

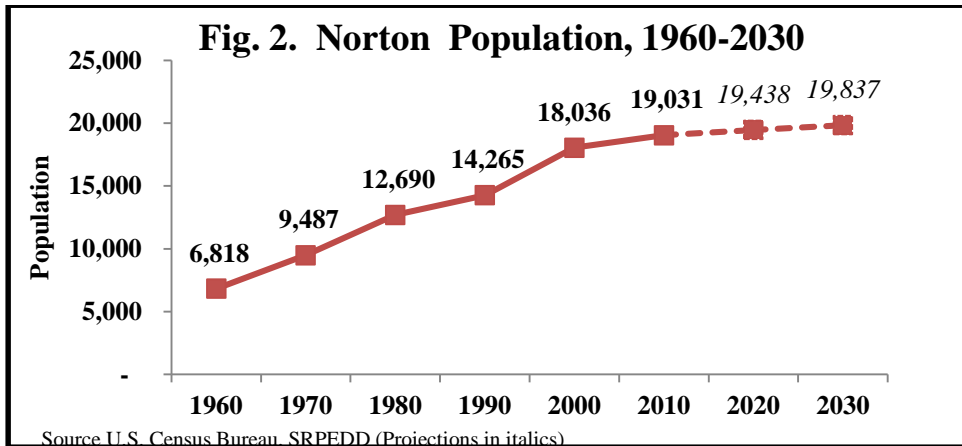
NORTON TOWN CHARACTERISTICS

1. Demographic Profile

1-A. Population.

Norton’s population growth since 1960 largely came about when people began to prefer to move out of cities and into suburbs, mostly facilitated by the establishment of rail and interstate highways going through the town and its neighboring communities. Subsequently, this movement brought about an expansion of residential developments in the area which brought in more families who settled in the town.

The trend in Norton’s population growth from 1960 to 2010, and the projected populations to 2030, are illustrated in Fig. 2.

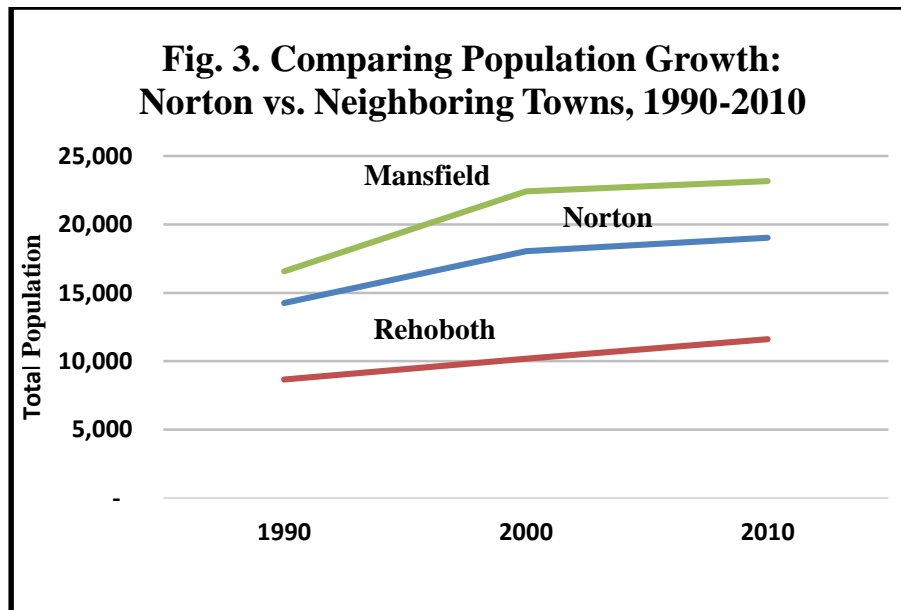


The data show a linear expansion in the total population of Norton from 1960 to 2000, followed by a slow-down soon after (Fig. 2). The regionally projected numbers to 2030 suggest that the town’s population progression will be somewhat restrained in the next decades.

Table 1 reinforces the pattern of rapid rise in Norton’s population (in terms of percent change through the decades) as observed above, and the moderate growth by 2010.

Table 1. Population Growth Rate: Norton, 1960-2010			
Years	Population	Numerical Increase	Percentage Change
1960	6,818		
1970	9,487	2,669	39.1
1980	12,690	3,203	33.8
1990	14,265	1,575	12.4
2000	18,036	4,771	33.4
2010	19,031	995	5.5
Source: U.S. Census Bureau			

To explore whether the trend in Norton is true for the surrounding area, Fig 3 shows a comparison of growth among the town’s neighboring communities.



A similar pattern of stable population growth by 2010 experienced by Norton was also apparent in the adjacent towns, as Fig. 3 reveals.

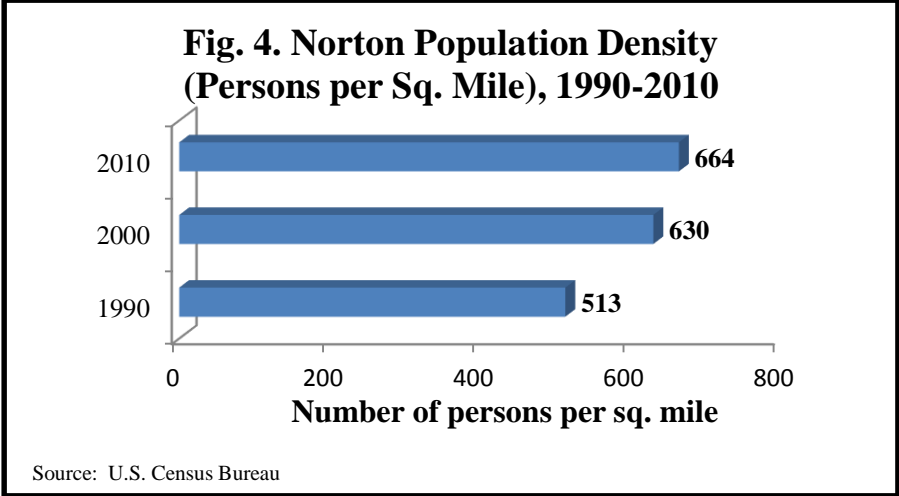
A comparison of the regionally- projected total population to the year 2030 for Norton and neighboring communities can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Population Projections: Norton and Neighboring Communities, 2010-2030					
Municipality	2010	2020	2030	% Projected 2010-2020	% Projected 2010-2030
Norton	19,031	19,438	19,837	2.1	2.0
Rehoboth	11,608	11,940	12,107	2.9	1.4
Attleboro	43,593	45,642	47,681	4.7	4.5
Taunton	55,874	56,757	57,184	1.6	0.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The population projections in Table 2 reflect the modest population growth predicted for the area around Norton in the coming decades, assuming no major event, or some development and upheaval occurs along the way.

In Fig. 4, the number of persons per square mile for a span of 20 years in Norton, are shown. Norton’s population density expanded rapidly between 1990 and 2000 and stabilized soon after. By 2010, the town added only 34 people more per square meter.

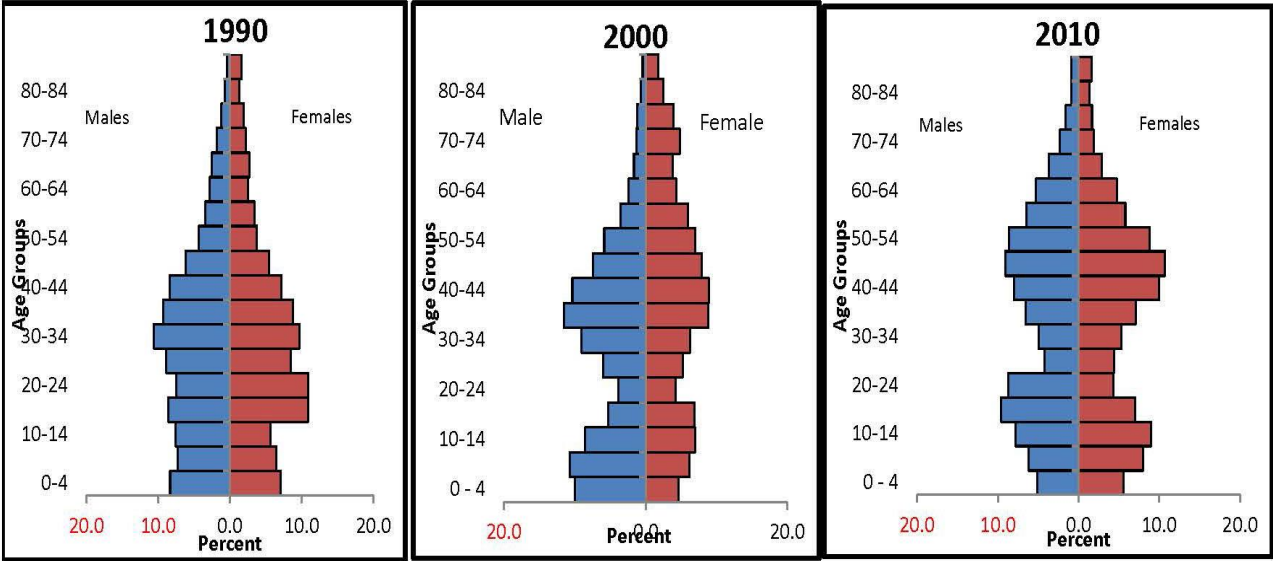


There is no doubt that planning for Open Space and Recreation needs for the town of Norton necessitates serious consideration of the past, present, and future trajectory of the town's population growth, as well as population density. To be responsive, accommodate, and provide for all the varied needs and demands of all members of the community, planners have to grasp and be cognizant of past developments, present constraints, and future direction of the town's population. Additionally, the area and surrounding community situation deserve as much attention, as the town's progress will not occur as an isolated event.

1-B. Age Structure

The age profile of the community members is most vital in the preparation and assessment of their needs. The age and sex composition of Norton's population from 1990 to 2010 (latest definitive numbers available) are illustrated in the population pyramids in Fig. 5.

Fig. 5. Population Age and Sex Distribution: Norton, 1990-2010

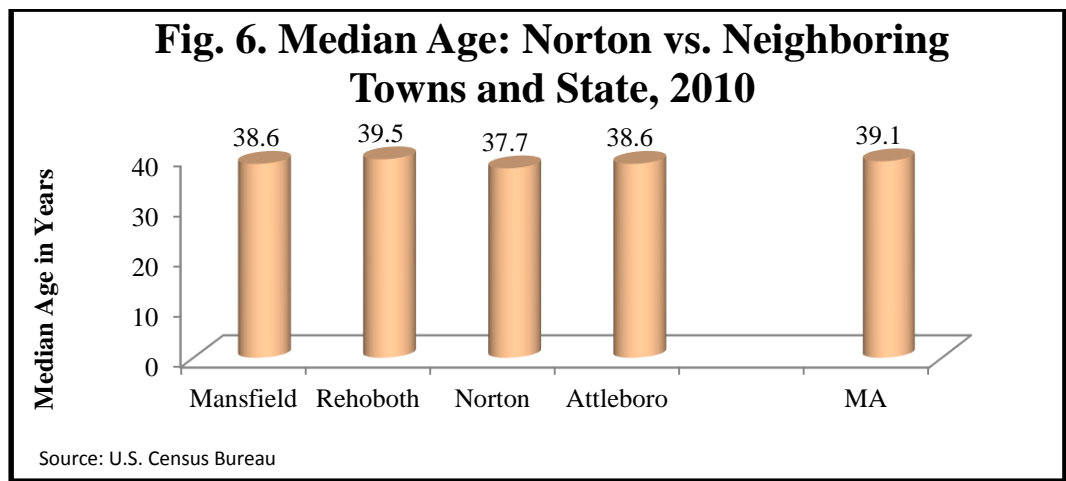


The population pyramids for Norton (Fig. 4) portray a deficit of young adult cohorts compared to the proportion of middle-aged and older adults, over the three decades, i.e., 1990-2010. Such an observation are supported by the figures in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Percent Change in Major Age Groups: Norton, 1990-2010			
Age Groups	1990	2010	% Change 1990-2010
Under 5 years	1,094	983	-10.1
5-19 years	3,314	4,443	33.9
20-24 years	1,328	1,627	22.5
25-44 years	5,067	4,476	-11.7
45-64 years	2,274	5,480	141.0
65-74 years	666	1,213	82.1
75+ years	522	814	55.9
Total	14,265	19,031	33.5
Source: U.S. Census Bureau			

The data gave evidence that younger wage earners (25-34 years old) comprised 36% of the total town population in 1990, but dwindled to 24% in 2010, even as the older labor force (45-64 years old) increased from 16% to 29% during the same years (Table 3). The older cohorts (65+ years old) have increased significantly over the same 20-year period.

A comparison of the median age of Norton’s population with its neighboring communities, and the state, is presented in Fig. 6.



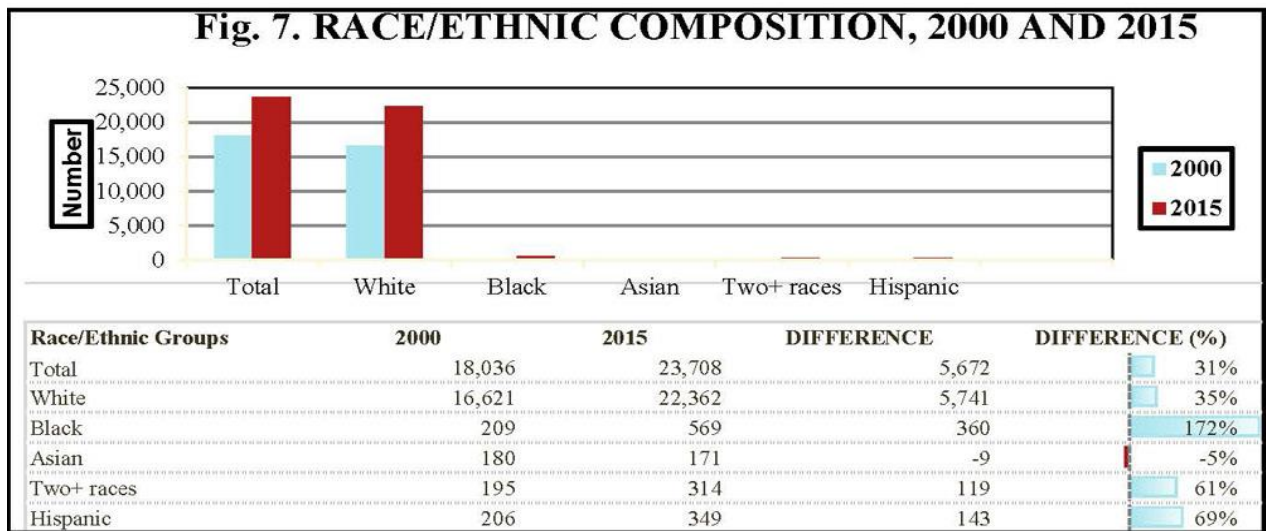
Norton seems to have had the youngest population among the communities in the area in 2010, with its median age even lower than the state's.

Interestingly, the bulk of Norton's wage-earning population as of 2010 had safely supported the extreme dependent age groups (youngest and oldest cohorts). However, it is inevitable that the town's majority of the aging labor force will make for a high older dependency ratio in the near future, as numerically demonstrated in Table 3.

Familiarity with the town's population age groups is most helpful in guiding planners as to the types and styles of outdoor and indoor amenities and facilities which are responsive and adaptable to the needs of these various cohorts.

1-C. Race and Ethnic Composition

Categories of race and ethnicity have changed the town composition across the state and country over the years. In Fig. 7, Norton's race and ethnic population from Census 2000 to estimates in 2015 are illustrated.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Over a 15-year period, dramatic changes had occurred in Norton's racial and ethnic population composition. These changes were exemplified by the percentage changes among the Non-white populations of the town from 2000 to 2015 (Fig. 7), which exceeded the overall increase in the town's total population. Black community members increased dramatically, along with the Hispanics and the "Two or more" races category. The only notable decrease occurred in the Asian population

The growing diversity of racial/ethnic population in Norton indicate varying interests and appetites for open space and recreational choices. Therefore, the planning exercise for the town has to acknowledge the changes in racial and ethnic composition of the town, as well as the trajectory for future growth among these sub-populations.

1-D. *Household Types*

A common experience across the country is also true in Norton: that the traditional nuclear and extended household had recently evolved into non-conventional structures. New kinds of household configurations such as those headed by females with no husbands, but with children under the age of 18 years, and households where adult residents prefer to live by themselves only are now familiar to everyone.

The household types and changes occurring in Norton between 2000 and 2015 appear in Table 4.

Table 4. Household Types: Norton, 2000-2015			
Household Types	2000	2015	% Change 1990-2010
Total households	5,872	6,151	4.8
Family households	4,472	4,639	3.7
Female householder, with children under 18 years old	404	277	-31.4
Householder living alone	1,132	1,420	25.4
Household 65+ years living alone	406	487	20.0
Household size	2.79	2.80	3.7
Source: U.S. Census Bureau			

There is evidence in Table 4 of a decrease among households headed by females with no husbands, but with children under the age of 18 years in Norton. However, between 2000 and 2015, living alone had become increasingly population town's elderly (65+ years) members.

During the span of 15 years, Norton remained one of the outliers among some communities in the state, as its household size rose, rather than declined. This experience may be traceable to several factors, among them, a growing number of childbearing families having small children, or young adult members, or possibly an increase in household wherein members observe a communal living arrangement, i.e., sharing the same house, and pooling earnings and expenses.

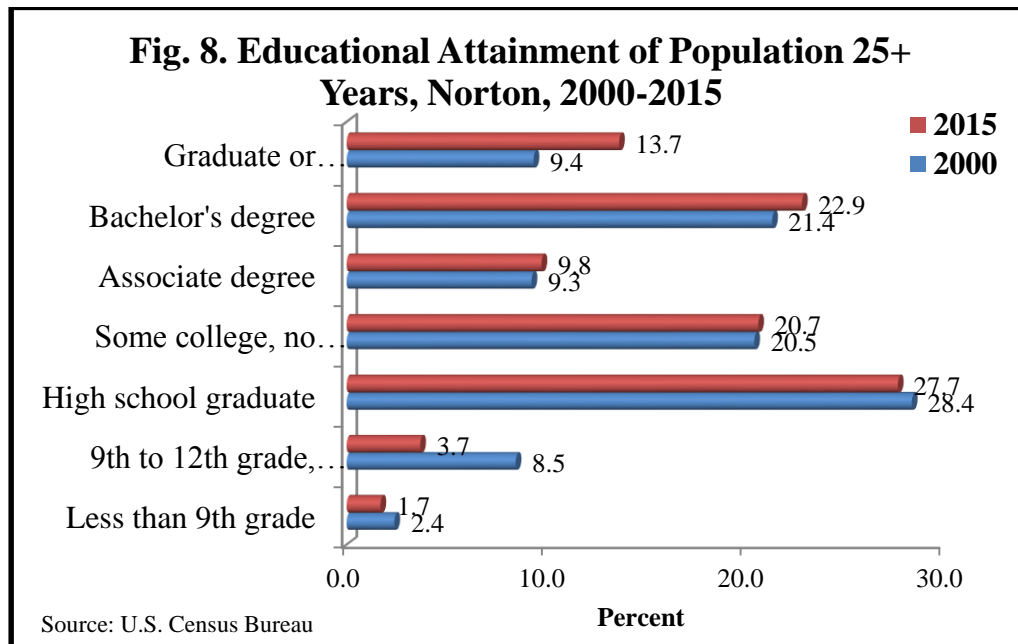
Overall, the familiar and conventional nuclear households (consisting of parents and their children) and even those with extended relations within the households, have given way to the present-day types of household structures. A great challenge for town open space and recreation planners includes facing and anticipating the demands and sustenance of single householders with young children, or adults living by themselves. Furthermore, the elderly who lives alone, may need alternative arrangements for recreation in the coming years.

2. Socio-Economic Characteristics

2-A. Education

It is an established fact that people's tastes and preferences for any issues and choices involved in daily life, are mostly governed by their socio-economic status, most notably, education and income.

Fig. 8 presents the educational attainment of Norton resident population aged 25+ years for 2000 and 2015.



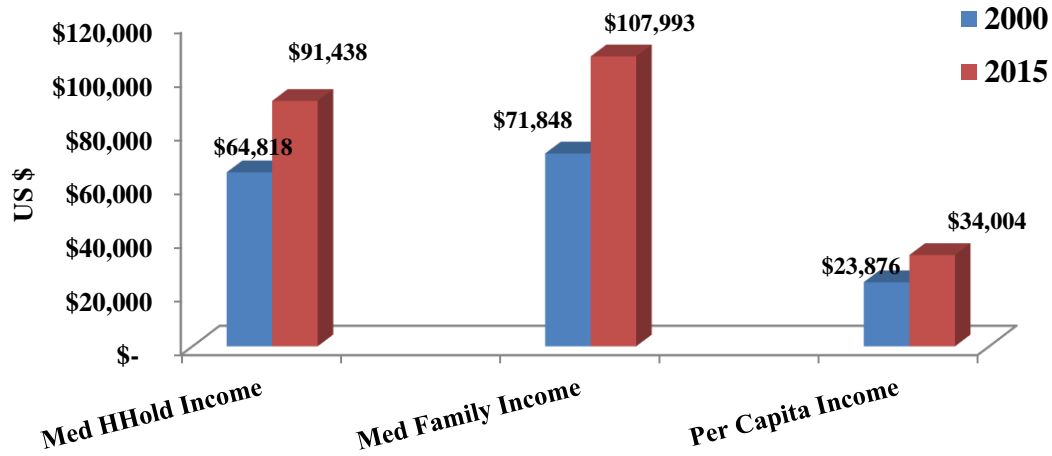
It is worth noting from Fig. 8 that Norton adults (aged 25 years and over) achieved substantial improvements in educational levels between 2000 and 2015. While those with under high school level declined, those who attained Associate degrees and attended college but did not attain a degree also increased. Furthermore, the percentage of those who had proceeded to obtain graduate degrees increased considerably during the 15-year period.

In general, planning for open space and recreational activities have to consider the implications and consequences of the town members' educational achievements.

2-C. Income

Usual income measures are of three kinds: median household income, median family income, and per capita income. Fig.9 shows these measures for the town of Norton in 2000 and in 2015.

Fig. 9. Changes in Income Levels, 2000-2015



Source: U.S. Census Bureau
 \$1 in 2000 = \$1.40 in 2015.

The data above displays the increase in all levels of income in the town from 2000 to 2015 (inflation rate = 40%), despite the economic depression in the late 2000s.

How the income levels compare between Norton and the state from 2000 to 2015 can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5. Income Levels: Norton vs. Massachusetts, 2000-2015

Income Levels	2000		2015		% Change, 2000-2015	
	Norton	MA	Norton	MA	Norton	MA
Median Household Income	\$64,818	\$50,502	\$91,438	\$66,563	41.1	31.8
Median Family Income	\$71,848	\$61,664	\$107,993	\$87,085	50.3	41.2
Per Capita Income	\$23,876	\$25,952	\$34,004	\$36,895	42.4	42.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Note: \$1 in 2000 = \$1.40 in 2015

It is evident from the data (Table 5) that Norton households and families had higher income levels compared to statewide average during the years under consideration. On the other hand, Norton's per capita (individual) income, in both 2005 and 2014, fell below that of the state average.

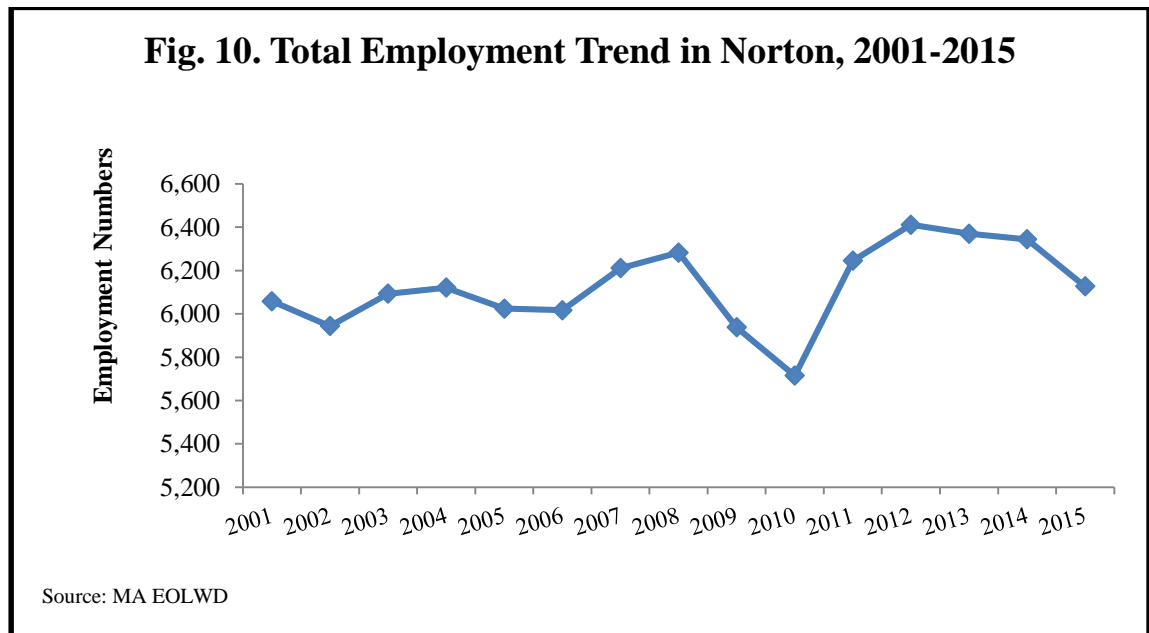
To assess whether or not any area in Norton met the criteria established by the state and federal government necessary to designate any portion of the community as an Environmental Justice area, an examination of all U.S. Census block group data was conducted for the Town, including: median household income; percent of minority population, and; percent of people with language deficiency. No evidence was found of any block group in Norton falling under the Environmental Justice eligibility standards.

Planning for Open Space and Recreation process can only be most effective when the socio-economic characteristics of the town residents are carefully considered. Both education and income are big factors that determine and guide the residents' tastes and preferences for the health facilities, recreational amenities, or infrastructure that they like, dislike or utilize.

3. *Economic Profile*

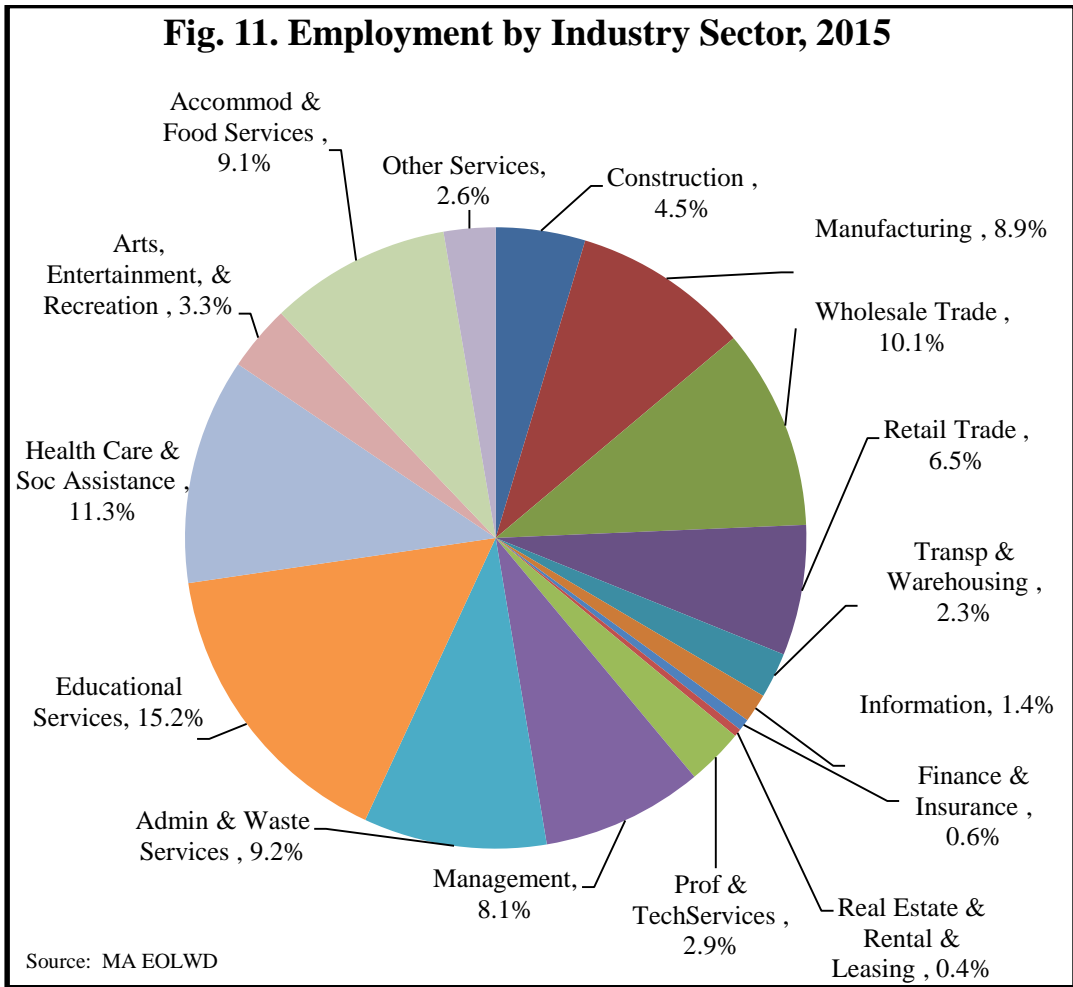
3-A. Employment

The trend in total employment in Norton from 2001 to 2015 is on display in Fig. 10.



It is quite clear from Fig. 10 that the start of economic recession, around 2008, made a big impact on Norton's total employment numbers. Although employment in the town rose soon after 2010, a clear economic recovery has remained elusive as of 2015.

Fig. 11 presents a breakdown of employment by industry for 2015 in Norton



Given Norton’s increasingly suburban profile and college community, it is not surprising that the Educational services sector dominated the town’s economy in 2015, comprising more than 15% of the town’s overall total employment. This was followed by Health Care and Social Assistance (11.3%), then by Wholesale trade (10.1%), Manufacturing (8.9%), Administrative (9.2%), as well as Management services employment (Fig. 9).

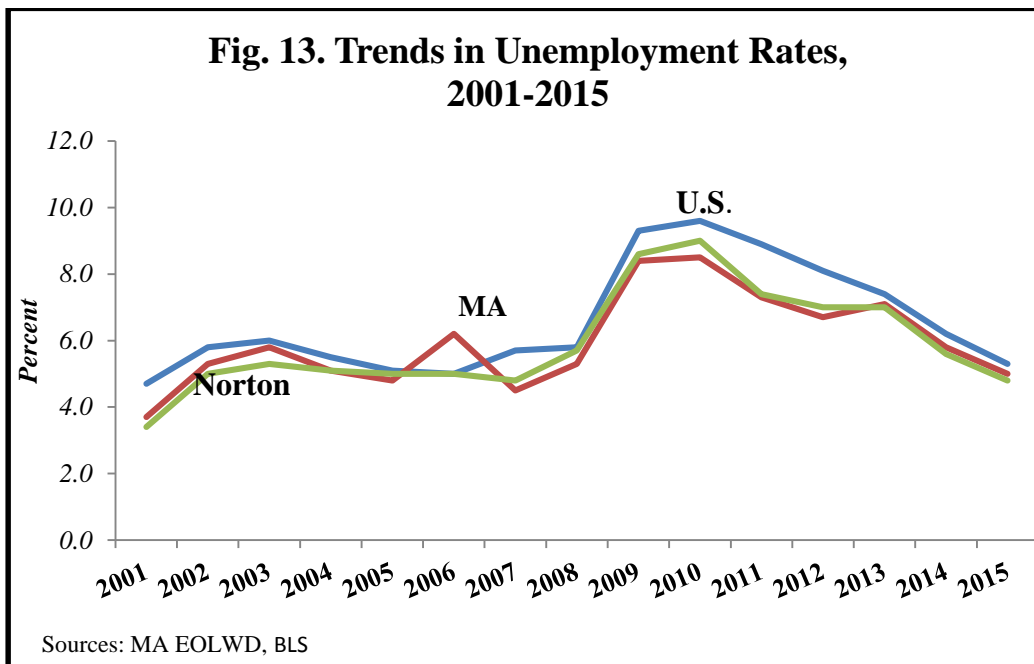
3-B. Unemployment Rates

In Fig. 12, the trend in unemployment rates for Norton from 2000 to 2015 is illustrated.



The rise in Norton’s unemployment rates coincided with the economic downturn after 2008. Since 2011, a gradual decline in the town’s unemployment rates was evident (Fig. 12).

A comparative view of Norton’s unemployment trend with that of Massachusetts and the nation is featured in Fig. 13.



Norton’s pattern of unemployment rates from 2001 to 2015 was by no means different from the state’s, and even somewhat lower in the recent past compared to the nation’s, as Fig. 13 reveals.

Overall, the economic features of Norton must assume a big consideration in the planning for the municipality’s open space and recreation. Not only do they influence the types of residents' needs and demands for pastime activities, and leisure facilities, but also their affordability, taste and preference for their children’s recreational options as well.

2. *Housing Characteristics*

4-A. *Housing Stock*

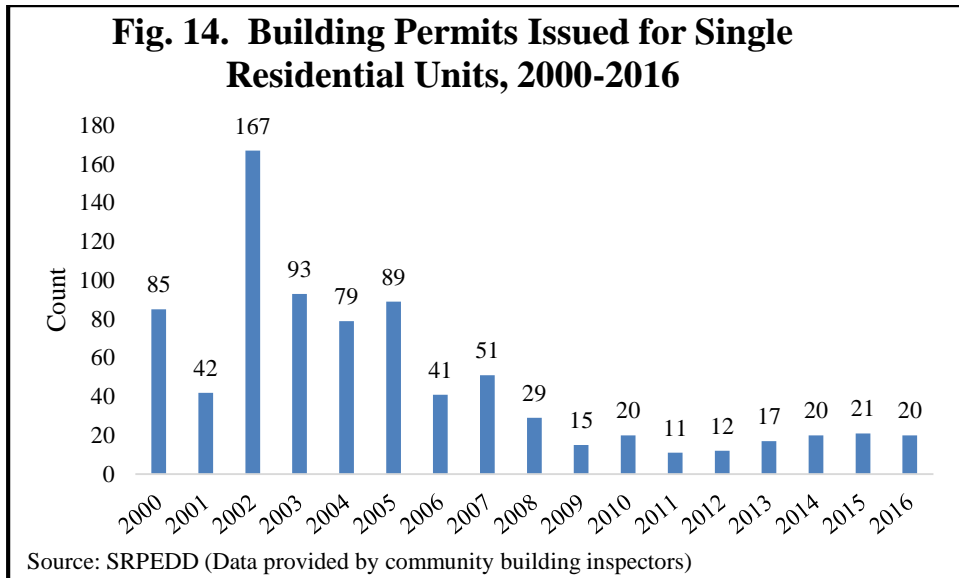
Table 6 presents updated housing data for the town of Norton from within a 15-year span.

Table 6. Housing Characteristics, 2000-2015			
Housing Characteristics	2000	2015	% Change 2000-2015
Housing Units			
Total	5,961	6,493	8.9
Occupied	5,872	6,151	4.8
Vacant	89	342	284.0
Housing Tenure*			
Owned	4,829	5,080	5.2
Rented	1,043	1,071	2.7
* Of occupied housing			
Source: U.S. Census Bureau			

The data show that Norton’s housing stock increased modestly from 2000 to 2015 (Table 6), although the vacancy rates had astronomically rose during the intervening years, mostly traceable to the housing debacle that occurred all over the nation. Interestingly, house ownership and rentership had remain stable during the 15-years under observation.

4-B. *Issuance of Building Permits*

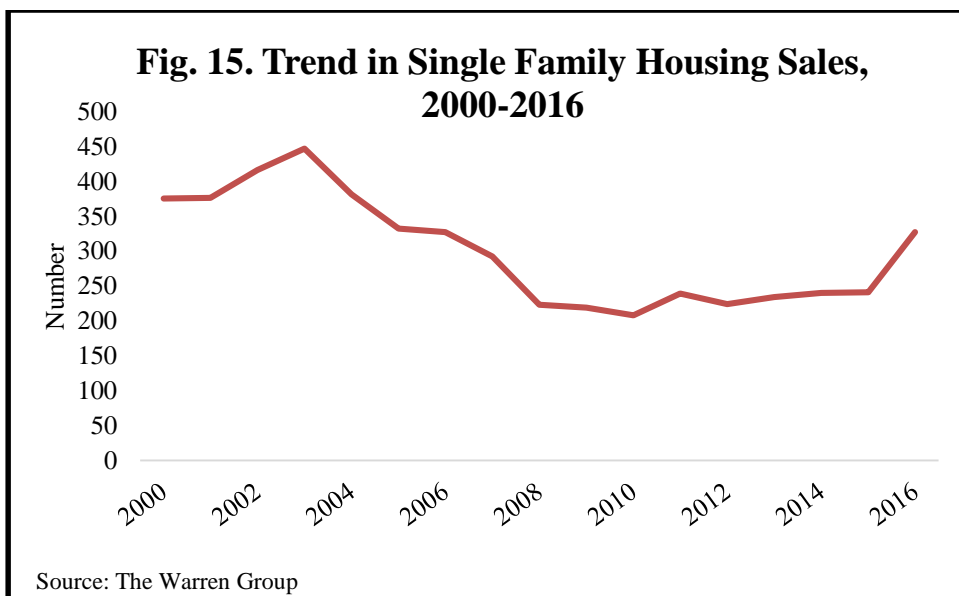
Another indication of the housing condition in a community is the number of building permits issued annually for new housing units in the area. Fig. 13 shows the number of building permits for single-family residential units issued by the town of Norton from 2000 to 2015.



In response to the worldwide housing crisis, and aggravated by the housing market bubble in the late 2000s, the Town of Norton issued very few permits for single residential units after 2008 compared to the numbers it had issued in early 2000s (Fig. 14). As of 2016, the Town is issuing more permits for multi-family, affordable, housing units in response to market changes.

4-C. Housing Sales

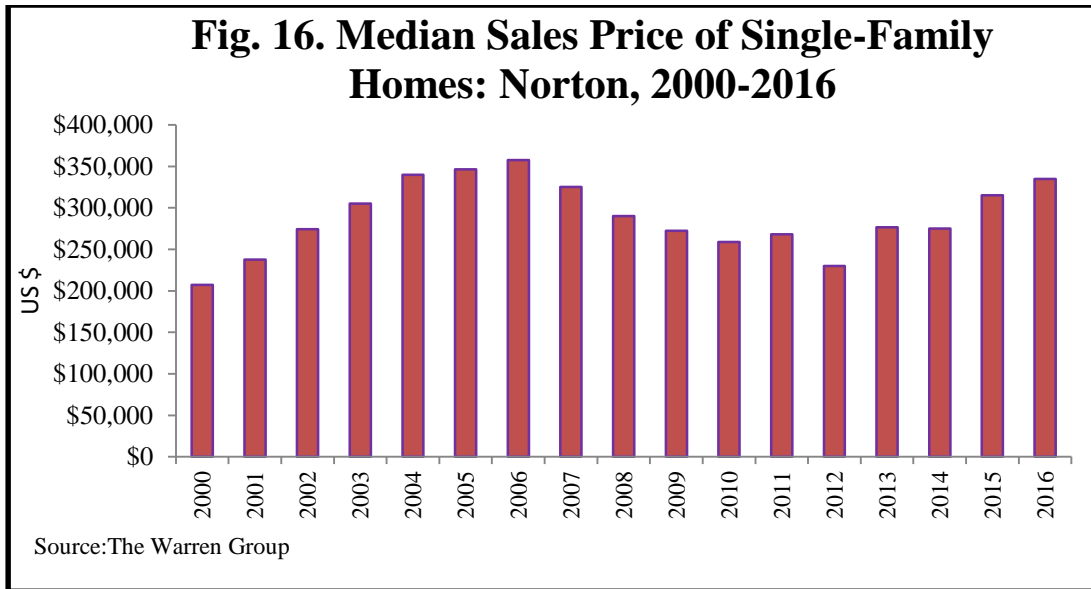
The sale of single-family residential homes in a given period usually signals the health of the housing market: whether there is an oversupply or a big demand of this type of housing in the community. Fig. 15 presents the trend of sales in single-family homes from 2000 to 2015 in Norton.



The impact of the economic-housing slump in Norton was obvious from the trend in single-family housing sales revealed in Fig. 15. . The data suggest an upturn in housing sales.

4-D. Housing Costs

Family relocations consider the cost and affordability of housing in a community. Fig. 16 shows the extent of costs in single-family homes from 2000 to 2016 in Norton.



The data (Fig. 16) noted an apparent rebound after 2012 in the median costs of single-family home in Norton, which may mean a sign of a resilient housing market. This, in turn signals a positive economic outlook for the town.

A comparison of the median costs of single-family housing in Norton with its neighboring communities for 2000 and 2015, along with the percent changes in costs, as shown in Table 7.

	Median Sales Price (One-Family Homes)		% Change, 2000-2015
	2000	2015	
Norton	\$207,000	\$315,000	52.2
Mansfield	\$275,000	\$374,000	36.0
Rehoboth	\$203,000	\$338,750	66.9
Attleboro	\$179,900	\$270,200	50.2
Taunton	\$172,400	\$249,950	45.0
Source: The Warren Group			

It is evident from the data (Table 7) that the cost for one-family house in Norton between 2000 and 2015 rose modestly when compared to Rehoboth. However, the prices in Norton increased more rapidly compared to its immediate neighbors, Attleboro and Mansfield, over a 15-year period, as the town attracts single families.

Thus, striving for adequate housing, good quality of life, and a bright future for Norton residents in the succeeding years, is a great challenge for Open Space and Recreation planning. The planning process requires a good grasp of the town's overall housing situation: availability, and projected supply of adequate types of housing to shelter all types of household and family structures, the costs involved, and the attractiveness of the community compared to the surrounding towns.

Overall, planning for Open Space and Recreation can best be carried out if the town's demographic composition, economic profile, and housing characteristics, are utilized most efficiently to guide the direction of all aspects of the plan, thereby benefiting not only the community members, but the environment as well.