

Chapter 4

Population and Housing

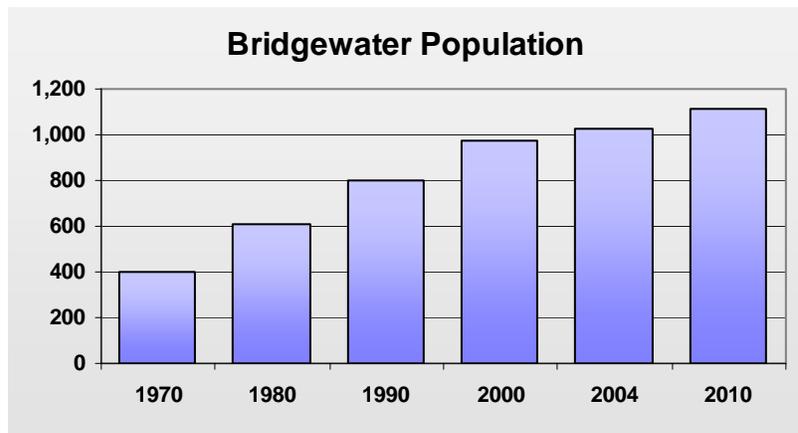


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1.0 POPULATION

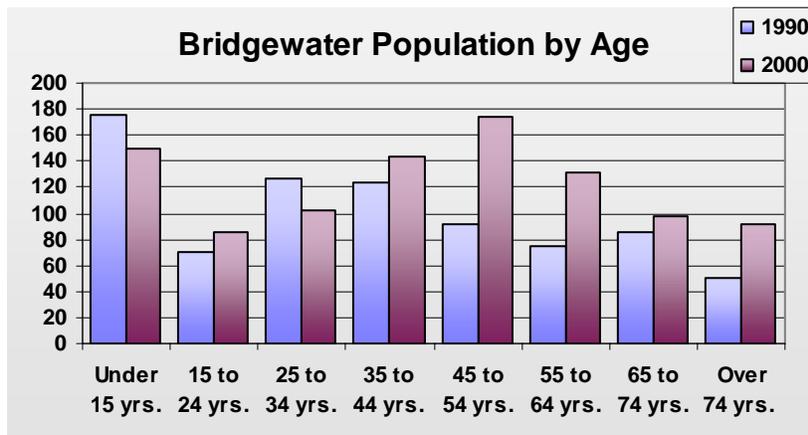
Over the past fifty years Bridgewater has experienced a series of small numeric increases in population, but overall has grown by a fairly large percentage. Bridgewater's population has increased by 802 residents from a population of 222 in 1950 to a population of 1,024 in 2004. This 361 percent increase is only a reflection of year-round residents. Meanwhile, there have also been increases in the seasonal population. This is reflected in the number of seasonal housing units.



Bridgewater's rate of population increase is expected to continue through 2010 when the year-round population may reach 1,110. Bridgewater's

population and housing characteristics are directly related to land use decisions, and these decisions contribute to the overall character of the community.

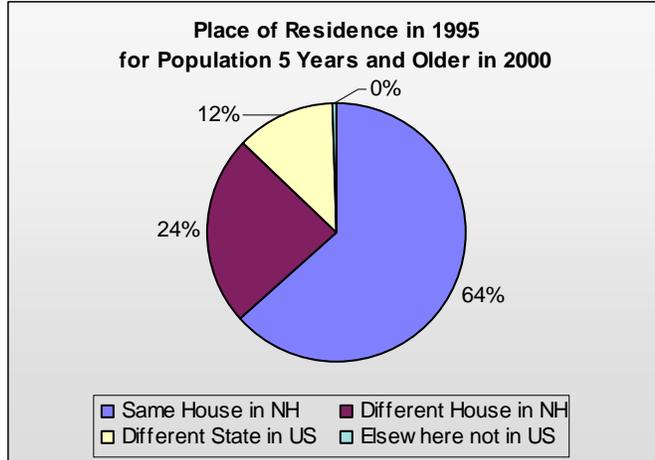
Bridgewater has one of the smallest year-round populations in the Lakes Region.



According to the 2000 Census, the median age in New Hampshire is increasing. In Bridgewater the median age was 45.4 in 2000. The median age, as of 2000, was 37.1 years in New Hampshire, and the median age in the U.S. was 35.3. An aging population will impact the community differently over time. This aging population will require a

different range of services from the community, including smaller housing units, daytime activities, and assisted care facilities. The figure above shows the current distribution of Bridgewater residents by age.

Bridgewater has a fairly stable residential population. As of 2000, 88 percent of the community was composed of residents that had been living in Bridgewater or another New Hampshire community during the previous five years.



2.0 HOUSING

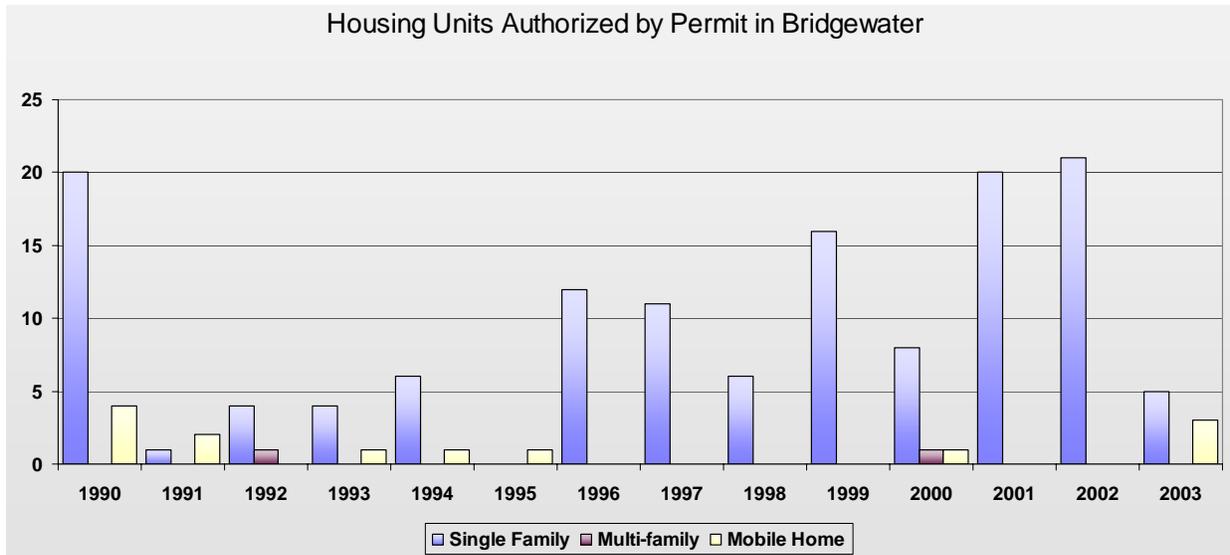
The 2000 US Census identified 850 housing units in Bridgewater. In the year 2000, 49 percent of these units were vacant seasonal units. Since 1990 Bridgewater has experienced a decrease in the number of vacant units. This is due mostly to a decrease in the number of vacant seasonal units. When analyzing the status of the year-round units, it appears that approximately 85 percent are owner occupied.

Units by Tenure and Vacancy	2000
Total Units	850
Occupied Units	414
Owner Occupied	352
Renter Occupied	62
Vacant Units	436
Vacant For Sale	11
Vacant For Rent	0
Vacant Seasonal	420

In 2004, the NH Office of Energy and Planning (NHOEP) reported that Bridgewater’s housing stock was composed of the following:

Single Family Units	752	83%
Multi-Family Units	55	6%
Manufactured Housing Units	101	11%
Total	908	100%

According to the NHOEP, between 1990 and 2003, 149 building permits were issued in Bridgewater. The figure below shows the distribution of permits granted from 1990 to 2003. The majority of permits are clearly for single family residential construction. Very limited multi-family construction has taken place in Bridgewater.



Land Use Implications and Potential Actions

Land Use Implications

Bridgewater's population has a direct impact on the character of the community. Here are a few items to consider related to the population and housing characteristics of the residents in Bridgewater.

- 1) Bridgewater's aging population may place a different demand on town services in the future.
- 2) There is a growing need for housing units that meet the needs of smaller households and the elderly that wish to remain in the area. Examples include senior housing facilities and accessory apartments.
- 3) Area businesses depend on housing that their workers can afford.
- 4) Housing located within or adjacent to a village development pattern can reduce some of the transportation costs for residents by providing transportation options and employment opportunities nearby.

Potential Actions

There are an array of possible actions the Town may want to consider pursuing as it evaluates the population and housing characteristics in Bridgewater and the related land use implications. This section will be used to identify the specific actions for Bridgewater to take upon completion of the master plan.

- 1) Begin to plan for services that will be required by a larger elderly population. This may include transportation, housing, access to healthcare, and other programs.
- 2) Ensure that Bridgewater's regulations provide opportunities for a diverse mix of housing unit types that can accommodate the changing composition of Bridgewater's households. This should include provisions for accessory apartments, smaller units, opportunities for higher densities in identified locations, and other techniques.
- 3) Establish regulations that promote the construction of quality workforce housing units in the community.
- 4) Work with developers to minimize the costs of living through quality housing design, energy efficient construction, and proximity to transportation options.