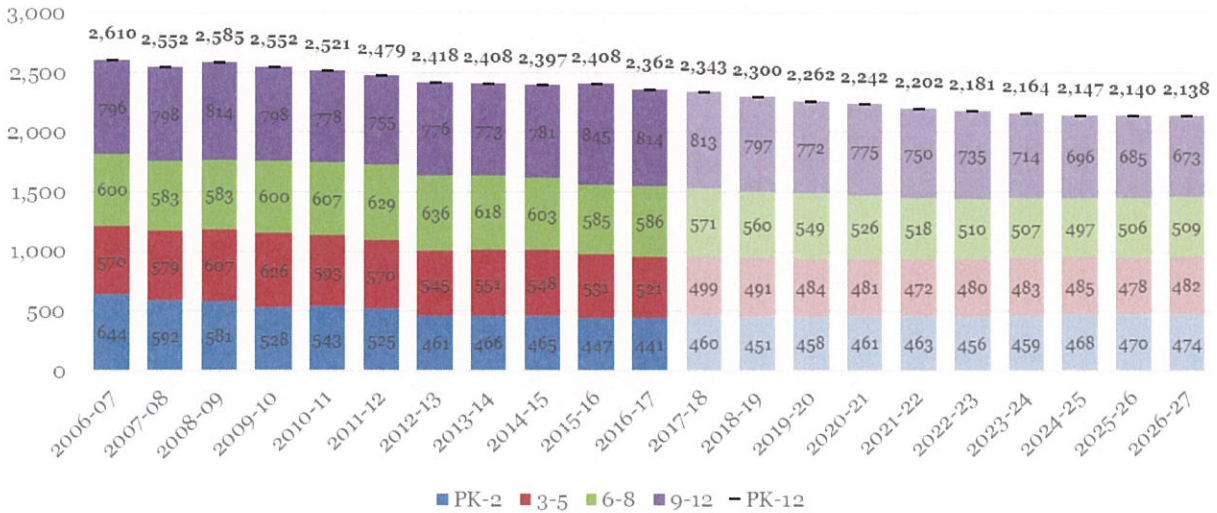


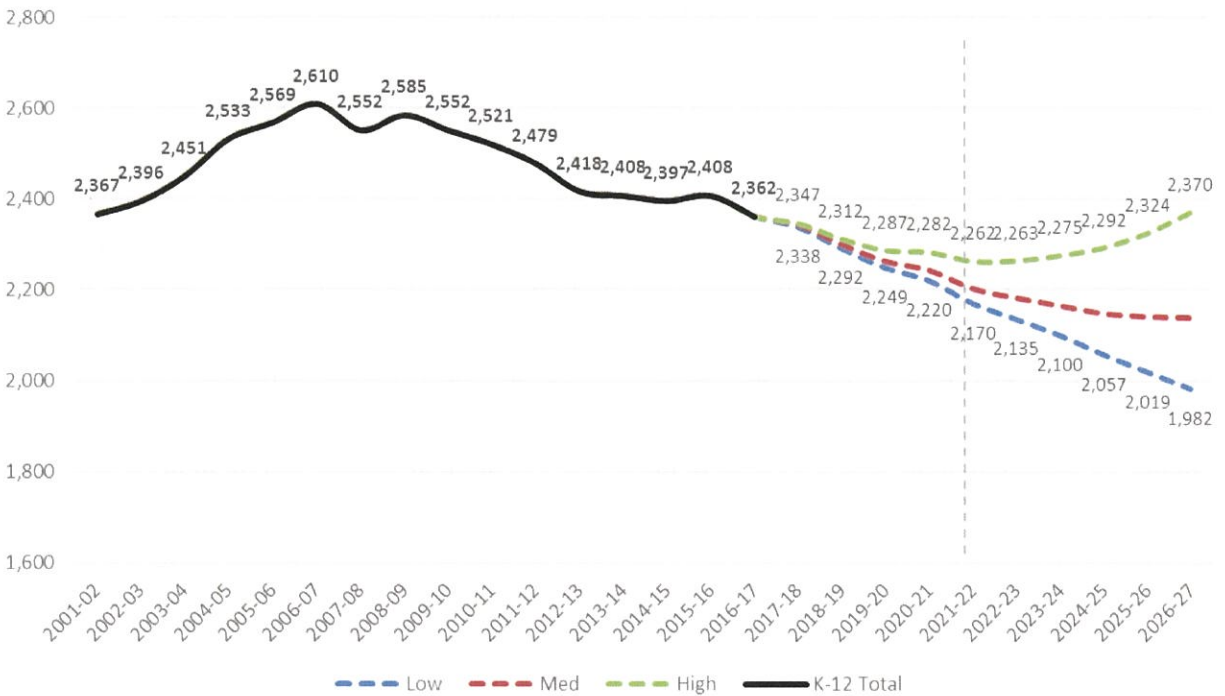
Districtwide Enrollment Projections

Districtwide Historic & Projected PK-12 Enrollment (Medium Scenario)



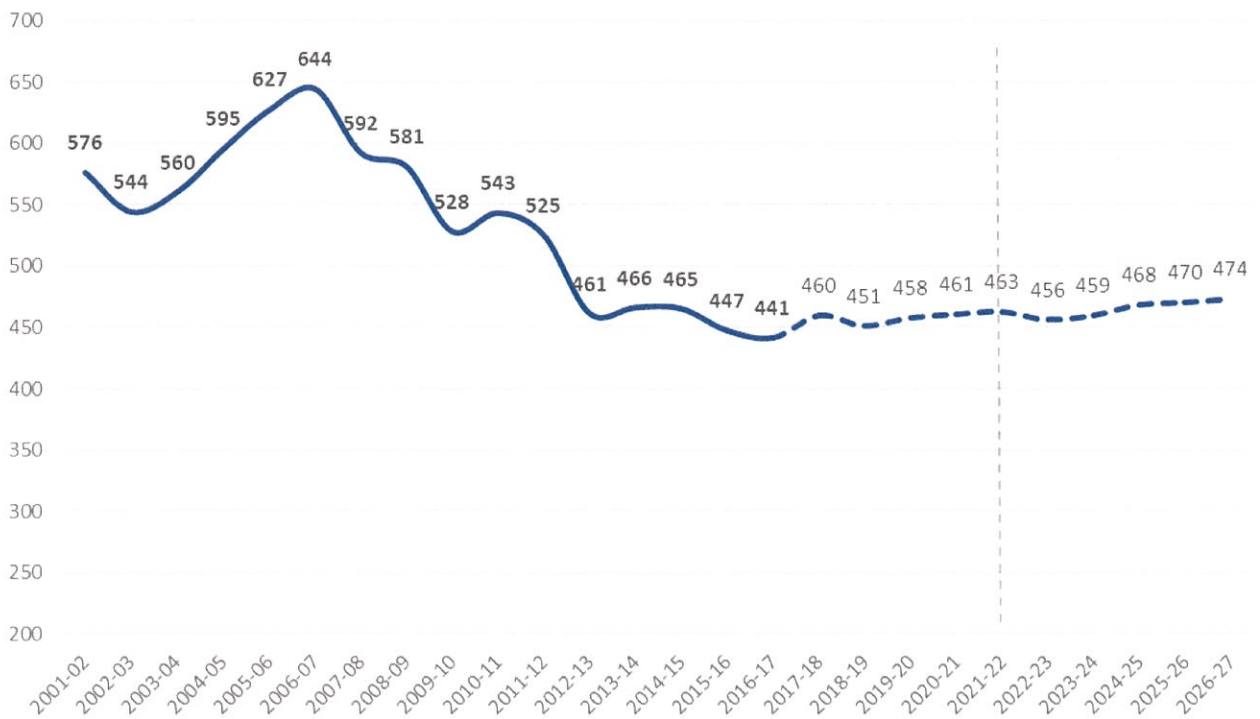
PK-12 Projection Comparison (Regression-Based K)

Weston Public Schools



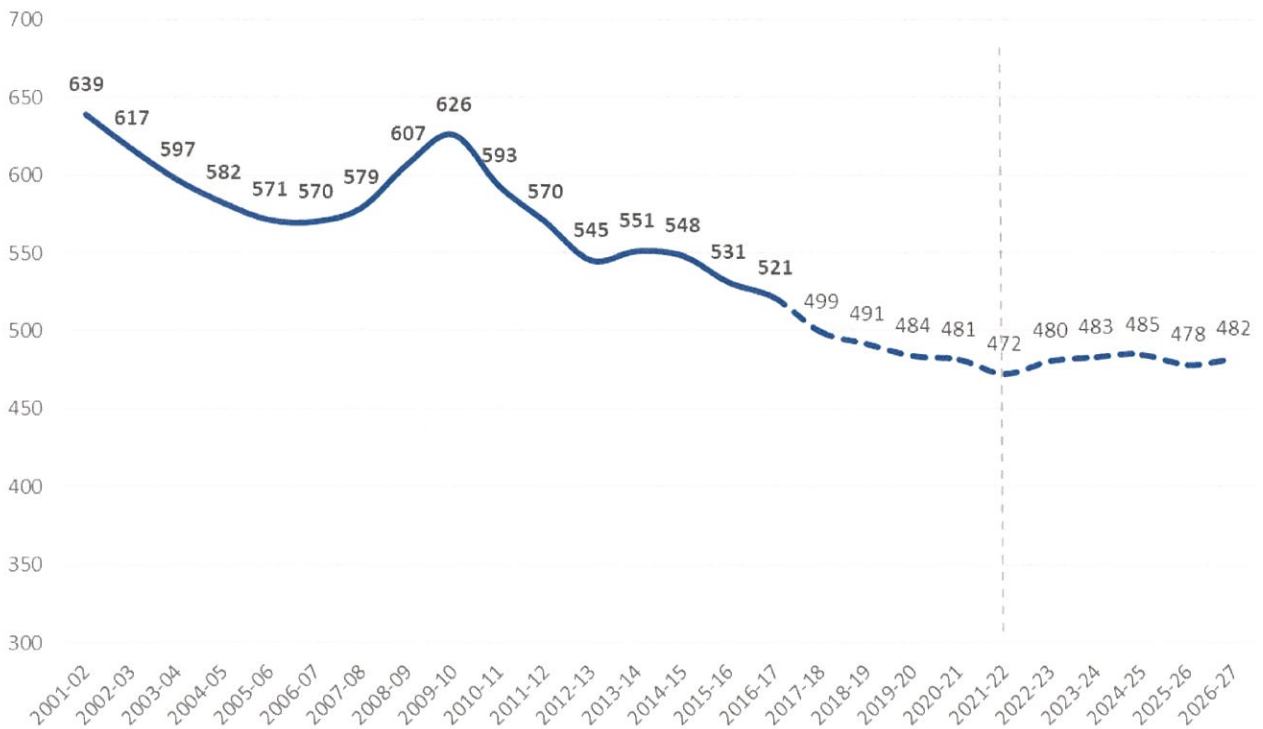
PK-2 Historic & Projected Enrollment (Regression Medium Scenario)

Weston Public Schools

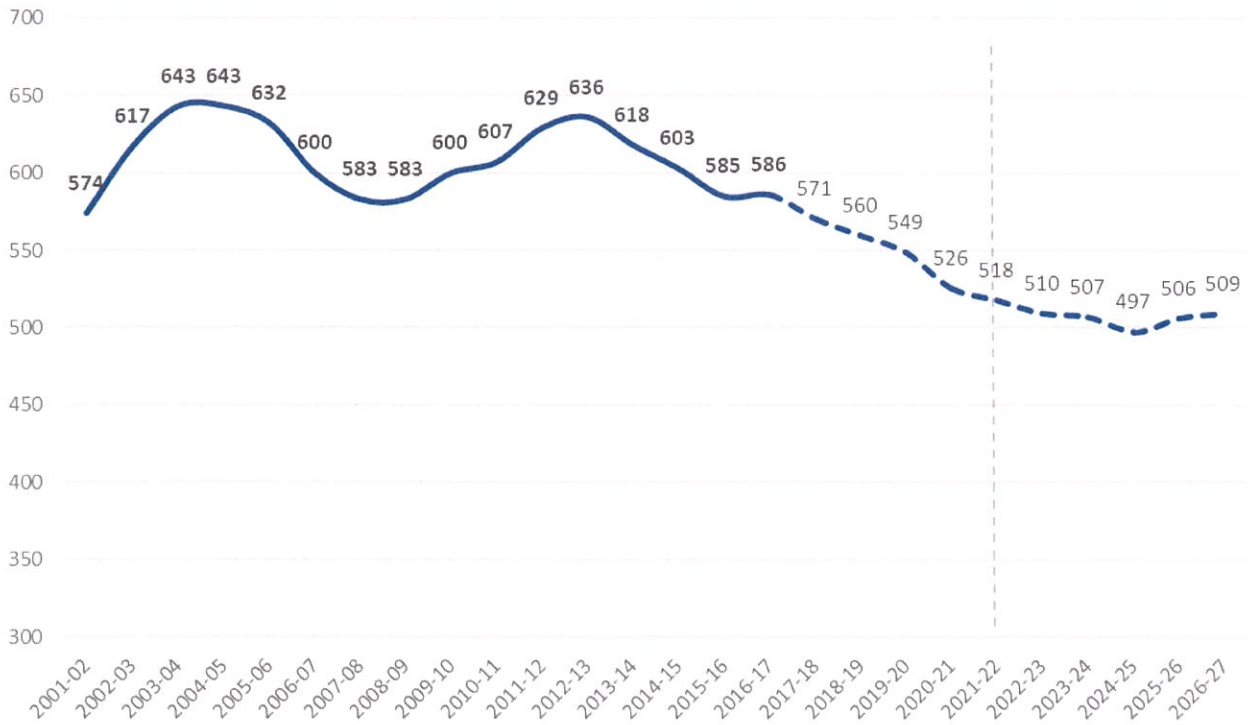


3-5 Historic & Projected Enrollment (Regression Medium Scenario)

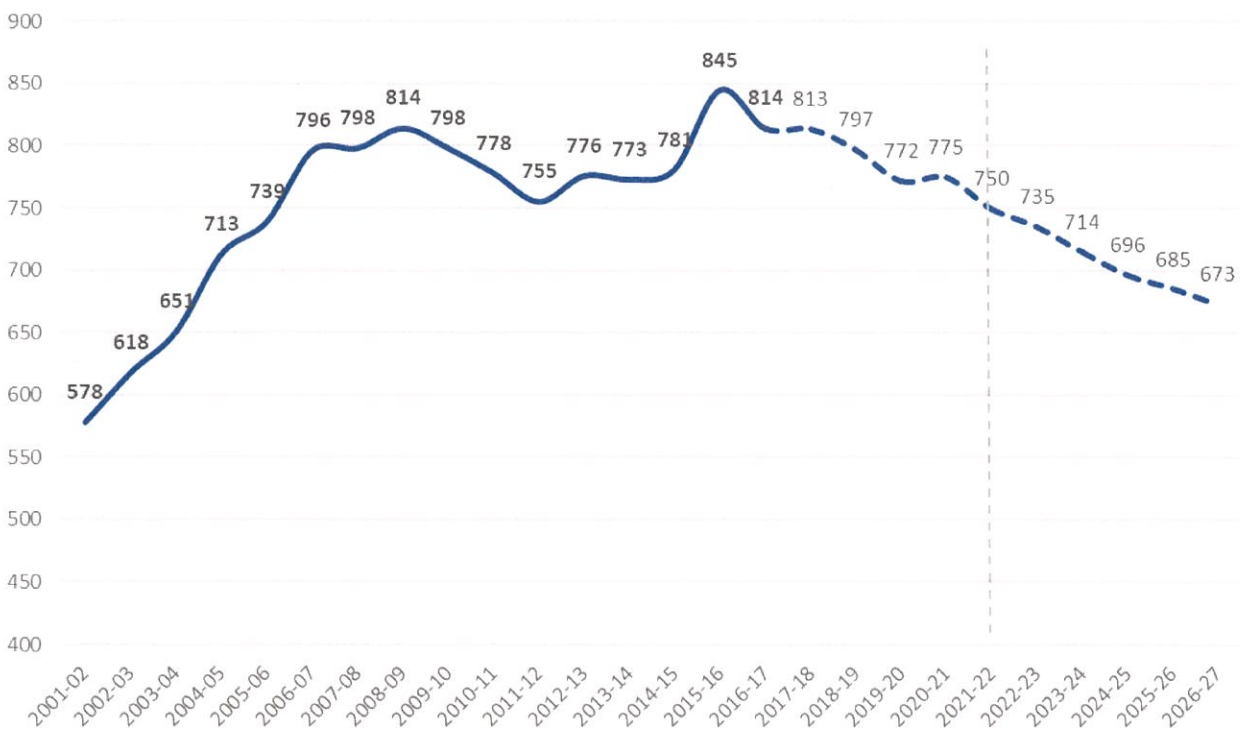
Weston Public Schools



6-8 Historic & Projected Enrollment (Regression Medium Scenario) Weston Public Schools



9-12 Historic & Projected Enrollment (Regression Medium Scenario) Weston Public Schools



Low Enrollment Projections

Low Regression K (Derived from Low Regression Births), 3-Year Average Persistency

School Year	Birth Year	Births	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	PK
2016-17	2011	49	128	143	145	163	173	185	187	194	205	189	213	206	206	25
2017-18	2012	63	124	139	150	155	168	176	190	189	191	204	188	211	207	45
2018-19	2013	60	121	135	148	160	160	171	181	193	187	190	202	186	212	45
2019-20	2014	72	131	132	143	158	166	162	176	183	190	186	189	201	187	45
2020-21	2015	61	120	142	140	153	163	168	167	178	181	189	185	187	202	45
2021-22	2016	55	113	131	152	149	158	166	173	169	176	180	188	183	188	45
2022-23	2017	62	116	123	139	162	154	160	170	175	167	175	179	186	184	45
2023-24	2018	59	112	126	131	148	167	157	165	173	173	166	174	177	187	45
2024-25	2019	56	109	122	134	139	153	170	161	167	170	172	165	172	178	45
2025-26	2020	51	105	119	130	143	144	155	174	163	165	169	171	163	173	45
2026-27	2021	48	102	114	126	138	148	146	160	177	161	164	168	169	164	45

School Year	PK-12 Total	K-12 Total	PK-2 Total	3-5 Total	6-8 Total	9-12 Total
2016-17	2,362	2,337	441	521	586	814
2017-18	2,338	2,293	459	499	571	810
2018-19	2,292	2,247	449	491	561	791
2019-20	2,249	2,204	451	486	549	763
2020-21	2,220	2,175	447	484	526	763
2021-22	2,170	2,125	440	473	518	739
2022-23	2,135	2,090	423	476	513	724
2023-24	2,100	2,055	414	471	511	704
2024-25	2,057	2,012	410	462	499	687
2025-26	2,019	1,974	398	442	502	677
2026-27	1,982	1,937	387	432	497	666

5 Year Change

-8.1% -9.1% -0.2% -9.3% -11.6% -9.2%

10 Year Change

-16.1% -17.1% -12.2% -17.1% -15.1% -18.2%

Medium Enrollment Projections

Medium Regression K (Derived from Medium Regression Births), 3-Year Weighted Average Persistency

School Year	Birth Year	Births	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	PK
2016-17	2011	49	128	143	145	163	173	185	187	194	205	189	213	206	206	25
2017-18	2012	63	125	140	149	154	170	175	189	190	191	207	188	211	208	45
2018-19	2013	60	123	137	146	159	161	172	179	193	188	193	205	186	213	45
2019-20	2014	72	135	135	143	156	165	163	176	183	190	189	192	204	188	45
2020-21	2015	61	127	148	141	152	162	167	166	179	180	191	188	190	205	45
2021-22	2016	55	124	139	154	150	158	164	171	170	177	181	190	186	191	45
2022-23	2017	62	130	136	145	164	156	160	168	174	167	178	180	189	188	45
2023-24	2018	60	130	142	142	154	171	158	164	171	172	168	177	179	190	45
2024-25	2019	62	132	142	149	151	161	173	161	167	169	173	167	175	180	45
2025-26	2020	62	132	145	149	158	157	163	177	164	165	170	172	166	177	45
2026-27	2021	64	133	145	151	158	165	159	167	181	162	166	169	171	167	45

School Year	PK-12 Total	K-12 Total	PK-2 Total	3-5 Total	6-8 Total	9-12 Total
2016-17	2,362	2,337	441	521	586	814
2017-18	2,343	2,298	460	499	571	813
2018-19	2,300	2,255	451	491	560	797
2019-20	2,262	2,217	458	484	549	772
2020-21	2,242	2,197	461	481	526	775
2021-22	2,202	2,157	463	472	518	750
2022-23	2,181	2,136	456	480	510	735
2023-24	2,164	2,119	459	483	507	714
2024-25	2,147	2,102	468	485	497	696
2025-26	2,140	2,095	470	478	506	685
2026-27	2,138	2,093	474	482	509	673

5 Year Change

-6.8%	-7.7%	4.9%	-9.4%	-11.7%	-7.9%
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10 Year Change

-9.5%	-10.5%	7.4%	-7.5%	-13.1%	-17.3%
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High Enrollment Projections

High Regression K (Derived from High Regression Births), 4-Year Average Persistency

School Year	Birth Year	Births	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	PK
2016-17	2011	49	128	143	145	163	173	185	187	194	205	189	213	206	206	25
2017-18	2012	63	126	142	153	155	168	177	192	187	194	206	188	211	205	45
2018-19	2013	60	126	140	152	163	159	172	183	192	187	194	205	186	209	45
2019-20	2014	72	140	140	149	162	167	163	178	184	192	188	193	202	184	45
2020-21	2015	61	135	155	149	159	166	171	169	178	183	192	187	191	201	45
2021-22	2016	55	135	150	166	159	164	170	178	169	178	184	191	184	190	45
2022-23	2017	62	144	150	160	177	164	168	176	178	169	179	183	189	183	45
2023-24	2018	61	147	160	160	171	182	168	174	177	178	169	177	181	188	45
2024-25	2019	70	156	163	171	171	175	186	174	174	176	178	168	175	180	45
2025-26	2020	74	160	173	174	182	175	179	193	174	174	177	177	166	174	45
2026-27	2021	83	167	177	185	186	187	179	186	193	174	174	176	175	165	45

School Year	PK-12 Total	K-12 Total	PK-2 Total	3-5 Total	6-8 Total	9-12 Total
2016-17	2,362	2,337	441	521	586	814
2017-18	2,347	2,302	466	499	573	809
2018-19	2,312	2,267	462	493	563	794
2019-20	2,287	2,242	474	492	553	767
2020-21	2,282	2,237	485	497	530	771
2021-22	2,262	2,217	496	493	524	749
2022-23	2,263	2,218	499	508	523	734
2023-24	2,275	2,230	512	520	528	715
2024-25	2,292	2,247	535	532	524	702
2025-26	2,324	2,279	552	537	540	695
2026-27	2,370	2,325	574	552	553	691

5 Year Change

-4.2% -5.1% 12.4% -5.4% -10.5% -7.9%

10 Year Change

0.3% -0.5% 30.2% 6.0% -5.7% -15.2%

All three enrollment scenarios project a decline in total K-12 enrollments through the first 5 years of the projection horizon. Thereafter, the low and medium scenarios chart a path of continued decline through the close of the projection horizon while the high scenario projects a rebound in enrollments, ending slightly above current enrollment levels by 2026-27. The medium scenario, which is recommended as the scenario most likely to reflect future conditions, depicts an overall decline from 2,362 to 2,202 PK-12 students (6.8 percent below current levels) by 2021-22, the last year of known births. Total enrollment is expected to continue to decline through 2026-27, reaching a low of 2,138 PK-12 students (equivalent to a 9.5 percent decline).

In the near term, enrollment declines are projected to occur not at the elementary level, where steep declines occurred in the late 2000s and early 2010s, but instead at the upper grade levels and particularly at the middle school level. Intermediate (grade 3-5) enrollments are projected to drop by 9.4 percent in the first 5 years, to 472 students, under the medium scenario. The middle school grade levels are projected to experience a slightly steeper decline of 11.7 percent over the same time period, to 518 students. Conversely, the elementary grade level is projected to see a small increase, with enrollments up 4.9 percent.

The intermediate and middle grade levels are projected to experience the steepest drops because while incoming kindergarten enrollments reached a nadir and are projected to remain fairly stable shrinking cohorts are continuing to matriculate into these grade levels. Accordingly, the overall size of both the intermediate and middle schools is projected to continue declining as the cohorts currently in these schools are likely to be replaced by smaller entering classes already in the system. At the high school level, declines are not projected to begin until 2018-19 and therefore are less pronounced at the 5-year horizon, at 7.9 percent below current levels.

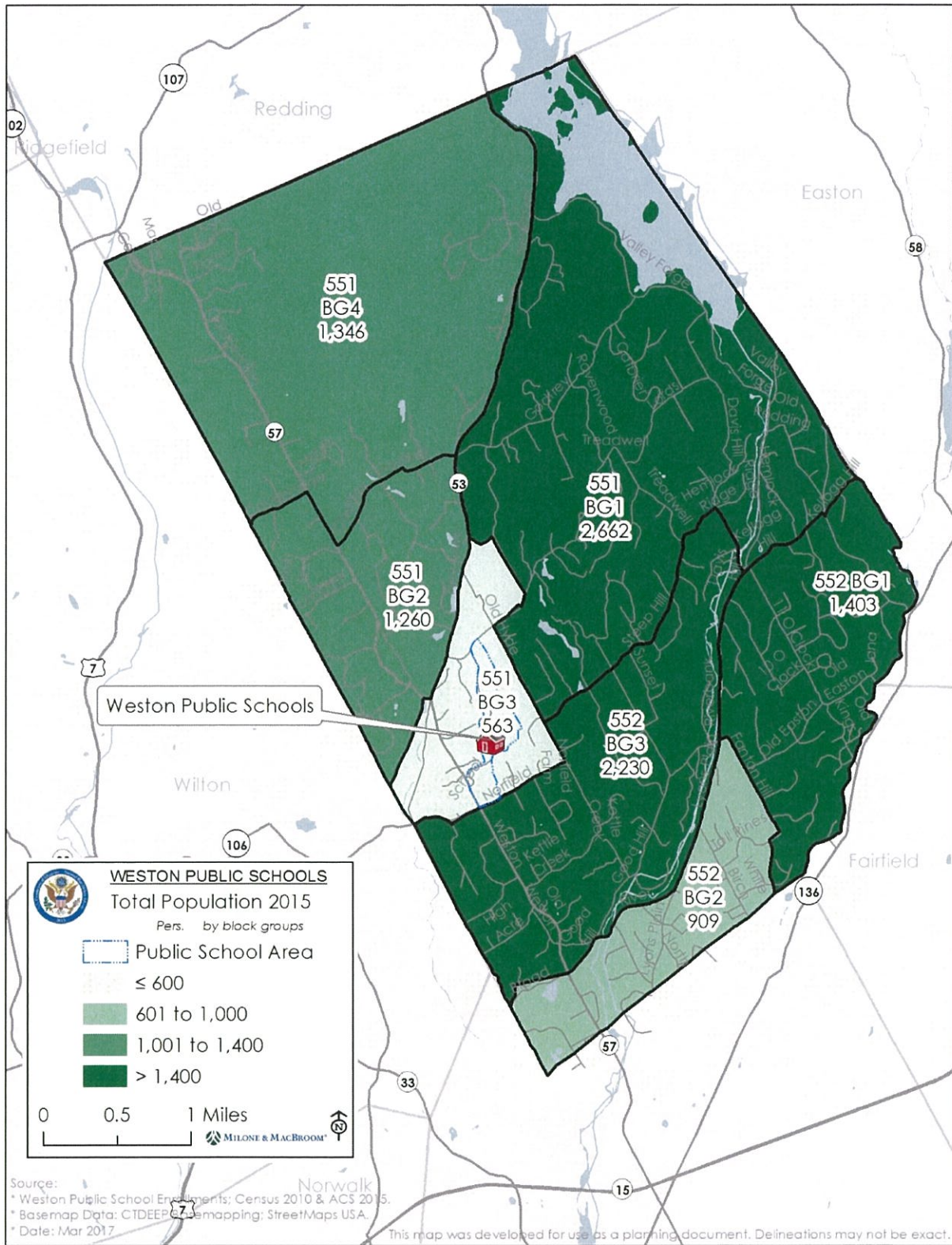
At the 10-year horizon, overall declines are expected to continue, with a net decline of 9.5 percent PK-12. In contrast to the first 5 years of projections, declines are much more concentrated at the high school level as small cohorts continue to move up through the system and entering kindergarten cohorts grow slightly. At the elementary level, slow but sustained growth continues, ending at 474 students by 2026-27. The intermediate grade level also sees a slight rebound in the latter half of the projection horizon, increasing from a low of 472 students to the low 480s for the last several years.

At the middle school level, enrollment is projected to continue to decline until 2024-25, with a slight rebound in the last 2 years. The overall projected decline amounts to a decrease of 13.1 percent in enrollment at this level. Finally, enrollments at Weston High School are projected to continue a path of steady decline through the close of the projection horizon, amounting to a 17.3 percent decrease to 673 students.

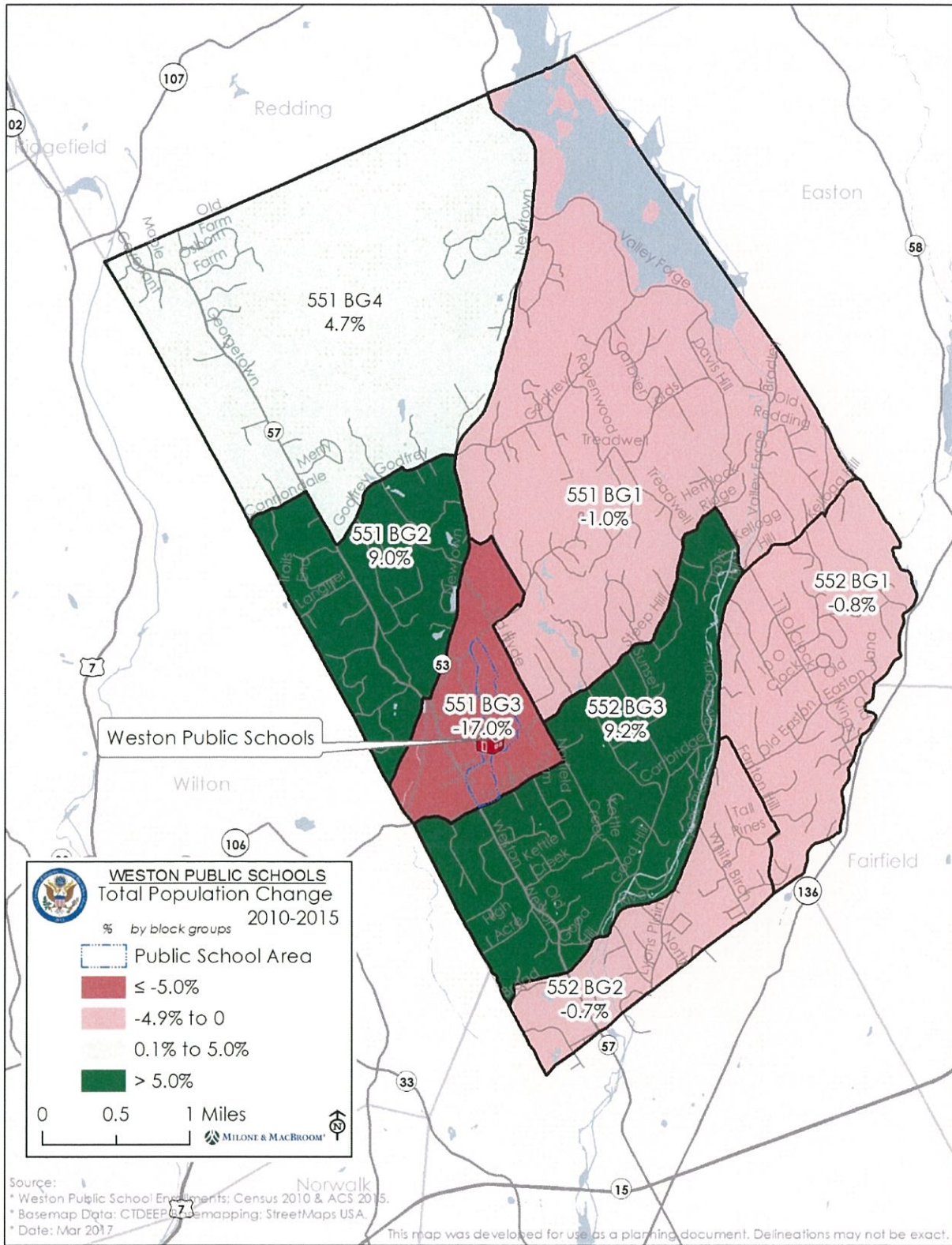
It is important to emphasize that the overall trajectory of the projections depends heavily on the projected kindergarten enrollments based on births and home sales in the community. Changes to the conditions underlying the results of this model may significantly impact the overall direction of projections; therefore, careful attention to both births and the pace of the local housing market is important going forward to ensure that any circumstances that may render these projections inapplicable are noticed and taken into account.

Appendix: Demographic and Statistical Mapping

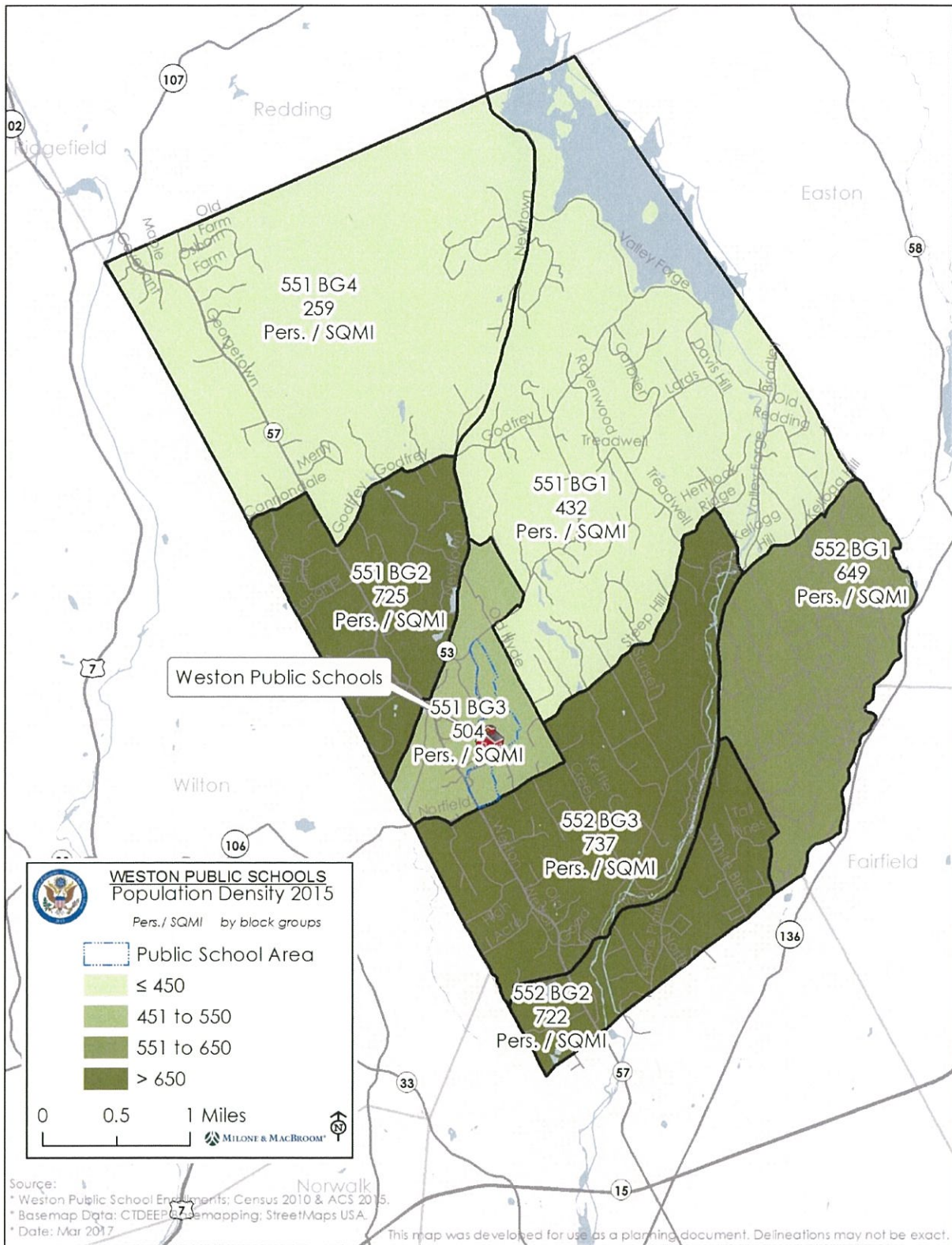
The following maps depict key demographic and housing market indicators that informed our analysis of Weston's enrollment patterns. Unless otherwise noted, the data displayed on these maps is drawn from the US Census Bureau's 2000 and 2010 Decennial Census and/or the 2015 ACS.



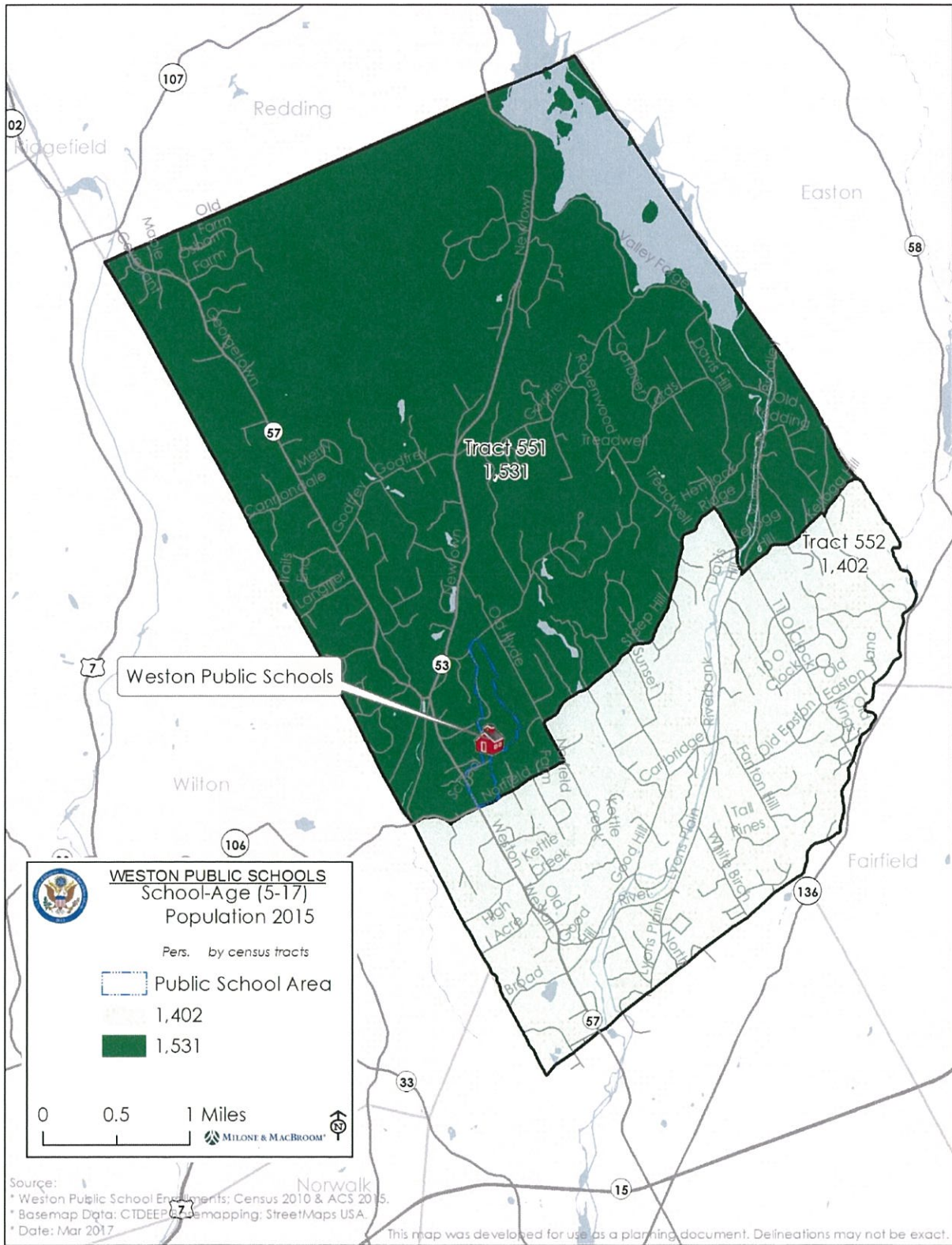
Map 1: Total Population



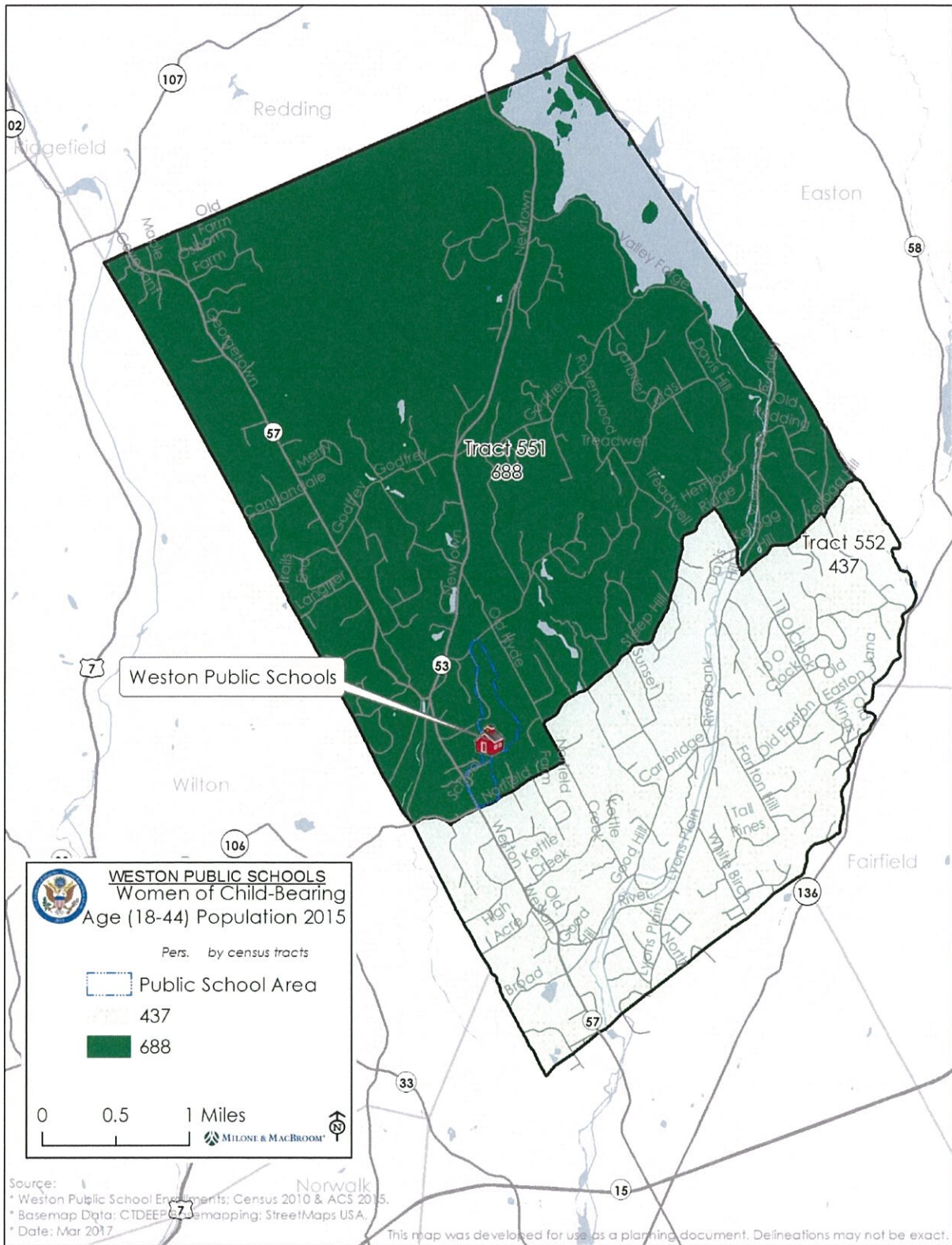
Map 2: Total Population Change, 2010 - 2015



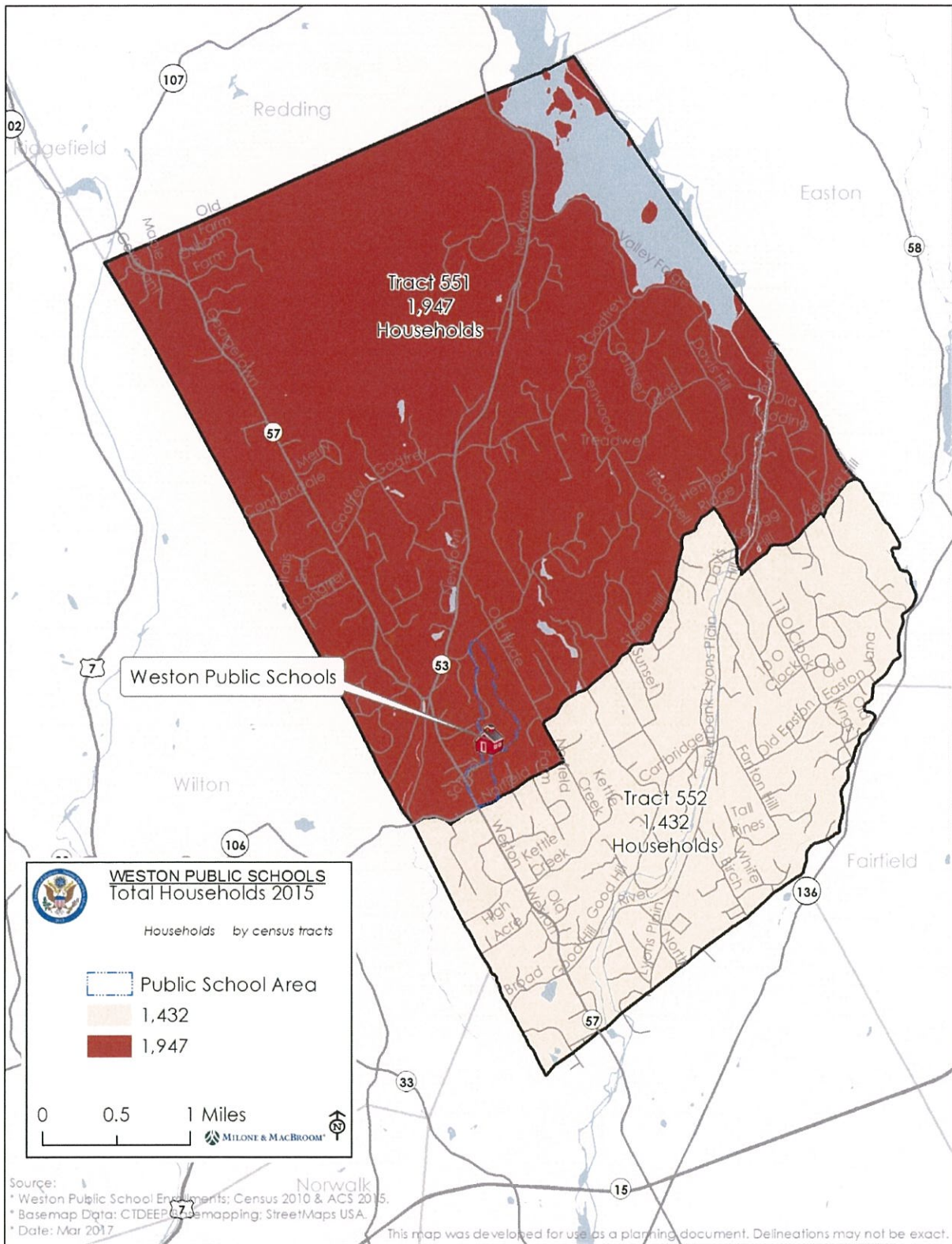
Map 3: Population Density



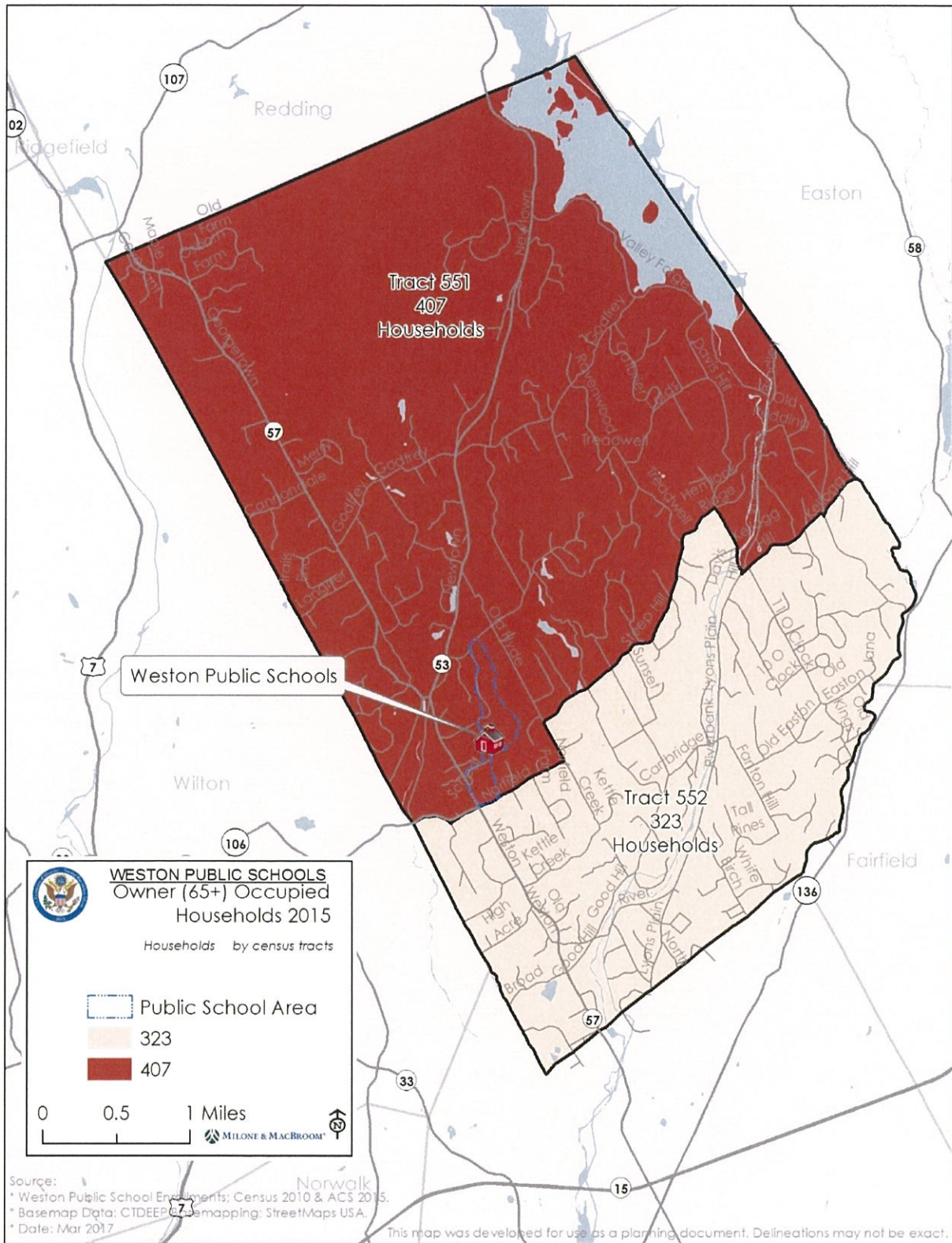
Map 4: School-Age Population



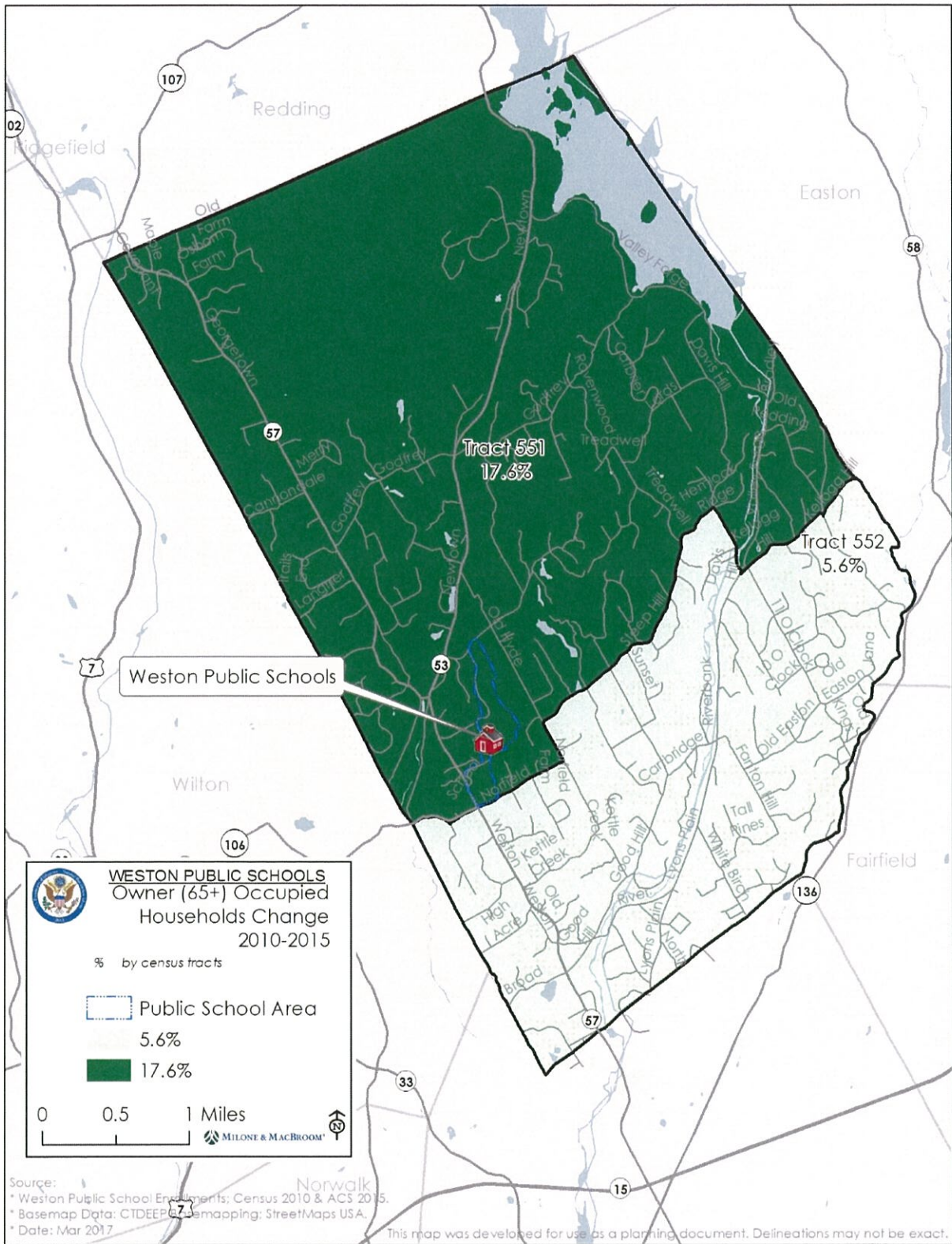
Map 5: Women of Child-Bearing Age (18-44) Population



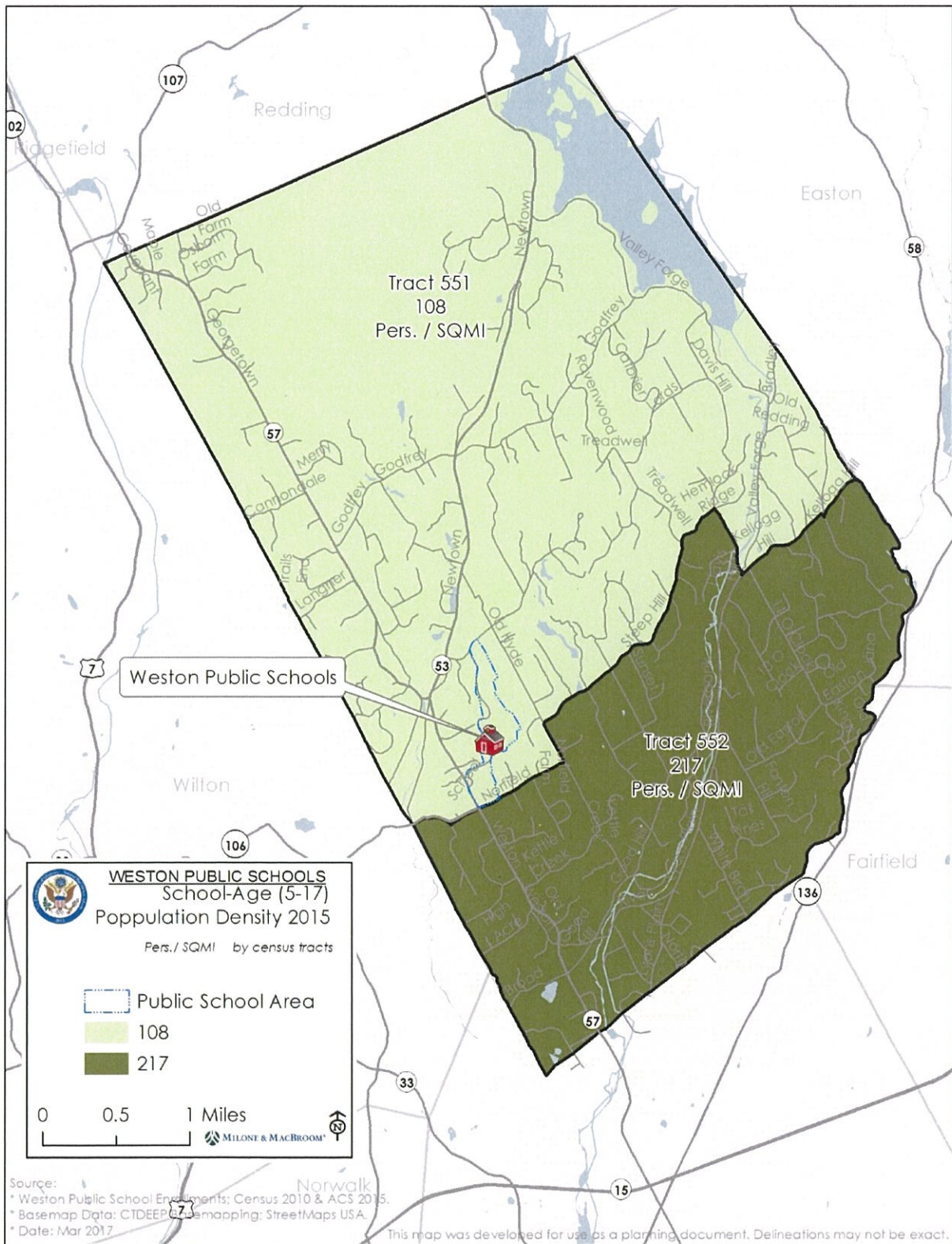
Map 6: Households



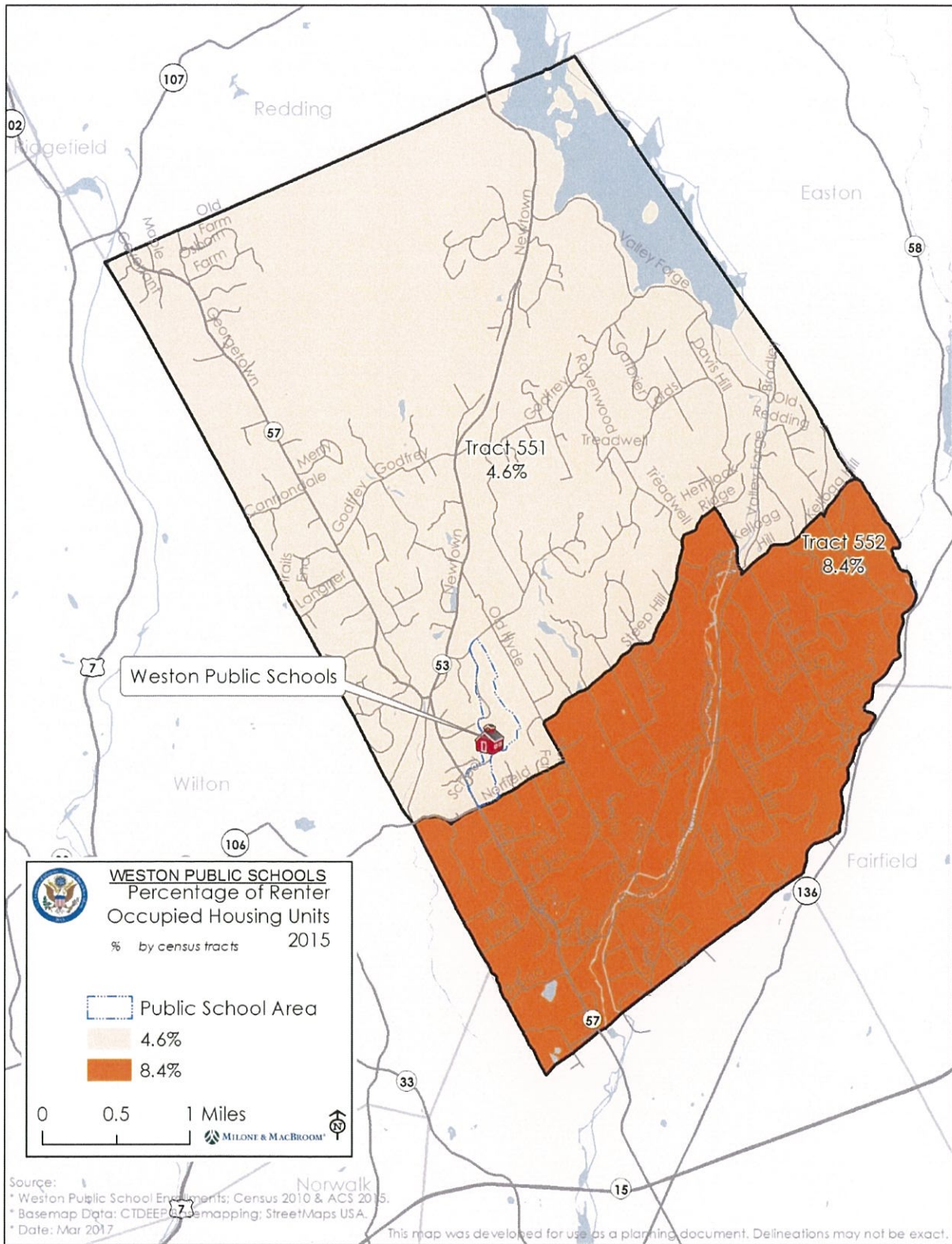
Map 7: Owner-Occupied (Age 65+) Households



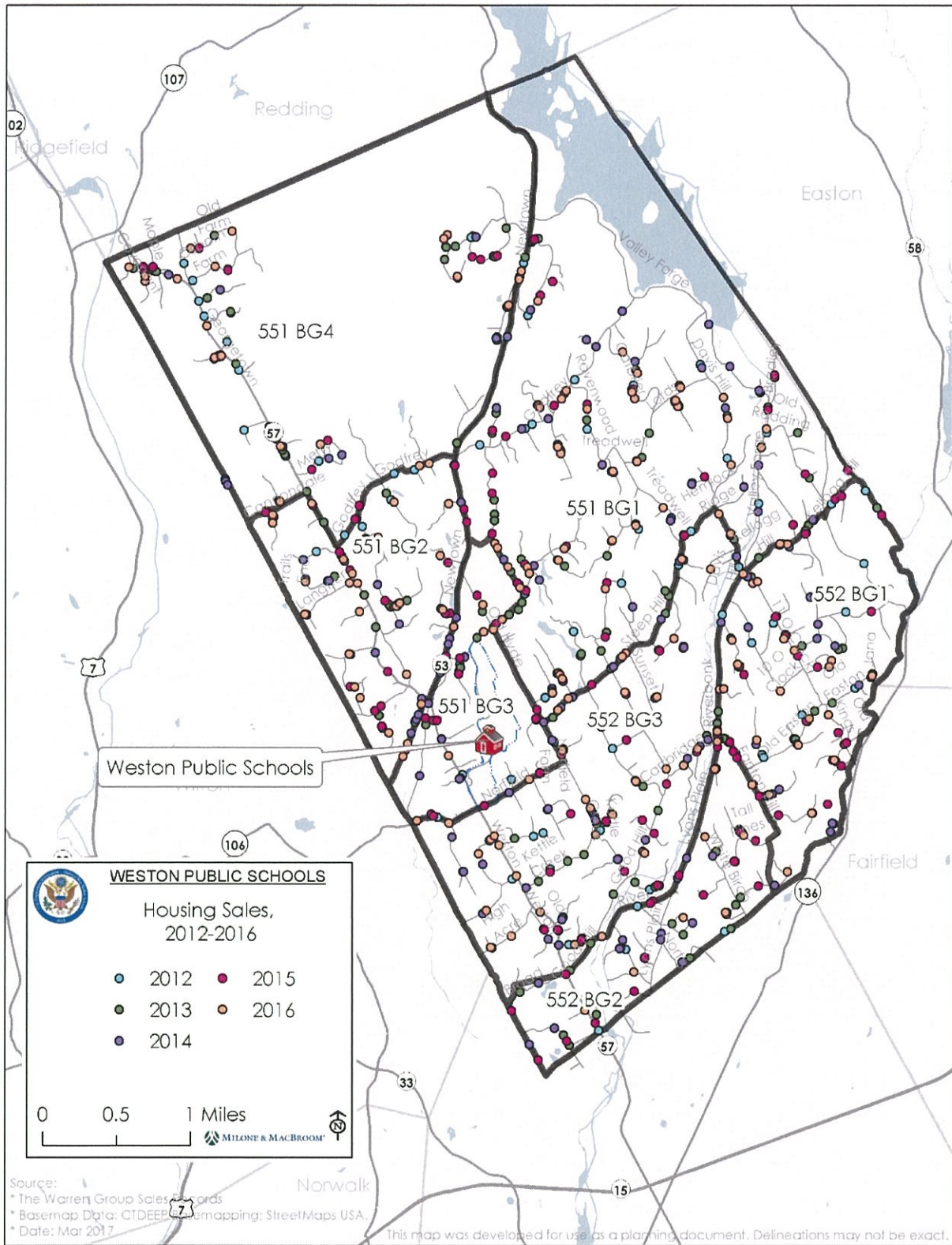
Map 8: Growth in Owner-Occupied (Age 65+) Households



Map 9: School-Age Population Density



Map 10: Rental Housing



Map 11: Home Sales, 2012 - 2016

CRAFTING A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR WESTON'S FUTURE PHASE I



A collaborative effort by:

Dr. Floyd Lapp, FAICP

Turner Miller Group

Ms. Tracy Kulikowski, Land Use Director

Dr. Chris Spaulding, PhD

Submitted to the Weston Boards of Selectmen and Finance
May 7, 2015

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This project was not initiated with any agenda or specific expectations in mind. It is simply a data gathering, information collecting exercise motivated by a request from the Boards of Selectmen and Finance to elucidate the factors affecting the projected decline in student enrollment and stagnant grand list growth. The authors are entirely agnostic with regard to proposed next steps if needed. Any further actions will be driven by the will of the town and its leadership. This planning study was intended to be a part of a larger project that will involve direct input and feedback from members of the community and leadership garnered from public meetings, discussion groups and extensive surveys. Any future guidance will be a result of this collaboration with input from as many stakeholders as feasible. To be clear, the intention of this report is to delineate what “could” be done and not necessarily what “should” be done to promote growth in Weston.

That said, Weston is possibly approaching a major crossroads. Like many geographically similar municipalities (see Appendix A), we are facing an aging population and a commensurate decline in school enrollment. In fact, from 1990 to 2010, Weston experienced a proportional halving of the key child bearing cohort (20-45 year olds) from 51% of the town’s population to 19%.

Following the national trends of post-World War II America, the Southwestern region of Connecticut, including Weston, experienced its greatest population growth between 1950-1970 (more than 130,000 persons and a 65% increase). However, since 1970, the region’s growth rates have significantly slowed adding only 30,500 persons or 9%, over a much greater time span. In 1950, Weston had a population of just under 2,000 that ballooned to slightly more than 7,500 by 1970 and to slightly more than 10,000 by 2000. However, in the 2000-2010 decade, Weston only increased by 142 persons and the projection for 2020 is even less robust, with projected growth of only 24 persons.

Half of the municipalities in Fairfield County are forecast to have population decreases by 2020 ranging from -0.7 to -9.3%. Similar to Weston's very modest growth of 0.2% projected to 2020 are: Trumbull (0.5%); Redding (1%); Shelton (1.1%); and Brookfield (1.3%). Additionally, our population is aging. Mirroring state trends, there has been a continued erosion of the 20-45 age cohorts within the population with several, not surprising, impacts. An aging population strongly correlates to declining school enrollments. According to Connecticut Economic Research Council (CERC), Weston’s school enrollment declined 5.4% over the five year period from 2007-2012. In addition, between 2015 and 2025 there is a projected enrollment decline of more than 500 students.

One trend that merits further analysis is a widening delay in initial student enrollment from first grade to latter elementary grades. Weston has traditionally seen a bump up of 10 to 25 students enrolling from kindergarten to first grade. This is possibly due to students being enrolled in programs that encompass kindergarten and the preference for completing the program. The delay may also be due to economic effects with parents holding off moving to other localities for as long as possible to build up financial reserves to enter our admittedly more expensive housing market. Recently, the trend has anecdotally broadened from first grade to latter grades, resulting

in potential mini bumps in enrollment in later grades.

Equally dramatic, since 2000, the trend that has persisted for the prior 50 years of urban decline (or slow growth) and major suburban development has been turned upside down. For example, in the Southwestern region, 75% of the population growth since 2000 has occurred in the urban centers of Stamford and Norwalk. Most of this growth has resulted from downtown residential multi-family redevelopment projects and economic development with nearby access to transit. By way of comparison, in the 1950-1970 period, Stamford and Norwalk's share of the region's growth was less than 50%.

According to the US Census Bureau, national migratory patterns do not favor New England and Connecticut specifically. Connecticut has seen a steady population outflow. In 2013 Connecticut ranked 45th in the nation for population growth and 44th in the nation for net migration.

A corresponding and possibly bigger concern is the lack of grand list growth (Appendix B). In order to keep mill rate increases manageable, we ideally rely on steady grand list growth. For the past 8 years, Grand List growth has been under 2% (Appendix C).

According to Weston Tax Assessor Ken Whitman, real estate assessments account for 94% of the grand list. Annual growth is predominantly the result of new or ongoing residential building permit work, including new construction, additions and renovations. Additionally, lot splits and subdivisions may also add the grand list. Business personal property is currently a mere 1% of the list. The majority of increases are generated by the electric and gas companies' infrastructure updates. Registered motor vehicles comprise about 5% of the grand list, and growth or shrinkage is a direct result of economic trends affecting the automobile industry. Since most of the vehicles are priced by the DMV, there is little control on the local level. Occasionally, external factors such as zoning changes, added amenities and services can have a causal effect on real estate values.

It should be noted that the State Legislature is currently considering several Bills that would have a significant impact on how property and motor vehicle taxes are determined and collected. Should some of these Bills become law, Weston would be significantly negatively impacted.

THE MILLENNIALS

The millennial age group, those born between 1980 and 2000, will define the near future housing market. According to a recent white paper by Cushman and Wakefield, "Facing the Millennial Wave", the majority of Millennials prefer to live in an urban environment, as demonstrated by the following facts:

- 62% of Millennials choose to live near shopping, restaurants, and offices;
- 2/3 of Millennials are renters;
- Young people aged 16-34 who have driver's licenses fell to 67% in 2011, its lowest level in 50 years. Out of those who drive, 23% drove fewer miles in 2009 vs. 2001.
- Millennials choose quality of life first, and job availability second. They prefer to live in the "cool cities", close to other highly educated people their age with a vibrant cultural scene.

- Millennials are getting married and having children later in life, pushing the average age to bear a first child from 27 to 34.

According to Jim Fagan, a Weston resident and Managing Director of Cushman and Wakefield, we may have lost a half of a generation of the housing market because of the above mentioned facts. However, some feel we may be on the verge of change. Millennials, as they age and have children, may opt for a suburban lifestyle. The big question is whether they will continue to opt for home locations that are close to shopping, restaurants and their work or whether the tide will turn once again towards a more rural environment.

Recent real estate trends in the Southwestern region indicate that the majority of home buyers in our area have at least one member of the household that work in the New York area. According to realtor Michelle Genovesi in the March/April edition of Westport Magazine, “If they can get closer to the city for close to the same price, they will choose a town closer.” In the same article, realtor Jillian Klaff “notes that current buyers are not looking for huge homes...buyers are looking for new or nearly new homes...that are as maintenance free as possible...the trend for smaller, easy to landscape and maintain parcels is gaining momentum. In the past, two-acre properties were desirable; huge parcels of land are not on most buyers’ must-have lists at the moment...Also, home buyers are continuing to seek out homes that are close to town or to the train. There is a perception that homes north of the Merritt Parkway are very far away from the ‘action’.” The article also notes that “there is a shortage of lower priced homes for end users and first time buyers.”

Although not evidenced based, anecdotally, it is possible that Weston was not the first choice of location for many residents. The reason Weston was so successful in attracting new residents in the building boom of the 1990’s and 2000’s was because home prices were relatively less expensive than our neighboring communities while mill rates were just a bit higher. Families were willing to move a little further “into the country” for a quality of life that included open space and a superior education.

Future trends with the Millennials are particularly hard to forecast. They represent a significant population bulge, similar to or greater than the “Boomer” bulge. However, due to economic impacts from “the Great Recession”, they have significantly delayed getting married and purchasing homes. The question as to whether they have simply delayed these activities or if this represents a fundamental behavior change is beyond the scope of this inquiry and will not likely be answered for some time.

WESTON’S INTREPLAY IN THE REGION

Not all communities are experiencing the same rate of decline as Weston. Communities along the I-95 corridor appear to be coming back quicker than those municipalities which are further removed from public transportation. This may be due to the desire to reduce commuting time, the desire to live closer to shops and retail, affordability, or the ability to rent vs. buy.

We need to realize that Weston will always be geographically challenged. We will never be able to offer our residents close proximity to a highway or a train station. This remoteness can also be a positive; it is one of the reasons people move to Weston: They want a rural environment.

DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

To provide the basis for a discussion of future development policy, a list of public, private and quasi-public sites were evaluated for their development potential. This analysis was based on a review of the 2010 Town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), the Weston Environmental Resource Manual, conversations with Land Use staff, and site visits. (Appendices D and E)

A. Non-Residential Development

Commercial development is most successful along major arteries. Given its geographical location, Weston is not, and will never be, a destination for shopping. Any commercial endeavor would likely have to rely on predominantly local residents or those visiting Weston for a specific purpose to be successful. This dependence can be hampered by the fact that the local town population is estimated to drop to about 7,000 people during normal weekday business hours.

Fairfield County is currently experiencing a 25% vacancy rate in our more urban areas, such as Stamford and Norwalk, and it is the unique enterprises in the more rural towns, such as destination farms, that have had some success. Therefore, we would caution that the Town would need to seriously consider the negative impact of commercial development (vacant buildings, additional public safety costs, traffic) prior to making significant changes (Appendix F).

The Town's existing local shopping center, commonly known as "Weston Center," is the only area in Town currently zoned for commercial development. Other commercial enterprises in Town, such as the Cobbs Mill Inn and Weston Gardens, for example, existed prior to the enactment of zoning regulations. Several residents also operate home based businesses out of their residences. The Planning & Zoning Commission explored the issue of additional commercial development at length during the preparation of the Town's 2010 Plan of Conservation and Development (PCOD). According to the which, 8% of residents surveyed in 2010 were in favor of additional development within Weston Center, 22% were in favor of development within or behind Weston Center and 31% were in favor of development within, behind and across the road from the Center. Few residents were in favor of non-residential development anywhere outside of this immediate vicinity of Weston Center, but land adjacent to Wilton and Redding were also considered. While the statistical accuracy of the survey may be questioned, it does provide the best basis for local views on commercial development.

It is important to note that "Weston Center" generates very little revenue for the Town. The current real estate taxes are approximately \$145,000 and the personal property taxes collected from all business are less than \$18,000 (see appendix G).

The construction of new commercial uses, such as retail or office uses on land in the vicinity of Weston Center or anywhere else in town would require a zoning map change and/or potentially changes to the text of the zoning regulations. The zoning map and the regulations can be changed, but only by the Planning & Zoning Commission after a public hearing process. The 6-acre Weston Center is zoned as Neighborhood Shopping Center District and it is the only site zoned that way in town. The rest of the town is zoned as a Two Acre Residential and Farming

District. The Neighborhood Shopping Center (NSC) District is intended to allow convenience goods and services that primarily serve the residents of Weston. The existing regulations limit the scale of new commercial development by requiring a minimum lot area of 5 acres, 300 feet of road frontage, 100 foot setbacks for the buildings, a maximum building size of 8,000 square feet and specific numbers of parking spaces.

“The Center of Town”

According to the Town Plan of Conservation of Development, residents only favored additional commercial development in the center of town, in the immediate vicinity of Weston Center. There are few small parcels of land in the area located along Weston Road (Route 57), from the intersection of Weston Road and Norfield Road north to School Rd., including the Town Hall complex that may be suitable for commercial development. The boundaries of the existing Neighborhood Shopping Center (NSC) District would need to be expanded by the Planning & Zoning Commission to include these properties before commercial development on these parcels of land could be considered. The existing NSC regulations would need to also be comprehensively reviewed to see if amendments are needed to allow appropriate commercial development, while providing adequate setbacks and screening from any adjacent residential development.

One parcel of town-owned land that could potentially be redeveloped into a commercial use is the former Jarvis Military Academy property, located at the corner of Norfield Road and Weston Road. The property consists of approximately two level acres of town-owned land. Currently, the Town’s Parks and Recreation Department is housed in a 2,200 sq.ft. historic building located on the property. The Neighborhood Shopping Center District would need to be expanded to rezone the Jarvis property. The Planning & Zoning Commission, with a proposed site plan, could also address changes needed to the regulations to facilitate appropriately scaled non-residential development on the site.

Given the history associated with this site, the Town’s POCD also recommends incorporating the historic home into any future development of the site. The Town, as landowner, is exempt from the zoning regulations, so another possibility for the reuse of this site is that the Town could lease the existing building for a commercial or professional office use if the building is no longer needed for municipal use. While the reuse of the Jarvis property may add valuable services to the town center, such as doctor’s or other professional offices, it would not yield a significant source of new tax revenue.

Directly across Norfield Road from the Jarvis property, is private property located at 48 Norfield Road. This is another important site in the Town center that would have to be rezoned to be incorporated into Neighborhood Shopping Center District before it could utilized for new commercial or office development. The site is currently listed for sale at \$1.1 million. It is a one acre site that contains a large historic home and outbuildings. This property abuts Town office buildings. The property is currently zoned for residential use and was previously utilized as a law office under the home occupation regulations. Beginning in 1950, before it was used as a law office, the property was utilized for a dentist’s office and the dentist lived in the house. The prior owner obtained variances from the Zoning Board of Appeals which allowed up the law office to have 5 employees who lived outside of the home, as long as one of the firm’s

employees lived in the house. That variance still applies to the property. However, a new business in the house must still be a home occupation, unless the Town were to own the property and lease it to a business as the Town is exempt from zoning. As with the Jarvis property, reuse of this property may add valuable services to the town center, such as doctor's or other professional offices, but it would not yield a significant source of new tax revenue.

The existing 6-acre Weston Center site is largely built out with several commercial buildings and parking areas. There was support for additional development or redevelopment of this site during the preparation of the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), and there may be some room for minor building expansion around the periphery of this site. However, it would be extremely difficult for any building expansion project to comply with the current building setback and parking space requirements. Weston Center already has fewer parking spaces than zoning regulations require for the businesses currently operating there. While potentially offering additional amenities, this would not be a large new tax revenue source.

The owner of Weston Center also owns an additional 7 acres immediately to the west of the Center which is currently in the Two –Acre Residential and Farming District. The vacant parcel contains approximately 7 acres of land and meets the minimum, 5-acre lot area for permitted uses in the Neighborhood Shopping Center District, if the parcel were to be rezoned. Permitted principal uses include retail and personal service businesses, banks, professional offices, sit-down restaurants and automotive service stations.

Based on the existing requirements of the NSC District, this site could support approximately 32,600 square feet of total site development (assuming 15% total site coverage) which could accommodate the maximum 8,000 square foot building either as an 8,000 square foot single-story building or as a two-story building with a 4,000 square foot footprint. The remaining total site development would include site access drives, parking areas and sidewalks. This would leave the remaining four acres of the site as open space and would allow an area to buffer uses from surrounding properties and to blend any new development into the landscape. Based upon a discussion with the agent for the owner, there may be an opportunity for professional offices. The Planning & Zoning Commission, with a proposed site plan, could also address changes needed to the regulations to facilitate more commercial space or a greater mix of uses on the site that is still appropriately scaled given the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

The Town owned property from the Onion Barn to the Bus Garage is approximately 5-6 acres in size. However, development options are constrained by factors such as the presence of the school bus depot, athletic fields, and existing traffic conditions along Route 57. Septic systems for Hulbutt Elementary School also are located under the ball fields, further reducing the opportunity for expansion. While the POCD expressed that this may be the best opportunity for additional non-residential development within the town center, there are concerns with respect to safety given the proximity of the site to the school campus. In addition to these security concerns, the POCD also noted that there are significant issues that required detailed study related to future development of this area.

Should Hurlbutt Elementary School not be needed to house students, the Town would have the flexibility to consider other options for use, including but not limited to commercial development, a Community Center, Town Green, Senior or alternative housing, etc.

In addition to considering zoning map changes to expand the existing Neighborhood Shopping Center or text amendments to increase flexibility in the existing NSC District, the Planning & Zoning Commission could look at the creation of a mixed-use "Village District" to address development of all land in the town center. A Village District is a zoning tool permitted by state statute that permits the adoption of flexible aesthetic or design standards to encourage infill development that is consistent with the Town's character and can yield additional zoning flexibility. A privately initiated proposal for a Village District for 115 acres in the center of Town including Weston Center, the Town and Library facilities and neighboring houses and church buildings generated a great deal of discussion during the preparation of the POCD, but did not garner enough public support to be adopted at that time.

Property abutting the Redding and Wilton borders

The potential redevelopment of the Georgetown Wire Mill property into a mixed-use community in Redding, including the potential for a train station along the branch line may make the Georgetown area close to the intersection of Route 57 and Route 107, attractive for development in the future. However, after many attempts by several developers to get this project off the ground, the Wire Mill property is in tax foreclosure.

The 85-acre town owned property known as Fromson-Strassler and the 97-acre privately owned Weston Farms property in Georgetown that abut Wilton and Redding were evaluated as potential sites for new commercial or office development. During the information gathering for the POCD, the community discussed the development of a portion of the Fromson-Strassler property for an office complex or other non-residential uses, and the potential revenue if the Town were to enter into a long term ground lease, at length. The POCD stressed that additional, substantial analysis was needed by a committee. However, commercial realtors caution that the Fairfield County office and retail markets have softened substantially since the POCD was written and that commercial developers are looking for property that directly abut major roads. Neither the Fromson Strassler property nor the Weston Farms property have direct frontage along a major arterial road. The site preparation costs needed to provide access and utilities to these "inland" properties, along with environmentally sensitive areas on both, makes non-residential development on these properties even more difficult in an already difficult regional real estate market at this time.

B. Residential Development

Town-owned as well as large lot privately owned properties were considered (Appendix H). Based on the current zoning regulations, the minimum lot area for new homes is 2 acres. The mathematical analysis below represents a maximum build out of the sites based on the existing zoning and subdivision requirements and assumes a generally accepted formula that a minimum 15% of each site is utilized for infrastructure and roads. The estimated total number of new homes that could be built, is just that, an estimate for planning purposes only. Construction on these sites could be limited by specific site conditions such as wetlands, rock outcrops, streams, steep slopes and flood plains as well as road design standards contained in the subdivision regulations.

1. Major Public Sites

Fromson-Strassler Property

As discussed above, approximately 85 acres of publically-owned, undeveloped land lies in the northwest corner of the Town, on the Wilton town line. Approximately 60 acres of this land is encumbered with wetlands, watercourses, shallow bedrock, steep slopes, and rock outcroppings. The best opportunity for development is an area of 10 acres on the lower sections at the end of Upper Parish Road. Assuming that approximately an unconstrained 25 acres of this site remains buildable, it is anticipated that this site could yield up to 10 new single family lots. The Conservation Commission did approve an 8 home layout for this property in the late 1990's.

Moore Property

The Town owns approximately 36 acres of land on Lords Highway East. While the property is generally flat and not constrained by environmental conditions, the Town's deed to this property restricts sale to a third party for residential and/ or commercial development. This restriction is binding on the town and runs with the land. The property could be used for municipal functions, which could include construction of recreational uses, office uses or publically-owned housing. The land could also possibly be leased by the Town to a third party but it is uncommon for a private developer to be willing to make a private investment in land when he/she would not own nor control for the life of the investment. These deed restrictions should be further discussed with town counsel.

Several other Town owned sites were considered, but for a variety of reasons were deemed to be unsuitable for further development. These sites were as follows:

Bisceglie Park – 55 acres on Newtown Turnpike. This property is the location of youth baseball fields, a fitness trail and the town's swimming hole. Most of the property is across the West Branch of the Saugatuck and in its natural state contains wetlands and relatively steep slopes.

Devil's Glen – The property is on the east side of town between Valley Forge and Davis Hill. It is a natural gorge formed by the Saugatuck River below the Senior Dam and is rugged terrain. The property is generally regarded as an open space conservation area.

Lachat Property – This 40 acre property on Godfrey Road West is currently being revitalized as a farm with community gardens and a restored historic farm house for educational programs. The property is co-owned with the Nature Conservancy and development is limited by deed restrictions.

Keane Park – Located on River Road in lower Weston, this 8 acres "pocket" park has children's swings and a play area along banks of the Saugatuck River. It is a low lying area in the flood plain of the river

Morehouse Farm Park - This 30 acre property located off Newtown Turnpike at Valley Forge Road, near the Redding town line, contains playing fields on the upper portion of the property and the historic Morehouse family home last owned by descendant Minerva Heddy on the lower portion. This property is in a sensitive watershed area.

2. Major Private Sites

Weston Farms Property

This property contains approximately 97 acres off Osborne Farm Road in the Georgetown area of the town, south of the Meadow Ridge Retirement Community. It contains a vacant 75 acre parcel and several undeveloped 2-acre lots in an approved subdivision. The land is currently on the market and the realtor has advertised that bids to purchase the property are due on May 12, 2015. This land could be potentially be subdivided into a maximum of 41, two-acre single family lots.

The development of this property would require subdivision approval by the Planning & Zoning Commission. The property could provide an opportunity for a developer to propose more flexible zoning techniques to the Commission, such as an open space residential development. Open space residential development regulations permits the lot sizes to be reduced so that homes can be arranged to fit or clustered on a portion of the property, while a setting high standards for the quantity, quality and configuration of the protected open space. Open space residential developments encourage a creative design process and high-quality development on smaller lots, while minimizing a development's impact on the natural features of the land. High-quality housing on smaller lots may be very attractive option for seniors who wish to stay in the community, but no longer want a 2-acre lot to maintain.

Belknap Property

This property contains approximately 42 acres between Wampum Hill Road and Cindy Lane. It borders property held by the Aspetuck Land Trust. This land could be subdivided into a maximum of 17, two-acre single family lots, but this total would likely be less due to large wetland areas and topographical conditions that may make road construction on this site difficult.

Tannery Lane Subdivision

The Tannery Lane Subdivision, approved by the Planning & Zoning Commission in 2004, contains a lot that is 26 acres in size. This lot is west of the Saugatuck River, off of Banks Drive and Smith Ridge Road. Currently approved as a single house lot, it has recently been sold. This land could be potentially re-subdivided into a maximum of 11, two-acre single family lots if road access could be provided onto Lyons Plain Road. This total would also likely be reduced due to the floodplain of the Saugatuck River on the property.

Weston Woods

This 22 acres property off Newtown Turnpike, south of the Singing Oaks Subdivision, was subdivided into residential lots and a 6-acre museum property for the Weston Woods Institute in 2009. The land is currently developed with several residential buildings as well buildings utilized by the Institute. The owner of this land is considering development of senior housing and is researching potential changes to the zoning regulations as the current regulations do not have any specific provisions for senior, or age-restricted housing. This land could be subdivided into a maximum of six, two-acre single family lots.

Assuming that the development of all of these sites occurs, yielding 85 new homes, and an average home price of \$1,000,000, we could expect total grand list growth of \$59,500,000, a 2.6% increase.

With regard to integrating this report with the POCD, we acknowledge that the POCD projected that there were between 200 and 500 lots (including the 85 referenced in this report) potentially available to develop. However, given that the lots have not been developed thus far, it may be fair to assume many are not ideal for development, because of topographic, access or other challenges, or that the property owners have no interest in subdividing their property.

CONCLUSIONS

This project originated as a confluence of two separate, but related factors. Most recently, a request by the Board of Finance to hire a planner to help assess whether there any options to increase school enrollment. More distally, the 2010 Town Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) generated by the Planning and Zoning board made the recommendation to hire a planner to examine issues pertaining to alternative housing and village district development.

The essential question we must ask ourselves is whether it is time to revisit our planning and zoning regulations to allow for more expansion and growth, which may have a positive impact on school enrollment and grand list growth. If we can nudge our planning and zoning priorities in such a way as to encourage growth and maintain our open space and small town feel, what would be the positive (or negative) impact on grand list growth, home sales and school enrollment?

1. Non-residential Development

Given the minimal land zoned for non-residential development, the opportunities under the existing zoning to supplement the town's tax base with commercial development are nearly nonexistent. If the residents of the town have an interest in increasing non-residential development, changes to the zoning regulations could be considered. This includes map changes to permit non-residential development in new locations, review of the permitted non-residential uses and consideration of lower lot requirements for certain lower intensity uses.

Currently, all commercial activity, including home occupations, represents approximately one percent of the grand list. Given that non-residential development is not likely to be a significant direct source of grand list growth, attention should focus on non-residential development that provide amenities that would make the town more attractive to new and current residents. Could these types of services make Weston a more appealing place to move, and act as a significant factor in convincing residents to stay long term? We have not been able to metrically analyze whether additional amenities, such as neighborhood scale retail development, would have an impact on home sales.

2. Residential Development

Although Weston may be "geographically challenged", that doesn't't preclude searching for ways to increase our grand list or to attract home buyers. There may be ways to consider modifications to the scarce number of available development sites to provide more potential for housing growth while striving to maintain the open space /conservation legacy that has been a

hallmark of Weston's image. Innovative site planning and zoning techniques can provide the best of both.

Under the existing residential zoning, a full build out of the sites discussed above would yield a maximum total of approximately 85 single family homes. This number of potential housing units, is well above any plans or proposals that the array of private developers are currently considering. Large lot, single family homes will provide some tax revenue to the town, but given the time span that it will take to build, the tax impact will hardly be noticeable. Based on 2012 demographic data from CERC and the Connecticut Department of Education, the 85 homes would yield approximately 0.75 public school children per single family dwelling or a total of 63 public school children. These estimates may be somewhat low if the housing skews more toward new families. The projected impact on the more than 500 public school enrollment decline by 2025 would be minimal.

Single family homes on large lots tend to be less affordable to young families. Smaller lot, single family development, which will yield more affordable, starter homes will tend to attract families with school aged children. This could be accomplished through increasing the permitted density within certain areas of the town with more limited environmental constraints, along major roads or, to a lesser degree, through the creation of cluster, or conservation cluster design subdivision regulations. Conservation cluster subdivisions preserve the total number of residential units permitted by existing zoning but allow dwellings to be clustered on smaller lots to allow for the permanent conservation of environmental features and open space. Given the sensitive environmental nature of vacant land, and the strong desire to maintain the town's bucolic character, conservation cluster subdivisions would be an ideal way to allow for responsible development which reflects environmental land constraints. These types of alternative housing developments may induce new families to move in, and empty-nest families to remain in town.

New traditional development cannot be the sole answer to declining school enrollment and stagnant Grand List growth. Even if all 85 single family homes, permissible under existing zoning, were developed by 2025 the population would be still only increase slightly more than the total population growth from 2000 projected to 2020, of roughly 166 persons.

The development of zoning for age-restricted (typically 55+), or senior housing can be undertaken. These types of developments are sometimes known as "Planned Adult Communities", or PACs. They can consist of small detached dwellings (on one-half to one-quarter acre lots) or townhouses (often owned in condominium) and typically, zoning regulations lay out a range of recreation and other amenities (community center, walking paths, etc.) to be provided on site to be controlled by a Home Owners Association. A hybrid could also be developed whereby only a percentage of the total housing constructed would be age-restricted with the balance intended for families. This type of development promotes housing choice and even very modest housing turnover should aging households in town decide to move.

NEXT STEPS, PHASE II

1. Form a committee to explore the potential desire of current and future residents:
 - A. This committee should conduct town meetings to discuss report, gain feedback from all stakeholders and modify/fine-tune next steps
 - B. Conduct focus groups among key demographic groups and representative townsmen to gauge desirability of options and to collect data in order to craft survey questions. Key initial groups will be:
 - i. Representative Townsmen
 - ii. Individuals who have recently moved into town
 - iii. Real estate professionals who work in area
 - iv. Parents of High-School seniors and parents of recent High-School graduates
 - C. Conduct survey market research to better understand:
 - i. Why people may be moving to Weston?
 - ii. Why people chose to leave or stay in Weston?
 - iii. What amenities are missing and desired in Weston?
 - iv. Desirability of commercial expansion around town center.
 - v. Feelings/concerns around senior/cluster/alternative housing
 - D. Develop a detailed marketing plan (potentially Phase III).
2. Land Use staff should survey the neighboring communities to get a sense of different zoning districts and their effectiveness in increasing tax revenue.
3. Town Officials should reach out to all large non-developed private properties; efforts should be made to explore the intentions of the owners/developers
4. The Board of Selectmen should collaborate with the Planning and Zoning Commission to determine the interest and feasibility of modifying the existing zoning regulations to promote the potential for housing and commercial changes.
5. Conversations should be held with the Norwalk Transit District to determine the feasibility of bus service.
6. A planning consultant should be considered to tie together all initiatives that may impact "Town Center."