

Wilton Economic Development Commission (WEDC)

Business Survey Recommendations

Draft V34 – August 24, 2023 Redline

WEDC surveyed Wilton businesses regarding Wilton sign regulations. A survey of Wilton residents regarding signage is forthcoming. 34 responses were received from businesses located in town center and along route 7 north and south of route 33.

Many business respondents noted that signage was extremely important for both advertising and visibility of their locations and that current regulations did not meet their needs. Based on the survey, we have identified two key areas that we recommend be addressed with the current regulations. We believe that some added discretion should be granted to the Zoning commissioner to allow for variances to the existing restrictions to address unique business location circumstances that warrant some added signage and that meets the many purposes stated in the existing Supplementary Regulations 29-8 Section A.1.

1. Obscured Non-Street Facing Businesses That Rely on Foot or Car Traffic for Visibility.

While there were some limited comments seeking larger signs and internal lighting, many comments were focused on the desire for added signage to address lack of visibility to traffic.

There are a number of B2C businesses that are not street facing or otherwise obscure yet rely heavily on foot traffic or car traffic to generate or direct traffic to their business. Absent added visible signage these businesses will continue to struggle to gain awareness and visibility. A variance to the current regulations should be made to allow these businesses to seek a permit to allow for a permanent (but perhaps during business hours only) A-frame sign to be placed in an agreed upon location to highlight their business and direct traffic to its location. To avoid clutter, the Zoning Office would need some discretion to identify those specific businesses that rely heavily on foot or car traffic for whom this exception would be allowed. Different standards should be established for town center versus route 7 businesses (which are less dependent on foot traffic and vehicle traffic travels at a faster speed; i.e., larger signs). Uniform size, border and color standards could be developed to maintain some conformity in the signage permitted in town-center.

2. Improvements to the Process

We believe that the process for temporary added signage consistent with the current regulations should be automated and quickly and easily accessible to businesses so that businesses can readily receive a permit to add a temporary sign to place during business hours for an event or special offering. The specific requirements should be clearly explained in the online process including any costs for non-

conformity. Temporary signage of this sort may be up during business hours only and include clear limitations on location, spacing, duration and frequency. Clear photo examples of permitted temporary signs should be made available as part of the online process.

~~With the improved temporary sign process, business should be directed to the process for approval. Notice of the improved process should be directed to businesses (e.g., via the Chamber of Commerce) and enforcement of non-complying temporary signs should be enhanced and consistent. Lack of consistency in enforcement was a concern raised by businesses. The improved signage process should be made accessible through the town website. Temporary signs that do not conform to permitting could be removed by zoning enforcement.~~

~~The EDC has created a "sign guidebook" identifying the various types of signs and showing examples to familiarize business owners with sign nomenclature. This guidebook should be available as part of the permit application process. If the town struggles with enforcement of temporary signage requirements consideration could be had to demanding a credit card for approval and failure to comply with the requirements after written notice of violation would result in an automatic credit card charge.~~

~~Except for the noted exceptions, it vital that the regulations need to be applied with better consistency, as that was raised in some of the surveys.~~

~~Another point is to create a spotlight on the town home page for new businesses. That would serve as an entry point for all the functions needed by businesses new to town, including the sign app process.~~

~~Also, I'd like to suggest that the guide book that Prasad and Peter developed be formally added to the process. It would be an exceptional aid in providing visual guidance on signage regs and styles. A huge time saver for businesses.~~