

POPULATION

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The measure of a community's needs, both existing and future is directly related to its population. The purpose of this section of the Master Plan is to provide a careful review of the present character of Netcong Borough's population and to determine the extent of its future population growth. From this data, a basis will be provided to ascertain whether existing Borough facilities and land use policies are adequate and what future needs will be.

REGIONAL GROWTH

Regional population growth plays a major role in a community's development since most new growth takes the form of immigration (new families moving into a community) rather than natural increase (local births over deaths). The degree to which a community is affected is generally measured by its location in the region, accessibility and amount of vacant land available for new development. The region in which the Borough of Netcong is located has been delineated by the Regional Plan Association consisting of 31 counties in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut with a 1970 population of over 19 million and a land area of 12,748 square miles.

In order to develop a meaningful analysis the Region has been divided into a series of concentric rings beginning with the core and moving outward through the inner, intermediate and outer rings of development. The rings of development are best associated with population density, the core having the greatest and the outer ring having the least. Table II entitled, "Regional Population Comparisons 1940-1970", illustrates the direction of population growth in the region. Prior to 1940, most growth in the region occurred in the core, but the core's share of the population increment was steadily declining. In the next two decades, the inner ring absorbed the bulk of growth, receiving as much as one-half of the population increment between 1950-1960. As the inner ring approached saturation, the majority of new growth shifted to the intermediate ring. Morris County, for instance, shared a large increase between 1960 and 1970 as illustrated on the table. The outer ring, which for many years was quite inactive, has begun to grow considerably although in absolute terms this growth is quite small compared to the numerical growth in the intermediate ring.

Netcong is at the outer edge of the intermediate ring. Growth pressures are expected to remain constant in the greater Netcong area through the 1980's. By that time much of the vacant land in surrounding communities will be developed.

CURRENT POPULATION AND GROWTH RATES

The 1970 U. S. census placed the Borough's population at 2,858 persons, an increase of 3.36 percent over the 1960 population of 2,765. This increase in population was numerically and as a percentage less than that from the 1950 to 1960 decade. Between 1950 and 1960, the population of the Borough increased from 2,284 persons to 2,765 persons for a 21 percent increase over the decade. Between 1940 and 1950 the population increased approximately 5.89 percent going from 2,157 persons in 1940 to 2,284 persons in 1950. Between 1940 and 1970 the Borough's population increased by 32.5 percent. Netcong has been an exception to the development patterns in the area. Already in 1920, Netcong with an area of .8 square miles had a population of 1800 people, being a density of 2,250 people per square mile, representing 63 percent of its population in 1970. For example, from 1920 through 1945 Netcong had a greater population than Mt. Olive even though its land area is 2.5 percent of that of Mt. Olive. In 1970 with a population of 2,858 people Netcong had a density of 3572.5 people per square mile while neighboring Stanhope had a density of 1520 people per square mile, Byram had a density of 223 people per square mile, and Mt. Olive had a density of 345.8 people per square mile. At the same time Morris County had an overall density of 815.4 people per square mile and the State of New Jersey had a density of 957.2 people per square mile.

Between 1920 and 1970 Netcong had its greatest growth period in the 1950's, increasing its population by 481, representing a 21 percent increase during the decade even though growth was occurring at a more rapid pace in neighboring Municipalities. Mount Olive grew by 46 percent while Morris County as a whole grew by 59.16 percent during the 1950's.

From 1960 to 1970 Netcong's growth dropped dramatically to 3.36 percent for the decade, while Morris County-wide the growth was 46.57 percent. However, development was occurring at a more rapid rate around Netcong with Mt. Olive Township expanding 173 percent during the same period.

From 1970 to present Netcong has grown at its most rapid rate since 1920 due mainly to the Netcong Heights Garden Apartment Complex. When this apartment development is completed it will add approximately 900 new residents to the Borough. From 1970 to 1976 Netcong grew by 65.8 percent, representing the highest growth rate in Morris County. As a whole, Morris County, and Sussex County expanded by 14.6 percent and 12.7 percent respectively during the same time period. From the above we can see that the western portion of Morris County and the southeastern section of Sussex County are the most rapidly expanding areas of the counties.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

The largest single age group in 1970 in the Borough of Netcong was that of youths in the 5-14 year old category. This is shown on Table III, entitled "Borough of Netcong, Population by Age and Sex".

Between 1960 and 1970 this age group showed an increase of 12 percent for a population of 576 people comprising the largest age group in Netcong. The greatest increase during the decade came with the 15-24 years old age group having an increase of 27 percent. One category that showed a decline as a percent of total population was the under 5 age group, decreasing by 26 percent. This decline can be attributed to an overall drop in the birth rate and the trend toward smaller families coupled with a low rate of development during the 1960's in Netcong. Few young families who usually move into new construction were moving to Netcong because of the limited number of homes built during that time period.

As a percentage of the total population Netcong has approximately 2 percent more people than the county in the under 5 age group, correspondingly Netcong has 2 percent more people in the child bearing age group 25 to 34. Netcong also has approximately 4 percent more people than the county in the 55 and over age group. In the other age groups Morris County and the Borough of Netcong percentages are fairly close to each other.

The Census reports the educational attainment of persons 25 years and older based on the number of school years completed. Sixty-seven percent are high school graduates Morris County wide, while 48 percent of people in Netcong over 25 years of age are high school graduates. It was found that 9.4 percent of the people 16 to 21 years old were not high school graduates and

occupied, 42 or 4.7 percent were vacant and 2 or .3 percent were seasonal housing. The Netcong Heights Garden Apartment Complex will add 424 renter occupied units to the Borough. This will bring the percentage of renter occupied units to approximately 50.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

During the 1970's the Borough of Netcong has seen its most rapid period of growth since 1920, the earliest year of our records. From 1970 to January of 1976 Netcong's population grew by 642 people for a total of approximately 3,500 people, being an increase of 2.25 percent. This spur of growth has been brought on by the Netcong Heights Garden Apartment Complex which is presently more than half complete. Upon completion this development will add a total of approximately 900 residents to the Borough. Combined with other growth we project the population of Netcong to be 3,900 by 1980. Growth has been rapid since 1974 and will continue until the estimated completion of the apartment complex at the end of 1979. It is expected that another 25 apartment units shall be constructed near Railroad Avenue by 1980. It is expected that the garden apartment zone will be fully developed in the 1980's. After that population growth will occur due to scattered construction on any remaining empty lots and granting of variances. If no major variances are granted, population growth

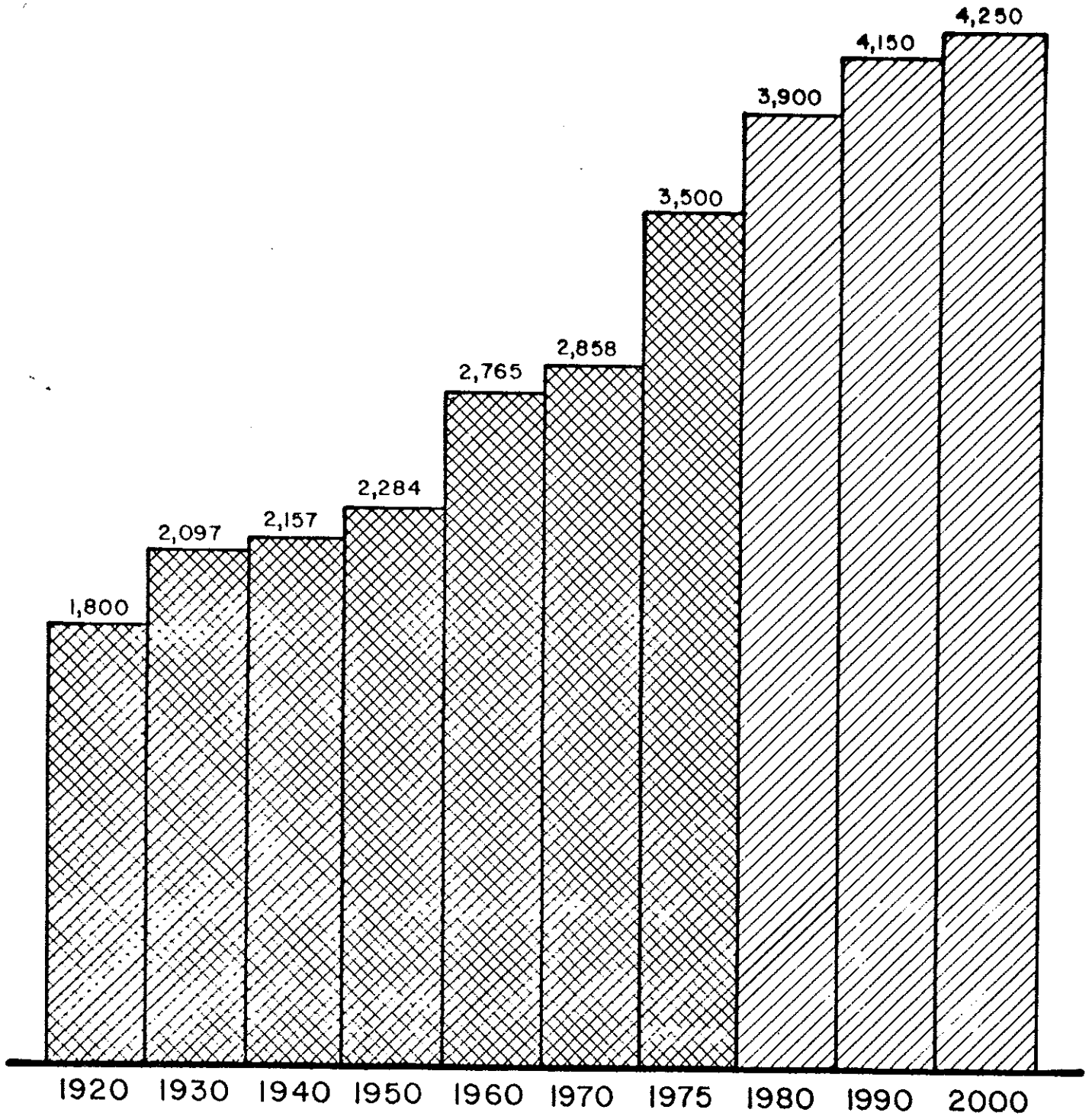
within Netcong will become very minimal since all available property will have been developed. Without major variances the population projections are as shown on Plate II entitled "Population Projections - Borough of Netcong". Only redevelopment of existing areas more densely will increase the population after the late 1980's. Relatively rapid growth is and shall continue to occur in surrounding communities. For example, the Morris County Planning Department has estimated the growth from 1970 through 1980 to be 304 percent in Mt. Olive and 49 percent in Roxbury. The growth in Byram during the same period is estimated at 29 percent and is expected to increase to 45 percent from 1980 to 1990. It is expected that development will drop in Mt. Olive to 36 percent from 1980 to 1990.

Since Netcong is at the intersection of major roads and is surrounded by rapidly expanding communities it is well located for commercial and industrial development. The Morris County Master Plan has proposed Netcong and its environs as a major employment center of the area. This kind of development will not increase the population of Netcong.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

BOROUGH OF NETCONG

PLATE II



SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 1) Netcong is a relatively old established town in the area being the most densely populated town in western Morris County. Already in 1920, Netcong had a density of 2,250 people per square mile.
- 2) From 1960 to 1970 Netcong's population grew by only 3.36 percent; however, during the 1970's Netcong is expanding at its fastest rate since our records of 1920 due to the Netcong Heights Garden Apartment Complex.
- 3) After the apartment zone is fully developed Netcong's population growth will slow to a trickle unless major variances for high density are permitted.
- 4) Since Netcong is at the hub of major east-west, north-south roads surrounded by growing communities it is ideally situated for commercial development and redevelopment.