

Callahan, Rich

From: Wrinn, Michael
Sent: Thursday, October 19, 2023 2:23 PM
To: Callahan, Rich
Subject: Fwd: Wilton Center

Pls post, thanks
MEW

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

Begin forwarded message:

From: Maryjean Romeo <gromeo@optonline.net>
Date: October 19, 2023 at 2:20:55 PM EDT
To: "Wrinn, Michael" <Michael.Wrinn@wiltonct.org>
Subject: Wilton Center

CAUTION: This email came from outside the Town network. Is it authentic? Don't click until you are sure.

Dear Mr Wrinn,

I fully support the Master Plan and Regulation changes for Wilton Town Center.

Thank you .

Sincerely,

MaryJean and Gerardo Romeo
36 Springbrook Lane
Wilton CT 06897

Callahan, Rich

From: Wrinn, Michael
Sent: Thursday, October 19, 2023 8:54 AM
To: Callahan, Rich
Subject: Fwd: Wilton Center

Pls post, thanks

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

Begin forwarded message:

From: Chris Calabrese <seerainboy@yahoo.com>
Date: October 19, 2023 at 7:12:55 AM EDT
To: "Wrinn, Michael" <Michael.Wrinn@wiltonct.org>
Subject: Wilton Center

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Michael, anything you can do to get this approved would be great. I have lived here since 2005 and we are way behind compared to surrounding towns.

Thank you,

Chris Calabrese

Sent from my iPhone

Callahan, Rich

From: Wrinn, Michael
Sent: Thursday, October 19, 2023 11:11 AM
To: Callahan, Rich
Subject: Fwd: In support

Pls post, thanks
MEE

Begin forwarded message:

From: Adrienne Reedy <adrienne.reedy@gmail.com>
Date: October 19, 2023 at 10:46:25 AM EDT
To: "Wrinn, Michael" <Michael.Wrinn@wiltonct.org>
Subject: In support

CAUTION: This email came from outside the Town network. Is it authentic? Don't click until you are sure.

Dear Michael,
Although my husband and I cannot attend the meeting tonight, as a resident here for over 25 years, please note that we are in full support of the proposed initiative in developing our town center!! It's a thoughtful plan that gives us a sustainable tax base.
Thank you,
Steve and Adrienne Reedy
50 Duck Pond Place

Sent from my iPhone

October 19, 2023

c/o Michael Wrinn, Town Planner
Planning & Zoning Department
Wilton, CT 06897

Wilton Town Center Area Masterplan Subcommittee:

I am submitting this letter for Public Comment regarding the Wilton Town Center Masterplan as I will be unable to attend the October 19th Public Hearing due to a prior obligation in another town. I am also submitting this letter as my own opinion and does not serve as an official position by the Inland Wetlands Commission where I currently serve.

Since time is short, I will be blunt. I do not like the Bronxville look and feel proposed for the Town Center. Bronxville/Tuckahoe (Pg 98) have population of about 7,000 in about 1 square mile. Where is this desire coming from to have such high density and such reduced pedestrian experience for Wilton Town Center? This is not a romantic village. This is not an exciting village. It is a bedroom village. If this desire is coming from the one property owner who owns 75% of the Town Center, then I would like to remind you that same property owner has done very little over many years to create vibrancy on the properties they own. This just looks like you are catering to only voice and nobody else. I would like a Town Center like Ridgefield. Not only does it have good pedestrian experience, with busy daytime and nighttime life, but they also are a community who embraces the arts and culture and there are actual events and experiences available for adults... unlike Wilton.

Overall, the 156 page "Masterplan" is not a "Masterplan". A Masterplan is like Schenk's Island Masterplan, with pictorial map of different amenities (Pg 13). Give us an Executive Summary in a Picture. Why isn't there one of these on the Front Cover? All I see are a lot of pieces of things, a lot of ideas and moving parts, and it reads as a hot mess. It also has some unprofessional editing, such as references to "Pinterest" versus actually referencing the projects shown on the page (Pg 108). I was hoping that the rough sketch shown on Pg 105/106 could be expanded throughout the Town Center. Unfortunately, RGR Landscape doesn't inspire. Lots of paving, very little trees and token green spaces with 1980s design. It is an inconsistent message and an embarrassment for modern landscape architecture where we put the pedestrian experience first, and I'm writing that as a Landscape Architect. Looks like there was a lot of fighting with each other about what to put in this document and it shows. Had you taken a step back (more Public Hearings!?) this could have been avoided. The Public is like a Design Critic. They may not know what we know but they will tell what they think, unvarnished.

I also have a concern that this very urbanized direction will be expensive to implement and maintain. The Town has long history of not doing any maintenance. Including on buildings that have public/private partnerships. Including on school buildings. \$100 million for urgent school repairs is next on Town Agenda. Town will not have appetite for painted intersections (Pg 116). They look bad after few years of skid marks anyway, and depending on how it is applied, can increase stopping distance of vehicles leading to accidents and death when the surface is wet. Some of the streetscape details proposed are

impractical in their implementation (Pg 87, Fig 20; pavers too big, they will crack. Cracks are trip hazards. Injuries...).

I am not happy with the Norwalk Riverwalk. Not about whether it will ever be built due to the private property problem. But about how the design is proposed (Pg 113). First, you are operating on false assumptions. The conclusion on Pages 33-36 that Wilton Center does not have a flooding issue is based on data from 2013 FEMA Flood Insurance Maps and is a VERY DANGEROUS position to have in 2023 and beyond. An excellent primer as to why that is so dangerous can be read in the Washington Post article, ["America underwater: Extreme Floods expose the flaws in FEMA's risk maps"](#), published Dec 6, 2022. Some highlights:

- a. "Maps do not forecast flooding. Maps only reflect past flooding conditions and are a snapshot in time. They do not represent all hazards and do not predict future conditions," Michael Grimm, acting deputy associate administrator of FEMA's Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration, told The Post."
- b. "Climate has changed so much that the maps aren't going to keep up for some time," said W. Craig Fugate, FEMA administrator under President Barack Obama. "They are not designed for extreme rainfall events."
- c. "You would think, well, FEMA could just update the maps in issue," Fugate said. "That's not true. ... Local governments have been opposed to any maps that show an increasing risk."

'In addition to the maps being out of date, some decades-old in a changing climate, another problem is how the maps are built in the first place. They capture river and coastal flooding, not inundation caused by intense bursts of rainfall, known as pluvial flooding — a particularly dangerous problem in cities, where many porous surfaces have been paved over.

This makes FEMA's designated flood hazard zones a bad match for the intense weather events that [scientists say](#) U.S. communities will face, like the catastrophically intense rainfall from remnants of Hurricane Ida that left 13 dead in New York City last year.

"It is precisely that type of flooding, urban flooding and flash flooding from shortish duration but very high-intensity downpours, that is expected to increase the most in a warming climate," said Daniel Swain, a climate scientist at UCLA.'

So, basically, all of the research done in this "Masterplan" about the Floodzone needs to be thrown out. I attended a continuing education webinar about the Flood Insurance Rate Map updates a couple of years ago, but they have been delayed due to various issues too long to go into detail here. FEMA will eventually update the maps for Fairfield County. It's not an "if", but a "when". But you can be proactive now and study how or where Zone X changes *and the impact of pluvial flooding* for the Town Center. If you consider that the entire Zone X is potentially Zone AE, you can potentially save a lot of lives when

Climate Change gets worse. But that also means that some of your building typologies are impractical. Like First Floors need flood vents. Or no basements.

Looks like the Pg 113 design is practical though, right? Well, no. The space between façade of building and a watercourse is perfect place for some high-density planting and civic space. Reason for this is that planted area (not lawn) has absorption capability like a wetland that can help mitigate flooding during catastrophic storm events. These areas can be designed to flood but also be nice civic space with greenery, seating, and event space by the water. You can't do that if it is impervious area for vehicular circulation. Also, nobody wants to walk next to a parking lot. It's not romantic.

There are multiple comments about how sustainability and eco-friendly design will be encouraged. It should not be encouraged. It should be required. We are in 2023, not 2003. City of Norwalk just put together a pretty good sustainability requirement for all new buildings beyond a certain size, although I think it does not go far enough. But green roofs, green walls and on-site power generation should be required here too.

I wish the pedestrian experience could be expanded. There was an emphasis on storefronts, Brooklyn-like brownstones and some Flex Zones but not much as to how the proposed changes will feel as a pedestrian. The Pedestrian connections map on Page 86 does not reflect reality as people do not walk in straight lines. They walk to destinations in the most direct manner possible. Goodness, any Landscape Architect worth their salt knows this. It also does not begin to think about how pocket parks, plazas and gardens will change or encourage certain pedestrian connections. We are left thinking that it will be project by project, everyone for themselves. Like 12 Godfrey.

There is a spot of good news in this criticism. The Recommendations starting Page 118 are on the right track, although the map (Pg 119-121) needs updating since the Pedestrian Bridge was built. The issue of how those are funded needs to be explored and language about public-private partnerships needs to be clear on how the public benefits, even for those "passing through" which Mr. Tomasetti appears to dislike (Sept 28 Zoom Meeting). I hope that members of P&Z can put aside personal opinions about other towns and think about how Wilton can be a welcoming place for everyone whether you live here or not.

The Draft Street Typologies (Pg 137), however, do not address pedestrian experience on Danbury Rd. There is hardly any sidewalk along that road. How can you propose painted intersection with crosswalk but then not have a street typology for walking to other areas of greater Town Center? And the other subareas on the following pages promote "auto-oriented development". Great. That means visitors will still just be passing through anyway.

This is a disappointing outcome. The overlay zoning may result in a Stamford look and feel and not a village like feel like some of the other CT towns. I do not want our Town Center to look like New York town. I live in Connecticut, not New York. The Town Center Masterplan is still a draft and needs to go back to the drawing board. If there is a public vote on it, I would vote not to approve.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,
Rem Bigosinski, RLA

GREGORY AND ADAMS, P.C.

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OF COUNSEL

JULIAN A. GREGORY
(1912 - 2002)

THOMAS T. ADAMS
(1929 - 2015)

PLEASE REPLY TO SENDER:
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J. VANCE HANCOCK
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MATTHEW C. MASON*
JAMES D'ALTON MURPHY*
KATHLEEN L. ROYLE *
RALPH E. SLATER
ROGER R. VALKENBURGH *

* ALSO ADMITTED IN NEW YORK

⚙️ ALSO ADMITTED IN VERMONT

§ ADMITTED IN NY & NJ ONLY

October 19, 2023

Via Email

Planning and Zoning Commission

Town Hall Annex

238 Danbury Road

Wilton, CT 06897

Attn: Michael Wrinn – Director of Planning and Land Use Management

RE: Master Planning and Regulatory Changes

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Commission:

On behalf of our client Kimco Realty, we would like to thank the Master Planning Subcommittee and its members for the effort they put into conceptualizing the Master Plan for Wilton Center. We have been actively watching the production of the Master Plan and its ancillary regulations and look forward to working with the Planning and Zoning Commission to assist in bringing this new vision for Wilton Center to fruition. We support the adoption of both the Master Plan and the proposed regulations and hope that you can make them a reality.

Respectfully submitted,
GREGORY AND ADAMS, P.C.

/s/ J. Casey Healy

By: J. Casey Healy

JCH/klr

Cc: Nick Brown – Kimco Realty

Callahan, Rich

From: White, Daphne
Sent: Thursday, October 19, 2023 12:46 PM
To: waynegura@gmail.com
Cc: Wrinn, Michael; Callahan, Rich
Subject: RE: [wiltonct] Wilton Center (Sent by Wayne Gura, waynegura@gmail.com)

Hello Mr. Gura,
We have received your comments and concerns relating to Wilton Center.
Thank you,
Daphne White

From: Contact form at wiltonct <cmsmailer@civicplus.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 19, 2023 12:34 PM
To: White, Daphne <Daphne.White@WILTONCT.ORG>
Subject: [wiltonct] Town center (Sent by Wayne Gura, waynegura@gmail.com)

Hello dwhite,

Wayne Gura (waynegura@gmail.com) has sent you a message via your contact form (<https://www.wiltonct.org/user/65/contact>) at wiltonct.

If you don't want to receive such e-mails, you can change your settings at <https://www.wiltonct.org/user/65/edit>.

Message:

Please please please do not grant zoning for taller buildings than we currently have downtown - especially on River Road

A taller building that is currently there will just ruin the charm of the proposed Riverwalk

▪

Callahan, Rich

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

CAUTION: This email came from outside the Town network. Is it authentic? Don't click until you are sure.

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