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# WILTON 2019

PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

# Vision

As a result of a robust, participatory, and forward-thinking planning process, the Wilton community aspires to see the following vision realized:

“ Wilton has simultaneously respected its rich history and natural environment while growing and transforming itself into a 21<sup>st</sup>-century community. Learning the lessons of the town’s and region’s development in the 20th century, town leaders, and the community course-corrected to provide what has become a vibrant village core, dynamic commercial, and mixed-use spine along the Norwalk River and Danbury Road, where new businesses and residences have grown and new and old generations of Wiltonians live, work, shop, and play in a connected and harmonious built environment.

They have fostered a Wilton for the current community and next generation. A Wilton where town leaders and residents simply expect and demand a community that is inviting, prosperous, connected, clean, safe and sustainable, and provides exceptional education and recreation alongside modern services and infrastructure for its citizenry. A Wilton where new housing typologies and mixed-use designs emerge through organic means to provide desired and versatile living, working, shopping, and entertaining opportunities and experiences. A Wilton where its natural and historical environments are preserved, integrated, and improved to become sought-after design features, community amenities, and regional attractions. A Wilton where the post-war, automobile-centric suburban zoning model was rethought and revamped for the new millennium. A Wilton where the built form, function, and aesthetic guided policy on issues such as use, height, and setback. A Wilton where connectivity – natural, historical, physical, technological, social and economic – is cultivated by design. A Wilton that is an incubator of land-use ideas that attract residents, businesses and investors for their innovation and efficacy. A Wilton where forward-thinking citizens incentivized and educated the builders of the new millennium. A Wilton that is the model for Fairfield County and Connecticut in the 21st century.”

# Wilton at a Glance

## People



**Population 2018:** 18,397



**Median Household Income:** \$172,095



**Population Growth:** 1.8% between 2010 and 2018



**Education:** 76% of adults with at least a Bachelor's degree

## Economy



**Jobs 2016:** 12,978



**Job Growth:** 22% between 2007 and 2016



**Major Employers:**

- ASML
- Bridgewater Associates
- Tauck, Inc.
- Wilton Meadows
- Melissa & Doug LLC

## Quality of Life



**Train Stations:** 2

Travel time to Grand Central Terminal: ~90 minutes



**Protected Open Space:**

1,985 acres



**Public Schools:** 8th

best school district in CT (niche.com)

## Wilton's Commercial Districts



**Wilton Center**

Wilton Center is the focal point of community economic and cultural activity and offers high quality infrastructure and amenities, including the Wilton Train Station. Over the next decade the Town seeks to develop a Master Plan for Wilton Center and pursue residential, commercial, mixed-use, and transit-oriented development.



**Danbury Road**

Danbury Road is the central artery of the community. A regional employment hub, Danbury Road is home to major employers such as ASML and Tauck. Over the next ten years, the Town seeks to develop the corridor with a diverse mix of uses with the highest intensity uses in the southern portion of the corridor and more rural patterns north of Cannondale.



**Cannondale**

Cannondale is a small historic village located adjacent to the Cannondale Train Station. The Town seeks to develop a Master Plan for Cannondale and pursue mixed-use, residential, and commercial development that is compatible with the village's unique historic character and charm.



**Georgetown**

Georgetown is a historic village that spans portions of Wilton, Redding, and Weston. In conjunction with neighboring towns, Wilton seeks to strengthen Georgetown as a vibrant, mixed-use village, centered around a redeveloped Gilbert & Bennett Mill complex.

# Plan Themes and Goals

The Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) is both a visionary and action-oriented guide to inform the Town's land use decisions and community investments over the next ten years. The POCD planning process allowed the community to focus on "the big picture," affirm goals identified in the last plan, identify new trends, and to prepare for future opportunities and challenges. The POCD identifies specific actions that the Town can take to help achieve its vision over the next decade and beyond. These actions are organized under three overarching themes and sixteen goals as outlined below:



## **Overarching Theme:**

*Wilton will pursue attractive and appropriate development that increases the vibrancy of its village centers and commercial corridors, while preserving its historic character. High quality transportation and utility infrastructure will support both residents and the business community.*

## **Goals:**

- 1) Strengthen Wilton Center as a vibrant economic, residential, recreational and cultural hub for the community and region
- 2) Pursue context-sensitive economic development on Danbury road
- 3) Strengthen the economic viability of the Cannondale area while protecting its unique design and historical character
- 4) Strengthen the Georgetown node through mixed-use, transit and pedestrian oriented development
- 5) Enhance Wilton's transportation network for all modes and users
- 6) Improve and maintain Town-owned facilities and services in a fiscally prudent manner
- 7) Maintain safe and efficient public utility services and infrastructure



*Wilton will support diverse housing types while protecting its low-density residential neighborhoods. The Town will maintain its high quality schools, town facilities, and services, and will foster a sense of community.*

- 1) Continue to increase housing options to benefit the shared interests of the Town's residential and commercial communities
- 2) Preserve and protect Wilton's established rural and lower-density residential neighborhoods
- 3) Enhance the strength and diversity of the local economy and its connections to the region
- 4) Continue to cultivate and maintain a high-quality school system under local control
- 5) Foster community engagement, coordination, and a culture of self-governance



*Wilton will preserve and protect its natural resources, rural areas, and historic resources; and, provide residents with access to high quality open spaces, and recreational opportunities. The Town will continue to be a state leader in sustainability and conservation efforts.*

- 1) Conserve and Enhance Open Space and Greenways
- 2) Protect Wilton's abundant natural resources
- 3) Continue to lead the State in energy conservation and resiliency, waste reduction, sustainability, and public health
- 4) Preserve Wilton's Rural Character, Historic Resources, and Cultural Landscapes

# Built Environment

Wilton's built environment includes the human-made features and facilities that make the Town a great place to live, work, and play, including its aesthetic design, building scale and form, infrastructure, and public buildings.

## At a Glance:

- The Town completed streetscape upgrades in Wilton Center in 2017, including new sidewalks, lighting, benches, and bollards.
- The Town has designed a pedestrian bridge linking Wilton Center to the train station area and is pursuing grant funds for construction.
- Danbury Road is the Town's most well-traveled corridor, with traffic volumes ranging from 18,500 vehicles per day near Ridgefield to over 30,000 vehicles per day in South Wilton.
- Sanitary sewer infrastructure is available on Danbury Road south of Olmstead Hill Road, in Wilton Center, and along portions of Westport Road and Wolfpit Road.
- Over the last decade, the Town has completed several major capital projects, including a renovation to the Comstock Community Center, renovations to the Wilton Public Library, and a major renovation and addition at Miller-Driscoll School.

## Our Focus for the Future:

### Enhance Wilton Center as the economic and cultural hub of the community

Wilton Center is an opportunity area for mixed-use and transit-oriented development and an area where the Town can diversify its housing stock. Through a Master Planning process, the Town will develop a long-term vision for Wilton Center and will identify ways to better connect the area to nearby assets such as the Wilton Train Station, Danbury Road, and the Norwalk River.

### Pursue context-sensitive economic development on Danbury Road

Development on Danbury Road varies in scale, density, and design based on location and availability of infrastructure. Danbury Road in South Wilton contains the highest-density development in Town while north of Cannon Road, Danbury Road is primarily rural in character. The Town has identified Danbury Road south of Cannon Road as a priority development area. With limited vacant land available, future development in this area will primarily be the redevelopment of underperforming or obsolete land uses.

### Strengthen Cannondale and Georgetown

Cannondale and Georgetown are two smaller village centers that offer unique historic charm and an eclectic mix of businesses. Through a Master Planning process, the Town will develop a long-term vision for the two villages and will pursue development that is consistent with each village's unique character. Due to its inter-municipal location, planning and investments in Georgetown should be a coordinated with neighboring municipalities.



*Photo Credit: Paul Warchol*

### Maintain high-quality infrastructure and facilities

Several major infrastructure investments are planned over the coming decade including the widening of Route 7 between Lambert Corner and Grumman Hill Road, and upgrades to the Danbury Branch rail line. With a growing work-from-home population, the Town also recognizes the need for high quality telecommunications infrastructure, including cellular and high-speed internet service.

# Human & Economic Environment

Wilton's human and economic environment includes housing, social, and economic programs, policies, and services that make Wilton an attractive place to live, work, and do business.

## At a Glance:

- As of 2016, there were nearly 13,000 jobs in Wilton. The number of jobs in Wilton increased by 22% between 2007 and 2016.
- The Town established an Economic Development Commission (EDC) in 2012 to help identify business needs, establish a Town marketing and branding campaign, and better market and promote Wilton as a place to live, work, and do business.
- Wilton is one of the few communities in Connecticut to maintain an AAA bond rating.
- About 84% of Wilton's housing units are single-family. However, in recent years there have been efforts to diversify the housing stock. Over 200 multi-family housing units were built and/or approved over the last decade.
- Wilton High School was recognized as the 9th best high school in Connecticut by U.S. News & World Report in 2019. Rankings are based on reading and math proficiency, college readiness, and Advanced Placement test scores.

## Our Focus for the Future:

### Diversify the housing stock

Wilton recognizes the need to diversify its housing stock in order to accommodate all life stages, including its workforce, families with children, single-persons, and empty nesters. This includes providing housing at a greater variety of sizes, styles, and price points and modifying the Town's regulations to enable and incentivize this type of development. A diverse housing stock can support existing residents, attract new residents, and provide a larger employee and customer base for Wilton businesses.

### Enhance the strength and diversity of the local economy and its connections to the region

Wilton has a highly educated and talented workforce, strong financial standing, successful small businesses, major corporate entities, and access to a large and diverse labor pool via the Route 7 corridor. The Town is committed to strengthening its local economy by marketing its assets to prospective businesses, modifying regulations to encourage business growth, and supporting the Town's growing telecommuting population.

### Maintain a high-quality school system

Wilton Public Schools is the Town's greatest asset and is one of the principal reasons why residents choose Wilton as a place to live. Recent facilities upgrades position the district to meet the needs of current and future students over the coming decade. Wilton will continue prudent community control and cost-effective investment in school facilities and programming to maintain and enhance Wilton Public Schools' attractiveness to current and prospective residents and businesses.

### Improve systems and processes for land use matters

Upgraded Town systems enable a more efficient and effective land-use application process, improve potential business development, and increase community participation in land-use matters. The Town will explore ways to improve these systems and processes, including the use of electronic applications and forms, enhanced pre-application process, improved coordination between various boards and commissions, and ways to improve community participation in the decision making process.



*Photo Credit: Wilton Economic Development Commission*

# Natural & Historical Environment

Wilton's natural and historical environment includes natural resources, habitats, cultural resources, and historic resources that contribute to Wilton's high quality of life and unique character.

## At a Glance:

- Wilton benefits from a wide variety of natural resources and open spaces, including forested lands, agricultural fields, wetlands, and meadows. As of 2018, Wilton is home to about 2,000 acres of protected open space, about half of which is owned and maintained by the Town.
- Wilton continues to develop its section of the Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT) to provide residents a high-quality recreational amenity that connects them to the Town's natural beauty and, is planned to eventually connect to the Norwalk shore and Danbury. Several sections of the NRVT have been built in the last five years, and additional segments are in the planning stages.
- Wilton has significant historic resources including a National Historic Site, three National Historic Districts, five Local Historic Districts, a State Scenic Road, and five Local Scenic Roads.
- The Town is a state leader in energy conservation, sustainability and waste management. The Town has achieved a 20% energy reduction over the last decade and has been recognized for its waste reduction efforts such as the Zero Waste Challenge, Carry-in Carry-out Program, and household hazardous waste collection programs.

## Our Focus for the Future:

### Conserve and steward open spaces

The Town and local organizations have significant holdings of open space that protect natural resources and provide residents with opportunities for passive recreation. The Town will continue to focus its efforts on maintaining and stewarding existing open space lands. One major effort over the next decade will be the continued development of trail systems including the Norwalk River Valley Trail and proposed River Walk in Wilton Center.

### Protect water resources

A majority of Wilton residents rely on private wells for their drinking water, it is critical to protect water quality through the reduction of non-point source pollution. The Town will continue to implement its stormwater management plan and will explore regulatory changes and incentives to encourage stormwater best management practices.

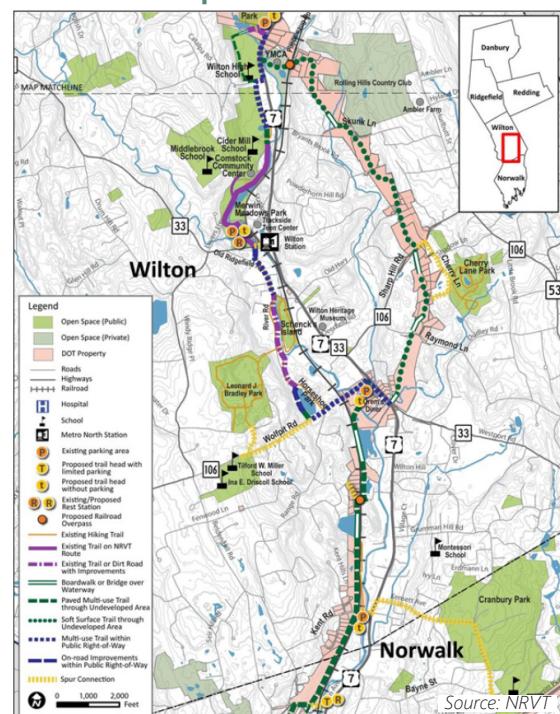
### Preserve historic resources

Wilton has significant historic assets from its rural origins, which fundamentally complement its natural environment and contribute to its character, sense of place, and quality of life. The Town will help preserve historically significant structures by reviewing the Town's administrative process, exploring regulatory or zoning incentives for historic preservation, and educating property owners and the public on the value of historic structures.

### Promote energy efficiency and resiliency

Wilton will continue to incorporate cost effective energy efficiency upgrades to Town facilities and private development, which meet environmental goals and help reduce overall building operating costs. The Town plans to meet 70% of municipal and school building energy needs through rooftop solar and virtual net meters. With severe weather becoming more common in recent years, the Town will also evaluate ways to improve the resiliency of critical facilities.

### Proposed NRVT Route





Town of Wilton

[www.wiltonct.org](http://www.wiltonct.org)