



New Haven-Bridgeport-Stamford-Waterbury-Danbury, CT NECMA

Regulatory Order/Family: Traditional/Middle America

Summary

In Connecticut, metropolitan New Haven contrasts in several interesting ways with metropolitan Hartford. It has a larger number of populous jurisdictions and a well established regional railroad system around which several jurisdictions have encouraged new high-density, mixed-use centers. Fewer than half of jurisdictions use exclusionary zoning; about 30 percent allow densities to exceed 15 dwellings per acre. There is little growth management in the region, but many jurisdictions require or encourage affordable housing. Perhaps as a consequence of this combination of structural factors and policies, the New Haven NECMA has sprawled less than metropolitan Hartford, and two of its four cities over 100,000 residents are growing or holding their populations.

Governance Framework and Growth Trends

The New Haven-Bridgeport-Stamford-Waterbury-Danbury NECMA technically overlaps in part with the New York City CMSA, but standing alone it is the 26th largest metropolitan area in the U.S. With 1.7 million residents in 2000, its population grew between 4 and 5 percent in both the 1980s and 1990s, up about 75,000 in the 1990s alone. It has 52 jurisdictions, 12 of them over 50,000 and four (Bridgeport, New Haven, Stamford, and Waterbury) over 100,000. Twenty-nine jurisdictions had between 10,000 and 50,000 residents in 2000, and 11 had under 10,000. This makes the metro area slightly less fragmented than the neighboring Hartford NECMA.

New Haven also sprawled less rapidly than Hartford, with a 13 percent increase in developed land between 1982 and 1997 accompanying population growth just under 7 percent. It climbed from 20th to 15th densest metro area during that period. New Haven-Bridgeport's density reflects, in part, the leading role of Stamford as a growing secondary central business district (with mixed housing, office, and retail development) in the New York metropolitan area as well as the importance of fixed rail as a foundation for high-density transit-oriented development. Stamford's population grew from 108,000 to 117,000 in the 1990s and continues to grow even now. Even severely distressed Bridgeport lost fewer residents than Hartford in the 1990s (a decline of less than two percent), but New Haven lost nearly 7,000 residents in the 1990s. About 10 percent of the land in the metro area is publicly owned, with the state and local governments each in charge of about half of the public land.

Regulatory Environment

We received responses to our survey from 7 incorporated municipalities and 17 towns. Together, these jurisdictions account for 63 percent of the metro area's population, and 53 percent of its land area.

Based on these responses, we estimate that 97 percent of the jurisdictions have comprehensive plans and 98 percent have zoning. Exclusionary zoning is markedly less pronounced in metro New Haven than in Hartford, with an estimated 40 percent of jurisdictions limiting densities to below 8



dwellings per acre and 45 percent prohibiting our hypothetical development (compared with about 63 percent in Hartford). Thirty percent of the jurisdictions allow development to exceed 15 dwellings per acre, and these jurisdictions account for 55 percent of the region's population.

While the New Haven metro area differs from Hartford in its accommodation of density, it resembles Hartford in its lack of growth management measures. Only 12 percent of jurisdictions use impact fees and 11 percent are estimated to use urban containment. New Haven's jurisdictions are more supportive of affordable housing than those in Hartford, with nearly 50 percent estimated to have an incentive program of some kind (40 percent use inclusionary zoning or density bonuses), and 17 percent have dedicated funds for affordable housing. Predictably, the jurisdictions that support affordable housing tend to be the more populous ones.