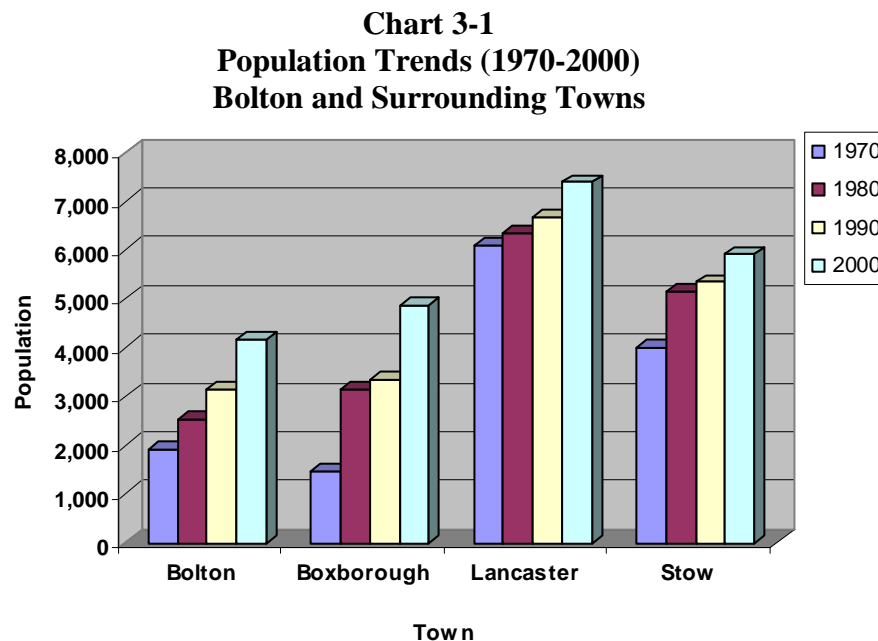


3. RECENT GROWTH

This Chapter provides an overview of Bolton's land use history and projected future use, specifically population and housing changes. Historically, Bolton's land use policy simply focused on single use zoning, but as the town's development and build-out analyses demonstrate the consequence of such zoning, more creative and comprehensive strategies are called for. These consequences include exhausted public services, increased residential taxes, and depletion of open space. Recent development trends include the use of the State 40B statute, which allows increased density of development on a given site. Though the statute was introduced in 1969, 40B projects were not included in the State build-out study of 2000. Without new and comprehensive land use strategies, future growth may eventually overwhelm Bolton and the town will lose much of the rural character, agricultural heritage and small-town feel.

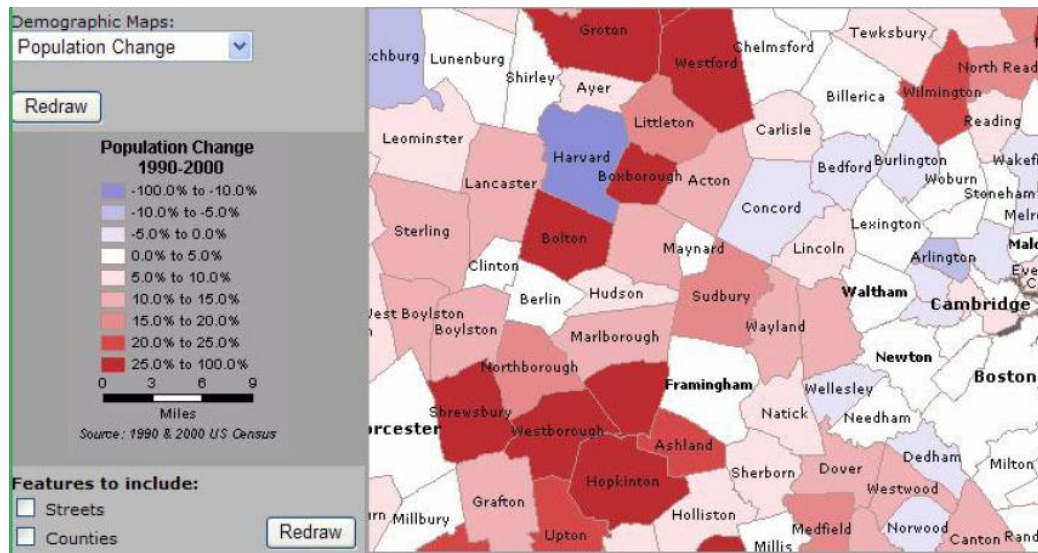
3.1 Past Population Changes

Chart 3-1 compares Bolton's population trends to those of the other towns in the region: Boxborough, Lancaster and Stow. In the past decade, Bolton's population has grown significantly faster than surrounding communities and the region in general (see **Figure 3-1**). The 2000 population in Bolton was 4,148, an increase of 117% since 1970. During the same time, other towns in the area, such as Lancaster and Stow grew by only 21 percent and 48 percent, respectively. The only other town in the immediate area that experienced faster population trends is Boxborough, which saw an increase of 235 percent. Aside from its appeal and location, Bolton's population was smaller than the surrounding towns to begin with and had a significant amount of unbuilt land on which to grow. Though Bolton has grown, the town is still smaller than its neighbors.



Source: U.S. Census, 1970-2000.

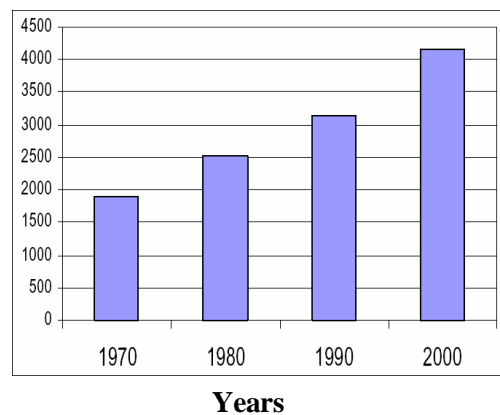
Figure 3-1
Regional Population Growth
Boston and Western Suburbs



Source: <http://www.massstats.com/>

Bolton's Growth Rate

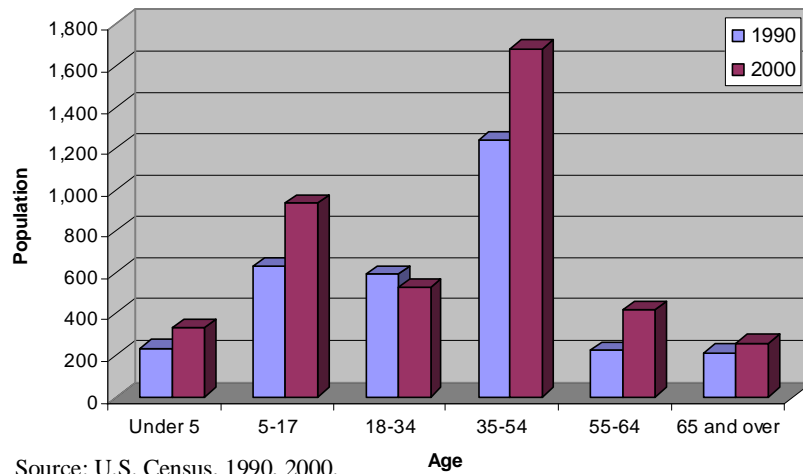
Chart 3-1 also shows the Town of Bolton's population growth by decade since 1970; an enlarged graphic is provided at right. Bolton's growth rate was steady through the 1970s and 1980s, (approximately 28%) but accelerated during the 1990s. In each of the first two decades, the town's population grew by approximately 600 people. During the 1990s, the population increased by 1,014 people, or 32 percent. The last decade accounts for just over 45 percent of the population growth that occurred in these three decades.



This population growth and pressure has had, and will continue to have, an impact on land use patterns. Increases in population inevitably result in more open land being converted to subdivisions and, in general, leads to more land being used for commercial uses and other services to support the increase in population. While Bolton has taken some steps to mitigate the impacts of this population increase, additional and more comprehensive strategies will be needed to address these issues through the future.

While the population of Bolton is increasing, this change affects a few age groups in particular. As shown in **Chart 3-2**, the fastest growing segments of the population are in the 5 to 17, 35 to 54, and 55 to 64 age groups who saw 48 percent, 36 percent, and 87 percent increases, respectively, between 1990 and 2000. These persons accounted for 93 percent of the total population growth during this period. An interesting point to note is the subsequent decrease in the 18 to 34 population (11% or 66 people). This is the age group that places little or no burden on Bolton's school system and they are underrepresented in the community.

Chart 3-2
Population by Age (1990 and 2000)
Bolton

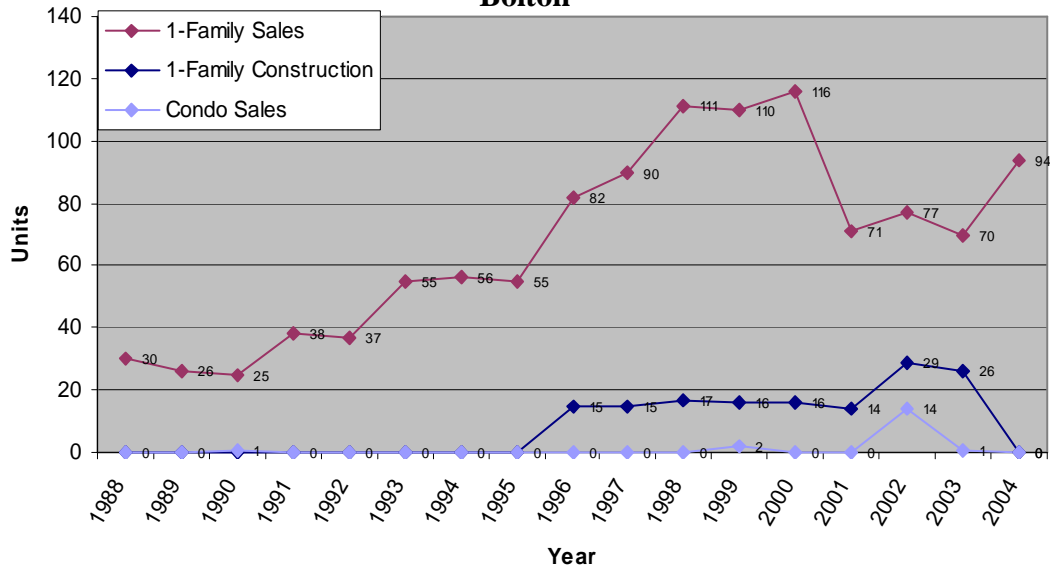


The key age groups show that established families and seniors are moving into town, but young adults are moving out. Some reasons for the latter trend are that young adults leave home for college and subsequently settle elsewhere, and first-time home buyers are generally unable to afford Bolton homes. These trends have a significant impact on Bolton. For example, growth in the under 5 and 5 to 17 age groups indicates that the schools have been, or will soon be, required to accommodate an increasing number of students. Furthermore, this growth pattern dictates a pattern of housing demand that is sacrificing Bolton's open space. Families with children, the predominant population group moving to Bolton, are more likely to look for single-family homes. However, seniors and young adults have different housing needs. Seniors will require a range of housing options, such as assisted living centers, apartments and smaller homes to fit their lifestyles and the young adult population typically demands smaller, denser housing, such as apartments and townhouses.

Residential development in Bolton between 1985 and 1999 occurred at an average rate of 46 acres per year. Developed land in Bolton, which includes all industrial, commercial, and residential land use, increased from 8.5 percent of the town's total land in 1971 to 18 percent in 1999. Nearly all of this was residential development. As shown in **Chart 3-3**, the number of housing units sold in Bolton took a sharp dive in 2001, at a time when prices were continuing to increase. After three years of consistent housing sales, the number of units sold has risen again in 2004. In 2002, the town instituted a Rate of Development Bylaw to limit the number of building permits issued to 37 per year. While this is a common tool used by towns, the Rate of Development bylaw is a temporary measure, and, per state requirements, it will be revoked when the Master Plan is completed.

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Chart 3-3
Number of Homes Sold and Constructed (1988-2004)
Bolton

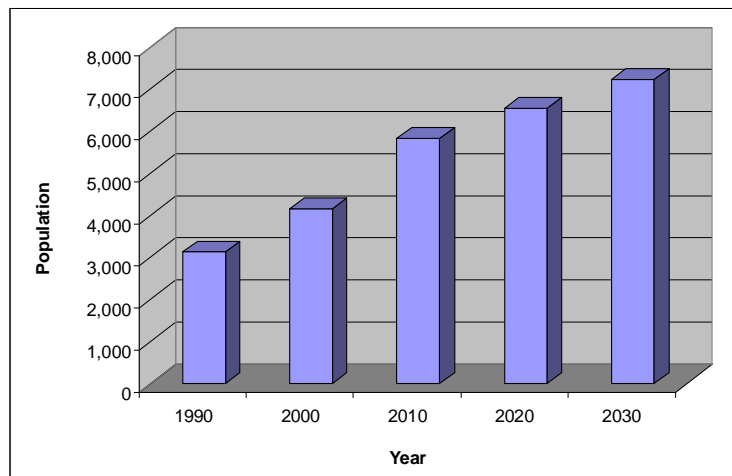


Source: The Warren Group, May 12, 2005

3.2 Projected Population Changes

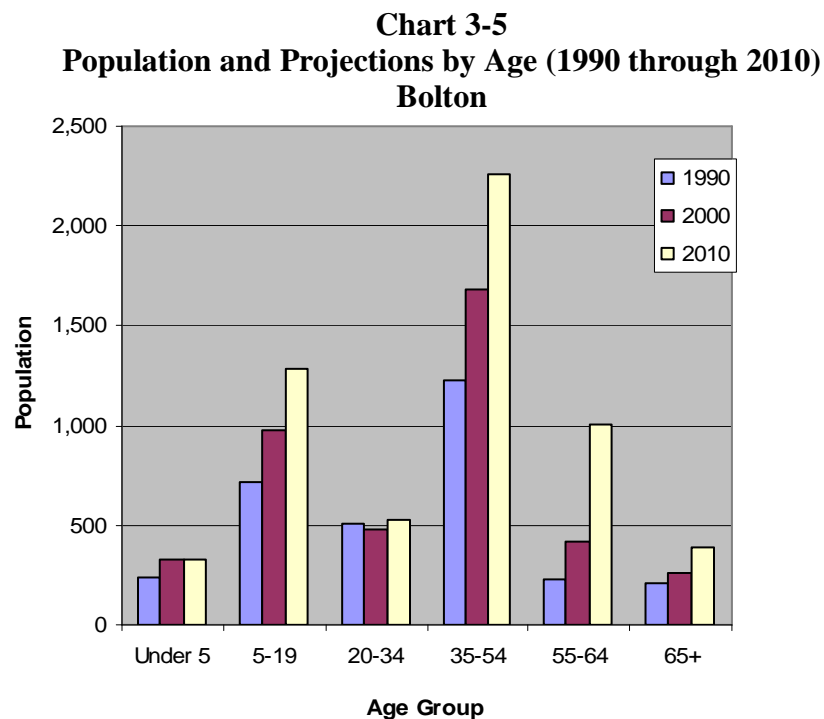
As noted above, Bolton's population trends indicate that the town experienced a growth period during the 1990s, primarily through an increase of established families with children, and seniors. If past trends are indicative of future population growth, the town is likely to see overall growth in all age cohorts through at least the year 2010. According to forecasts published by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Bolton's year 2000 population is projected to increase by 3,071 persons (74 percent) by the year 2030 (see **Chart 3-4**). The latest census (January 2006) shows Bolton's current population is 4,929.

Chart 3-4
Total Population and Projections (1990 through 2030)
Bolton



Source: MAPC Population Forecasts, for MAGIC region, March 2003 (partially updated in January 2006).

When further analyzed to determine the population changes in various age cohorts, an interesting shift is projected to occur between 2010 and 2020, continuing through 2030. Overall, all age groups will see an increase, but the primary age groups affecting the growth trends prior to and through 2010 are in the 5 to 19, 35 to 54 range, and 55 to 64 age ranges. These groups are projected to account for approximately 90 percent of the population growth between 1990 and 2010.¹ As the demographics change to account for births, deaths, and the aging population, the age cohorts that affect population growth will shift. Between 2010 and 2030, the 5 to 19 and 35 to 54 age groups are projected to remain relatively stable, while the fastest growing segments of the population will be, respectively, in the 55 to 64 and 65 and over age groups.² In effect, the years between 2010 and 2030 are projected to be a slower growth period than the previous 20 years, with the population increasing at approximately half the rate (see **Chart 3-5**).



Source: 2010 – 2030 MAPC Population Projections, released January 31, 2006.

These projections, however, are just that. They are based on historical trends and methodologies to account for shifts in the population, but changes in town policy to slow growth or attract different population groups could affect the actual numbers achieved through the year 2025.

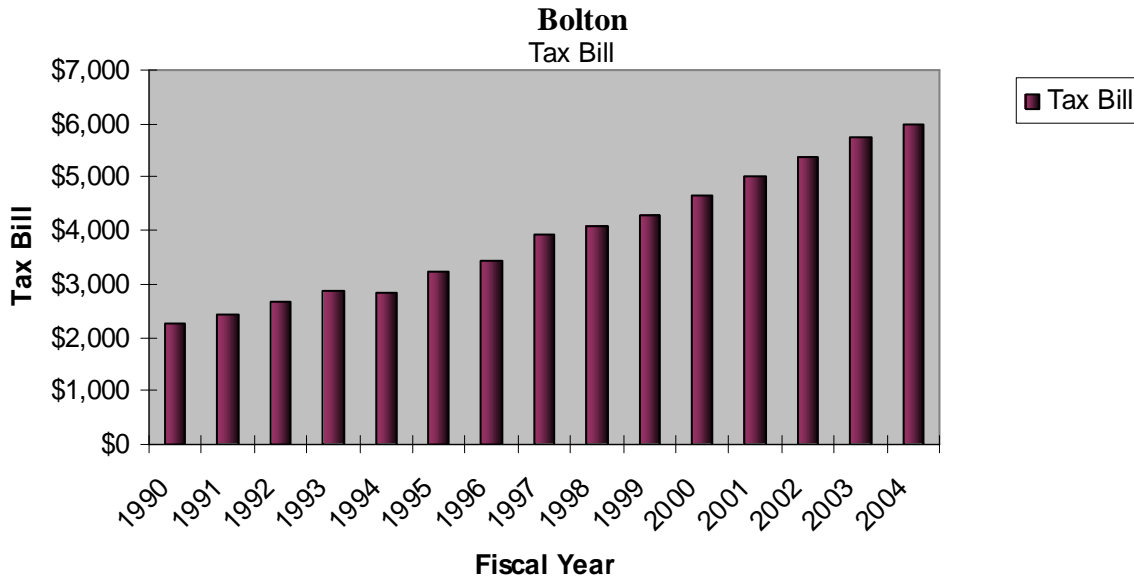
¹ Actual breakdowns of each age cohort's contribution to the total percentage are: increases in 5-19 group (564 persons, 21.06% of total), 35-54 group (1,037 persons, 38.73% of total), and 55-64 group (781 persons, 29.17% of total).

² Actual breakdowns of each age cohort's contribution to the total percentage are: under 5 group (118 persons, 8.40% of total 2010-2030 population growth); 5-19 group (222 persons, 15.75% of total 2010-2030 population growth); 20-34 group (156 persons, 11.09% of total 2010-2030 population growth); 35-54 group (8 persons, .60% of total 2010-2030 population growth); 55-64 group (427 persons, 30.30% of total 2010-2030 population growth), and 65 and over group (477 persons, 33.86% of total 2010-2030 population growth).

3.3 Relationship between Bolton's Population Growth and Taxes

The MPC found that most new houses do not pay their own way, as they require more spending on schools and other services than they pay in taxes. Therefore, as the number of houses in Bolton is forecasted to grow, Bolton's tax rates will also continue to increase to support the necessary town services: police, fire, schools, public works, etc.

Chart 3-6
Average Single Family Tax Bill (1990-2004)

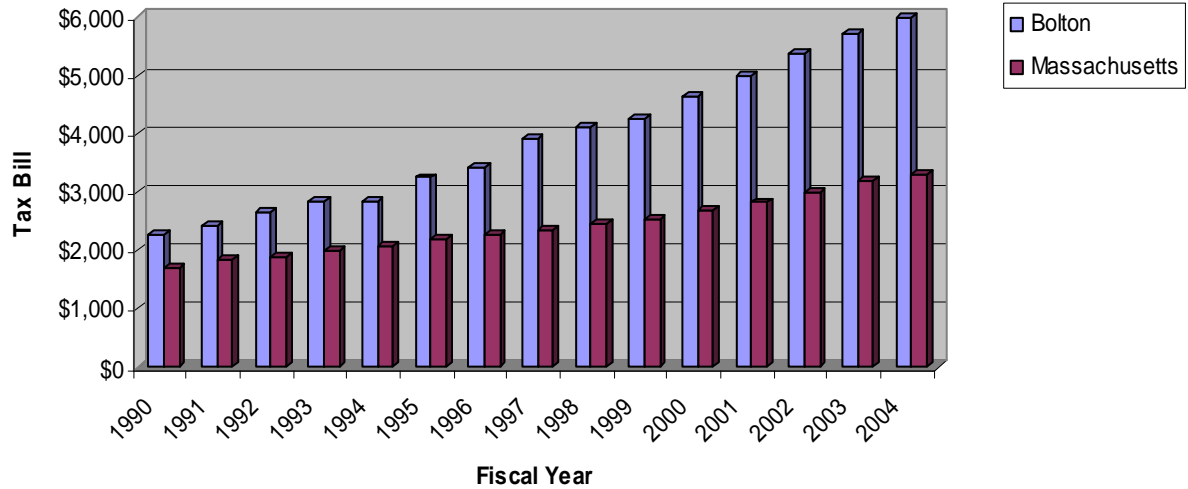


Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services
Tax Rate indicates residential tax rate per \$1,000 value.

The average single family tax bill increase has been steady and incremental (see **Chart 3-6**). Between 1990 and 1999, the average tax bill rose from \$2,274 to \$4,283, an increase of 88.3 percent or an average annual increase of \$223. Between 2000 and 2004, the increase occurred at a slightly slower rate, from \$4,699 to \$5,996, representing an average annual increase of \$324. The compound annual growth rate (CAGR) was 7.4% in the period from 1990-1999; the CAGR was 6.3% from 2000-2004.

While this increase in the single family tax bill has been more incremental than the increase in the assessed value of property, it has been at a faster rate than the increase in the state's average single family tax bill (see **Chart 3-7**). Between 1990 and 1999, the state's average tax bill increased from \$1,711 to \$2,557, an average annual increase of \$94 per year; but between 2000 and 2004 the rate grew faster, from \$2,679 in 2000 to \$3,300 in 2004, or an average annual increase of \$155.

Chart 3-7
Average Single Family Tax Bill (1990-2004)
Bolton and Massachusetts

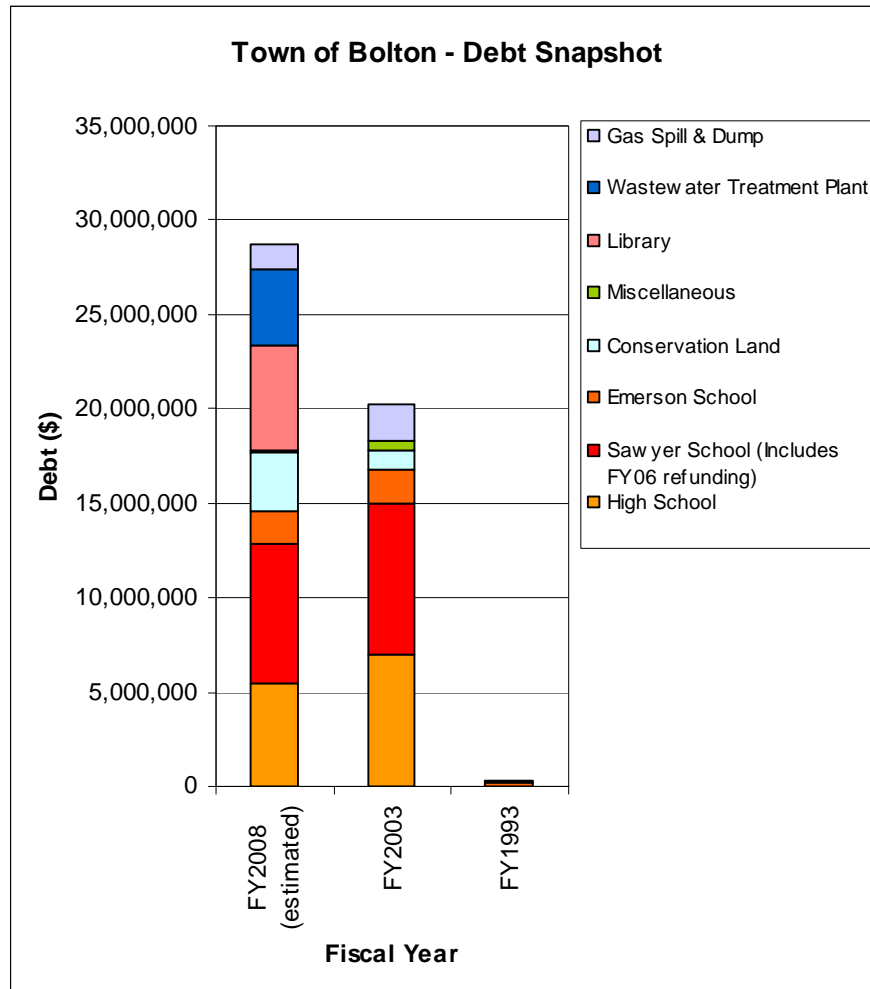


Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services

Bolton is not alone in trying to limit tax growth while providing all the necessary services to its residents. In many similar towns, taxes are primarily driven by population and per-student cost and they exhibit a similar tax growth. Research done by the MPC in communities like Groton, Westford, Westborough, Hopkinton, Shrewsbury and Boxboro, shows that growing a local commercial base in a town like Bolton cannot significantly slow tax growth. Average tax rates are generally higher in towns that have more commercial activity, and these communities often offer more public services.

3.4 Town Debt

As shown in the following graph, town debt grew to over \$20,000,000 in 2003, up from almost none twenty years before, due primarily to school construction. Town debt is expected to further increase to over \$28,000,000 in 2008 due to three expenditures already approved by voters: the library expansion, wastewater treatment plant, and agricultural preservation restrictions.



NOTES

FY2008 estimated debt includes projects voted to date at past Town Meetings (as of July 2006). Reflects remaining debt scheduled as of FY2008.

Gas Spill and Dump debt includes Transfer Station, Landfill Capping, Gas Spill Cleanups, and 50% of Nashoba Realty Land purchase.

Wastewater Treatment Plant and Library assumed will be bonded starting in FY2008 for a 20 year period at an annual average interest rate of 5.5%.

Miscellaneous Debt includes Athletic Fields, Highway Trucks, Ambulances, and Communication Equipment.

FY2008 Conservation Land comprised of expected debt for conservation projects including Nicewicz/Shartner APRs, Barrett's Hill, Savignano Land, and half of Nashoba Realty Land.

3.5 Town Buildout Data

A Buildout analysis is a tool for looking at development patterns and maximum potential growth in a city or town. It is sometimes referred to as a town's "worst case scenario". After setting aside land unavailable for building (municipal, wetland, conservation, developed lots, etc.), it calculates the number of remaining buildable house lots allowed using existing zoning regulations. The MA Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) did buildout analyses for every municipality in the State in 2000. Under present zoning, which has not significantly changed since 2000, Bolton's numbers were as follows:

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- Additional housing lots: 1,740 (calculation assumes that 90% of new housing lots will be traditional subdivisions or regular frontage lots; 10% of new housing lots will be backland lots) Last Census count indicated there were 1,492 housing units.
- Additional residents: 5,046
- Total residents at buildout: 4,148 (2000 U.S. Census) + 5,046 = 9,194
- Additional Students: 1040
- Additional Residential water use: 378,449 GPD
- Additional Municipal solid waste: 2588.59 tons
- New roads: 37.73 miles (Bolton currently has approximately 60 miles)
- Additional Non-recycled solid waste: 1,840.78 tons
- Additional Commercial/Industrial building area: 410,557 sq feet

The State buildout study was completed without taking into account the additional units that could be built on a given parcel under 40B regulations. Depending on the number of higher density 40B developments, the population and number of housing units at maximum buildout could be significantly higher. Conversely, it does not take into consideration the town's forty-year record of setting aside open space from development, a process that is likely to continue, and the continuation of which is encouraged in this plan.

Note: the 8 maps which start on the next page were reduced for this document. Full size copies of these maps are contained in printed copies of the plan available in the library, or by separate download from the town's web site.