

OVERBUILDING IN SOUTH WILTON

Carolyn Reifers 4/13/24

I recently read an article by Karla Murtaugh, “Five Reasons to Move to Wilton”. In this article she described Wilton as “a rural residential town rich in New England history. Nestled in the Norwalk River Valley, it has winding roads, large lots and a generally rural feel. This lends Wilton a serene lifestyle. Bustling retail areas also abound with wonderful restaurants and all the modern amenities of an urban center.

Wikipedia described us as a “residential community with open lands, historical architecture and many colonial homes. The transformation from a small farming to a suburban residential community has been carefully controlled by zoning”. But has it been carefully controlled by zoning? I’m not sure if either one of these authors has driven up route 7 in South Wilton recently.

My family has lived in Wilton for 26 years, and in my experience, the Wilton P and Z historically represented the people of Wilton by fighting against lawyers that represented the developers who wanted to dramatically change our quality of life. Building plans were reduced in size and number until an agreement could be reached.

So where is your support for our quality of life in South Wilton? Mr. Tomasetti, as per your interview on Good Morning Wilton podcast from 2019, you stated that: “in terms of the commercial tax base, it all derives from the development that occurs mainly on Rte 7 and in Wilton Center”. You also state that “it is important to protect what is left of our rural character”. These statements are contradictory. On the one hand you talk about all the development happening on Rte 7 and on the other hand, you state that it is important to protect our rural character. So, what is blatantly obvious then is that you are not interested in preserving the rural character of South Wilton.

In the October 24, 2023 P and Z meeting, concerning 141 Danbury Rd across from Lambert House:

“The topic of neighborhood character and architectural unity was raised several times, in particular by **Commissioner Florence Johnson**, who objected to the assertion by **Lisa Feinberg**, the applicant’s attorney, that this area of Wilton “does not offer much precedent-worthy design.” Commissioner Johnson pointed to the Lambert House and surrounding Lambert Corner, as the main architectural reference point for the area. We now see that Commissioner Johnson’s remarks were not considered and

we are stuck with this monolithic building at 141 Danbury Rd. with no redeeming esthetic qualities.

During the viewing of the last two P and Z meetings on Zoom, March 25 and April 8, 2024, I did learn that you are making more of an effort to make these developments more esthetically pleasing to the senses. In the architectural rendering for 131 Danbury Rd, an illusion to colonial architecture , called “modern colonial” was suggested (a single cupola does not accomplish this in my opinion), also included were screenings and plantings, and the installation of shaded lighting, with a required set back from the road and away from private property lines that are contiguous. That is a vast improvement from what we are seeing at 141 Danbury Rd. Perhaps there is still time to alter the side of this building that faces Rte 7.

As it now stands, in South Wilton:

----- ASML has recently added 2000 additional staff, (4000 additional cars traveling rte 7 twice/day.

---141 Danbury Rd has 173 luxury apartments, with two people in each apartment (374 cars traveling rte 7 twice /day during rush hour),

---the proposed construction of 64 Danbury Rd (22.9 acres) with 8 buildings and a total of 93 dwelling units (186 additional cars traveling rte 7 twice/day during rush hour.)

---And now the Tracey-Locke building on 131 Danbury Rd is the next target for demolition and redevelopment with the building of 208 apartments-this brings us to a total of 4639 additional cars traveling rte 7 during rush hour in South Wilton.

All of this must be considered. More traffic, more noise, more pollution, more traffic lights added to an already congested one mile stretch of Route 7 in South Wilton.

In your last two P and Z meetings, the results of traffic studies were shared, with data that is contrary to what residents are experiencing. In the April 8 meeting Mark Ahasic and Anthony Cenatiempo showed concern about the number of “curb cuts” from Ring’s End to 141 Danbury Rd. Mr. Cenatiempo suggested that the Police Dept be involved in resolving the issue. It was then suggested that Rte 7 be widened to four lanes with an additional left turn lane,

probably adding a traffic light. Would this need to be done for both 131 and 141 Danbury Rd, adding two more traffic lights and slower traffic to an already stressed section of Rte 7?

My question to you is, **why were these traffic issues not realistically assessed before 141 Danbury Rd was built?** Or did it just not matter to you? Now we have a major issue of two large apartment/condo buildings next to each other with no easy driving access for its 381 plus residents and compromised travel for those of us who live near Rte 7.

How many streets and neighborhoods will experience the overburdening of traffic due to more buildings being planned in South Wilton? I would personally like to see a study of what ASML traffic has done to Grumman Hill Rd and the streets surrounding it to the entrance of the Merritt Parkway. I can speak from experience when I say that Grumman Hill Rd has become a major cut through for ASML employees and what was once known as an “historic road”, has now become a dangerous road to walk and bike on. Many of my neighbors who have always walked on this road, now need to time their walks between ASML arrivals and departures, every day of the week, including Saturdays and Sundays.

Your commission has also supported the building of a 5 story structure with 42 units at 12 Godfrey Place in Wilton Center and 207 units in a 5 story structure in the Commonfund Building near the Wilton Train Station.

More buildings are being assessed for the possibility of apartments, condos and low income housing. Are Wilton residents really aware that their roads and neighborhood lifestyle and the character of Wilton will be compromised in this way?

In our 26 years we have enjoyed the rural feel of our neighborhood and Wilton in general. Wilton is quickly being destroyed by all this overbuilding, specifically on this 1 mile corridor of Rte 7. Your plans to build and develop a mini city inside a small town shows your indifference to the Wilton community and to the quality of life we have grown accustomed to.

It is important to give the existing residents of Wilton a reason to stay here by avoiding overbuilding our rural setting and negatively impacting our residential community.

Please stop this and really think about what you are agreeing to, before it's too late.