

## Callahan, Rich

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**From:** Wrinn, Michael  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 19, 2023 6:19 AM  
**To:** Callahan, Rich  
**Subject:** Fwd: Wilton Center Master Plan and Proposed Regulation Amendments

Pls post, thanks

Michael E. Wrinn  
Director of Planning and  
Land Use Management  
203-563-0188

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Scott Lawrence <splawren@gmail.com>  
**Date:** October 18, 2023 at 9:18:39 PM EDT  
**To:** "Wrinn, Michael" <Michael.Wrinn@wiltonct.org>  
**Cc:** "Tomasetti, Richard" <Rick.Tomasetti@wiltonct.org>  
**Subject:** Wilton Center Master Plan and Proposed Regulation Amendments

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Dear Chair Tomasetti, Members of the Planning and Zoning Commission and Members of the Wilton Center Area Master Planning Subcommittee,

Congratulations on your exciting and important work on the Wilton Center Master Plan and new Form-Based Codes for Wilton's zoning regulations! These products are a centerpiece for the 2019 PCOD's enabling vision and should be adopted as soon as practicable once you have incorporated public feedback in these hearings. I offer these thoughts in support. Any data references come from the BFJ reports and planning documents.

The need is for these updated Codes is manifest, and the timing is welcome. Much has happened since the Commission updated the POCD in late 2019. The need to get ahead of the design and economic curves to ensure Wilton's development future is more pressing than ever. Some demographic and economic shifts are still being felt as a result of COVID and larger realignments of real estate, but many land-use issues that Wilton faced in 2019 remain the same. Wilton's development potential and population growth have barriers, which means its economy and grand list growth face pressures – some good, some bad.

- Wilton continues to be a predominantly single-family residence community (89% of housing stock) with low population density (under 2000 residents per square mile) dispersed widely among 27 square miles, with only one central commercial corridor on Route 7 and one main town center in Wilton Center.

- Wilton's developable land remains limited, fragmented and expensive, with most suitable lots located along the Route 7 corridor outside of the village centers of Wilton Center, Cannondale and Georgetown.
- Wilton's housing stock, 89% comprised of detached single-family homes on 1 and 2 acre lots, has regained some desirability since 2019, but ownership costs remain high, especially maintenance costs, with 90% of the homes being over 20 years old.
- Multifamily rents have nearly doubled since 2010 and the number of residents that are housing-cost burdened (spending over 30% of income on housing costs) has increased significantly, but little new supply has been built to meet welcomed population growth in the last five years.
- Wilton Center continues to serve as a local shopping hub for Wilton residents, but it still lacks sufficient visibility, retail diversity, residential density, design flexibility and economic draw to reach a happy equilibrium for property owners and businesses, let alone reach its true growth potential. It remains a small and off-the-path town center, naturally hemmed in by Route 7, the Metro North railroad and Norwalk River (with flood zones) to one side, and steep slopes and residential development on other sides, limiting development to redevelopment, rather than expansion.
- Macroeconomic conditions for development today are significantly more challenging than those existing four years ago, with expensive new building design requirements, ballooning construction costs and 20-year high interest rates, all making most projects difficult to pencil out for financing or investment purposes.
- State initiatives and mandates creep ever closer to forcing housing mandates on towns that have not achieved sufficient diversity and affordability in their housing stock, which may or may not include Wilton.

To get ahead of these issues, Wilton needs to enable building significantly more, more diverse and more affordable housing with supporting commercial development than it has done previously. Your Master Plan and proposed Codes offer an answer to many of these difficult issues and a path towards an economically vibrant Wilton Center and its surrounding areas. Form-based zoning regulations are new to Wilton, but their timing and application are just right.

First, your proposed form-based overlay codes will help solve longstanding zoning issues in Wilton by unlocking value and development potential without sacrificing architectural character. They shift away from Wilton's traditional zoning requirements that focus on special-permit-only uses with strict setback, height, floor-area-ratios and unit density, which aimed to protect the center from over-development, but instead stifled nearly all development. Many existing regulations were developed in the 1990s and early 2000s and have produced an inefficient mix of balkanized uses within seven different zones of widely varying requirements. Overall, these zones have produced excessive and inefficient parking, limited connectivity and streetscape enhancement, circumscribed building designs, few residential units and limited development potential. The prior 2001 Wilton Center Master Plan is teachable example of that type of planning. It focused on traffic and sidewalk circulation but did little to enhance zoning to unlock property uses or development – and none ensued.

Today, Wilton Center has multiple small retail and office vacancies that are unlikely to be filled at current rents, especially where aging and obsolete spaces or limited visibility and traffic are factors. Over half of Wilton Center's parking spaces are vacant at peak weekday hours and 64% are vacant at peak weekend hours. The market area for Wilton Center's retailers is generally Wilton, while the market area for Wilton residents is regional, leaving the center's businesses to compete regionally with only

local customers. Wilton's store and restaurant businesses continually lament the lack of nighttime and weekend patrons, while Wilton's youth and young professionals continually cite the lack of retail and dining options drawing them to Wilton Center. That disconnect has only increased since the movie theater closed and a major section of office and street retail on River Road has been emptied out in hope of future redevelopment.

Your Zoning reform is poised to address these issues where prior efforts have not. The town has improved the zoning regulations a few times over the last ten years accommodate certain development on an application-by-application basis, but regulations still do not cohesively accommodate the new economic realities of retail, office and residential real estate in Wilton Center. Your proposed form-based codes offer a solution by providing flexibility on use and design within a desired building bulk and aesthetic and its integration into a larger desired streetscape or center plan. The applicant is freed to maximize economic use of the specific property, provided that the town's overall form, bulk, infrastructure (including parking) and aesthetic requirements are met. Mixed-use properties of greater efficiency and lower cost (both per square foot and per acre) often result, especially for older or obsolete properties that cannot be economically redeveloped otherwise.

Second, your proposed codes will not destroy Wilton Center or its "feel," as some have suggested. Yes, form-based codes enable redevelopment, often at a larger and more efficient scale. That triggers some people to fret over "density", "stories" and "height," wondering if a new development will dwarf existing development or ruin a desired "small-town" aesthetic. Well-designed codes address this concern by permitting larger forms and bulk where topography, infrastructure and visibility best allow it, while graduating forms and designs to transition areas with more sensitive requirements, like historic buildings, natural features or public spaces.

With such revised codes, it matters less whether a building has office, residential or retail use, because the public-facing effects - traffic, noise, safety, infrastructure and aesthetics -- are still controlled by town regulations. It also matters less that a building's ground or upper floors have apartments, and whether it has 5, 20 or 40 apartments per acre density, because the units provide more affordable housing options, they bring residential density and patronage to core retail areas, the building envelope will still be required to fit into the center plan with an aesthetic that enhances the streetscape, and all parking will be accommodated onsite at ratios required by real-world use, rather than blanket metrics. More specifically, a fourth story or even a fifth-floor partial "bonus" story, which can be a building's most valuable square footage at the lowest marginal cost per additional foot, will not adversely affect ground-level aesthetics, assuming the form-code requires that it be recessed and invisible to ground-level pedestrians and cars. Finally, giving density, height or story bonuses will help Wilton Center, if they are largely unobtrusive and given only in instances where the development provides greater public spaces, enhanced viewsheds or some other public benefit in exchange.

Third, the new form-based codes do something that Wilton's current mishmash of zones and regulations do not: they ensure that each application meets the needs of a greater, holistic scheme for the center's development, including surrounding areas. Prior zoning reform enhanced the Wilton "village district" overlay requirements and created an architectural review board to ensure Wilton Center applications met desired design requirements. Unfortunately, those requirements remain largely inapplicable outside the Wilton Center village district, where six other zones with differing design schemes apply. Few of these zones address any public benefit concept. Your updated code unifies the design and public benefit concepts and makes them applicable to all applications seeking to use the form-based code overlay benefits and its more flexible building allowances, whether in Wilton Center or the surrounding greater areas on Route 7. The codes encourage walkability, connectivity, public space creation, easement grants or other requirements to meet broader Wilton Center and surrounding area design goals. The updated scheme facilitates transit-oriented development by tying pedestrian and vehicle access to Wilton Center station and it highlights walkability to Wilton Center's businesses and most

desirable public assets – the Norwalk River, the town green and the Wilton Library. This has proven an elusive goal for Wilton's existing zoning and its application-by-application approach.

Finally, this is a great first step, but it will be an iterative process. Your commission and contributing subcommittees have lent a wealth of real estate, design and economic experience to this process and resulting plan and codes. Real-world applications at the Kimco Center and other Wilton Center locations will test these codes and give a chance to reflect and revise further with public feedback. That will be an exciting process to watch. There will be both public support and pushback, both of which are welcome, but please stay the course and see this through. The status quo is not an alternative.

I am also grateful for the First Selectwoman's and Board of Selectmen's support of this important endeavor I hope the cooperation among the PZC and other town boards continues with similar successes for Wilton's future.

Thank you all for your hard work and diligence in making Wilton better.

Best,

Scott Lawrence

79 Hemmelskamp Rd.

Wilton, CT 06897

**Callahan, Rich**

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**From:** Wrinn, Michael  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 19, 2023 6:17 AM  
**To:** Callahan, Rich  
**Subject:** Fwd: Support of the Wilton Center Master Plan

Pls post, thanks

Michael E. Wrinn  
Director of Planning and  
Land Use Management  
203-563-0188

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Jennifer Kendra <jennifer.l.kendra@gmail.com>  
**Date:** October 18, 2023 at 6:44:06 PM EDT  
**To:** "Wrinn, Michael" <Michael.Wrinn@wiltonct.org>  
**Subject:** Support of the Wilton Center Master Plan

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Dear Micheal,

I'm writing to you in support of the proposed Wilton Master Plan from Planning & Zoning.

As a 20-year resident of Wilton, this is exactly what I've longed to see come to pass in our town - to effectively take Wilton Center into the 21st century with a keen eye towards 3 of my priorities - a robust and vibrant center attracting leisure activities and businesses for the community to partake in, a beautiful scape in which to enjoy while respecting and preserving the environment around us, AND a plan to attract more industry and jobs to our town, thus expanding the job base and diversity of our community.

Regards,  
Jennifer Kendra  
112 Cedar Road  
Wilton  
914-806-3518

**Callahan, Rich**

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**From:** Gmail <ltscarfi@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 18, 2023 8:38 PM  
**To:** Callahan, Rich  
**Subject:** I support Greater Wilton Center Area Master Plan

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The master plan is a great idea for wilton. Please make it happen.

Sincerely,

Tracy Scarfi  
103 huckleberry hill rd  
203.912.6488

**Callahan, Rich**

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**From:** Megan Abrahamsen <meganabrahamsen@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 18, 2023 7:39 PM  
**To:** Callahan, Rich  
**Cc:** Wrinn, Michael  
**Subject:** Comments on Master Plan

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Dear Mr. Callahan,

I am writing to share that I support the new master plan for Wilton Center. I own Blue Star Bazaar - a boutique in town - and am a current resident. I first moved to Wilton in 1980, graduated from Wilton High School in 1990 and returned to raise my own family here in 2009.

I believe the new plan will help attract new customers to the town center by offering more housing "in town". This will allow both existing and new businesses to survive. It seems that the overall height increase in buildings is modest enough to maintain a small town, charming feel.

People in town often discuss their desire for more amenities, restaurants, shopping options. I know that these things cannot be supported strictly on a town full of 2 acre, single family homes. We need additional residents - of all ages - and we need more homes that are walkable to town to create a better pedestrian vibe.

Thank you for considering my opinion.

**Megan Abrahamsen**  
**BLUE STAR BAZAAR**  
Clothing & Gifts  
239 Danbury Road, Wilton, CT 06897  
(203) 762-6061  
[website](#) | [instagram](#) | [facebook](#) | [twitter](#)

**Callahan, Rich**

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**From:** Ann Fastiggi <annfastiggi@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 18, 2023 6:53 PM  
**To:** Callahan, Rich  
**Subject:** Support for proposal

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I am in total support of the plan to try and revitalize downtown Wilton to stimulate more pedestrian traffic and local businesses that can thrive. I like that the proposal takes into account green space and plan for traffic.

I think the plan submitted is quite comprehensive.

Sincerely,  
Ann Fastiggi  
Wilton resident  
(11 Silvermine Woods)

Ann Fastiggi  
203.856.2071 (mobile)  
Sent from my iPhone



## Wrinn, Michael

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**From:** Fred Jr Kaoud <fred@kaouds.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 18, 2023 5:03 PM  
**To:** Wrinn, Michael  
**Subject:** RE:Message from the Wilton P& Z Wilton Center Area Master Planning Sub-Committee

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To whom it may concern,

As a long time Wilton resident and business owner, it's finally good to hear the town is planning to invigorate and create more buzz within the town square.

This is well overdue and is much welcomed by myself and I'm sure many more like me in the community.

Perhaps now we can stop going to Ridgefield Center for dining and the like, Cheers.

Thank you.

**Wrinn, Michael**

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**From:** Stephen Paturynski <spaturynski@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 18, 2023 4:28 PM  
**To:** Wrinn, Michael  
**Subject:** Master plan - changing the regulations to unlock develop development opportunities in Wilton Center

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Hi Michael,  
I hope you are well. I am writing to express my support for the Wilton Center development project. Thank you.

Regards  
Steve Paturynski  
9 Bhasking Ridge Road

Sent from my iPhone

## Wrinn, Michael

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**From:** Itcooper1@aol.com  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 18, 2023 4:18 PM  
**To:** Wrinn, Michael  
**Cc:** Patty Tomasetti  
**Subject:** Wilton Center Area Master Plan

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Good afternoon, Michael,

As a 26-year resident of Wilton with no intention of relocating, I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the Wilton Center Master Plan. I believe the plan holds great potential and want to voice my endorsement of unlocking development in Wilton Center.

Simply put, this plan has the potential to bring more restaurants, shops, people, and outdoor spaces to our town. These elements should lead to a vibrant and thriving environment for activity and provide a fun, exciting destination for both residents and visitors.

Wilton is my home and I love its unique charm but I also believe bringing new opportunities for growth and community interaction will benefit Wilton in the long-term.

Thank you for your time and dedication to the bettering of our town.

Trisha Cooper  
32 Sunset Pass

**Wrinn, Michael**

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**From:** vsfiftyeight@aol.com  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 18, 2023 4:14 PM  
**To:** Wrinn, Michael  
**Subject:** Wilton Center Master Plan

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Good afternoon, Mr. Wrinn.

As over 30+ year residents of our wonderful town of Wilton, we were compelled to send a quick note of support for the proposed changes to the zoning regulations detailed in the Greater Wilton Center Area Master Plan. We strongly feel that the vision expressed in these plans are precisely what would address the most glaring issue within our fine town. Other than the most apparent and pronounced town center deficiencies found when comparing surrounding and even at this point more distant towns, such upgrades to the amenities and housing options seem to be clearly addressed by approval of this inventive and visionary plan. With the established architectural review board in place, concerns for some regarding proper decisions in maintaining the charm unique to Wilton should be nullified, whilst not allowing our town center to continue to decline from its current distressed and alarming state. We truly feel that with the oversight of this essential newly appointed board cannot be overstated and trust in them should be the linchpin for approval. Upon acceptance, the benefits to all aspects of this town are truly beyond measure.

These sentiments have been shared with us throughout town for many years, as we have only remained silent and watched further decline. We seemingly and finally have a well-designed (quite literally) plan to address the concerns of so many unwilling to be heard. Thank you for reading our email, as our and many others support for this plan would ensure the future growth and beauty of our beloved town. - Vincent and Julie Santomero, 174 Deforest Road

**Wrinn, Michael**

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**From:** jsc <jsc525@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 18, 2023 4:15 PM  
**To:** Wrinn, Michael  
**Cc:** Tomasetti, Richard  
**Subject:** Reg #23405 - proposed Greater Wilton Center Area Master Plan

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Good afternoon, Mr. Wrinn and Mr. Tomasetti

My name is Jennie Wong, and I have been a resident of Wilton since 2013. I served on the Economic Development Commission between 2015 and 2019. I am writing to support Reg #23405 to amend the Zoning Regulations to create four new overlay districts, with related zoning regulations for each district.

While serving on the EDC, I frequently received input from residents and business owners alike on the need for more traffic and visibility in our Town Center. Reg #23405 will bring much-needed vibrancy to our Town Center while preserving our unique heritage. I understand these new regulations are crafted after years of thoughtful efforts of the Greater Wilton Area Master Planning Subcommittee with inputs from our community and considering the Plan of Conservation and Development and the Master Planning process. Therefore, I am confident that Reg 23405 will lead to a revitalized Wilton Center.

Regards,  
Jennie Wong

**Wrinn, Michael**

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**From:** Kenneth MacCallum <ken.maccallum@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 18, 2023 3:57 PM  
**To:** Wrinn, Michael  
**Subject:** Hearing regarding village center master plan

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Mr. Wrinn – Please accept the following statement in connection with tomorrow's hearing:

I fully support the proposed Master Plan. It presents a refreshing vision of what the village center area can be. It provides approaches to invigorate the area, while at the same time providing flexibility – if they wish to avail themselves of the 'overlay' - for property owners and developers to present new and other types of buildings. The area is atrophying, and this is the type of initiative that will move the town forward.

Adopting the Master Plan will also put an end the innumerable spot rezoning and variance applications and requests for property-specific plan amendments in the area, that have consumed so much of staff and P&Z time and resources in recent years.

I also wish to express my thanks and our gratitude to the exceptionally qualified group of volunteers on P&Z and the various subcommittees who have spent innumerable hours of their personal time over the past years developing the master Plan.

Ken MacCallum  
11 Tall Oaks Road  
Wilton, CT 06897