540