

# Board of Aldermen

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2012-2013

City of Newton

1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton, MA 02459



## MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

TO: MEMBERS OF THE BOARD  
FROM: STEPHEN M. LINSKY, CHAIR  
DATE: JULY 31, 2012  
RE: LONG RANGE PLANNING

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The Long Range Planning Committee will be meeting jointly with the Economic Development Commission just before the start of the next full board meeting on Monday, August 13<sup>th</sup> beginning at 6:30 PM. in Room #209.

The Planning Department, along with Nancy Lee from the Dukakis Center, will be presenting on the findings from the EDSAT survey.

An executive summary prepared by the Planning Department will be available in member's packets. The complete report is available in electronic form and is attached to this announcement.

I hope all members are able to attend, as this survey is a potentially important tool in assisting the city in formulating and directing future development.

Thank you.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL**

**RESULTS FOR THE CITY OF NEWTON, MA**

**MAY 25, 2012**

For additional information about the Economic Development Self Assessment Tool (EDSAT), please visit [www.economicdevelopment.neu.edu/](http://www.economicdevelopment.neu.edu/) or contact

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## **Introduction**

A robust and adaptable local economy greatly depends on local, county, and regional officials taking the lead on formulating and implementing an economic development strategy. This includes understanding what it is that businesses are looking for, what local and regional resources are available, what advantages their jurisdiction has to offer, and what weaknesses they must overcome. The Economic Development Self Assessment Tool (EDSAT) is an important step public officials can take in assessing their jurisdiction's strengths and weaknesses for sustaining and expanding economic growth. Public officials and business leaders who come together as a team for self assessment also benefit from an integrated view of how various departments and stakeholders affect economic development and their roles in creating a business friendly environment.

By participating in this self assessment, Newton is on its way to better understanding the assets it has for economic development and addressing the challenges working against it. This report contains an assessment of the responses provided by Newton to the questions in EDSAT. All responses and results will be kept strictly confidential.

## **Project Overview**

The EDSAT and accompanying analysis are part of an ongoing partnership between Northeastern University's Dukakis Center for Urban Research and Policy (Dukakis Center) and the National League of Cities (NLC). The larger economic development efforts between the Dukakis Center and the NLC include an Economic Development Toolkit of which EDSAT is the first tool. Since 2005, the Dukakis Center has sought to identify the "deal breakers" impeding private investment in local jurisdictions. Based on research on the rebirth of older industrial cities, the Dukakis Center has studied and identified what municipalities can do to respond to changing market forces and highlighted strategic opportunities for other key actors, including state government, regional agencies, business leaders, and academic institutions. The result has been the development of EDSAT and the creation of an analytical framework for providing practical feedback to public officials that take part in the self assessment.

## **Methodology**

The EDSAT questionnaire is the product of a rigorous and interactive process involving the research team, partners in the development community, and communities that have participated in the self assessment. The foundation for the over 250 questions that make up the EDSAT questionnaire was established when the Dukakis Center surveyed a large group of members from the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties (NAIOP) and CoreNet Global, the professional association representing in-house location experts. They were asked to identify those factors that are most important to businesses and developers when evaluating locations. That process generated a set of 38 broad themes relevant to economic growth and development. Examples of themes are highway access, available workforce, and the timeliness of permit reviews. Based on the rankings by the location experts, EDSAT themes are identified as "Very Important," "Important," or "Less Important" to companies and developers.

Each question in EDSAT addresses a location factor and provides several ways to look at that factor in relation to Newton's response:

1. The level of importance businesses and developers place on that location factor
2. How Newton and other jurisdictions have responded to that question
3. How Newton compares relative to the importance of the location factor and other jurisdictions.

For example, the efficiency of the municipal permitting process is Very Important to businesses and developers. A jurisdiction should take an objective look at this and all other Very Important location themes after receiving the analysis of their self assessment. If a jurisdiction sees that it is taking months to review an application, rather than weeks, then this should be an indication that there is room for improvement in streamlining the permitting process. Even if Newton is among the fastest for permit reviews, consider if your staff and review boards or commissions could streamline anymore or provide more technical support to applicants. The EDSAT analysis is an opportunity for revisiting Newton's economic development strategies and processes as well as considering new ones.

A second perspective is how Newton's response compares to answers provided by comparison group municipalities<sup>1</sup> (CGM). Take the permitting example again. If it takes Newton a significantly shorter time than others to review a permit application, then Newton may have a relative advantage in a Very Important location factor. However, if it takes significantly longer, then Newton may be at a disadvantage. While there are local and regional regulations or processes affecting the review process, businesses are only interested in the absolute number of days it takes to complete the review. If other jurisdictions can do it faster, it raises the question of how can Newton streamline its processes.

Depending on Newton's response to a given question in light of the CGM, EDSAT assigns a color code to the comparison, indicating your relative strength in that location factor. Green indicates a jurisdiction is stronger than the median or majority response from the CGM; yellow indicates the response equals the median or majority response or is qualitatively similar and; red indicates a jurisdiction is weaker than the median or majority response.

The interaction between the importance of a location factor and Newton's relative strength yields telling information. A comparison yielding "red" for a Very Important factor represents the potential for a "deal breaker," while a comparison resulting in "green" for a Very Important factor represents the likelihood of a "deal maker."

There are several important considerations to keep in mind when reviewing Newton's EDSAT results.

1. Location experts across the country ranked the importance of each location factor to businesses and developers. If a jurisdiction has a slow permitting process, a workforce that lacks the necessary skills, and infrastructure that lacks the capacity to support growth, those are three weaknesses among Very Important factors or three deal breakers, regardless of a jurisdiction's geographic location or how it compares to the CGM.

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<sup>1</sup> The term comparison group municipalities (CGM) is used in this report to represent any jurisdiction that completes the EDSAT. Most jurisdictions are individual towns and cities. In some cases they are several small municipalities planning and strategizing as a single entity for economic development, a geographic region, or a county.

2. A jurisdiction must look at its EDSAT results as a whole picture and not focus on one factor. One deal breaker does not mean the jurisdiction can give up on economic development and a jurisdiction cannot rest on one or two deal makers. Economic development is a dynamic process and should be managed in such a way that your community responds to the changing needs of business.
3. The interpretation of comparisons and color assignments depends on the context of the jurisdiction answering the question and its objectives for economic development.

For example, if there are many more square feet of vacant warehouse space than the median number for the CGM, EDSAT assigns “red” because large amounts of warehouse space could indicate out dated facilities in a stagnant industry. However, the empty space may actually be an asset if the jurisdiction is focusing on attracting businesses that would benefit from large spaces, such as a distribution center, manufacturing, or creative mixed use complex. For some questions, the red and green color assignments serve to flag the response for further consideration within the context of the jurisdiction’s objectives and circumstances. Several questions have no comparison at all. They tend to be lists of potential incentives, resources, or regulations the municipality, county/region, or state offers. For some lists more or fewer checked items represent strength or weakness and will be discussed in the corresponding section of the report.

## **Summary and Organization of Relative Strengths and Weaknesses**

This section highlights Newton’s primary strengths and weaknesses for economic development. EDSAT does not provide an overall grade for a jurisdiction. Each jurisdiction has its unique set of strengths, weaknesses, and economic development objectives, thus it would not be relevant to the process to assign an overall ranking among the CGM. Instead, the Dukakis Center staff creates a list of significant or notable responses for each of the Very Important, Important, and Less Important location factors. The lists of strengths and “deal makers” are not organized in any particular order. Dukakis Center staff suggest that municipalities review the lists and use them to highlight and enhance strengths.

The lists of weaknesses and “deal breakers” on the other hand are prioritized for public leaders to consider mitigating or eliminating. The tasks are ordered according to what the Dukakis Center staff considers more feasible and within control at the local or county/regional level. For example, if a jurisdiction has limited highway access, building a new highway interchange or connector would neither be a task that can be finished quickly nor would it likely be an efficient use of resources. However, streamlining the permitting process and making that information easily accessible to location experts and businesses are tasks that could be accomplished with modest investments in time and resources. Location experts rank both highway access and the timeliness of permitting as Very Important. In the prioritized list of potential “deal breakers,” the permitting process would be listed higher than the highway interchange.

It is suggested that Newton review the prioritized lists and the more detailed narrative about all the location factors, while keeping in mind its economic development objectives and the resources available for addressing “deal breakers” and other weaknesses. This is an opportunity for informed dialogue among colleagues and for establishing a roadmap to turn “deal breakers” into “deal makers.”



At the end of each list of “deal breakers” is a list of on par comparisons between Newton and the CGM. On par comparisons indicate that neither Newton nor the majority of CGM undertake these activities or that the comparisons do not show any quantitative or qualitative differences. The Dukakis Center staff included these with the weakness to draw attention to them. These activities tend to be within reach from the perspectives of implementation and jurisdictional control. If Newton initiated some of these activities, then the city would further differentiate itself.

### **Strengths or Potential “Deal Makers”**

These are the location factors in which Newton has strengths and they are the economic development assets of the city. Newton should build upon them in economic development strategies and highlight them to prospective businesses and developers. Please note that the strengths are not listed in any particular order within the three lists.

#### Strength among Very Important Location Factors

- Parking—Newton offers onsite parking near development sites, which is not common among the majority of the CGM.
- Traffic—Newton has a transportation planner or traffic engineer on staff and routinely uses the services of a transportation consultant. Most of the CGM have only one or the other resource. Another advantage for the city is it does not require companies or developers to mitigate traffic beyond the streets adjacent to the development site.
- Workforce Composition— The workforce in Newton is more skilled than among the typical CGM. There is a smaller percentage of semi-skilled workers and a higher percentage of professional workers and managerial positions.
- Labor—The workforce in Newton is more highly educated than that in the typical CGM. Eighty five percent of residents age 25 and older have at least a high school diploma and 51% or more of residents age 25 and older have earned at least a bachelor’s degree.

#### Strength among Important Location Factors

- Public Transit—Newton has a higher percentage of manufacturing sites and general office sites within one quarter mile of public transit than the CGM. Newton also includes transit oriented development in its strategy to attract new businesses.
- Physical Attractiveness—Newton is an attractive and well-maintained community.
- Quality of Available Space—The city has a lower proportion of brownfields than the typical CGM, which is an advantage that reduces uncertainty and costs for developers. Another advantage is the city has no vacant or underutilized shopping centers, making for a more attractive community and signaling to prospective investors that the city likely has a healthy local economy.
- Predictable Permits—Newton offers more permitting guidance and supporting information to prospective businesses and developers in the form of flowcharts and handbooks.

- Citizen Participation in the Review Process—Elected officials in Newton are more involved in expediting development by facilitating dialogue with community groups than their counterparts in the CGM.
- Cultural and Recreational Amenities—Newton has more cultural amenities than the typical CGM, namely a major museum, a professional repertory theater company, and a symphony orchestra.
- Crime—Newton has a remarkably low crime rate per 100,000 residents relative to the CGM. Residential burglaries are over two times lower; auto thefts are four times lower; robberies were over two times lower; and there were no homicides in 2011.
- Local Schools—Newton public schools perform better than schools in the typical CGM. A higher percentage of students test proficient in English and Mathematics; average SAT scores are higher than the state average; average ACT scores are slightly higher than the state average; and a higher percentage of high school graduates attend a four year college.
- Amenities (site)—Development sites in Newton tend to be in closer proximity to more amenities. More sites are within one mile of fine dining restaurants and daycares.
- Business Incentives (state)—Newton businesses have a wide range of state tax incentives available to them including various tax credits, low interest loans, equity financing, and grants.

#### Strength among Less Important Location Factors

- Airports—Newton is about 13 miles from Logan International Airport and is closer than the typical CGM to its nearest major airport.
- Proximity to Universities and Colleges—Newton has four four-year colleges within the city and thirty four-year colleges within ten miles of the city. The access to colleges and universities from Newton is by far better than among the CGM.

#### **Weaknesses or Potential “Deal Breakers”**

These are the location factors with which Newton is experiencing some challenges. The factors in the Very Important group are the ones the city should consider addressing first because they are the most critical “deal breakers.” Next, the city should consider those in the Important group and finally the Less Important group. Note that within each group of weaknesses there is a list of on par comparisons between Newton and the CGM. The Dukakis Center staff included these with the weaknesses to draw attention to them. These activities tend to be within reach from the perspectives of implementation and city control, therefore if Newton were to pursue them, the city would be addressing the needs of prospective businesses more strategically.

#### Weakness among Very Important Location Factors

- Parking—Newton has a lower proportion, 50%-74%, of retail sites with onsite parking as compared to 75% or more among the CGM. Newton also charges nominal parking fees for daily parking (\$0.75) and weekly parking (\$7.50) when the median daily and weekly fees are free among the CGM.

- Rents—Rent for retail space in the central business districts (village centers) is about 2.5 times higher in Newton; retail space along the highway business district is about 2.8 times higher; and manufacturing space is about 25% higher. Rent for Class B office space in the central business districts (village centers) is 1.9 times higher and Class B office space in the highway business district is about 2.8 times higher.
- Infrastructure—Residential, commercial, and industrial electricity rates are slightly higher in Newton than the median rates among the CGM.

***On Par Comparisons among Very Important Location Factors***

- No notable on par comparisons.

Weakness among Important Location Factors

- Critical Mass Firms—Newton does not have an industrial attraction policy and the city has not identified any industry types or sectors to target for recruitment.
- Cross Marketing—Newton does not formally engage local and regional business organizations, regional planning and development organizations, or state agencies to market the city.
- Tax Rates (local)—Newton has a split property tax where the residential rate is \$10.90/\$1000 and the industrial/commercial rate is \$20.89/\$1000. Both rates are higher than the median rates among the CGM that have split tax rates
- Housing—The median sale price of a single family house and median rent for a two bedroom apartment are higher in Newton than median prices among the CGM.

***On Par Comparisons among Important Location Factors***

- Sites Available—Newton does not maintain a readily accessible and current list of sites that are available for development. Such a list allows the city to respond quickly and effectively to inquiries from prospective businesses. The list could also be made available on the city’s website and shared with marketing partners. However, the city does maintain a list of commercial real estate vacancies on its website.
- Marketing Follow-up—Newton does not pursue any form of debriefing with prospective firms after they have made the decision to locate or not locate in the city. Collecting this first hand information allows the city to fine tune marketing and recruiting strategies.
- Marketing Follow-up—The city also does not have a formal process to keep in contact with existing firms about their satisfaction with doing business in the city. Growing existing firm is important because they have already invested in the Newton community.
- Industry Sensitivity—Newton does not currently have a marketing program based on business needs identified by industrial or office location specialists and/or one based on existing core strengths, opportunities, and industry concentrations already located in the city. The EDC is in the process of developing such a program.

- Industry Sensitivity—Newton does not currently engage local business spokespersons to speak on behalf of the community, which would further engage the existing businesses and leverage their understanding of their market to direct recruiting efforts. As part of a concerted outreach effort to local business owners in Newton, the EDC is in the process of identifying and engaging “connectors” or “ambassadors” from the business community who could assist with outreach.

#### Weakness among Less Important Location Factors

- Website—Generally Newton’s website contains a good amount of information. Two areas where the city could invest in providing more functionality and data on its website is to make online permit applications available and to add more information about parcel characteristics for available development sites.

#### ***On Par Comparisons among Very Important Location Factors***

- No notable on par comparisons.

## Detailed Section Analysis

The following is a section by section analysis of the EDSAT results comparing Newton and the overall importance of each location factor and the CGM. Within each section are several related themes, where the symbols ●, ◐, and ○ indicate the relative importance of the theme to developers and businesses, as ranked by NAIOP and CoreNet Global location experts. The shaded circle (●) denotes a Very Important factor, the half-shaded circle (◐) denotes an Important factor, and the unshaded circle (○) denotes a Less Important factor.

### Section 1. Access to Customers/Markets

In order to minimize transportation costs and time to market, businesses want adequate access to highway corridors that have the least amount of congestion for their shipping needs, customers, and employees. Highway access, congestion, and parking are Very Important factors in location decisions. Public transportation is Important, while proximity to airports, rail, and water transport are Less Important. The overall physical attractiveness of the public spaces, enforcement of codes, and condition of housing and commercial real estate is Important, as they are indications of general economic health and quality of life in Newton.

#### A. Highway Access ●

Seventy five percent or more of Newton's available sites for retail trade in the central business districts (village centers), manufacturing, and general office space are within two miles of a major highway. This level of highway access is similar to the median level of access by the CGM. Newton does not impose weight restrictions on streets and access roads, which is considered a benefit by businesses and is an advantage for Newton since the majority of the CGM do have weight restrictions.

#### B. Public Transit ◐

At 75% or greater, public transit access in Newton is better than in the CGM for manufacturing sites and general office space; and is about the same for retail sites. Transit is available on nights and weekends. Similar to the CGM, the city has commuter rail within five miles of the city boundaries and does not have shuttle service to commuter stops.

Newton has eight Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Green Line light rail stations, three MBTA commuter rail stations, and Express Bus and bus service. Transit oriented development is part of the city's strategy to attract new businesses, which is a strength over the majority of the CGM. Existing development in many of Newton's village centers is focused on transit and transit oriented development is addressed in the 2007 Newton Comprehensive Plan.

#### C. Parking ●

Onsite parking at manufacturing and office space sites are similar to the CGM. However, Newton has a lower proportion, 50%-74%, of retail sites with onsite parking as compared to 75% or more among the CGM. Newton also charges nominal parking fees for daily parking (\$0.75) and weekly parking (\$7.50) when the median daily and weekly fees are free among the CGM. An advantage for Newton is the city offers onsite parking near development sites.

D. Traffic ●

Newton has a transportation planner or traffic engineer on staff and routinely uses the services of a transportation consultant. Most of the CGM have only one or the other resource. Another advantage for the city is it does not require companies or developers to mitigate traffic beyond the streets adjacent to the development site.

Newton reported the city's typical weekday rush hour traffic is between 11-25 mph and is overall moderately congested. This is similar to the CGM. The city notes that local traffic situations vary significantly from street to street, depending on the type of roadway. The city has major highways like Route 128 and the Massachusetts Turnpike, other higher speed roads like Route 9/Boylston and Hammond Pond Parkway. An example of a lower speed road that travels through village centers include Centre Street that passes through Newton Highlands, Newton Centre, and Newton Corner and would have typical speeds that vary.

E. Airport ○

Newton is about 13 miles away from Logan International Airport and closer than the typical CGM to its nearest major airport. Newton is similar to the CGM in that the major airport is accessible by public transportation or accessible by car in less than 20 minutes during non peak hours. The city and most CGM do not have a general aviation airport and are between 11 and 20 miles from a regional airport. Air transportation is considered less important by location experts because only a few types of businesses that produce extremely time sensitive or perishable products need to be close to an easily accessible airport.

F. Rail ○

Rail is another mode of transportation that is overall less important to businesses, except those that need it to transport heavy or bulky raw materials and finished products. Newton does not have freight rail, but is also highly unlikely to want to attract businesses that rely on freight rail. The city does not have interstate rail such as Amtrak, but it does have commuter rail.

G. Physical Attractiveness ●

Anyone researching Newton would think it is an attractive community. Nuisance codes are "vigorously" enforced and the city "moderately" maintains public areas around development sites. The city maintains online and in-person systems for reporting code violations and maintenance requests; and has a system for monitoring the quality and timeliness of responses. The city has a higher percent of acreage reserved for parks and involves the arts community in designing open spaces.

The condition of residential and commercial properties is overall good and on par with the CGM. The percentage of vacant commercial space is low and also similar to the CGM.

H. Water Transportation ○

There is no water transportation in Newton.

## Section 2. Agglomeration

Agglomeration refers to the number of complementary and supplemental services and related firms, including academic institutions that are available within a jurisdiction to support new or existing companies. A concentration of similar or supporting companies helps create a critical mass of businesses within an industry, making it easier for that industry to thrive in the local community or regionally. The level of agglomeration within a jurisdiction can be enhanced by the intensity of its plans to attract companies, coordination of marketing plans with regional or state efforts, cross marketing among organizations, and follow up with existing and potential businesses.

### A. Complementary/Supplemental Business Services

Newton has a “moderately” involved chamber of commerce and an active volunteer or non-profit economic development entity, which is similar among the CGM. In terms of supplemental business services, Newton is about on par with the CGM—there are CPA and financial services firms, specialized commercial and intellectual property law firms, and major banks. Newton has an advantage over the CGM because the city has business services such as venture capital and specialized recruiting firms that are capable of working with emerging technology and scientific firms, which are industries the city is likely to want to recruit.

The city does not currently have a formal business incubator but there are at least two shared office spaces, Chapel Bridge Park and Newton Executive Office Center that offer flexible workspaces. Newton is in the process of exploring options for a formal business incubator to provide space and services to assist start-up businesses.

### B. Critical Mass Firms

Newton has an up to date economic development plan and is part of a regional comprehensive economic development strategy. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) is the regional planning agency for Newton and MAPC is actively involved in the economic development of the greater Boston region as well as Newton. However, the city does not have an industrial attraction policy.

Newton has not targeted any industry types or sectors. Without any targeted industries, Newton is at a disadvantage because targets can help guide the city’s development processes and actions. Having targeted industries also helps guide collaboration with the city’s economic development stakeholders such as existing businesses and local and regional chambers of commerce. It also makes it difficult for the city to identify state or federal grants and programs to support their development efforts.

One place to look for potential targets is by identifying existing clusters of industries in Newton. These industries may need to build critical mass or new complementary businesses to grow. By recruiting such businesses, Newton would support existing businesses as well as bringing in new ones. Looking to regional targets such as alternative energy would also be beneficial as the city can join existing efforts. Similarly, the city can look to identified state targets such as alternative energy, information technology, financial services, life sciences/biotechnology, healthcare, manufacturing, or travel and tourism. The city has a

highly educated work force (see Sections 4D) and very likely has the type of workforce technology, scientific, and professional firms the state targets are cultivating.

#### C. Cross Marketing ◀

Newton does not formally engage existing businesses to attract new businesses. As mentioned in Section B above, existing businesses can help identify what is needed for them to grow and that can become a recruiting target. The existing businesses understand their market and can speak first hand to prospective business, conveying more compelling reasons to locate in Newton.

Newton does not formally engage local and regional business organizations, regional planning and development organizations, or state agencies to market the city. These are disadvantages for the city because most CGM do engage these three types of entities to help with marketing and the city is missing out on wider exposure through these entities.

Note that the city's Economic Development Commission (EDC) has recently formed two subcommittees focused on supporting existing businesses and on attracting new ones. Additionally, Mayor Setti Warren has formalized a series of Business Roundtable discussions with property owners and small business owners that began in early 2012. The EDC and city planning staff also plan to coordinate with regional organizations (i.e. MassEcon and MassBio). These concerted outreach and promotion efforts will significantly improve the City's cross-marketing efforts as long as they are formalized and regularly implemented.

#### D. Marketing Follow-up ◀

Newton does not pursue any form of debriefing with prospective firms after they have made the decision to locate or not locate in the city. By not following up, the city is missing out on timely and first hand information about the firms' decisions. Collecting this information allows the city to fine tune marketing and recruiting strategies in real time, address any misconceptions about the city, and fill in possible information gaps.

The city also does not have a formal process in place to keep in contact with existing firms about their satisfaction with doing business in Newton. Growing existing firms is just as important as attracting new businesses, if not more so because they have already invested in the Newton community. Targeting complementary or supplementary new businesses could be one of the first objectives in an industrial attraction plan.

While none of these procedures currently exists as formal processes, the EDC and planning staff have recently begun more concerted outreach efforts, including individual and small group meetings with business and property owners. The aim is to gauge satisfaction and learn lessons for improving the efficiency and efficacy of city processes. Like, the emerging cross marketing procedures mentioned in Section C above, nascent outreach efforts are most effective if they are formalized and regularly implemented.

#### E. Proximity to Universities & Research ○

Newton has four four-year colleges within the city and thirty four-year colleges within ten miles of the city. The access to colleges and universities from Newton is by far better than among the CGM. Newton is on par with the CGM with not having any community colleges and one vocational/technical high school within its jurisdiction.



### **Section 3. Cost of Land (Implicit/Explicit)**

The cost of land to a firm includes two Very Important factors: infrastructure and rent. Updating civil, utility, and telecommunications infrastructure can create significant expenses for a firm to incur and therefore, if a municipality does not have adequate capacity in place, a potential firm could decide the location is not suitable. Rents are Very Important because they contribute to operating expenses. Location experts consider the quality of available space and amount of available land for development Important factors.

#### **A. Infrastructure ●**

The public infrastructure in Newton has “sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service” for water supply, public sewer, wastewater treatment, natural gas, electric power, and telecommunications (land lines, cellular, and broad band). This is on par with the CGM.

Residential, commercial, and industrial electricity rates are slightly higher in Newton than the median rates among the CGM.

#### **B. Rents ●**

Rents in Newton tend to be higher than median rent levels among CGM. Rent for retail space in the central business districts (village centers) is about 2.5 times higher in Newton; retail space along the highway business district is about 2.8 times higher; and manufacturing space is about 25% higher. Rent for Class B office space in the central business districts (village centers) is 1.9 times higher and Class B office space in the highway business district is about 2.8 times higher.

Rent is a very important location factor because it directly affects the cost of doing business. Because Newton has notably higher rents, this is a potential “deal breaker,” which the city has little control over. However, the city shares a border with Boston, which contributes to and could make up for the higher rents for some businesses such as professional services, retail, or dining/entertainment. Newton city officials can compensate for the higher rents by providing municipal services that support businesses, facilitating a collaborative relationship with businesses, and by creating an overall business friendly environment within the community. This will be discussed in more detail in Section 5G.

#### **C. Quality of Available Space ●**

Newton has a lower proportion of brownfields than the typical CGM, which is an advantage that reduces uncertainty and costs for developers. Another advantage is the city has no vacant or underutilized shopping centers, making for a more attractive community and signaling to prospective investors that the city likely has a healthy local economy.

Because Newton is essentially built out, the city does not have any developable open land or greenfield sites. While this would limit large scale projects that would be available to municipalities with more developable land, Newton’s opportunities are in redevelopment.

#### **D. Land (space) ●**

The amounts of vacant developable land, useable warehouse space, and useable office space in commercial buildings are about on par with the CGM. Newton has a smaller percentage of parcels that are five acres or larger and zoned for industrial or commercial development than

the CGM. This makes sense since the city is essentially built out and development strategies would revolve around redevelopment.

## **Section 4. Labor**

The effect of labor factors on location decisions runs somewhat contrary to popular belief. An available labor force that is adequately trained (Workforce Composition) is a Very Important factor, while the cost of labor is Important and the presence of strong unions is Less Important. Conventional wisdom often tells municipalities that higher labor costs and unions negatively impact a firm's decision to consider a location because they raise the cost for labor. This is less of a "deal breaker" than previously thought, if the workforce is adequately skilled. Workforce training resources is Less Important relative to other location factors. However, having a technically trained workforce whose skills align with the industries a municipality wants to attract is a valuable selling point.

### **A. Labor Costs ●**

The range of hourly wages paid to semi-skilled and mid-level clerical workers are the same as among the CGM. Similarly for the prevailing average annual salary for public high school teachers. There is no local living wage statute in Newton.

### **B. Workforce Composition ●**

The workforce in Newton is more skilled than among the typical CGM. There is a smaller percentage of semi-skilled workers and a higher percentage of professional workers and managerial positions. The percentages of unskilled and technically skilled workers are about the same; as well as the percentage of current English language learners in the workforce.

### **C. Unions ○**

Union activity in Newton is "somewhat" active and similar to the CGM. There has not been a major work stoppage or organizing drive in the last three years.

### **D. Labor (available) ●**

The workforce in Newton is more highly educated than that in the typical CGM. Eighty five percent of residents age 25 and older have at least a high school diploma and 51% or more of residents age 25 and older have earned at least a bachelor's degree. This is one of the potential "deal makers" for Newton as businesses, especially those in the scientific, technical, or professional sectors are likely to find an appropriate workforce in the city.

### **E. Workforce Training ○**

The city does not regularly interact with workforce development resources such as regional or state employment services or area high schools or technical schools. However the city does work with human service career training centers and public/private partnerships. Finally, there is available capacity at an adult education program in the city.

The city may want to consider working with area vocational/technical high schools and community colleges to ensure an adequate supply of workers with middle skills. Even biotechnical firms will need lab technicians and information technology staff; and professional companies will need executive assistants and clerical staff able to support complex and technical tasks.

## Section 5. Municipal Process

The municipal process section covers several themes of marketing and permitting. When it comes to marketing themselves, jurisdictions that are aggressive and collaborate with firms already located in their municipality may have an upper hand at attracting new investment. Those firms can speak about first hand experiences and market conditions to interested companies and investors. Likewise, they can advise municipal leaders about industries they are intimately familiar with. Once the marketing efforts pay off, a municipality then needs to have a transparent and efficient permitting process to minimize time and costs for the new businesses to open their doors. Among the factors examined in this theme, the timeliness of approvals is Very Important to location experts and the remaining themes are Important with the exception of the Permitting Ombudsman, which is Less Important.

### A. Industrial Sensitivity ◀

Newton does not currently have a marketing program based on business needs identified by industrial or office location specialists and/or one based on existing core strengths, opportunities, and industry concentrations already located in the city. By building on existing core strengths, the city supports and grows businesses already members of the community. Indeed, the EDC is in the process of developing such a program, which will be an integral part of the city's development strategy if it is formalized and incorporated into standard development processes.

Newton does not currently engage local business spokespersons to speak on behalf of the community, which would further engage the existing businesses and use their understanding of their market to direct recruiting efforts for new supplemental or complementary businesses. As part of a concerted outreach effort to local business owners in Newton, the EDC is in the process of identifying and engaging "connectors" or "ambassadors" from the business community who could assist the city in reaching out to both existing and prospective business owners. Again, engagement will be most effective if it is made into a long term and on-going process.

Newton does have a quick response team to respond when negative incidents or data are reported on news media. The Citizen Assistance Officer is a full-time staff person in the Mayor's Office who handles press relations broadly, including responding to both positive and negative inquiries about the city. This is an advantage for the city because the majority of the CGM do not have this capability.

The city does not engage its ethnic populations in unique business or cultural events, as a way to attract niche shopping or destination attractions.

### B. Sites Available ◀

Regarding available development sites, Newton and the majority of the CGM are similar in that they tend to own sites that are being marketed for development; maintain active relationships with commercial real estate professionals and developers; have land use regulations that protect against incompatible uses. Newton has an active strategy for reclaiming or land banking tax title properties, which the majority of the CGM does not.

Newton does not maintain a readily accessible and current list of all sites that are available for development. Such a list allows the city to respond quickly and effectively to inquiries from prospective businesses. The list could also be made available on the city's website and shared with marketing partners. However, the city does maintain a list of available commercial real estate vacancies at <http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/lrplan/econdev/reconnect.asp>).

C. Timeliness of Approvals ●

The municipal review processes for permitting related to new projects and site plan review, zoning variance, special permits, building permits, and appeals in Newton are all within the same length of time as the CGM.

The site plan review process for existing businesses is about four weeks shorter in Newton than among the CGM. The remaining review processes are similar in duration.

D. Predictable Permits ◐

Newton offers more permitting guidance and supporting information to prospective businesses and developers in the form of flowchart and handbooks. The city also provides a checklist, as does the majority of the CGM. Newton does not have a single presentation format where an applicant can present a proposal to all review boards and commissions at one time. One potential next step for Newton is to develop a single presentation process, which would save applicants time and therefore, costs.

E. Fast Track Permits ◐

Newton does not pre-permit, expedite permits, fast tracks permits, or use overlay districts to fast track permits. However, the city worked over time to make its overall permitting process more efficient and many permitting processes would qualify as an "expedited" timeframe according to state definitions. Newton should continue to work on its permitting processes and should not rule out pre-permitting or fast tracking if a future project or designated development district would benefit from it.

F. Citizen Participation in the Review Process ◐

Elected officials in Newton are more involved than among the CGM, in expediting development by facilitating dialogue with community groups. Abutters and neighborhood opposition have not stopped a proposal in the last five years, which is not the case among the majority of the CGM. Elected officials have not had to intervene to rescue a project that has been endangered by opposition. In general, the abutters and community groups slow the permitting process about the same as in the CGM.

Newton's elected officials should continue to include residents and existing businesses in economic development planning. Gaining support for a comprehensive development strategy and plan would create a more business friendly and welcoming environment. Any opposition or delays would likely be minimized for any particular project. From a strict business perspective, delays due to abutter or neighborhood opposition are costly events.

G. Permitting Ombudsman ○

Elected officials in Newton appear to be invested in ensuring the efficiency of the permitting process. The mayor and other officials play a significant role the permitting process and a review team convenes to consider major projects. This level of involvement is higher than what is typical among the CGM. However, the city does not offer economic development training programs for staff, boards, and elected officials to stay current on business and economic issues that can affect the city's development policy and strategies.

Like the majority of CGM, the city offers technical assistance for businesses regarding state or federal permitting processes. Having the staff capacity to direct applicants to the appropriate state or federal contacts who can provide assistance is important because it saves time and effort for the business owner. One very important role of the permitting ombudsman is to be the liaison between the permit applicant and the municipal, state, and federal processes. Simply making those connections will create a more business friendly environment because it supports the applicant. Additionally, businesses and business owners want to be recruited and want to see how they fit into the economic and to some extent the social fabric of a community. Formalizing ombudsman roles for elected officials and staff is important so that they can act as ambassadors who can provide permitting as well as other types of technical support and facilitation. Support can help overcome some weaknesses the city cannot otherwise address.

The local licensing process in Newton is on par with the CGM at four weeks or less. There is the local requirement for a general business license and various local licenses that are approved by the Licensing Department, Health Department, or the Board of Aldermen. The local licensing requirements do not appear to be out of the ordinary.

## **Section 6. Quality of Life (Community)**

The quality of life within the community is Important in location decisions because companies want to be able to offer its employees a safe community with affordable housing, good schools, and a rich selection of cultural and recreational opportunities.

### **A. Cultural and Recreational Amenities**

Newton has more cultural amenities than the typical CGM, namely a major museum, a professional repertory theater company, and a symphony orchestra. Like the CGM, there is a golf course and boating facilities within five miles, but no professional sports team or civic center or arena.

### **B. Crime**

Newton has a remarkably low crime rate per 100,000 residents relative to the CGM. Residential burglaries are over two times lower; auto thefts are four times lower; robberies were over two times lower; and there were no homicides in 2011.

### **C. Housing**

The cost of housing in Newton tends to be higher than among the CGM. The median sale price of a single family house and median rent for a two bedroom apartment are higher. This may make it more difficult for lower wage earners to live in the city. The rate of homeownership is similar, but the percent of homes for sale is higher. This may be an

indication of the recent housing market and recession. Vacancies in the rental market are similar.

#### D. Local Schools ◀

Newton public schools perform better than schools in the typical CGM. A higher percentage of student test proficient in English and Mathematics; average combined SAT scores of 1811 are higher than the state average of 1526; average composite ACT score of 24.5 are slightly higher than the state score of 24.2; and a higher percentage of high school graduates attend a four year college.

Expenditures per pupil, graduation rates, dropout rates; and the lack of any schools designated as “underperforming” are similar to the CGM. There are no charter schools in Newton, but city students have the choice of parochial, non-sectarian, and boarding schools.

### **Section 7. Quality of Life (Site)**

This section looks at the amenities and services available within one mile of existing development sites. Having a variety of amenities and services near employment centers makes it more pleasant and convenient for employees to work in a location. It becomes easier to find places to eat lunch or meet friends and family for dinner or to run errands before or after work.

#### A. Amenities ◀

Development sites in Newton tend to be in closer proximity to more amenities than sites among the CGM. There are more fine dining restaurants and daycares within one mile and there are about the same amount of fast food restaurants and retail shops within one mile.

### **Section 8. Business Incentives**

Business incentives are Important considerations for location experts as they consider candidate communities, however, incentives are not at the highest level of importance or the first factors a potential investor looks at. This is contrary to popular belief. Factors like infrastructure, workforce composition, and the timeliness of permitting are at the highest levels of importance and “deal breakers” a municipality must clear before an interested developer or company will advance negotiations with such inquires as tax incentives. Therefore, providing a broader portfolio of business incentives to offer potential investors is valuable as possible “deal closers.”

#### A. State ◀

Newton businesses have a wide range of state tax incentives available to them including various tax credits, low interest loans, equity financing, and grants. The city notes that these programs have requirements that the city does not know whether current or prospective businesses would meet. It would be beneficial to the city to confirm the types of businesses that would be eligible as a way to provide technical support to businesses and to market the incentives appropriately.

#### B. Local ◀

Newton does not grant new or existing businesses any property tax exemptions or use tax increment financing.

The city offers incentives in the form of revolving loan funds and low interest loans. The city actively participates in state and federal programs designed to attract and retain businesses. The city provides businesses the assistance to secure financing from commercial lenders and state finance mechanism. While the city is not currently attempting to attract local, state, or federal facilities, the city is fighting to prevent five post office branches from being closed. The EDC, residents, and other city officials are collaborating in this effort.

## **Section 9. Tax Rates**

Tax rates are another cost factor that has traditionally been thought of as a “deal breaker” for businesses. Municipalities have often thought that if tax rates are too high, then they will have a hard time attracting businesses. Like financial incentives, the tax rate is not one of the Very Important factors identified by location experts. If the Very Important factors are satisfied, then a potential developer or firm will likely ask for a more favorable tax rate as a part of later stage negotiations. However, negotiations are unlikely to get to this point if the More Important location factors have not been satisfied.

### **A. Local**

Newton has a split property tax where the residential rate is \$10.90/\$1000 and the industrial/commercial rate is \$20.89/\$1000. Both rates are higher than the median rates among the CGM that have split tax rates.

In addition to property taxes, the city collects a hotel room tax and a meals tax. These taxes are additional sources of revenue to fund public services and relieve the property tax burden. About 1% of tax revenue comes from industrial property; about 15% from commercial property; and about 82% comes from residential property.

### **B. Tax Delinquency**

The percentages of industrial, commercial, and residential properties that are more than one year tax delinquent in Newton is about the same among the CGM. The number of properties is slightly higher. Newton auctions tax title properties within one to five years and the Treasury Department is currently establishing a process for conducting auctions to return properties to the market.

The city does not clear liens, but instead works with attorneys and other involved parties to determine the parties responsible for the overdue taxes. The city may want to consider clearing tax liens because a new business making a stream of payments into the future may be worth more over time than the one time payment of overdue taxes.

## **Section 10. Access to Information**

A city’s website could be the first impression for location experts researching potential candidates. In this information age, a location expert could use a municipality’s website to gather initial information and if it is not available, easy to find, and easy to understand, the researcher may reject the city as a potential location without further consideration. While a city’s website may rank as Less Important in terms of decision making, it can be that initial source of information that entices a location expert to probe deeper and contact a municipality to seek additional information. At that point, the municipality’s economic development leader or

permitting ombudsman has an opportunity to step in and develop one-on-one rapport with the developer or company representative.

A. Website ○

Newton's website contains significantly more information about the city's development policies, economic development tool, permitting, links to various state and regional agencies, chambers of commerce, and arts and cultural organizations. Two areas where the city could invest in providing more functionality and data on its website is to make online permit applications available and to add more information about parcel characteristics for available development sites. Examples of this information are owner, square footage of sites, abutters, assessed value, tax rate, tax status, aerial photos, and GIS links.



## Next Steps

The City of Newton has many strengths that make it attractive to businesses and residents alike. The most notable ones identified in this analysis are

- The highly skilled and educated workforce
- Municipal permitting processes that are on the shorter end of the duration spectrum
- The technical guidance that is offered to permit applicants
- A public transit network that includes light rail, commuter rail, and bus
- An enviable set of quality of life factors such as its proximity to Boston, the historic and village atmosphere with the amenities and services of a modern city, and a highly rated public school system.

There are some economic development strategies and processes the city could employ to better position itself to support existing businesses, to attract new businesses, and to market the city and its strengths. Many of these activities are already being pursued by the Economic Development Commission, including small business support, small business incubation, and business attraction. If the EDC has not done so, conducting a business inventory would provide a good starting point to defining an economic development strategy. A new business inventory or an updated one will show the city what clusters already exist and which ones are missing.

By supporting and growing existing businesses, the city is in return assisting businesses that have already invested in the community. Topics to explore with existing businesses include:

- Their satisfaction with doing business in Newton and how can deficiencies be addressed and benefits enhanced
- What types of similar or supporting businesses they would like to see the city recruit that will help them grow
- What role business owners can play to help the city attract those businesses through peer-to-peer or industry outreach and marketing efforts

Based on the business inventory and sectors identified by existing businesses, the next question to ask is what other industry sectors are missing. To know what is missing depends on what the city envisions for its village centers and highway business districts in terms of business diversity. The city should consider how to diversify its business mix to meet consumer/resident needs and commercial and industrial needs. The city should also consider ways to provide a business mix that is resilient to countercyclical trends in the economy. If the city does not have a development vision and objectives, it must develop one by working with business owners, residents, and economic development resources. Two ways the city could approach developing a vision is to identify exemplar municipalities Newton (or each village center and highway business district) would like to emulate in terms of business mix (and character); or to identify individual objectives to meet within a significant time frame such as “Newton 2020.”

With identified business sectors, the city can be proactive and direct marketing efforts. By including local businesses and residents, the vision and objectives will be shared, thus creating excitement around a common goal leading to a stronger economy and projecting a more business

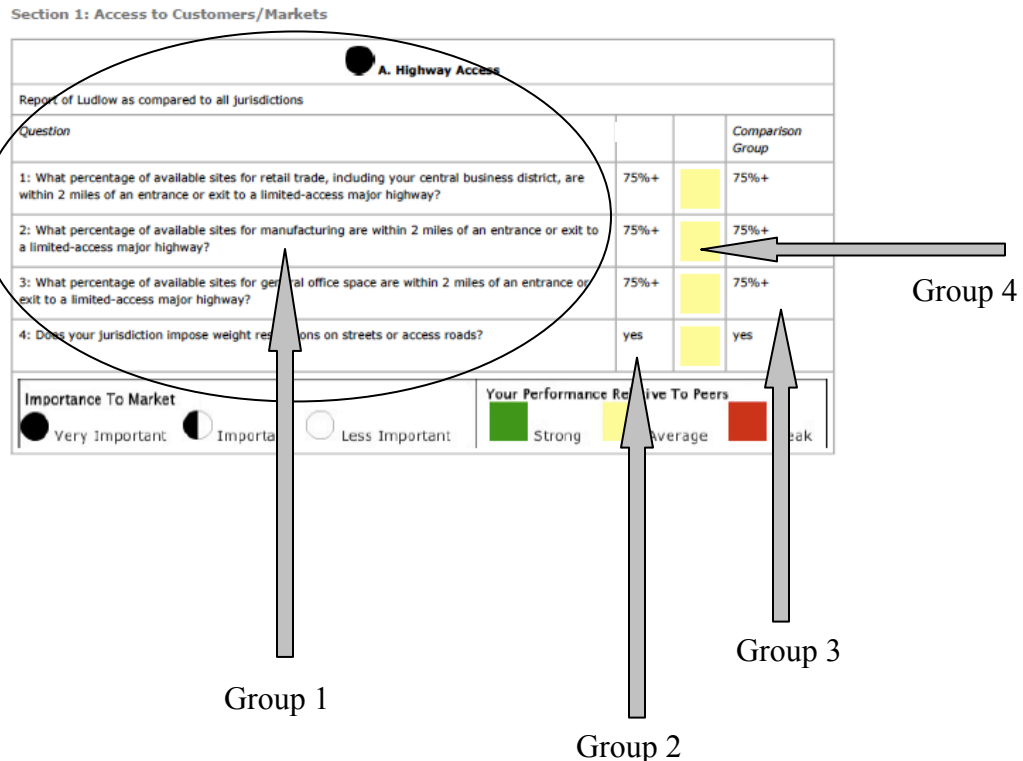
friendly environment to prospective businesses. Prospective businesses want to see how they fit into an existing economy and that the business itself and its employees are welcomed into the fabric of the community.

The EDC is already on its way to pursuing many of these next steps. Its ultimate goal is to coalesce the findings from EDSAT and findings from additional EDC efforts into an economic development plan that is targeted, leverages existing strengths, increases the economic diversity and resilience of the local economy, increases business friendliness, and represents the city's vision for its economy.

# EDSAT Questionnaire Results for Newton, Massachusetts

This section of the report presents a tabular printout from the EDSAT. The results are displayed in four primary groupings of information:

- Group 1 identifies location themes, such as Highway Access, and questions about specific location factors related to that theme. At the top of each table is a circle that represents the relative importance of a theme to location experts and businesses. A filled circle (●) indicates “Very Important,” a half-filled circle (◐) indicates “Important,” and an unfilled circle (○) indicates “Less Important.”
- Group 2 shows Newton’s responses to the EDSAT questions.
- Group 3 is the median or majority (for yes/no questions) response of all the other jurisdictions (the comparison group municipalities or CGM) that have completed the EDSAT questionnaire.
- Group 4 is a series of green, yellow, or red blocks indicating how Newton compares to the CGM. There is a built-in function in EDSAT that allows a municipality to compare itself against a subset of the CGM by other criteria such as population, median income, or size of operating budget. For purposes of this analysis, Newton is compared with all the CGM.



# Economic Development Self-Assessment Tool

You are logged in as: **admin** [[Log Out](#)] [[Change Password](#)]  
 Survey for: **Newton, MA** [[Main Menu](#)] [[View Report](#)]  
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Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University  
 and the National League of Cities Center for Research and Innovation






May 25, 2012

Comparison of Newton with:  [Run Report](#)








## Section 1: Access to Customers/Markets








## SELF-ASSESSMENT SURVEY RESULTS

Newton MA






 <b>A. Highway Access</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Newton		Comparison Group
1: What percentage of available sites for retail trade, including your central business district, are within 2 miles of an entrance or exit to a limited-access major highway?	75% or greater		75% or greater
2: What percentage of available sites for manufacturing are within 2 miles of an entrance or exit to a limited-access major highway?	75% or greater		75% or greater
3: What percentage of available sites for general office space are within 2 miles of an entrance or exit to a limited-access major highway?	75% or greater		75% or greater
4: Does your jurisdiction impose weight restrictions on streets or access roads?	no		between yes and no

<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Weak  Average  No Comparison
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 <b>B. Public Transit</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
5: What percentage of available sites for retail trade are within 1/4 mile of public bus or rail rapid transit?	75% or greater		75% or greater
6: What percentage of available sites for manufacturing are within 1/4 mile of public bus or rail rapid transit?	75% or greater		50-74%
7: What percentage of available sites for general office space are within 1/4 mile of public bus or rail rapid transit?	75% or greater		50-74%
8: Is there a transit-oriented development strategy in your plans for attracting new firms?	yes		no
9: Is there a commuter rail or bus stop within 5 miles of your jurisdiction's boundaries?	yes		yes
10: Do you offer any shuttle services to other public commuting stations?	no		no
11: Is public transit service available on nights and weekends?	yes		yes

<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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 <b>C. Parking</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
12: What percentage of available sites for retail trade have on-site parking?	50-74%		75% or greater
13: What percentage of available sites for manufacturing have on-site parking?	75% or greater		75% or greater
14: What percentage of available sites for general office space have on-site parking?	75% or greater		75% or greater
15: Does your jurisdiction offer parking facilities near development sites?	yes		no
16: Have you used state or federal infrastructure grants to improve parking in your jurisdiction?	no		no
17: How much is typically charged for parking in your central business district? \$ Hourly	.75		0
18: How much is typically charged for parking in your central business district? \$ Daily	7.50		0
19: How much is typically charged for parking in your central business district? \$ Monthly	0		0

<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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 <b>D. Traffic</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
20: Do you have regular access to a traffic engineer or transportation planner, such as one who is on staff or with a regional organization to which your jurisdiction is a member?	yes		no
21: Do you routinely use the services of a transportation consultant?	yes		yes
22: Do you have access to traffic count data for the major roadways in your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
23: Do you require firms or developers to provide traffic mitigation beyond the streets adjacent to the site? (e.g. installing traffic signals, metering flow)	no		yes
24: How would you rate traffic into and out of your jurisdiction during a typical weekday rush hour?	Moderately congested		Moderately congested
25: What is the average speed of automobile commuter traffic during a typical weekday rush hour?	11 ♦ 25 mph		11 ♦ 25 mph
26: Do you require a traffic impact analysis for large-scale development or redevelopment projects?	yes		yes

<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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**E. Airports**

Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions

<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
27: Do you have a local (municipal/ general aviation) airport?	no		no
28: The closest regional airport is how many miles away?	11-20 miles		11-20 miles
29: The closest major/international airport is how many miles away?	11-20 miles		20-30 miles
30: Is the major/international airport accessible by public transportation?	yes		yes
31: How long does it take to drive to the major/international airport from your downtown?	Less than 20 minutes		Less than 20 minutes











**Importance To Market**
 Very Important
  Important
  Less Important
**Your Performance Relative To Peers**
 Strong
  Average  
 Weak
  No Comparison








<input type="radio"/> <b>F. Rail</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
32: Do you have rail freight service available?	no		yes
33: Do you have intercity passenger rail service? Check all that apply.			
- Commuter	yes		no
- Intercity/Interstate(Amtrak)	no		no
- no	no		yes

<b>Importance To Market</b> <input checked="" type="radio"/> Very Important <input type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> No Comparison
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 <b>G. Physical Attractiveness</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Newton		Comparison Group
34: To what extent do you enforce codes and regulations on abandoned properties / abandoned vehicles / trash and rubbish disposal within your jurisdiction?	Very vigorously		Moderately
35: To what extent does your jurisdiction maintain streets, sidewalks, parks, etc., near available development sites?	Moderately		Vigorously
36: Is there a hotline available for reporting code violations and maintenance needs within your jurisdiction?	yes		no
37: Is there a system for monitoring the timeliness and quality of responses to reported violations within your jurisdiction?	yes		no
38: Do you involve the arts community in the design of open space (street furniture, murals, etc.)?	yes		no
39: What percentage of the acreage within your jurisdiction is reserved for parks?	11-15%		6-10%
40: What percentage of your housing stock is considered dilapidated?	0-5%		0-5%
41: What percentage of your commercial buildings are boarded up or closed down and would need renovations to reopen?	0-5%		0-5%
42: What percentage of commercial space is presently vacant (not currently occupied)?	6-10%		6-10%
43: What percentage of your industrial buildings are boarded up or closed down and would need renovations to reopen?	0-5%		0-5%
44: What percentage of industrial space is presently vacant (not currently occupied)?	6-10%		6-10%

<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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<input type="radio"/> <b>H. Water Transportation</b>		
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions		
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>	<i>Comparison Group</i>
45: Do you have water based transportation facilities within your jurisdiction? Check all that apply.		

<b>Importance To Market</b> <input checked="" type="radio"/> Very Important <input type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> No Comparison
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## Section 2: Agglomeration

			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Newton		Comparison Group
1: Is your local chamber of commerce or business association actively involved in the economic development activities of your jurisdiction?	Moderately		Moderately
2: Does your jurisdiction have an active volunteer economic development committee or nonprofit center for economic development?	yes		yes
3: Is there an incubator or other form of cooperative and supportive space for start-up businesses in your jurisdiction?	no		no
4: Are there CPA, business advisory and financial services firms in your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
5: Are there law firms in your jurisdiction specializing in commercial law, intellectual property rights, and patents?	yes		yes
6: Are there branches of major commercial banks in your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
7: To what extent are the business services (e.g. venture capital, business planning, specialized recruiting, etc.) in your jurisdiction capable of working with emerging technical and scientific firms?	Highly capable		Moderately capable






  

<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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


 <b>B. Critical Mass Firms</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Newton		Comparison Group
8: Does your jurisdiction have an up-to-date development strategy, overall economic development plan (OEDP), or an economic development plan within your community master plan?	yes		yes
9: Is your jurisdiction part of a county or regional OEDP or Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)?	yes		yes
10: Does your state have a development strategy or economic development plan?	yes		yes
11: If yes, are there firms within specific industry types or sectors that are targeted in your jurisdiction's, your county's or your state's development strategy?	yes		yes
12: If yes, what specific industry types or sectors are targeted by your municipality's development strategy? (Your Municipality)	No Targets		
13: If yes, what specific industry types or sectors are targeted by your municipality's development strategy? Other, please specify (Your Municipality)			
14: If yes, what specific industry types or sectors are targeted by your region/county's development strategy? (Regional/County)	Alternative Energy		
15: If yes, what specific industry types or sectors are targeted by your region/county's development strategy? Other, please specify (Regional/County)			
16: If yes, what specific industry types or sectors are targeted by your state's development strategy? (State)	Other, please specify: Alternative Energy; Travel and Tourism; Information Technology; Financial Services; Traditional Manufacturing; Other Life Sciences, including Biotech; Healthcare		
17: If yes, what specific industry types or sectors are targeted by your state's development strategy? (State)			
18: Which of the following jurisdictions have development specialists to assist in interpreting the needs of these clusters? (Choose all that apply)	State		State
19: How aggressive is your industrial attraction policy?	Don't have one		Moderate






  

<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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 <b>C. Cross Marketing</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
20: Do you actively enlist the services of firms already resident in your jurisdiction to assist in attracting new firms?	no		no
21: Do you engage local and regional business organizations to participate in marketing your jurisdiction?	no		yes
22: Do you engage regional planning and development organizations to participate in marketing your jurisdiction?	no		yes
23: Do you engage state agencies and organizations to participate in marketing your jurisdiction?	no		yes

<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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 <b>D. Marketing Follow-Up</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
24: Is there a formal de-briefing process with firms that chose to locate in your jurisdiction about what made the difference?	no		no
25: Is there a formal de-briefing process with firms that chose <u>not</u> to locate in your jurisdiction about what made the difference?	no		no
26: Do you have a formal procedure for contacting existing local firms about their satisfaction with your jurisdiction?	no		no
27: Do you have a formal procedure for intervening when early news surfaces about firm dissatisfaction with your jurisdiction?	no		no

<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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**E. Proximity to Universities & Research**

Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions

<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
28: How many major public or private four-year college or universities are located within your jurisdiction?	4		0
29: How many major public or private four-year college or universities are located within 10 miles of your jurisdiction?	30		2
30: How many community colleges are located within your jurisdiction?	0		0
31: How many vocational/technical schools are located within your jurisdiction?	1		1

**Importance To Market**

 Very Important  Important  Less Important

**Your Performance Relative To Peers**

 Strong  Average  
 Weak  No Comparison



## Section 3: Cost of Land (Implicit/Explicit)

 <b>A. Infrastructure</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Newton		Comparison Group
1: Are there significant limitations to any of your existing infrastructure systems? - Water Supply	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
2: Public Sewer	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
3: Wastewater Treatment	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
4: Natural Gas	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
5: Electric Power	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
6: Data/Telecommunications - Land Lines	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
7: Data/Telecommunications - Cellular	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
8: Data/Telecommunications - Fiber optic / Cable / DSL	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
9: What is the average cost in cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for residential, commercial, and industrial end users in your municipality? Residential	17		16.23
10: What is the average cost in cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for residential, commercial, and industrial end users in your municipality? Commercial	16		15.20
11: What is the average cost in cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for residential, commercial, and industrial end users in your municipality? Industrial	14		13.03






  

<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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
 <b>B. Rents</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
12: What is the current average square foot cost for existing retail space in your central business district (Triple Net/Lease)?	29.60		11.63
13: What is the current average square foot cost for existing retail space in your highway business district (Triple Net/Lease)?	28.00		10
14: What is the current average square foot cost for existing manufacturing space (Triple Net/Lease)?	5.00 - 10.00		6
15: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your central business district (Triple Net/Lease)?: CLASS A			12.00
16: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your central business district (Triple Net/Lease)?: CLASS B	22.60		12.00
17: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your central business district (Triple Net/Lease)?: CLASS C			8
18: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your highway business district (Triple Net/Lease)?: CLASS A			
19: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your highway business district (Triple Net/Lease)?: CLASS B	22.75		8
20: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your highway business district (Triple Net/Lease)?: CLASS C			6
21: Of all the available office space in your jurisdiction, what percentage is: CLASS A	n/a		15
22: Of all the available office space in your jurisdiction, what percentage is: CLASS B	n/a		40
23: Of all the available office space in your jurisdiction, what percentage is: CLASS C	n/a		40

<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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 <b>C. Quality of Available Space</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
24: Approximately what percentage of available sites in your jurisdiction would be considered contaminated or brownfield sites?	1-10%		21-35%
25: What experience does your jurisdiction have with the redevelopment of contaminated or brownfield sites?	Limited		Limited
26: Approximately what percentage of available sites in your jurisdiction would be considered vacant or severely underutilized shopping centers?	0%		21-35%
27: Approximately what percentage of available sites in your jurisdiction would be considered unused open land or greenfield sites?	0%		21-35%

Importance To Market		Your Performance Relative To Peers	
 Very Important	 Important	 Strong	 Average
 Less Important		 Weak	 No Comparison







**D. Land (space)**

Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions

<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
28: Approximately how much vacant developable land in your jurisdiction is currently zoned for commercial/industrial uses?	1-150 acres		1-150 acres
29: Approximately how much vacant useable industrial or warehouse space exists in commercial/industrial buildings in your jurisdiction?	1-250,000 sq. feet		1-250,000 sq. feet
30: Approximately how much vacant useable office space exists in commercial/industrial buildings in your jurisdiction?	500,001-750,000 sq. feet		500,001-750,000 sq. feet
31: What proportion of the parcels available for industrial development or large scale commercial development are of 5 acres or more?	0-10%		11-20%








<b>Importance To Market</b> Very Important              Important              Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b> Strong              Average Weak              No Comparison
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## Section 4: Labor








 <b>A. Labor Cost</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
1: What is the prevailing average hourly wage rate for semi-skilled, blue-collar manufacturing workers?	\$17.26 - \$22.25		\$17.26 - \$22.25
2: What is the prevailing average hourly wage rate for mid-level clerical workers?	\$17.26 - \$22.25		\$17.26 - \$22.25
3: What is the prevailing average annual salary for public high school teachers?	\$70,001 or more		\$70,001 or more
4: Is there a local minimum or living wage statute?	no		no




  

<b>Importance To Market</b> <input checked="" type="radio"/> Very Important <input type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> No Comparison
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 <b>B. Workforce Composition</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
5: What percentage of your workforce is Unskilled?	1-25%		1-25%
6: What percentage of your workforce is Semi-skilled	1-25%		26-49%
7: What percentage of your workforce is Technically skilled	1-25%		between 1-25% and 26-49%
8: What percentage of your workforce is Managerial	26-49%		1-25%
9: What percentage of your workforce is Professional	26-49%		1-25%
10: What percentage of your workforce are current English language learners?	0-10%		0-10%








<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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<input type="radio"/> <b>C. Unions</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
11: Have any employers in your jurisdiction had a major strike or work stoppage within the last three years?	no		no
12: Has there been a major union organizing drive among public or private workers in the last 3 years?	no		no
13: Do labor unions have a significant presence in the labor market of your jurisdiction?	Somewhat		Somewhat

<b>Importance To Market</b> <input checked="" type="radio"/> Very Important <input type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> No Comparison
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 <b>D. Labor (available)</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
14: What percentage of residents age 25 or older have earned at least a high school diploma?	85% or greater		between 66-84% and 85% or greater
15: What percentage of residents age 25 or older have earned at least a bachelor's degree?	51% or greater		21-35%







<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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


<input type="radio"/> <b>E. Workforce Training</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
16: Which of the following workforce training resources do you interact with to respond to skill development needs of firms?			
- Regional employment board or state employment services department	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Area High schools	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Voc-tech schools or community colleges	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Human service or nonprofit career training centers	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17: Do you support public-private partnerships to provide specific workforce training?	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	yes
18: Is there an adult education program readily available to residents of your jurisdiction?	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	yes








<b>Importance To Market</b> <input checked="" type="radio"/> Very Important <input type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> No Comparison
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## Section 5: Local Process








 <b>A. Industry Sensitivity</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
1: Does your jurisdiction have a marketing program based on the needs identified by industrial or office location specialists?	no		no
2: Does your jurisdiction have a marketing program based on existing core strengths, identified opportunities, or industry concentrations?	no		no
3: Do you have a quick response team available when negative data, stories, or incidents about your jurisdiction make the news?	yes		no
4: Do you actively engage local business spokespersons to speak on behalf of your jurisdiction?	no		no
5: Do you have a strategy for engaging your jurisdiction's racial or ethnic populations in unique businesses, festivals, etc., as a way to attract regional niche shopping?	no		no












  

<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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 <b>B. Sites Available</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Newton		Comparison Group
6: Does your jurisdiction own sites that it is currently marketing for development?	yes		yes
7: Is there a readily accessible, up-to-date, complete list of sites that are available for development in your jurisdiction?	no		no
8: Do you maintain an active relationship with commercial real estate brokers, developers, or agents with sites in your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
9: Do your land use regulations protect land currently zoned industrial from encroachment by residential or other incompatible uses?	yes		yes
10: Do you have an active strategy for reclaiming or land banking tax delinquent and tax title properties?	yes		no
11: Do you have an active strategy for reclaiming vacant or underutilized shopping plazas?	no		no






  

<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Weak  Average  No Comparison
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
 <b>C. Timeliness of Approvals</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Newton		Comparison Group
12: What is the average time from application to completion of the review process for the following?: Site plan review	5-8 weeks		5-8 weeks
13: What is the average time from application to completion of the review process for the following?: Zoning variance	5-8 weeks		5-8 weeks
14: What is the average time from application to completion of the review process for the following?: Special permit	9-12 weeks		9-12 weeks
15: What is the average time from application to completion of the review process for the following?: Building permit	0-4 weeks		0-4 weeks
16: What is the average time from application to completion of the review process for the following?: Appeals process	5-8 weeks		5-8 weeks
17: What is the average time from application to completion or occupation in existing structures: Site plan review	0-4 weeks		5-8 weeks
18: What is the average time from application to completion or occupation in existing structures: Zoning variance	5-8 weeks		5-8 weeks
19: What is the average time from application to completion or occupation in existing structures: Special permit	9-12 weeks		9-12 weeks
20: What is the average time from application to completion or occupation in existing structures: Building permit	0-4 weeks		0-4 weeks
21: What is the average time from application to completion or occupation in existing structures: Appeals process	5-8 weeks		5-8 weeks






  

<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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
 <b>D. Predicable Permits</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
22: Do you provide a checklist of permitting requirements to prospective developers?	yes		yes
23: Do you provide a flowchart of the permitting process to prospective developers?	yes		no
24: Do you provide a development handbook to prospective developers?	yes		no
25: Do you allow for a single presentation of a development proposal to all review boards and commissions with relevant permit authority?	no		no









  

<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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

 <b>E. Fast Track Permits</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
26: Do you pre-permit development in certain districts?	no		no
27: Are there any publicly or cooperatively owned industrial parks in your jurisdiction that have their own expedited permitting authority?	no		no
28: Do you have an "overlay" district that allows expedited permitting of certain uses?	no		no
29: Do you market "fast track" permitting to potential developers or firms?	no		no

<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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 <b>F. Citizen Participation in the Review Process</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
30: To what extent do abutters slow the permitting process in your jurisdiction?	Somewhat		Somewhat
31: To what extent do organized neighborhood groups slow the permitting process?	Somewhat		Somewhat
32: To what extent do elected officials in your jurisdiction expedite development by facilitating dialogue with community groups?	Somewhat		Very little
33: Do you establish a specific time frame and procedure for abutter or neighborhood response in the initial stage of the process?	yes		yes
34: Do interested parties get multiple opportunities for review and comment during the various development review processes?	yes		yes
35: Has a development proposal in your jurisdiction been stopped by abutter or neighborhood opposition in the past 5 years?	no		yes
36: Have officials from your jurisdiction intervened to rescue a development proposal that was endangered by abutter or neighborhood opposition in the last 5 years?	no		no








  

<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Weak  Average  No Comparison
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<input type="radio"/> <b>G. Permitting Ombudsman</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
37: Does the chief executive officer of your jurisdiction play a significant role in ensuring the efficiency of your local permitting process?	yes		no
38: Are there other local officials empowered to ensure the efficiency of your local permitting process?	yes		yes
39: Is there a "development cabinet" or "development team" that is convened to review major developments?	yes		yes
40: Do you have an established training program for development staff that regularly identifies critical adjustments in policy or regulation to accommodate changing needs of firms?	no		no
41: Do you have an established training program for boards, commissions, authorities, districts, and elected officials that regularly identifies critical adjustments in policy or regulation to accommodate changing needs of firms?	no		no
42: If yes, approximately how long (in weeks) is your local licensing process for businesses?	0-4 weeks		0-4 weeks
43: Is your jurisdiction involved in the process for businesses that require state or federal permitting or licensing?	yes		yes
44: Do you provide technical assistance for businesses in the state or federal permit or license application process?	yes		yes
45: Does your jurisdiction require any local licenses for specific businesses or industries?			
- General license for all businesses	yes		no
- Auto dealership	yes		no
- Barber shop	no		no
- Bar/Tavern	yes		no
- Beauty salon	no		no
- Child care services	no		no
- Construction contractor	no		no
- Home health care	no		no
- Massage therapist	no		no










- Real estate agent/broker	no		no
- Restaurant	yes		no
- Skilled Trades (electrician, plumber, etc)	no		no
- Other, please specify	yes		no
46: other:	entertainment, carnival, amusement machines, body art, tanning salon, taxi		entertainment, carnival, amusement machines, body art, tanning salon, taxi






<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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## Section 6: Quality of Life (Community)








 <b>A. Cultural and Recreational Amenities</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
1: Is there a professional sports team resident within your jurisdiction?	no		no
2: Is there a major art, science or historical museum?	yes		no
3: Is there a professional repertory theater company?	yes		no
4: Is there a civic center, arena or major concert hall?	no		no
5: Is there a golf course within your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
6: Is there a symphony orchestra, opera, or ballet company?	yes		no
7: Are there public beaches or boating activities within 5 miles of your jurisdiction?	yes		yes








  

<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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


 <b>B. Crime</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
8: What was the residential burglary rate per 100,000 last year in your jurisdiction?	138.8		313
9: What was the auto theft rate per 100,000 last year?	31.8		between 121 and 124
10: What was the robbery rate per 100,000 last year?	20.0		44
11: What was the homicide rate per 100,000 last year?	0		3





























  

Importance To Market		Your Performance Relative To Peers	
 Very Important	 Important	 Strong	 Average
 Less Important		 Weak	 No Comparison






 <b>C. Housing</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Newton		Comparison Group
12: What was the median sale price of a single family home in your jurisdiction last year?	\$451,000 or greater		\$251,000-\$350,000
13: What was the median rent for a two bedroom apartment in your jurisdiction last year?	\$1251 or greater		\$801-\$1000
14: What is the home ownership rate?	66-75%		66-75%
15: What is the vacancy rate for rental housing?	3-5%		3-5%
16: What percent of homes are for sale?	5-7%		Less than 3%
17: Approximately what proportion of the major officers of firms located in your jurisdiction live in the community?	Some		Some








<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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 <b>D. Local Schools</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Newton		Comparison Group
18: What is the average K-12 per pupil expenditure in your jurisdiction last year?	\$14,001 or more		\$14,001 or more
19: Does your state mandate an assessment or proficiency test as a prerequisite for high school graduation?	yes		yes
20: If yes, what percent of students in your jurisdiction tested at least <b>proficient</b> in English?	81% or greater		66-80%
21: If yes, what percent of students in your jurisdiction tested at least <b>proficient</b> in Mathematics?	81% or greater		66-80%
22: If yes, are the tests used as a measure of performance within your local school district for teacher assessments or teacher evaluations?	no		no
23: What percentage of your jurisdiction's K-12 students are eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch last year?	1-25%		1-25%
24: What was the average combined (reading, math, and writing) SAT score last year?	1811		
25: What was the average composite score (English, math, reading, and science) for the ACT last year?	24.5		
26: What percentage of high school freshmen normally graduate within 5 years?	95% or more		95% or more
27: What is the high school drop out rate last year?	1-25%		1-25%
28: Are there any schools in your jurisdiction that are currently deemed <b>underperforming</b> ?	no		no
29: What percentage of high school graduates from last year's class went on to a four-year college?	75% or greater		50-74%
30: Are there any charter schools in your jurisdiction?	no		no
31: What types of private schools are there in your jurisdiction?			
- Parochial	yes		
- Non-sectarian	yes		
- Boarding	yes		
<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important		<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison	


## Section 7: Quality of Life (site)

 A. Amenities			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Newton		Comparison Group
1: What proportion of existing development sites within your jurisdiction have the following within 1 mile?: Fast food restaurant	Most		Most
2: What proportion of existing development sites within your jurisdiction have the following within 1 mile?: Fine dining	Most		Some
3: What proportion of existing development sites within your jurisdiction have the following within 1 mile?: Day care	Most		Some
4: What proportion of existing development sites within your jurisdiction have the following within 1 mile?: Retail shops	Most		Most





















<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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## Section 8: Business Incentives


























 A. State					
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions					
Question	Newton		Comparison Group		
1: Are businesses in your jurisdiction eligible for any of the following special state tax incentives? Check all that apply.					
- Investment tax credits	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no		
- Job training tax credits	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no		
- Research and development (R&D) tax credits	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no		
- Low (subsidized) interest loans	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no		
- Loan guarantees	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no		
- Equity financing	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no		
- Workforce training grants	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no		
- Other, please specify	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no		
2: Are businesses in your jurisdiction eligible for any of the following special state tax incentives? Other, please specify		<input type="checkbox"/>			
3: To what extent does your jurisdiction actively take advantage of any special state business incentives?	Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat		
4: Does your state allow for priority funding for distressed economic areas?	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	yes		
<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <b>Importance To Market</b>  <input checked="" type="radio"/> Very Important              <input checked="" type="radio"/> Important              <input type="radio"/> Less Important         </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strong              <input type="checkbox"/> Average  <input type="checkbox"/> Weak              <input type="checkbox"/> No Comparison         </td> </tr> </table>				<b>Importance To Market</b> <input checked="" type="radio"/> Very Important <input checked="" type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> No Comparison
<b>Importance To Market</b> <input checked="" type="radio"/> Very Important <input checked="" type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> No Comparison				







 <b>B. Local</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
5: Does your jurisdiction offer existing or new businesses property tax abatement? Existing businesses	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
6: If yes, what proportion of existing businesses are offered abatements?		<input type="checkbox"/>	
7: Does your jurisdiction offer existing or new businesses property tax abatement? New businesses	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
8: If yes, what proportion of existing businesses are offered abatements?		<input type="checkbox"/>	
9: Who negotiates the tax abatement?		<input type="checkbox"/>	
10: Does your jurisdiction offer any of the following incentives for businesses to locate in your jurisdiction? (Check all that apply)			
- Revolving loan fund	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Loan guarantees	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Revenue bonds	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Equity participation	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Business district group loans	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- None	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Investment tax credits	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Job training tax credits	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Research and development (R&D) tax credits	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Low (subsidized) interest loans	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Workforce training grants	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Other, please specify	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no







11: other:					
12: Does your jurisdiction actively pursue federal and/or state programs designed to assist in attracting and retaining businesses?	yes		yes		
13: Does your jurisdiction use Tax Increment Financing (TIF) or other programs to provide tax breaks to businesses?	no		yes		
14: Does your jurisdiction grant TIFs or similar programs for retail development?	no		no		
15: Does your jurisdiction assist in securing financing for businesses with commercial lenders or state industrial finance mechanisms?	yes		yes		
16: Do you actively try to attract local, state, and federal facilities, including post offices, to your jurisdiction?	no		no		
17: Is any part of your jurisdiction in a designated Enterprise Zone?	no		no		
18: Do you participate in a regional brownfield revolving loan fund or offer your own?	No brownfields funds utilized		Regional		
<table border="1"> <tr> <td> <b>Importance To Market</b>   Very Important     Important     Less Important </td> <td> <b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>   Strong     Average   Weak     No Comparison </td> </tr> </table>				<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison				

## Section 9: Tax Rates


















			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Newton		Comparison Group
1: What types of taxes are collected by your jurisdiction to pay for local services?			
- Property tax	yes		yes
- Local sales tax	no		no
- Local income tax	no		no
- Hotel room tax	yes		no
- Meals tax	yes		no
2: Of the potential commercial and industrial property tax revenue your jurisdiction could collect, what percent is currently abated?	0%		0%
3: Does your jurisdiction tax property in industrial or commercial uses at a different rate than residential properties?	yes		yes
4: If yes, what is the tax rate on industrial/commercial property? \$ /\$1,000	20.89		15.80
5: If yes, what is the tax rate on residential property? \$ /\$1,000	10.90		8.61
6: If no, what is the tax rate on all property?			
7: What % of your tax revenue is derived from: Industrial %	1.27		
8: What % of your tax revenue is derived from: Commercial %	14.56		
9: What % of your tax revenue is derived from: Residential %	81.68		
10: Does your jurisdiction impose impact fees on new commercial or industrial development?	no		no
<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important		<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison	

 <b>B. Tax Delinquency</b>			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Newton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
11: What proportion of residential property in your jurisdiction is more than one year delinquent in taxes?	0%-3%		0%-3%
12: What proportion of commercial property in your jurisdiction is more than one year delinquent in taxes?	0%-3%		0%-3%
13: What proportion of industrial property in your jurisdiction is more than one year delinquent in taxes?	0%-3%		0%-3%
14: How many properties are tax defaulted or subject to the power of sale?	100-200		50-100
15: When do you choose to auction tax title properties?	1-5 years		1-5 years
16: Do you have an organized and defined process for conducting such auctions and ensuring that they are successful?	no		yes
17: Do you auction the "right to foreclose" on tax delinquent properties?	no		no
18: Do you seek tax abatement on tax title properties to allow the liens to clear for new owners?	no		no
19: If a tax delinquent or tax title property serves as an impediment to development, does the property receive special attention?	no		no







<b>Importance To Market</b>  Very Important  Important  Less Important	<b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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


## Section 10: Access to Information

A. Website			
Report of Newton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Newton		Comparison Group
1: Does your jurisdiction's website list all local development policies and procedures?	yes		no
2: Does your website have contact information for key officials?	yes		yes
3: Does your website have general information about your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
4: How frequently is your website updated?	Weekly		Weekly
5: Does your website include an explicitly designed economic development tool aimed at businesses and developers?	yes		no
6: Is there a development permit checklist or flow chart on the website?	yes		no
7: Are permit applications available for downloading on the website?	yes		yes
8: Are applications and other forms date certified to ensure that they are the most recent versions (i.e. the same versions that you would get in person)?	yes		no
9: Is it possible to file a permit application electronically?	no		no
10: Is there a list of available land and building sites on the website?	yes		no
11: If yes, check the types of information available about each site. (Check all that apply)			
- :Owner	no		no
- Square footage of vacant land	no		no
- Square footage and quality of existing buildings and structures	yes		no
- Abutters	no		no
- Zoning	yes		no
- Assessed value	no		no
- Tax rate	no		no

Please note that this response has been changed to "yes" and the comparison color should be green.

- Current tax status (e.g. paid up, delinquent)	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Contamination	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Aerial photos	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- GIS links	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
12: Other, please specify		<input type="checkbox"/>	
13: Is there a posting of current hearings available on the website?	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	yes
14: Is there a posting of pending applications available on the website?	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
15: Is there a listing of current members of development review boards and staff contact information?	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	yes
16: Are there links to other local development resources? (Check all that apply)			
- State finance agencies	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- State permitting agencies	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Regional planning agencies	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Regional development organizations	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Workforce training organizations	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Local public or quasi-public financing resources	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Demographic information	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	yes
- Economic development agencies	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
17: Other, please specify		<input type="checkbox"/>	
18: Are there links to other locally-based private or non-profit organizations?			
- Colleges and universities	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Chambers of Commerce	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	yes

- Community development corporations	no		no
- Arts and cultural organizations	yes		no
- Sports and recreation venues	no		no
- Convention and tourist organization	no		no
19: Other, please specify			
20: Is there a designated webmaster or staff person responsible for maintaining the website?	yes		yes

<p><b>Importance To Market</b></p> <p> Very Important    Important    Less Important</p>	<p><b>Your Performance Relative To Peers</b></p> <p> Strong    Average</p> <p> Weak    No Comparison</p>
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