



WILTON ECO-DEV

Re-imagining the future of a rural NH community

October 2016

Wilton New Hampshire 03086

In a 5 minute walk you can shop antiques, get your hunting license, drop off your dry cleaning, send a FAX, rent a tux, have your hair done, mail a present, buy a house, get your teeth cleaned, eat paella and pizza, sip cappuccino, see a movie, listen to Boston blues bands, grab a good book, crunch on caramel and dark chocolate turtles, register your car, vaccinate your dog, take a yoga class, scrap book your heart out, get a bikini wax and literally smell the roses at Works of Heart.



Town of Wilton, NH

In a 10 minute drive you can find the trail head to wilderness hiking, pull a trout out of a clear lake, join a full moon ceremony, take in some New England history, see bear cubs, watch wild turkeys cross the road and wonder why, plant a garden, eat and shop local, gorge on fresh almond croissants, meet friends, sled across 4 towns, swim under a waterfall, build a barn, add on a place for mom, educate your kids public, private or home school, breath clean air, drink clean water and live safe and free.



What the residents said...

- We love our small, rural town. We're not Milford or Peterborough.
- Save our attractions! The Town Theatre, Local's Café, library, historic sites and conservation lands
- Downtown is a Norman Rockwell painting. Just upgrade the facades, clean up the signage, create some directional signs to mills and satellite parking.
- Make the "park" children and senior friendly.
- Market our town. You can't find it on Google or Trip Advisor.
- We need a small country store/bakery for grocery and drug store convenience shopping, a basic, low cost food family restaurant, coffee all day, a pub, more retail value shopping.
- Standardize operating hours for downtown businesses.
- Exploit the river and railroad, create reasons to walk around downtown.
- Don't allow anymore residential development along Main St. We need all the commercial properties we can to accommodate basic services for all.

Source: Revitalize Wilton SWOT, Survey Monkey, from Oct 2015 to present, 60 respondents

Strengths

- Small town
- Location (access to 101, Rt. 31; close to Manchester, Nashua, Peterborough, MA border)
- Outdoor activities -- trails, etc.
- Points of interest -- Town Hall Theater, Frye Measure Mill, etc.
- Souhegan River
- Private school (Pine Hill/ High Mowing)
- High-speed internet access (TDS)
- Library (EXPAND)
- Historical town
- Old mill infrastructure
- Safe community

Opportunities

- Increasing “buy local” trend
- Utilize the Souhegan River -- river walk, parks, etc.

Weaknesses

- School system/perception of school system
- Appearance of downtown -- facades need updated
- Lack of activities/night life
- Lack of stores -- no pharmacy, grocery store, laundry mat, etc.
- Parking in downtown/perception of parking issues
- Low discretionary income
- Lack of businesses/variety
- Lack of high-paying jobs
- Unfavorable attitude towards business/signage; Poor signage on 101
- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of offerings for “younger” people
- No public transportation
- High property taxes
- Low household income
- Aging population
- Small population (lack of growth)
- Area in Milford before entering Main Street Wilton lacks appeal
- Traffic patterns on Main Street
- Lack of accommodations for travelers

Threats**Threats**

- Above average school systems in neighboring towns

Charter

Our responsibilities are to set priorities, make recommendations, and guide the execution of programs and projects that help achieve the vision of Wilton residents to remain a vibrant and thriving small town. Our goals are to protect its rural environment, historic charm, and natural resources; while promoting opportunities for residential and business growth that are compatible, responsive to and supportive of the needs of the community and local economy.

Three major focus areas for our work

■ Diversify the tax base

Develop data on which town departments can make future decisions about balanced development. Invest in new businesses in emerging and trending sectors, while retaining current businesses and anchor attractions. Seek out funds and grants that can offset costs for development and approved projects

■ Build a vibrant downtown

We need to address residents' basic needs for a small grocery store, a casual eating place and other establishments that meet local needs. But successful retail districts need to attract tourists as well as serve their own residents and even with the shift to on-line sales, 60% of retail sales will still happen in physical stores. Shopping remains part of the entertainment mix in Main Street districts and downtowns are still the center of our civic life.

■ Establish Wilton as a destination

Market Wilton's existing destinations, promote tourism-based opportunities, and review existing regulations to ensure they support Wilton's rural and agricultural character as well as town goals related to economic development and livability.

Our Approach

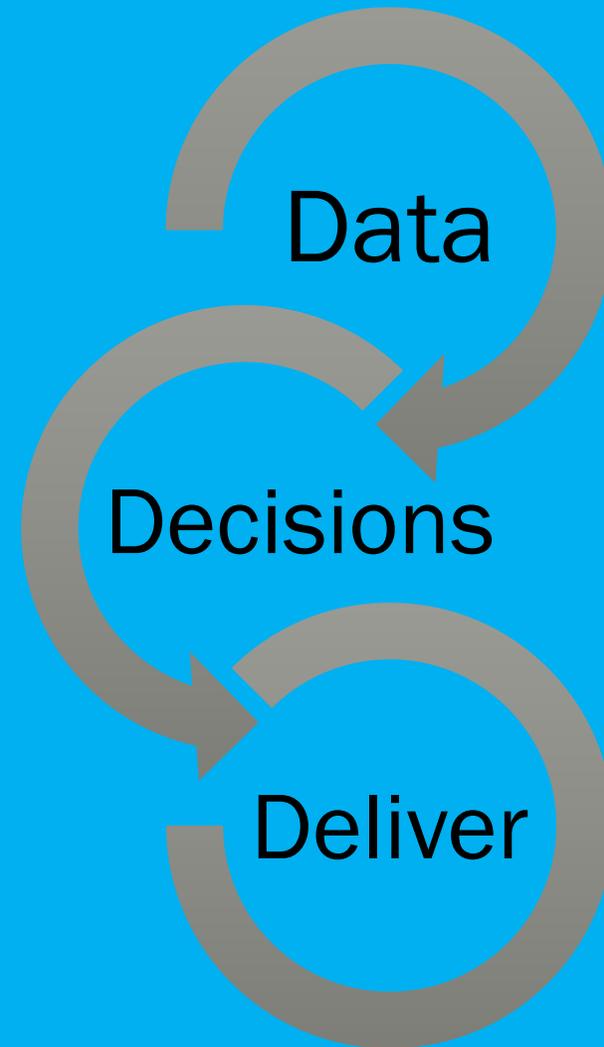
Ask the right questions and gather the facts and analyze the data

Seek out external input, resources and the wants and needs of residents and businesses.

Make recommendations to Town Boards and Budget Committee

Develop project plans and budgets for priority initiatives.

Identify resources and guide execution.



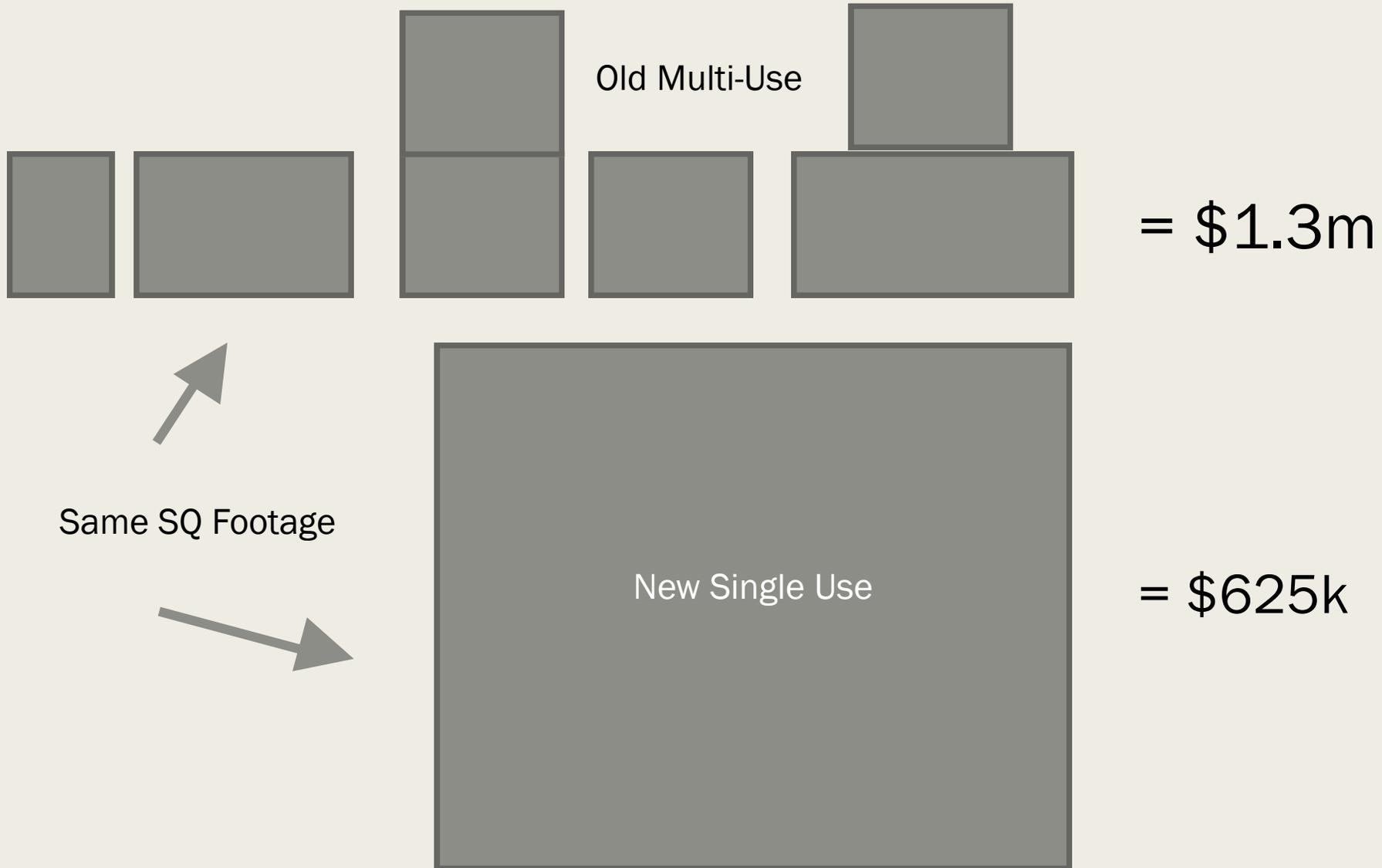
What we're reading...

- City Rules: How Regulations Affect Urban Form -- Emily Talen
- Above and Beyond: Visualizing Change in Small Towns and Rural Areas - Julie Campoli
- A Pattern Language -- Christopher Alexander et al
- The High Cost of Free Parking-- Don Shoup
- Rural By Design--- Randall Arendt
- The Walkable City: How Downtown can save America One Step at a time -- Jeff Speck
- The Urban Design Handbook: Techniques and Working Methods
- A Public Place Design Guide for Urbanists--- Mark C. Childs
- A Building History of Northern New England --James L. Garvin
- Tomorrow's Cities, Tomorrow's Suburbs - -William H. Lucy and David L. Phillips
- Pocket Neighborhoods-- Ross Chapin
- The Language of Towns and Cities: A Visual Dictionary -- Dhiru A. Thadani
- A Street Through Time-- Anne Millard and Steve Noon, illus.
- The Original Green--- Steve Mouzon

Asking the right questions...

- What is the Wilton brand? What is the desired end state we're building toward?
- What are the next generation of economic drivers?
- Can we be an entrepreneurial seed bed? Many successful companies start as home-based businesses. But digital age businesses don't care about real estate, they care about connectivity.
- Do we have the resources for light manufacturing, small tech, even professional services firms who say their challenge is attracting qualified younger employees?
- Could we target visitors in the young married sector. Many who visit, eventually move here seeking an urban culture, village lifestyle.
- What does it take to sustain a thriving downtown business?
- How do we help people get the most they can from their networks and fight for regulations and funding to expand them?
- What about more efforts like The Sanctuary @47 Maple that provide a collaborative work environment for home office workers?

Optimizing Tax Revenues



UNHCE Business Retention & Expansion Program Update

- Planning Phase – July - August
 - *Recruited leadership team and taskforce*
 - *Developed Wilton business list and contacts = 113*
 - *Reviewed and approved survey instrument*
- Research Phase – Sept - November
 - *Recruited and trained volunteers to do business visits*
 - *Organizing mailings in waves as we bring on volunteers*
 - *UNH does analysis and drafts key findings report with red flags – within 45 days*
 - *Organize campus retreat and final report identifying 3-5 projects for implementation*
- Implementation Phase – November – March - ongoing
 - *Present findings and priority projects to select board, planning and zoning, budget committee, etc.*
 - *Make formal recommendations for changes in ordinances, policies, etc.*
 - *Present findings at Town Meeting in March*
 - *Secure approvals and funding through Warrant Articles, etc.*
 - *Execute*

NRPC Pilot Project for Wilton Downtown

- Collaborate with the Wilton Economic Development Leadership Team and coordinate with additional local partners and champions including the planning board and board of selectmen (October 2016 – December 2017)
- Review the existing Economic Development Master Plan chapter and ongoing UNH Cooperative Extension Business Retention and Expansion (UNH CE BR&E) planning efforts in Wilton to collect pertinent data and identify issues (November 2016 – March 2017)
- Articulate desired outcomes for the strategic plan that will complement the UNH CE BR&E planning process and focus on promoting opportunities for a vibrant downtown center and businesses attraction (January 2017 – June 2017)
- Review potential projects and implementation strategies that would achieve the desired outcomes and identify necessary resources and financing options available to implement each project (March – September 2017)
- Prioritize the identified projects based upon their anticipated impact and feasibility to identify a short list of projects to further scope out (March – September 2017)
- Perform an economic impact analysis of up to 3 priority projects (June – December 2017)

Leadership Team

Creating the long view for a vibrant and sustainable rural town

- Jennifer Beck, Chair jenniferscottbeck@gmail.com - Strategy/Spokesperson
- Dan Donovan, Wilton Select Board Rep dan@maynarddonovan.com - Business Resources
- Jackie Kahle, VP, Marketing, CA Technologies jrtkahle@comcast.net - Business Research/Communications
- Christine Devine, Owner, Devine Flooring chris@devineflooring.com - Business Research
- Tina Smith, AVP, Financial Services, People's United Bank tina.smith@peoples.com - Business Research
- Harry Dailey, Wilton School Board and Budget Committee harry-dailey@comcast.net - Program Manager
- Mike McGonegal, Mike McGonegal Voice-Overs, LLC mike@mikemcgonagal.com - UNH Taskforce, Marketing
- Dick Putnam, Putnam's Clothing ptmclothes@aol.com UNH Taskforce
- Nancy Clark, Heritage Commission and Historical Society nclark@tellink.net UNH Taskforce