

**HISTORIC DISTRICT &
HISTORIC PROPERTY
COMMISSION**

Allison Sanders, Chair
Lisa Pojano, Vice-Chair
Gilbert Weatherly, Clerk
Jeffrey Bendremer
Lori Fusco

Alternates

Pam Brown
Peter Gaboriault
Alice Schroeder



**TOWN HALL
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, Connecticut 06897**

2022 Annual Report

2022 Commissioners:

(All Commissioners and Alternates Continuing)

Allison Gray Sanders, Chair

Lisa Pojano, Vice-Chair (term ended November)

Gilbert Weatherly, Clerk

Jeffrey Bendremer

Alternates: Pam Brown, Peter Gaboriault, Alice Schroeder (term ended November)

Meetings Held:

Regular: January 4; February 2; March 1; April 5; June 3; November 1; December 6

Special: March 23; April 14; April 28; September 21; October 6

Site Walk: October 21

Achievements:

Applied for and received approval for CLG status in August, an important POCD goal.

Lobbied for a voice in the master plan process and made a presentation to the P&Z Wilton Center Area Master Plan Subcommittee on March 10. Chair and Vice-Chair provided insight as well as the 2020 "Historic Preservation Tool Kit" report prepared for the HDC to the committee and consultants BJB. The Wilton Center area in discussion includes a stretch of Route 7 which includes multiple historic structures and sites, such as an HRI-listed stone church, cemetery, and LHD #5 with a National Register property. Advocated preservation and use of the Tool Kit for the list (by address) of historic properties and places that are in the area subject to the Master Plan review.

Provided material about historic preservation for the certification application for Sustainable CT; Wilton was awarded Silver Certification in November.

Other Work of the Commission:

GIS Overlay of Local Historic Districts: Commission continues to work with P&Z and IT

Departments to accomplish this POCD goal. Due to other IT work, the overlay project was delayed during early 2022 but is once again active.

Continued to actively support Friends of Ambler Farm as they work with the town to obtain funding for urgently needed repairs of the Platt-Raymond House and completion of renovation for the Ambler House. Issued statements and arranged an October site walk for HDC and public to view conditions.

Arranged “Energy Efficiency, Renewable Energy and Historic Preservation” presentation to HDC by Municipal Outreach Coordinator Patrice Gillespie of CT Energy Network; took place 12/6.

Lover’s Lane Bridge Replacement (State project) Met with Town Engineer to discuss materials selection for this bridge adjacent to LHD #2.

Demolition Delay Ordinance Revision: Final suggested changes to the proposed update of the Demo delay were submitted to First Selectwoman and Town Counsel in July 2020. Commission was advised that funding would need to be allocated for legal review. No further action in 2022.

COA Requests: 70 Ridgefield Road/Wilton Congregational Church Air intake vents approved with conditions.

Demolition without permit:

475 Danbury Road Owner of disassembled/removed barn fined \$500

Demolition Delay Applications – None delayed:

38 Kingdom Ridge Road

141 Danbury Road

83 Forest Lane

11 Powder Horn Hill

73 Cherry Lane

STATEMENTS & A List of Historic Danbury Road Properties Provided for Town Center Master Planning Committee:

TO: Board of Selectmen

FROM: Allison Sanders, Chair, HDC

DATE: March 1, 2022

RE: ARPA Infrastructure Priorities Project per BOS Meeting Feb 22, 2022

Statement of Support for repairs and renovations to the “Yellow House” at Ambler Farm

The Historic District Commission strongly supports and recommends that the Town allocate a minimum of \$200,000 for the repair and renovation of the historic c 1799/1890 Platt Raymond Ambler House aka the “Yellow House” at Ambler Farm. The building is suffering from considerable deferred maintenance, and is urgently in need of restoration.

Further delays in upkeep will continue a precipitous decline in the condition of the structure. Unoccupied buildings, particularly historic ones, are vulnerable to temperature fluctuations, weather penetrations, pest infestation and neglect. This is a unique opportunity to improve the current state of the property.

Repairs to the exterior must respect the existing architectural elements of this important building, which appears on the Town's Historic Resource Inventory (Historic House Survey). There are many distinctive details, such as the decorative shingles, which give the building character and architectural significance. Another important aspect is preserving the style, size and proportions of the existing doors and windows.

The longer the town waits to do the necessary repairs, the more the building will need: please act now to preserve the "Yellow House."

March 10, 2022

Provided to Wilton Center Area Master Planning Sub-Committee and BJB Consultants – list plus HDC commissioned "Historic Preservation Tools for Commercial Properties Report 6/2020"

List of Danbury Road Properties of concern:

Rt 7 (Wolfpit Road to Pimpewaug Road) property list showing **historic** structures

RED = potential for change/redevelopment **YELLOW= Historic**

HRI = Historic Resource Inventory (Historic House Survey)

East Side:

190 Danbury Road (Devan Chevrolet)

196 Danbury Road (Hastings) **HRI c 1840**

200 Danbury Road (Sharp Hill Square) includes Raymond-Morehouse House **c 1835 HRI**

218 Danbury Road (Halpern Accounting) **HRI c1880**

224 Danbury Road (Wilton Historical Museum Complex)

LHD #5 (1740 – 1900), National Register Fitch House, 1772

228 Danbury Road (1947, karate)

230 Danbury Road (1943, hair salon)

232 Danbury Road (for rent, previously real estate office) **HRI c1845**

238 Danbury Road (Town of Wilton Complex) Town Hall **HRI 1930**

242 Danbury Road St. Matthews Cemetery **historic site**

250 Danbury Road, (For rent, previously real estate office) **HRI c 1860**

254 Danbury Road, Baptist Church (Formerly St. Matthews), **HRI 1860**

300 Danbury Road, Crossways, Comstock House **HRI 1791**

(Development pending: proposed mixed use, historic house slated for demolition)

{ **2 Pimpewaug**, (landscaping) Chichester-Gregory House **HRI 1790** }

West Side:

187 Danbury Road (office complex)
195 Danbury Road (office and medical complex)
203 Danbury Road (former liquor store/gas station)
211 Danbury Road (Sunrise Assisted Living)
213 Danbury Road (daycare)
215 Danbury Road, (animal hospital)
221 Danbury Road, (landscape design Glengate) Proposed apartment building
225/229 Danbury Road, (OLF School and Church)
with residential building behind #225 HRI c 1841)
235 Danbury Road (1946, A Nu You hair salon)
237 Danbury Road (retail Blue Star Bazaar& Southern Yankee) HRI 1873 + strip with nail
salon, 2 restaurants
241 Danbury Road (future Mormon Church site)
249 Danbury Road (2017, medical building)
255 Danbury Road (1934, residence)
261 Danbury Road (1927, kitchen design) HRI 1927
263/265 Danbury Road (1956/1941, former shoe repair

TO: P& Z

FROM: Allison Gray Sanders, Chair, HDC

DATE: March 23, 2022

RE: 8-24 Referral (MR#152) Extension of the Sanitary Sewer line from 19 Cannon
Road/Cannondale to Danbury Road

The Historic District and Historic Property Commission urges, in the strongest possible terms, that P&Z advise the WPCA to deny the request for an extension of the sanitary sewer line in the 8-24 Referral.

Cannondale is small but complex area both geographically and historically. Packed into a handful of acres in a scenic valley are a river, a bridge, a railroad track and station, a mill pond, dam, old trees, stone walls, and diverse historic buildings. It has retained it's authentic New England-style small village character, and would look quite familiar to Mr. Charles Cannon, whose name identifies the area. It is an irreplaceable piece of Wilton's history.

Recognized in the national program to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources, Cannondale has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1992. Cannondale National Register District documentation codifies the inventory of important buildings and features as well as providing a professional appraisal of the extent of the existing historic neighborhood.

Following the directive of the POCD, the town is engaged with master planning Wilton Center, and is already seeing the benefits of that analysis. **The POCD also calls for the town to implement a master planning process for "the Cannondale Node"** (pg. 95). A planning process would carefully and thoughtfully strive to create a plan that embraces and enhances the topography and existing historic architectural features of this undervalued resource. **The key**

point is that any sizeable project, (as evidenced by the proposal, which requires a sanitary sewer extension) should not, cannot be pursued until Master Planning is complete.

Another way to consider the issue: if P&Z chooses to support the 8-24 request, then planning options that would have been available to the town will have been forestalled. Possibilities will have been pre-empted, and the intent of the POCD will be thwarted.

Even without a master plan, there is no question that the size, density, and use of the proposed project would be antithetical to what is appropriate for Cannondale Village as envisioned by the POCD. **The POCD's Goal 4 "Preserve Wilton's Rural Character, Historic Resources and Cultural Landscapes"** (pages 39-40) states: "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. Notable historical and scenic assets include [among others]: Cannondale National Register District." This is a place to "establish zoning incentives for preserving historic structures" which is in the POCD as well. A variety of incentives are already being discussed in the current master planning of Wilton Center, using the HDC-provided "Historic Preservation Tools for Commercial Buildings" report.

The recent design proposed for 19 Cannon Road would dominate the surrounding structures, and open the door to more over-scale development jammed into a small space. Overall, it would be non-compliant with POCD Goal 3 (page 70) which is to **Strengthen the economic vitality of the Cannondale area while protecting its unique design and historical character.**

When it comes to the future of Cannondale Village – arguably an area with an unmistakable New England-style sense of place – it is impossible to justify proceeding with a sewer extension before master planning. Please advise the WPCA to deny a sanitary sewer extension to the 19 Cannon Road project.

TO: Water Pollution Control Authority
Planning & Zoning Commission

FROM: Allison Sanders, Chair

DATE: October 6, 2022

RE: 8-24 Referral: Wilton Water Pollution Control Authority – to P&Z: Extension of Sanitary Sewer from 19 Cannon Road to Danbury Road for a proposed development at 19 Cannon Road

Cannondale is small but complex area both geographically and historically. Packed into a handful of acres in a scenic valley are a river, a bridge, a railroad track and station, a mill pond, dam, old trees, stone walls, and diverse historic buildings. It has retained its authentic New England-style small village character. It is an irreplaceable piece of Wilton's history.

**Regarding Hinckley Allen letter of September 1, 2022 re: 19 Cannon Road:
Page 2, Item A “The parcel . . . is not located in a historic district.”**

The Historic District and Historic Property Commission takes issue with the above statement. Recognized in the national program to identify, evaluate, and protect America’s historic and archeological resources, Cannondale has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1992. Cannondale National Register District documentation codifies the inventory of important buildings and features as well as providing a professional appraisal of the extent of the existing historic neighborhood.

19 Cannon Road is located in the Cannondale National Register District

In addition to the area being designated as the Cannondale National Register District, the structure at 19 Cannon Road, which is to be demolished to make way for the proposed project, is listed on Wilton’s Historic Resource Inventory (HRI) of structures that are important to the town for their historical and/or architectural attributes. The Colonial Revival-style “Ambler House” c 1905 “contributes to the original residential character of Cannondale” and is further described as “picturesque . . . set on generous, park-like grounds” as described by architectural historian Mary McCahon in the 1989 historic house survey.



Catherine and Lewis Ambler House c 1905

Master Planning

Following the directive of the POCD, the town is engaged with master planning for Wilton Center. **The POCD also calls for the town to implement a master planning process for the area, and for “the Cannondale Node.”** A planning process would carefully and thoughtfully strive to create a plan that embraces and enhances the topography and existing historic architectural features of this undervalued resource.

Any sizeable project, such as the proposal for 19 Cannon Road, should not be pursued until Master Planning is complete.

POCD Goal 4 “Preserve Wilton’s Rural Character, Historic Resources and Cultural Landscapes”

Even without a master plan, there is no question that the size, density, and use of the proposed project would be antithetical to what is appropriate for Cannondale Village as envisioned by the POCD. The POCD’s Goal 4 “Preserve Wilton’s Rural Character, Historic Resources and Cultural Landscapes” states: “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. Notable historical and scenic assets include [among others]: Cannondale National Register District.” This is a place to “establish zoning incentives for preserving historic structures” which is in the POCD as well. A variety of incentives are already being discussed in the current master planning of Wilton Center, using the HDC-provided “Historic Preservation Tools for Commercial Buildings” report.

The design proposed for 19 Cannon Road would dominate the surrounding structures. **Overall, it would be non-compliant with POCD Goal 3 which is to “Strengthen the economic vitality of the Cannondale area while protecting its unique design and historical character.”**

When it comes to the future of Cannondale Village – an area with an unmistakable New England-style sense of place – it is impossible to justify proceeding with a sewer extension before master planning.

TO: Planning & Zoning Commission

FROM: Allison Sanders, Chair

DATE: October 14, 2022

RE: OPPOSITION: MR#154, 8-24 Referral - Wilton Water Pollution Control Authority/Baywing LLC – Sanitary sewer line extension - 19 Cannon Rd to Danbury Rd

Cannondale is small but complex area both geographically and historically. Packed into a handful of acres in a scenic valley are a river, a bridge, a railroad track and station, a mill pond, dam, old trees, stone walls, and diverse historic buildings. It has retained its authentic New England-style small village character and is a National Register Historic District. It is an irreplaceable piece of Wilton’s history and would be severely compromised by development of this scale.

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historic neighborhood. **19 Cannon Road is located in the Cannondale National Register District**

Buildings” report.

Historic Resource Inventory Designation

In addition to the area being designated as the Cannondale National Register District, the structure at 19 Cannon Road, which is to be demolished to make way for the proposed project, is listed on Wilton’s Historic Resource Inventory (HRI) of structures that are important to the town for their historical and/or architectural attributes. Related to both the Cannon and Ambler families, the structure is the Colonial Revival-style “Ambler House” c 1905 and “contributes to the original residential character of Cannondale” and is further described as “picturesque . . . set on generous, park-like grounds” as described by architectural historian Mary McCahon in the 1989 historic house survey.

PHOTO

Catherine and Lewis Ambler House built c 1905

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December 2, 2022

To: Lynne Vanderslice, First Selectwoman

From: Allison Sanders, HDC Chair

Thank you for your note regarding our last meeting.

HDC continues to be very concerned about the state of the Yellow House, and we appreciate your detailed commentary on BOS budgetary concerns, use of the building, and interface with FOAF (Friends of Ambler Farm). We have been in touch with Ashley [Executive Director] on an ongoing basis and have asked to be kept updated.

I offer the following comments as this project unfolds.

POCD:

While it is your/BOS' obligation to focus heavily on cost and use, I think what is getting short shrift in this discussion is the historic importance of Ambler Farm, of which the Yellow House is a substantial component. I go back to the POCD's repeated emphasis on historic preservation.

Here are POCD's four "Overarching Themes" from "Natural and Historical Environment" (page 24):

- 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

In #4 above, the reasons for the essential continued preservation and stewardship of Ambler Farm are fully described – the property's Rural Character, Historic Resources and Cultural Landscape. The POCD goes on to further expand those broad themes and set goals for enhancing #4.

Historic Importance:

To answer your question: The Yellow House is not on the State or National Historic Register.

However, it is on our town Historic Resource Inventory here: <https://wiltonhistorical.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Hurlbutt-Street-275.pdf>

You may or may not be aware that in 2007, the HDC prepared an Ambler Farm Study Report, which is the first step to creating a Local Historic District. Ambler Farm is important enough that it qualifies for, and should be a LHD. However, my understanding is that this Study Report (attached) was not acted on/ignored by the First Selectman and was not presented to BOS for consideration.

Going back to your original question about National Register status, quite a bit of research is already done via this study report... it would be worth looking into what else would be needed. I think there may be enough here to get State Registration, which would be helpful in obtaining National status. As for National Historic Register status; I do not know how long that process takes. The actual application is usually prepared by a paid consultant as it is rather specialized. It may be possible to

obtain a grant to cover it.

The questions you alluded to about other places to house an Ambler Farm employee (such as the White House or another residential property owned by the town) raise the alarming implication that the Yellow House would no longer exist – via demolition.

This is really disturbing.

There are three major points which argue against demolition:

While the Town has every legal right to demolish the building, it sets a terrible precedent and example. Since the POCD was published, P & Z has challenged developers to work with existing historic buildings – not demolish them: Sharp Hill Square is an excellent result. P & Z has established the ARB to provide developers with helpful design review, again, to nudge design in a direction that supports character, historic resources and cultural landscapes. If the Town seems unwilling to follow the POCD, then why should anyone else?

From the conservation angle, it is said: “the greenest building is the one that is already built”. POCD theme #3 from the list “Continue to lead the State in energy conservation and resiliency, waste reduction, sustainability, and public health” argues against demolition. Demolition results in a huge load of shingles, wood framing, brick from chimneys, stone foundations, wood flooring, and historic windows, not to mention carpeting, linoleum, drywall and other non-historic materials dumped in landfills. It is a tremendous waste and contrary to the Town-wide conservation efforts documented by Wilton Go Green to achieve “Silver” certification.

Last, but certainly not least. Ambler Farm – from the red barn to the icehouse to the white house and the yellow house – is an important assemblage of buildings. Removal of a key structure leaves a gaping hole in the historic fabric and reduces its integrity.

From the Ambler Farm Study Committee Report:

“Ambler Farm is the centerpiece of the Hurlbutt Street neighborhood. The purchase of the farm by the Town of Wilton (1999) confirmed the conviction of the voters that this unique and significant property should best survive as open space, available for educational, agricultural and enjoyment purposes. As long as this property retains this integrity, it preserves a critical piece of our rural and architectural past, contributes to our knowledge and enrichment, and reinforces the foundation on which our Wilton future rests.”