Easton: A Look at Demographics, Housing, and Economic Development

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Dukakis Center for Urban & Regional Policy
Northeastern University
School of Public Policy & Urban Affairs
www.northeastern.edu/dukakiscenter

A “Think and Do” Tank
Easton’s Demographic Portrait
### Easton Population 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>23,112</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age (years)</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 years and younger</td>
<td>5,239</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 years and over</td>
<td>15,944</td>
<td>69.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 years and over</td>
<td>2,797</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At present, Easton has a young population with more than 1/5 of its Population under age 19; only 12% are age 65 or older.
### Easton: 2010 Census Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total households</td>
<td>7,865</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family households (families)</td>
<td>5,732</td>
<td>72.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With own children under 18 years</td>
<td>2,708</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonfamily households</td>
<td>2,133</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Householder living alone</td>
<td>1,758</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 years and over</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1,059</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 years and over</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than 1/3 of Easton households are families with children; but even today more than 1/5 of housing units have a householder living alone.
A Look at Easton’s Demographic Future
According to MAPC Projections, Easton’s Population will likely decline over the next 15 years … and be stable if Massachusetts experiences faster economic growth.
Town Easton
Projected Household Growth
(Status Quo vs. Stronger Region Projection)

But number of households rising because of shrinking household size
**Town of Easton**

**Projected Population Change**

**2010-2020**

**Status Quo Projections**

**2010-2020:** With the exception of a small increase in 25-34 year olds, all of the net growth in Easton’s population will be age 55+.
Town of Easton
Projected Population Change by Age Cohort
2010-2030
Status Quo Projection

2010-2030: Going out another decade to 2030 and this trend toward an aging population is even stronger
Town of Easton
Projected Population Growth by Age Cohort

By 2030, nearly 25% of Easton’s Population will be Age 65+ -- TWICE today’s proportion
Easton’s Housing Stock Today
Today, Easton is typical of American suburbs with nearly 80 percent of its housing stock Single Family homes.
Town of Easton
Housing Unit Size

... with very few smaller units for smaller households
Shift in Housing Demand – Aging Baby Boomers

Aging Boomers may wish to “age in place” but not in their current homes

They may wish to remain near friends and familiar local community amenities

As such, they may give up their large single family homes for smaller multi-family housing … but in the communities where they now live

Will they be able to stay in Easton?
Shift in Housing Demand - Young Households

To attract younger households to Easton, there may be the need for smaller housing units as well ... since many are delaying childbirth and many are planning on smaller families

Younger households may also wish to live closer to the city or in village centers – less so in far-flung suburbs

Can Easton become attractive to younger households?
Shift in Housing Demand – Need for More Affordable Units

Declining incomes for renter households means we need to find more affordable units or they will face ever larger housing hurdles.

This means we need to free up rental housing for low and moderate income families.

And it means we need to build more affordable units as part of new developments.
To meet our housing needs …

- Need **zoning reform** to allow denser, transit-oriented multi-family housing
- Need to find ways to build **“Millennial Village” housing** for graduate students, medical interns and residents, and other **young professionals** to take pressure off of the older housing stock – 2-family/”Triple Deckers”, and garden apartments
- Need to **control building costs**
Number of Housing Permits Issued in Greater Boston, 2000-2013

Huge Increase in Permits
Up 114% since 2011

Number of Housing Permits Issued in Greater Boston, 2000-2013


9,563 8,929 8,558 11,120 12,713 15,107 12,332 9,772 6,529 4,714 5,823 5,275 7,966 11,270

### Proportion of Housing Permits by Type of Structure
Greater Boston

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Single Family</th>
<th>2-4 unit</th>
<th>5+ Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000-2002</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2013</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>54.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 (Est)</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Major Shift to the Production of the Multi-Unit Housing we need for aging boomers and young Millennials**
But we have much more to do

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This is the Future of New Housing
Economic Development in Easton
First, a look at the Massachusetts Economy
Since 2009, Massachusetts economic growth rate has outpaced the nation.
Growth in Real Product, Massachusetts vs. U.S.

Source: U.S., Bureau of Economic Analysis; Massachusetts: MassBenchmarks

And the Commonwealth’s near-term growth prospects look good
By the end of 2013, Massachusetts had recovered all the jobs it had lost in the Great Recession … and is continuing to grow.
Town of Easton Employment
Town of Easton
Number of Establishments
2001-2012

2001: 692
2007: 811
2012: 778
Town of Easton
Total Employment
2001-2012

2001: 9,256
2007: 9,669
2012: 9,612
Between 2001 and 2007, Easton’s employment base increased by 413 jobs … with strong growth in Retail Trade, Transportation, Services, Education, Information, Finance & Insurance, and Construction.
But since 2007, overall employment has shrunk with significant losses in Finance & Insurance, Manufacturing, Wholesale Trade, Information, Retail Trade, and Construction.
Promoting Economic Development in Easton
Practical Strategies to Attract and Retain Economic Investment: Learning from EDSAT
Economic Development is a collaborative process that builds strong, adaptive economies and requires leadership. Companies move to municipalities, not states. Municipal Officials must play a critical role in attracting business investment, jobs, and a strong tax base.
Local Communities on their Own

With rising federal deficits and a bipartisan drive to cut the federal debt … and at the same time a call for tax cuts, there will be little additional aid to local communities from the federal government.
States in Crisis

With states facing structural budget deficits, local aid from state governments will be in short supply in many states.
Local Economic Development

In this new environment of fiscal constraint, local communities will prosper only if they are successful in finding new sources of revenue … and the best way to do this is to attract business enterprise to town.
Be the **CEO** for Economic Development

- Municipal leaders must initiate and support the development process.
- Begin by assessing your municipality’s strengths and weakness.
- Change what you have **control** over.
- Collaborate with others on what you can **influence**.
Fundamental Proposition

Cities and towns have the ability to create their own destiny, and they can benefit from having sophisticated partners who can help them develop tools and information to compete successfully.
Development of EDSAT

- We surveyed corporate real estate and development professionals on location decisions
  - NAIOP (National and Massachusetts Chapter)
  - CoreNet Global

- Based on the NAIOP/CoreNet survey, the Economic Development Self-Assessment Tool (EDSAT) for municipal leaders was created
## Project type selected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>NAIOP</th>
<th>CoreNet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Industrial</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial / Profess.</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed-use</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D Facility</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office / Headquarters</td>
<td>68.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D Facility</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution / Warehouse</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Geographic area in which do most of work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>NAIOP</th>
<th>CoreNet</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Atlantic</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Atlantic</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East North Central</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East South Central</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West North Central</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West South Central</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Deal Breakers

City Self-Assessment

City Action

Deal Makers
Deal Breakers

- Uncorrected “Cognitive Maps”
- Too Little Attention to Site Deficiencies
- Slow Municipal Processes
- Too much reliance on Tax Breaks
NAIOP/CoreNet Survey Categories

- Permitting Processes
- Labor
- Development and Operating Costs
- Business Environment
- Transportation and Access
- Quality of Life/Social Environment
The Self-Assessment Tool (EDSAT)

The self-assessment tool includes sections on:

1. Access to Customers/Markets
2. Concentration of Businesses and Services (Agglomeration)
3. Cost of Land (Implicit/Explicit)
4. Labor
5. Municipal Process
6. Quality of Life (Community)
7. Quality of Life (Site Amenities)
8. Business Incentives
9. Tax Rates
10. Access to Information
Key EDSAT Results for Easton

How does Easton fare on the EDSAT questions relative to Comparable Group Municipalities (CGMs)?
Easton’s Strengths

• **Parking:** Easton is at an advantage over the CGM in that it offers parking facilities near development sites and has used state or federal infrastructure grants to improve parking.

• **Traffic:** Unlike the CGM, Easton has regular access to a traffic engineer or transportation planner.

• **Rents - Manufacturing:** Manufacturing space rent in Easton is less expensive than the CGM ($5 vs. $6 per square foot).

• **Workforce Composition:** Easton has a higher proportion of professionals in the workforce than does the CGM.

• **Labor:** Easton’s labor force is slightly more educated, with more bachelor’s degrees per person, than the CGM.
Easton’s Strengths (Con’t)

- **Physical Attractiveness**: More of Easton’s land is reserved for parks than the CGM, and unlike the CGM, the town features a hotline for reporting code violations and maintenance needs.

- **Quality of Available Space**: Compared to the CGM, Easton has a lower percentage of both contaminated or brownfield sites and vacant or severely underutilized shopping centers.

- **Sites Available**: Easton has an active strategy, unlike the CGM, for reclaiming or land banking tax delinquent and tax title properties.

- **Fast Track Permits**: Easton has an advantage over the CGM in that the town features an “overlay” district that allows expedited permitting for certain uses.
Citizen Participation in the Review Process: Abutters and organized neighborhood groups slow the permitting process only very little, while among the CGM, they slow the process somewhat. Additionally, not only do elected officials somewhat expedite development by facilitating dialogue, compared to the CGM’s very little facilitation, but unlike the CGM, officials have intervened to save a project endangered by abutter or neighborhood opposition within the last five years.

Crime: Compared to the CGM, crime in Easton is significantly lower per person in terms of auto theft, robbery, and homicides, and the town has a slightly lower rate of residential burglaries.

Local Schools: More of Easton’s public high school graduates go on to attend four-year colleges after graduation than do graduates of CGM public high schools.
Easton’s Strengths (Con’t)

- **Amenities**: All of Easton’s existing development sites are within one mile from fast food restaurants, day care, and retail shops, compared to most of the CGM’s sites.

- **Local Business Incentives**: Easton is at an advantage over the CGM in that it actively tries to attract local, state, and federal facilities to its jurisdiction.

- **Proximity to Universities and Research**: Unlike the CGM, Easton features a major four-year college, Stonehill College, within ten miles of the jurisdiction, and has double the number of public or private four year colleges or universities than does the CGM.

- **Permitting Ombudsman**: Easton’s chief executive office, the town administrator, plays a significant role in ensuring the efficiency of the local permitting process, giving the town an advantage over the CGM.

- **Website**: Easton’s website lists all local development policies and procedures, allows for the submission of some permit applications, both unlike the CGM, and the town features a few links the CGM websites do not typically contain.
Easton’s Weaknesses

- **Timeliness of Approvals**: Although Easton’s permitting process is generally on par with the CGM, the town takes longer to complete the Appeals Process.

- **Infrastructure**: Public sewer and wastewater treatment capacities are inadequate for current needs, representing a possible “deal-breaker” to potential businesses and developers considering Easton.

- **Rents – Retail/Office**: Rents in Easton for retail space and general office space in both the central business and highway business districts are significantly higher than the CGM, except for Class A in the highway business district. These rents are also potential “deal-breakers” for potential businesses and developers considering Easton.

- **Highway Access**: A smaller percentage of available manufacturing sites are within two miles of a highway, compared to the CGM, putting Easton at a disadvantage.
Easton Weaknesses (Con’t)

- **Development Strategy**: Easton currently does not have an up-to-date development strategy, overall economic development plan, or economic development plan within the current master plan. The jurisdiction also does not target specific sectors that are targeted in the county or state development strategy, nor does it have an industrial attraction policy. However, Easton is currently crafting their master plan with assistance from this report, which will alleviate these disadvantages and put the town on par with the CGM.

- **Predictable Permits**: Unlike the CGM, Easton does not provide a checklist of permitting requirements to prospective developers, although the town is currently developing such a tool.

- **Local Business Incentives**: Although the CGM actively pursues federal and/or state programs designed to assist in attracting and retaining businesses, utilizes Tax Increment Financing (TIF) or other programs to provide tax breaks for businesses, and assists firms in securing financing with commercial lenders or state industrial finance mechanisms, Easton does not, leaving the town at a disadvantage.
Easton Weaknesses (Con’t)

- **Cross Marketing:** Unlike the CGM, Easton does not engage local and regional business organizations to participate in marketing the town.

- **Tax Delinquency:** Easton has significantly more properties that are tax defaulted or subject to the power of sale than the CGM, and the town chooses to auction properties off after 5-10 years, longer than the CGM’s 1-5 years.

- **Local Tax Rates:** Although Easton does offer a single tax, which is advantageous, that rate is higher than both commercial/industrial and residential rates in the CGM.

- **Quality of Available Space:** Easton has a significantly smaller proportion of unused open land or greenfield sites than in the CGM.

- **Housing:** Both median home sale prices and median rents for two bedroom apartments are higher in Easton than among the CGM.
Easton’s Weaknesses

- **Public Transit:** Compared to the CGM, a significantly smaller proportion of Easton’s available sites for retail trade, manufacturing, and general office space are within a quarter mile of a public bus or rapid transit stop. Additionally, unlike the CGM, public transit is unavailable on nights and weekends.

- **Land (space):** Easton has a smaller proportion than the CGM of parcels available for industrial development or large scale commercial development on five acres or more.

- **Workforce Training:** Unlike the CGM, Easton does not support public-private partnerships to provide specific workforce training.
But What Really Matters?
Factors Correlated with Greater Establishment Growth

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN
ESTABLISHMENT GROWTH
AND
EDSAT VARIABLES

2001-2011

ES-202 DATA
50 Massachusetts Municipalities - Factors Most Highly Correlated with Increase in Establishments 2001-2011

- Economic Development Marketing: 0.37
- Timeliness of Approvals: 0.31
- Parking: 0.23
- Public Transit: 0.23
- Cross Marketing: 0.23
- Low Traffic Congestion: 0.21
- Fast Track Permitting: 0.17
- Site Availability: 0.16
50 Massachusetts Municipalities - Factors Most Highly Correlated with Increase in Establishments 2001-2011

Easton’s Economic Development Strengths

- Economic Development Marketing: 0.37
- Timeliness of Approvals: 0.31
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50 Massachusetts Municipalities - Factors Most Highly Correlated with Increase in Establishments
2001-2011

Easton’s Economic Development Weaknesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development Marketing</td>
<td>0.37</td>
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<td>Timeliness of Approvals</td>
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<td>Site Availability</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions
Things to Think About

- **Housing** - Need to find ways of encouraging the production of appropriate multi-unit housing for your aging Baby Boomers

- **Millennials** – Need to find ways of encouraging the production of appropriate housing for young workers and their smaller families

- **Economic Development** - Easton has a lot of good things going for it:
  - Available Parking
  - Low Traffic Congestion
  - Available Development Sites
  - Fast Track Permitting

- But you could be better positioned to attract more business investment and jobs by:
  - Developing stronger Economic Development Marketing
  - Work more closely with Local Business Groups to market Easton
  - Improve Timeliness of Approvals on Zoning Appeals
Thank You!

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