



News release from: Newtown Economic Development Commission, 3 Primrose St., Newtown, CT 06470

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NEWTOWN—A somewhat surprising profile of Newtown business owners and their concerns is emerging from a large-scale survey that is headed into its last few days.

The survey will be available only through Sunday (Oct. 31). Created by a town agency, it is designed to reach the leaders of the approximately 1,750 Newtown businesses of all sizes, shapes and services. It may be reached by clicking on the Economic Development Commission Web site, www.newtown.org, and hitting the “take survey” button.

While initial respondents listed numerous gripes, questions or comments about the pluses and minuses of doing business in town, only a few commented on what some perceive as high Newtown real estate and personal property taxes. One theme was that the town needs more unique businesses, not more duplication of existing stores, restaurants and services, so that residents need not travel and shop elsewhere. Another commented that a diversified commercial tax base could allow residential taxes to be lowered.

(more)

EDC RELEASE-2

Among the first findings:

-- 88% of respondents supported the idea of attracting stores and services to neighborhood business districts, including Sandy Hook Center, Hawleyville Center, Botsford and the Borough Village. Increasing traffic congestion in the center of town and along Main Street may be a factor in the strong response.

-- 63% said they would not benefit if public transportation was available from neighboring towns or local commuter parking lots.

-- A slightly larger percentage, 67%, said they did not think they would benefit if there was more low-cost housing available locally.

-- A narrower majority, 58%, said additional support services, such as hotels or rental cars, are not needed here.

As for the businesses themselves:

-- 49% said they only operated in Newtown, with no locations elsewhere.

-- An additional 36% are home-based occupations, a group that is not well-known locally.

-- Nearly half of the sample size, 48%, has been in business in Newtown for 10 or more years.

-- Slightly more than half of the businesses answering, 51%, had from two to nine full-time employees.

-- Although the survey allows answerers to respond anonymously, almost one-third of respondents have provided contact information and nearly a dozen have asked for Economic Development Commission assistance in discussing and solving problems.

Fourteen separate industries are represented to date. The types range from agriculture and construction to transportation and warehousing and wholesale trade. The larger blocks include retail trade, health care and social assistance, and professional, scientific and technical services.

(more)

EDC RELEASE-3

The survey's 18 questions are designed to elicit a firm's past, present and future concerns about operating in Newtown. The questions delve into the need for additional public and private support services, the individual's experiences in dealing with the EDC and other town agencies, and include statistical questions measuring the respondent's plans for future expansion locally, it's type of business and customer base.

An EDC commissioner urged this week that businessmen and women who have not taken the survey invest seven minutes to do so now, before it is withdrawn and compilation of the data begins. The EDC will use the results to develop better methods of matching commercial services to Newtowners' needs.

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