



Friends of Newtown Seniors (FONS) Roundtable

June 25, 2024,

Discussion Highlights

Newtown Senior Center

Eighteen people attended. Ned Simpson started the meeting off with some context for the FONS Roundtable and guidelines. The purpose is sharing and learning. Highlights will be shared with the FONS Board and other entities. Everyone should participate. We will focus on Newtown and Western CT issues. As much as possible discuss “how to” rather than “why it can’t”. The discussions may produce recommendations for follow-up sessions, and Senior Center programs. Typical 90 Minutes session will start with welcome and introductions, updates from last Roundtable, if any. The days topic will be addressed with discussion questions, then table discussions, and general group discussions. Wrap-up will include To Do and Topics for next Roundtable.

At the April FONS meeting and dinner, a survey was taken asking to rank from 1 needs improvement to 5 it’s great, some aspects of senior life in Newtown. Average response to each category is shown below.

Life in Newtown

Area	Average
Recreation	3.63
Social	3.34
Services	3.08
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Entertainment	2.97
Shopping	2.93
Medical	2.65
Housing	2.05
Transportation	1.99

1 = Needs improvement, 5= Great

By design the April survey was vague. Each table was asked to discuss what the word means and why it ranked where it did.

Transportation

- If you don’t have a car, living in Newtown is very challenging
- Additional turn lanes at some key intersections would
- Newtown has a terrible road system. Many roads are so narrow, barely two car lengths. Waze and other mapping should not send through traffic on these roads
- Farrell Apartments in Sandy Hook is a good example of what the town needs more of. It has not had noticeable impact on traffic. It’s great to see people using the sidewalks



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- More sidewalks and fill the gaps in sidewalks. e.g. the lot between Church Hill Village and the gas station

Housing

- Housing Shortage. Big problem statewide.
- 55+ communities (Liberty, Walnut Tree, Regency, etc.) are great, but too expensive
- Lots of discussion about Nunnawauk Meadows. Who owns it, perception that it has years long waiting list, why don't they expand. Should be the subject for a follow-up session
- When empty nesters want to downsize there are very few options in Newtown
- Why don't developers build more modest size houses on small lots? *
- Concern that housing will
 - Add students to the schools and increase our taxes
 - Increase traffic congestion problems
- What's the status of in-law apartments, Accessory Apartments in Newtown? *
- The term "Affordable" when referring to housing. Statutory definition vs common usage. *
- Developers should be required to fund infrastructure (turn lanes, sidewalks, ett) in order to be approved.

Medical

- Plenty of dentist in town
- If you don't have a car, it's a problem
- Specialists Southbury, Danbury, or Trumble

Shopping

- Discussion about Sand Hill Plaza. Vacant stores. How nice the inside mall area was.
 - Has ownership changed recently? *
- Why are commercial rents so high? *

General Items

- Most of the attendees who have lived in Newtown 20 or more years commented "seen a lot of change, some good, some not good". *
- Everything on the list is related to housing.
- There is no vision of the future of Newtown. The State requires every town to have a POCD to define and plan for their future vision. I many towns POCD updates are a side exercise.
- Capacity of Newtown Schools. Decreasing student population. Will the student population increase in the future.



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Future Roundtables

- Invite people who can speak knowledgeably about residential and commercial development., John Voket, EDC Chair, P&Z, Robert Murray, Brian Atherton, etc.
- Invite Nunnawauk board member(s) to educate and discuss
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* Item to follow and follow-up.