

Population Projections for the Sussex Wantage Area

Background

Several discussions about the possibility of consolidating Wantage and Sussex have touched on the issue of population growth. One speaker at a consolidation commission forum warned against becoming a big town. Therefore, it is worth examining the likely scenario for growth of the two communities, or of a consolidated community.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to supply the Joint Consolidation Study Commission of Wantage Township and Sussex Borough, and the public who will study the work of the Commission, with a simple-to-understand summary of population projections prepared by other parties. The summary is intended to provide forecasts of population for the foreseeable future. It is not intended to be a rigorous examination of the literature on the subject. Nor is it intended to be a demographic population projection study in its own right. Its practical and utilitarian purpose is to supply basic information to illustrate the likely total population in a potentially consolidated community in the near future based on work performed by others.

Assumptions

This report assumes that the population of the area will be dictated by present zoning, regional location, regional development, geography, current regional migration behaviors and transportation limitations that now exist. It does not assume that a consolidation of the two municipalities will greatly affect the population or demographics of the area.

Likewise, it does not assume that greater growth will occur as the result of the new Growth Share regulations of the Council on Affordable Housing. If growth occurs, it will have to include low- and moderate-income housing as an element of the growth. If growth does not occur, the parties of the newly consolidated municipality will be required to meet only prior obligations.

Data Sources:

The U.S. Census Bureau Census 2000 is the basis for almost all population projections and analyses. This is the case here. The two population projections discussed in this report were created using Census 2000 data.

The Sussex County Division of Planning is responsible for preparing a County-wide master plan of which population forecasts for municipalities in the County is a significant part. The Division utilizes U.S. Census Bureau decennial census data to produce these population projections, supplemented by data from other sources such as the State government and interim work performed by the Census Bureau.

School districts throughout New Jersey are responsible for preparing projections of school-age populations to adequately prepare themselves for incoming grades. This is true of the Highpoint Regional High School District, of which the Sussex Wantage Regional School District is a part. Most recently, Statistical Forecasting, LLC prepared a report entitled, "Demographic

Study for the High Point Regional School District," dated December 2006 and prepared specifically by Richard S. Grip, Ed.D.

How did the municipalities appear in 2000?
A snapshot from the 2000 decennial census

Sussex

The 2000 Census provides the following information on Sussex Borough regarding population, housing and race. (Note that the vacancy rate is calculated from the Bureau of Census supplied data.)

Population	
Total Population	2145
Male	1025
Female	1120
Under Age 5 years	133
5 years to 19 Years	434
20 Years to 64 years	1305
65 years and over	273
Median Age	36.1
Housing	
In households	2135
In group quarters	10
Occupied housing units	903
Vacant housing units	58
Vacancy Rate (calculated)	6.04%
Total housing units	961
Race	
White	2066
African American	24
Asian	26
Other	29
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census	

Wantage

The 2000 Census provides the following information on the Township of Wantage regarding population, housing and race. (Note that the vacancy rate is calculated from the Bureau of Census supplied data.)

Population	Wantage
Total Population	10387
Male	5113
Female	5274
Under Age 5 years	701
5 years to 19 Years	2614
20 Years to 64 years	6156
65 years and over	916
Median Age	36.3
Housing	
In households	10382
In group quarters	5
Occupied housing units	3441
Vacant housing units	222
Vacancy Rate (calculated)	6.06%
Total housing units	3663
Race	
White	10086
African American	67
Asian	70
Other	164
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census	

1930 to 2000 Total Population Census Figures

The table on the next page reviews population change in the two municipalities between 1930 and 2000.

Between 1950 and 1990, Wantage has seen population increases of at least 30% every 10 years. Between 1990 and 2000 growth slowed to about 9.5%.

Between 1960 and 1980, the Borough's population grew at nearly a similar pace to that of the Township. 1980 was the Borough's peak population year. However, between 1980 and 2000, Sussex Borough has seen losses of 273 or 11.3% of the 1980 population of 2418.

While Wantage has continued to grow due to its vast amount of undeveloped land, Sussex Borough's highest recorded population was in 1980. So far, 2000 has been the peak year for population for the Township. It is unlikely that 2000 will remain the peak year for population for Wantage.

Year	Wantage			Sussex		
	Population	Change	Change %	Population	Change	Change %
1930	2075			1415		
1940	2376	301	14.51%	1478	63	4.45%
1950	2543	167	7.03%	1541	63	4.26%
1960	3308	765	30.08%	1656	115	7.46%
1970	4329	1021	30.86%	2038	382	23.07%
1980	7268	2939	67.89%	2418	380	18.65%
1990	9487	2219	30.53%	2201	-217	-8.97%
2000	10387	900	9.49%	2145	-56	-2.54%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

2010 and 2020 Population

Population projections

The Sussex County Division of Planning has issued population projections for all 24 of the municipalities in the County, for 2010 and 2020. Here is an extracted portion of the projections for the County, the Borough and the Township:

	2000 Census	Projected			2010 Relative Position	Projected			2020 Relative Position
		2010 Pop.	2000-2010			2020 Pop.	2010-2020		
			Change	%Change			Change	Change	
Sussex County	144166	161881	17715	12.29%	178635	16754	10.35%		
Sussex Boro	2145	2358	213	9.93%	2500	142	6.02%	20th	
Wantage Twp	10387	11587	1200	11.55%	12500	913	7.88%	4th	
Combined	12532	13945	1413	11.28%	15000	1055	7.57%	4th	

Statistical Forecasting, LLC's report for the high school also provides population projections for this period. Their forecasts are attributed to the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, Inc. (2005), which are provided in 5-year intervals in the Statistical Forecasting Report. For purposes of simplicity and clarity, the estimates for 2005 and 2015 are not shown.

	2000 Census	Projected			Projected		
		2010 Population	2000-2010		2020 Population	2010-2020	
			Change	Change		Change	Change
Sussex Borough	2145	2360	215	10.02%	2500	142	6.02%
Wantage Twp	10387	11590	1203	11.58%	12500	913	7.88%
Combined	12532	13950	1418	11.32%	15000	1055	7.56%

In these two projections, the only differences are:

- The County projects two (2) fewer people in Sussex Borough in 2010.
- The County projects three (3) fewer people in Wantage Township in 2010.

Other conclusions that can be gained from observing the above tables are:

- The projections for total populations in 2020 are identical for both the Sussex County Division of Planning and the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority.

- In 2020, Wantage alone has 7.0% of the County's population, down from 7.2% in 2000. However, a consolidated municipality in 2020 would have 8.4% of the County's population; Sussex Borough standing alone in 2020 has only 1.4% of the County's population.
- In terms of growth rates, there is a slight deviation between the municipalities during the 2000-2010 period and the 2010-2020 period. Sussex is about 1.5% to 1.8% behind Wantage in growth rate.
- Interestingly, the combined population does not affect the relative standing of Wantage in the County.
 - With or without Sussex Borough, Wantage ranks as the 4th largest municipality in Sussex County for the years 2000, 2010 (projected) and 2020 (projected).
 - Hardyston is a strong growth municipality rising from 7th largest in 2000 to 5th largest in 2020. A consolidated municipality of Sussex and Wantage would be almost 50% larger than Hardyston in the year 2020. Without the consolidation, Wantage would only be 2400 residents larger or 23.7% in 2020.
 - In 2020, Hopatcong is forecast to have a population of 16,800. It retains its rank as the 3rd largest municipality behind Vernon and Sparta. With a combined Wantage and Sussex, Hopatcong is only 1800 people or 12% larger than the potentially fourth largest municipality, but 4300 larger than a stand alone Wantage.
- In the County Division of Planning forecasts, the growth rates for both the Borough and the Township lag behind the projections for the County as a whole. This is primarily due to anticipated growth in the eastern and southern parts of the county occurring at a somewhat faster rate than the northern and western portions of the County. This is consistent with prior development patterns.

Conclusions

1. The County Division of Planning, the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority and the consulting firm, Statistical Forecasting, LLC, concur on the population projections for 2020 for the two municipalities. Indeed, school population forecasting for the High Point Regional School District relies on these projections to plan future school populations.
2. Growth in these municipalities lags behind overall County growth during the period.
3. Average projected annual population increases hover around the 1% or less for both municipalities, though Wantage is slightly higher than Sussex.
4. The current projections are based on current conditions. Unexpected events or extraneous factors could affect these projections. Such unlikely or unexpected events or factors could include major transportation improvements, development of regional job centers, trans-border events in New York State, or the discovery / development of major new water sources. Currently, neither these nor other events that could affect population change are anticipated, likely, or probable.
5. Population growth over the next 12 years is not likely to be a significant factor affecting the municipalities, unless one or more extraneous factors not previously considered by planners occurs.