

## **Editorial for Spring 2001 Preview**

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Located in northeastern Fairfield County, convenient to New York City, lower Fairfield County and Hartford, Newtown's location continues to be a major factor for companies who prefer a suburban location over larger cities. Newtown's excellent transportation network and three interchanges off I-84 have contributed to its economic growth as businesses find that accessibility to their work force and their northeastern markets is enhanced due to less road congestion and ease of access. Companies also have found that a skilled and diverse work force is available within 20 miles of Newtown and that new housing construction has contributed to the local labor pool.

Several new commercial and industrial projects were initiated over the winter with construction planned for this spring. Charter Communications is expanding into a new 18,000 square foot office building that will be built on the lot adjacent to their current facility. Charter will use the added space for their administrative offices. International Fiber Systems, Inc is planning to expand their manufacturing facility by 15,500 square foot to accommodate business growth. A new 20,000 square foot warehouse and distribution facility will be built in Hawleyville for a company who will be relocating to Newtown from New Milford. A 50,000 square foot self-storage facility is under construction on South Main Street and a new office building is planned in Sandy Hook on Route 34.

Newtown moved forward with their reuse plans for Fairfield Hills Hospital campus by issuing a request for proposals from developers. The Town hopes to attract companies that will provide a range of options including community uses, limited residential and a combination of commercial development such as offices, educational, research and development, retail and even light manufacturing. With more than 1 million square feet of space to fill, the Town is optimistic that they will have success in attracting a few proposals before the April 16th deadline. The RFP is available from the Newtown Finance Office and may also be downloaded from the Economic Development Commission's web site [www.newtown.org/FHH](http://www.newtown.org/FHH).

Some interest from private companies has been seen in Hawleyville where the Town rezoned land to allow for corporate campus development. Over 140 acres of land have been designated for planned commercial development of close to 1 million square feet. The first phase of the sewer project that will service the future development has already been completed. While no announcements are ready to be made for the large development area, the Housatonic Railroad has made it known that they wish to redevelop a small commercial property in Hawleyville Center and are looking for an interested developer. The Hawleyville area has access immediately off exit 9 and is one of only a few development areas left along the I-84 corridor.

A new industrial park has been approved for development in Sandy Hook. A total of 12 new lots are planned and will range in size from 1 to 4.7 acres. The new subdivision road will be constructed during the summer and lots will be available for sale shortly. Development in this area is expected to provide for expansion of several Newtown companies as well as businesses seeking relocation to Newtown. There are no public utilities planned for this development.

In sum, Newtown looks forward to another active construction season this year. Newtown is an attractive location to live and work and businesses already located in Newtown tend to grow in place. It is expected that corporate relocations and expansions will continue at the same pace as new housing construction which has been quite strong.