

Economic Development Strategic Recommendations

Wilton, Connecticut

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**Submitted by
Wilton's Economic Development Commission
WEDC**

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Wilton, CT

Wilton is a vibrant, suburban town nestled in the Norwalk River Valley and located along Connecticut's *Gold Coast*, which along with being considered one of the wealthiest areas, is an important commercial corridor between New York and Boston.¹ Wilton ranked #4 as a place to live, among the towns with the highest median property values, in Connecticut Magazine's "Rating the Towns" (November 2013). The Town of Wilton celebrates a rich New England history and boasts many historical landmarks which serve as a testament to its colonial roots. The Town's motto is "preserving its past for the future" and through careful planning and controlled zoning, Wilton maintains beautiful open spaces, an award winning school system, and a quaint downtown village while accommodating corporate headquarters and a myriad of locally-owned businesses. Wilton has done an excellent job of developing its Rt. 7 corridor and commercial properties currently exceed 14% of the Grand List.

B. Purpose of Document

The purpose of this document is to provide the first set of strategic recommendations from Wilton's Economic Development Commission (WEDC) for the Town of Wilton regarding planning and activities for sustainable economic growth yet consistent with Wilton's Plan of Conservation and Development and in keeping with the overall character, history and aesthetics of the town. These recommendations involve both organizational strategy to preserve the current positive economic status and competitive strategy to enhance economic development efforts to ensure the Town of Wilton continues to be attractive to existing and new businesses. It is the responsibility of Wilton's Board of Selectmen to determine which of the recommendations to act upon and in doing so, providing the appropriate resources (people and budget) to ensure successful implementation.

C. Current Market Conditions

A recent Forbes Magazine article highlights several economic challenges facing Connecticut as a whole. Although the state boasts one of the highest median incomes, a notable concentration of executive talent, and has first-rate infrastructure and accessibility, for the past two decades more residents have moved out of Connecticut than have moved in. "Connecticut [has ranked] #50 – the worst – in annual economic growth," for the past two years.² The towns along Connecticut's *Gold Coast* are no longer just competing with each other for economic development, but also with a global marketplace. "Connecticut's tax base is eroding as more and more people conclude there's a better future someplace else."³

The WEDC interviewed leaders from several of the Wilton's larger businesses. It was learned that many CEOs desire to live in or near the town where they locate their business, therefore it is important for Wilton to offer a high quality-of-life along with desirable business amenities such as infrastructure, services and transportation to attract new and retain existing businesses. While Wilton already has

¹ Powell, Jim. "How Did Rich Connecticut Morph Into One of America's Worst Performing Economies?" Forbes, August 1, 2013.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

many of these aspects, the Town must ensure that prospective businesses are aware of and perceive Wilton as a preferred location. Additionally, it was uncovered that currently no system is in place for communication between existing businesses and our Town leaders to nurture retention and cultivate expansion. The Town has not established essential relationships with these critical “clients of the Town” and therefore has no headlights into, and no opportunity to influence, businesses that may be considering changes e.g., expanding, downsizing or leaving.

When the WEDC first formed (July 2012) the team had anticipated that the mission would focus on the Town’s open commercial space; however Wilton has one of the highest commercial occupancies in the state for Class A office space (91%). While this is good news, market conditions indicate that Wilton will face significant competition regarding economic development in the near future with the possibility of our top commercial businesses relocating to other towns and challenges in attracting new businesses. The Town of Wilton must put initiatives in place to preserve the current state and ensure sustainable economic development in the future.

D. Considerations

This set of strategic recommendations for Wilton’s economic development provides a number of specific actions that were selected because they can yield important benefits for Wilton and its economic development efforts. There are many other possible initiatives that were considered or may be identified in the future. The limited number contained herein specifically recognizes limitations inherent in any smaller community with budget constraints, no staff dedicated to economic development efforts, dependence on the efforts of volunteers, and multiple organizations whose responsibilities focus on portions of an economic development program.

It is also important for Wilton’s leaders and residents to understand that little progress will be made toward implementing the recommended initiatives and the goals to which they relate, unless the community is willing to fund the effort. Economic development is one of the few areas of community expenditure that is a true investment – with the expectation that there will be a reasonable return on that investment.

The management of economic development for the Town is too complex and demanding to be left to volunteer commissions. The most significant action the Town can execute is to create an Office of Economic Development. The Office of Economic Development would partner with the Chamber of Commerce, the Town Planner, and Planning and Zoning Commission to help position Wilton as a business-friendly town and ensure the effective implementation of all economic development efforts. The most impactful approach would be to staff this office with a dedicated director (even if part-time), who would have the power and influence to create programs, events and communications to attract and retain businesses in Wilton. An alternative (but with less impact) would be to allocate existing town resources to handle some of the daily tasks that need to be performed in order to support economic development initiatives.

E. Strategic Recommendations

In this inaugural term of the WEDC (July 2012 – June 2014), the commission focused on creating a set of strategic recommendations for economic development in Wilton, in line with the vision, mission, objectives and duties outlined by Wilton’s Board of Selectmen. With submission of this document, the WEDC has fulfilled its introductory mission. It is up to Wilton’s Board of Selectmen to determine what

recommendations to act upon, to put the appropriate project plans and resources in place, and to determine the future for the WEDC.

The Wilton Economic Development Commission recommends the following five strategies to preserve and enhance economic development for the Town:

- A. Create and maintain dedicated economic development website as a key communication vehicle to attract new businesses, support existing businesses, and inform the public.
- B. Establish a rapid response team to address urgent needs of new and existing businesses.
- C. Launch a nurturing program for Wilton town leaders to open lines of communication, build relationships, foster retention and cultivate expansion of existing businesses.
- D. Deploy ongoing marketing outreach programs for the target market to attract and welcome new businesses.
- E. Create a long-term, strategic blueprint for Wilton's commercial corridor and Town Center and prioritize locations for development and re-development to ensure that the vision of the Town as a prosperous, charming and viable community to live, work and play is continually advanced

2. WILTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

The Wilton Economic Development Commission was launched in July 2012 with the following objectives:

1. *Develop a plan and make recommendations that will attract new businesses (and homeowners) to Wilton.*
2. *Encourage and assist current business owners to continue to operate and expand in Wilton.*
3. *Increase present and future occupancy of available commercial space in Wilton.*
4. *Expand the commercial sector of Wilton's overall Grand List.*
5. *Promote a "business-friendly" climate and culture that eliminates unreasonable, unnecessary and unintended obstacles to growth and development in Wilton.*

From July 2012 through March 2013 the WEDC:

- **Gained insights** from various town leaders and organizations, including First Selectman Bill Brennan, Town Planner Robert Nerney, Chamber of Commerce Leaders Peg Koellmer and Carol Johnson, and Director of C-PACE Jessica Bailey
- **Listened to** real estate brokers, property owners and developers including owners of Crossways Center and Thomas Pajolek, Executive Vice President, CBRE, Inc. a commercial real estate brokerage
- **Reached out** to top business clients in the town including Deloitte, Nielsen, AIG, Brietling

On April 1, 2013 the WEDC presented its first proposal to Wilton's Board of Selectmen identifying five "CAN DO" recommendations to enhance Wilton's economic future (see Appendix D):

- **Commit:** Dedicate ongoing resources to Wilton's Economic Development
- **Attract:** Create and put into action a marketing plan for the Town of Wilton to attract and onboard commercial and retail businesses
- **Nurture:** Design a nurturing program for existing businesses to support retention and expansion
- **Develop:** Build a development / re-development plan for the Town of Wilton to ensure it is utilizing its retail and commercial space to the fullest benefit
- **Optimize:** Establish the guidelines to foster a business-friendly climate for economic development with consistency in mission, approach, and implementation across the town.

From May 2013 through December 2013 the WEDC further evolved the recommendations into two overarching categories, focusing on the commercial market:

- **Preserving:** maintaining and expanding on what we are already doing well related to commercial economic development
- **Enhancing:** improving competitiveness and augmenting economic development by identifying and filling gaps and making the town as attractive as possible to existing and new businesses

Within each of these categories the WEDC considered:

- **Economic Development Management System:** Establishing guidelines to foster a business-friendly climate for economic development with consistency in mission, approach, and implementation across the town
- **Communications:** targeted marketing for the Town of Wilton to attract and onboard commercial and retail businesses as well as a nurturing program for existing businesses to support retention and expansion

- **Development Strategy:** The recommended development / re-development strategy for the Town of Wilton to ensure the Town is optimizing its assets as well as commercial and retail space

From January through June 2014 the WEDC:

- Presented this vision and recommended strategy to the Board of Selectmen on January 6, 2014
- Held a working session with the Board of Selectmen on February 24, 2014
- Finalized and published this set of strategic recommendations
- Launched the creation of an economic development website
- Prepared recommendations to evolve the WEDC as appropriate based on the Board of Selectmen decisions

3. WEDC VISION FOR THE TOWN OF WILTON

The Wilton Economic Development Commission believes that it is important for the Town of Wilton to articulate an overarching vision for the Town as a foundation to economic development efforts. As there is no existing vision for the Town, the WEDC created the following:

Wilton is a town in which individuals and families can vibrantly live, work and play. Wilton needs to be appealing both physically and functionally to residents and businesses. This requires that that all parts of the town be charming, attractive, and look prosperous, while also providing practical and efficient infrastructure. Additionally, the Town must have the right portfolio mix of retail, services, and cultural activities.

Currently, Wilton is well-positioned regarding economic development with a strong business community consisting of small and medium businesses, and provides convenience, jobs, services, and opportunities for the community. For example, commercial properties currently exceed 14% of the Grand List. However, Wilton faces increasing competition from neighboring towns to attract dynamic commercial and retail businesses to town.

The Wilton Economic Development Commission exists, in large part, for the purpose of attracting and retaining capital investment by high quality businesses in the Town. Communities today are competing in a global marketplace and those seeking to expand and diversify their business tax base do so by retaining existing businesses that want to expand and by attracting new business and investment into the community. The WEDC has therefore adopted the original vision for the economic development commission as its mission:

To enhance Wilton's reputation as a community where the quality of life for local residents, professionals and workers make Wilton a "first choice" (preferred) option to start a new business, to relocate an existing business, or for current businesses to remain in Wilton and flourish.

Maintaining Wilton's historical level of business development will focus in part on new or enhanced tax revenue and the stabilization of current revenue with an emphasis on commercial real property sources. The WEDC chose to focus this initial plan on commercial development and not residential development. Housing development is a much more complex and controversial equation; the commission decided that it should be handled separately. Within the commercial area, the targeted industry clusters include professional and technical services, financial services, marketing/marketing research, film/performing arts, healthcare, retail, and other entrepreneurial "clean energy" organizations. All economic development efforts need to be positioned in relation to the Town's *Plan of Conservation and Development* to preserve Wilton's character, history and aesthetics.

To align with the vision and achieve the mission, the WEDC's recommended strategy focuses on two core objectives:

1. **Preserving** the positive economic status of Wilton by keeping and expanding the existing businesses in town; i.e., expand on what we are already doing well related to commercial economic development

2. **Enhancing** economic development by retaining existing and attracting new businesses; improving competitiveness through marketing outreach and augmenting economic development efforts by identifying and filling gaps

4. WEDC STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The Wilton Economic Development Commission recommends the following five strategies to preserve and enhance economic development for the Town.

- A. **Create and maintain dedicated economic development website** as a key communication vehicle to attract new businesses, support existing businesses, and inform the public
- B. **Establish a rapid response team** to address the urgent needs of new and existing businesses
- C. **Launch a nurturing program** for Wilton town leaders to open lines of communication, build relationships, foster retention and cultivate expansion of existing businesses
- D. **Deploy ongoing marketing outreach programs for the target market** to attract and welcome new businesses
- E. **Create a long-term, strategic blueprint for Wilton's commercial corridor and Town Center** and prioritize locations for development and re-development to ensure that the vision of the Town as a prosperous, charming and viable community to live, work and play is continually advanced

A. Create and maintain a dedicated economic development website

Background:

The Town of Wilton would benefit from a website dedicated to economic development as a vehicle to communicate with existing and prospective businesses, as well as a channel to inform the public. The Wilton economic development website should be “user-friendly” and contain essential information, access to a comprehensive inventory of properties for purchase, development and lease, and resources for existing and prospective businesses. The website should also provide an opportunity to field inquiries and provide feedback.

The WEDC has already taken steps to creating a website that will be independent from, but linked to, the current Town website.

- Town of Wilton website: <http://www.wiltonct.org/>
- Wilton Economic Development secured domain name: <http://www.WiltonEDC.org>
(additionally secured domain names: WiltonEDC.com, WiltonEDC.net, WiltonEDC.info)

Website design and content

The website design is still in development (expected completion 4Q2014), however, economic development websites of three other towns have been identified as best practice models:

- Ridgefield, CT economic development website:
<http://www.ridgefielddevelopment.com/>
- Stamford, CT economic development website:
<http://www.stamfordct.gov/economic-development>
- Fairfield, CT economic development website:
<http://www.fairfieldct.org/ced-ecdev.htm>

Proposed sections for the website:

Note: the actual content for the website will be initially developed by the WEDC upon official engagement of the selected web-designer; below is a description of the proposed sections and content for illustrative purposes.

1. Welcome to Wilton: “The Heart of Fairfield County”

An inviting overview of Wilton related to economic development

- Wilton truly is the Heart of Fairfield County, centrally located with excellent access
(include a map to illustrate)
- A place to work, live and play
(include visuals of the town)
- Wilton is open for business: The Wilton Economic Development Commission exists to attract and retain good business in our town. This website has essential information and resources for potential and existing businesses.

2. Available Properties

Maintain or link to current lists of properties available for purchase, lease or development

- The town needs to create and maintain, or link to a tool that can provide, an inventory of unused public land and commercial property – vacant and occupied, developed and undeveloped – that would attract new businesses or appeal to existing businesses looking to expand
 - Stamford Economic Development website links to MrOfficespace.com
http://www.mrofficespace.com/sp_form.mpl?cust_id=1&srchview=stnd&SR=Y&pgt_type=search

3. Wilton for Business

- Overview of the business climate and businesses presently in town including range, scope, size of industry
 - Description of Wilton’s current, highly viable business environment
 - Easy access and transportation
 - A more desirable proximity for employees commuting from the North than to travel further to Norwalk or Stamford
 - Well-educated, highly skilled workforce
 - “In good company” – list of current businesses located in the town
 - Stamford uses a “Corporate Roster” of logos
<http://www.stamfordct.gov/economic-development/pages/corporate-roster>
- Business Advocacy Support: “How can we help you...”
 - WEDC Rapid Response team (see recommendation)
 - WEDC Nurturing Programs (see recommendation)
 - Create an email account that allows current and potential businesses to contact the WEDC directly
- Link to Chamber of Commerce website <http://www.wiltonchamber.com/>
 - Link to “Why Wilton” with description of contents e.g., statistics on Town
<http://www.wiltonchamber.com/why-wilton/>
 - Link to “Doing Business in Wilton” with description of contents e.g., information on regulations, as well as links to permits, forms, etc.
<http://www.wiltonchamber.com/why-wilton/doing-business-in-wilton/>

4. Wilton for Living

- Overview of Quality of Life (a place to Live and Play)
 - Profile of Town
Money Magazine top places to live#16 out of 25
[The Town of Wilton] features hundreds of restored 18th and 19th century homes. Town leaders seeking to maintain Wilton's pastoral feel have been spending millions to preserve open spaces. Like its sister towns, numerous celebrities call Wilton home including David Letterman, "Sopranos" actor Joe Pantoliano and comedian Chris Elliott.
 - Include visuals of the Town
 - List and link to various sites
 - Schools: Wilton Public Schools
Press (article about Wilton schools #6 in state)
 - Assets: Library, Clune Center

- Community: Wilton Family Y, Trackside
- History: Wilton Historical Society
- Nature: Ambler farm, Weir Farm, Town Forrest
- Culture: Playhouse Theatre, Newcomers, Wilton Magazine, Wilton Farmer’s market
- Services: Numerous retail stores and services accessible to employees
- Links to additional information
 - Link to Connecticut Economic Resource Center – Town Profile of Wilton
<http://www.cerc.com/>

5. About Economic Development in Wilton:

Promote Wilton’s advocacy for economic development

- Information about the WEDC and its role as a resource for potential and existing businesses
 - Mission Statement
 - Powers and Duties
 - Current Commission members, pictures, small bio
 - Link to scheduled meetings and minutes
- WEDC direct contact information (email and phone) for current and potential businesses
- Post this “Strategic Recommendations” document when approved
- WEDC happenings and news
See WEDC Nurturing recommendation

6. Dialogue (anticipated as a future capability on website)

A Social Media dialogue between Town leaders, commercial property owners, retail renters, etc.

Requires the development of a strategic plan for discussion topics, frequency, and promotion

- Discussion topics developed by Town leaders with support from the WEDC
- Promotion of the discussions through email; Give feedback to Wilton’s Economic Development Commission
- Closed loop actions for key issues are highlighted via the discussion

Website Content Management

To ensure the greatest value from the website, it will be critical to effectively manage the content. The initial content is planned to be developed by the WEDC leveraging existing resources. Some sections of the website will only need to be reviewed on a periodic basis to ensure the information is still viable e.g., the *Welcome to Wilton* and *About Economic Development in Wilton* sections will likely require only semi-annual reviews or updates related to significant changes in the Town. Other sections, such as the *Wilton for Business* and *Wilton for Living* should be reviewed and updated on a quarterly basis. Most critical, however, will be to ensure that the *Available Properties* section is kept current which will require “real-time” updates. And in the future, the *Dialogue* section will need to be refreshed, monitored, and responded to, with demonstrated actions taken as appropriate.

It is imperative to have assigned “ownership” of the website to maintain the integrity of the content and to be responsive to inquiries and feedback received through the website. As the mission and nature of the website is for the economic development of the Town of Wilton, a member of the Town staff with economic development as part of his/her role should be assigned as the dedicated website owner. This role is not that of a webmaster, but rather a content owner and liaison. This website owner would interface with the WEDC.

Building Awareness for the Website

An awareness-building / promotional campaign should be launched for the website.

- When the website framework has been set up and core content is available, but prior to the public website launch, it should be pre-promoted with:
 - The Board of Selectmen
 - Local commercial real estate brokers and developers
 - The Chamber of Commerce and other local organizations
- Once the website has been tested and publically launched:
 - An article in the local paper
 - Ongoing “drumbeat” of communication and other promotion as appropriate

Action Steps

1. Board of Selectmen to determine whether to act on all or part of the recommendation above
2. Assign a dedicated owner of the website (a member of the Town staff, with an economic development perspective) who would interface with the WEDC
3. Establish the approach for creating and maintaining a comprehensive inventory of properties
4. Design the initial site; identify or create content and post (WEDC would lead)
5. Promote the website to build awareness (WEDC and Website owner would work together)
6. Maintain and enhance (Website owner would lead with support from WEDC)

B. Establish a Rapid Response Team

Background:

Given the WEDC objectives as stated in Section 2 of this document, one of the core functions of the WEDC team is to serve in an advocacy role in support of new businesses seeking to move to Wilton and established local businesses considering departure from our community. In both of these cases, there is a need for productive two-way communication between the business owners and town officials. Experience has also indicated the need for assistance, primarily for prospective new businesses, in navigating the multiple departments and commissions responsible for approving new business applications. With the above in mind, Wilton should form a Rapid Response Team to provide the advocacy support required to maintain and grow a vibrant business community within the town. Efforts should focus on high value target sectors such as medical services, technology-oriented businesses, and light office uses such as financial services, research and development and eco-friendly firms.

Composition:

The Rapid Response Team shall be coordinated by the Wilton Economic Development Commission. It will have a core membership that will include:

- One or more members of the WEDC, providing both general business and real estate development experience where possible
- A member of the Board of Selectmen
- The Town Planner
- A representative from the Chamber of Commerce
- Other additional members as might be required to address the specific need of the business supported.

Participation by individual members of the above organizations should be rotated on an ongoing basis to provide consistent coverage across individual business commitments, vacation plans, etc.

Role in Supporting Potential New Businesses:

Potential new businesses often face challenges related to getting through the various hurdles related to locating in existing buildings or building/re-developing commercial properties. These are typically related to navigating the processes and gaining approvals related to Town policies and regulations, but could also be related to integrating the company and its employees into the business community. In the case of a potential new business, the role of the Rapid Response Team is to proactively reach out to the business' executive team and provide support that includes, but is not limited to:

- Listening – engaging in meaningful dialogue with the executive team of the prospective new business owners facing challenges to fully understand their needs, priorities and concerns
- Work with members of the Wilton Economic Development Commission, town departments and commissions, Chamber of Commerce, local realtors and local business owners to develop a meaningful solution aimed at addressing the identified requirements and priorities
 - Develop and maintain a list of the first point of contact for resolving specific issues e.g., approvals, permits, etc.
- Serve as *Ambassadors* to educate prospective new business owners, providing a sincere welcome and introduction to the Town of Wilton, our business community and to the many benefits of moving a business to Wilton e.g. transportation, professional talent, community spirit, etc.
- Assist in guiding new business owners or executives through the regulatory approval process

- Assist in driving timely resolution of regulatory approvals that may be necessary to enable the new business to locate in Wilton
- Other actions that may be required to meet the specific needs of the potential business owners.

Role in Supporting Existing Businesses Especially Ones Considering Leaving Wilton:

As existing business are identified which are considering leaving Wilton, the role of the Rapid Response Team becomes one of understanding and assisting in resolving, where appropriate, the factors leading to the potential move. The role of the Rapid Response Team is to proactively reach out to the business owner and provide support that includes, but is not limited to:

- Listen – proactively reach out to the business executives to clearly understand their intentions and document the factors necessitating the move
- Communicate a sincere interest in keeping the business as an important element of Wilton’s business community
- Document the issues and desired resolution of elements that are within the scope of our town government’s ability to consider and potentially resolve
- Proactively engage the appropriate town entity(s) to evaluate workable business solutions
- Maintain ongoing communications with the executives of the business throughout the process

While this planning document cannot envision all potential issues and requirements associated with the situations referenced above, we are confident that effective communications, sincere interest and proactive engagement will prove to be a valuable element in continuing to grow a vibrant business community in Wilton.

Action Steps

1. Board of Selectmen to determine whether to act on all or part of the recommendation above
2. More deeply develop and clearly define the mission, objectives, guiding principles and processes, including scope of responsibility and extent of authority, of the Rapid Response team
3. Form the rapid response team with qualified individuals, assign roles, and enable with training
4. Build awareness for the Rapid Response team through the website and by interfacing with appropriate businesses and organizations

C. Launch a nurturing program for existing businesses

Background:

It would be extremely valuable to design and launch a nurturing program to open lines of communication, build, and foster relationships between Wilton town leaders and existing businesses. This initiative would create an ongoing, “proactive,” open dialogue to keep Town leaders informed about how local businesses perceive the local business climate and provide headlights into possible issues and challenges which may necessitate action or policy change, and prevent the need for “Rapid Response”. A nurturing program would require identifying and building relationships with the leaders of key businesses in Town and fostering these relationships via intentional programs.

Target Audience

- Existing businesses the Town would like to retain and/or which are looking to expand within the Town.

Recommended Nurturing Strategies and Tactics:

- Put together a contact list of current Wilton businesses and owners/key leaders
- Coordinate opportunities for business leaders to meet with First Selectmen, Board of Selectmen and WEDC e.g.,
 - One-on-one meetings
 - Quarterly seminars or roundtables
 - Annual business development forum
 - discuss commercial business issues to have headlights into potential challenges and ensure retention and expansion of desirable businesses
- Create a closed-loop process to ensure that appropriate action is taken in a timely manner and results demonstrated back to the respective audience

Action Steps

1. Board of Selectmen to determine whether to act on all or part of the recommendation above
2. WEDC to put together list of current Wilton businesses and owner/key leaders
3. WEDC to more deeply develop and clearly define the mission, objectives, messages and calendar of targeted activities
4. WEDC to develop the closed loop process
5. WEDC to coordinate and communicate first formal event
6. WEDC to work with Town leaders to organize one-on-one meetings and seminars/roundtables

D. Deploy ongoing marketing outreach efforts to target market

Background:

The website, while valuable, will only be “found” by individuals and groups actively searching for information on Economic Development in Wilton. It is anticipated that the website will be most highly trafficked by Wilton-based commercial agents and developers who may direct prospective businesses to the website or by prospective businesses searching the internet.

A marketing outreach program could be used to build awareness for the website as well as build more momentum around economic development. The challenge and caution is that outreach takes resources to execute and to be responsive to inquiries and feedback. Without these resources marketing tactics run the risk of failed execution, becoming stale and ineffective, or having a negative impact if poorly executed. It is critical, if the Town decides to pursue a marketing outreach program that the program is supported by the leadership, dedicated resources are assigned and given the appropriate level of authority to take action, and the necessary funding for execution is provided. Additionally, effective marketing tactics will produce demand, therefore Wilton’s administration must be prepared with policies and processes in place to capture this demand and turn it into positive economics for the Town.

Target Market

- Prospective commercial and retail businesses looking to locate in Upper Fairfield County, specifically, small to mediums size companies as well as national and/or local organizations specializing in professional and technical services, financial and marketing services, healthcare, film and performing arts, and other “clean energy” entities.
- Identified gaps in local retail and services that the Town of Wilton wants to recruit
- Efforts are anticipated to be of value to existing businesses as well

Recommended Marketing Strategies and Tactics:

1. Understand the needs of the target market including prospective new businesses and desired retail and services organizations to fill gaps in the Town’s portfolio
 - Research the commercial target market to understand what drives their decision-making regarding business location
 - Create a portfolio view of the existing retail and service landscape in Wilton (for residents and employees) and identify gaps in desired retail and services for the Town
2. Brand Wilton – “The Heart of Fairfield County” a place to “live, work and play”
 - Create the Town of Wilton Brand – with a visual/icon, tag-line and value prop to be proliferated in all Town communications
 - Develop a set of messages and communications that demonstrate the brand for the target market to be used on the website and in various digital and hardcopy communications
3. Deliver programs and initiatives to attract, recruit and welcome commercial and retail businesses
 - Create Wilton information events for prospective businesses and commercial agents to keep Wilton top of mind for prospective new businesses, investors and entrepreneurs
 - Establish a Business Speakers Bureau for Economic Development in Wilton
Create a core presentation and train a small group of effective speakers who are willing to make presentations to community service groups, on public access television, and in other appropriate venues to inform the community and others about the “myths and realities”

of economic development in Wilton and the role the WEDC and Town government play in the process.

- Create awareness efforts (e.g., Welcome Packet, Promotions) and events for employees of new and existing business to welcome and familiarize them with Wilton's local retail, services and cultural opportunities and encourage engagement and participation
 - Coordinate with Chamber of Commerce as appropriate
 - Identify and integrate with existing Town efforts such as:
 - Holidays: Halloween, Christmas Tree-lighting, Holiday Walk, Memorial Day Parade
 - Town events: e.g., Taste of Wilton
 - Identify and integrate with cultural events e.g., Library events, Clune Center events, etc.
- 4. Engage the public in marketing efforts

As noted above, resources needed to be dedicated to ensure that marketing efforts are successful. While it is recommended that at least one individual be assigned to lead the Town's marketing efforts, it is also recommended that this individual engage Town leaders and the public in all marketing efforts. For example, Wilton High School offers Marketing classes. It would be worth pursuing the creation of a WHS Marketing Club and engaging students in creating and deploying economic development outreach efforts, e.g., the awareness efforts for the Town.

Action Steps

1. Board of Selectmen to determine whether to act on all or part of the recommendation above
2. Assign a dedicated resource to lead Economic Development Marketing
3. WEDC and dedicated Marketing lead to more deeply develop and clearly define the mission, objectives, guiding principles and processes, including scope of responsibility and extent of authority, of the Marketing lead
4. Economic Development Marketing lead to work with WEDC to build out an official Marketing Plan for the Town
5. Board of Selectmen to support the marketing plan with the required budget and additional resources

E. Create a long-term, strategic blueprint for Wilton's commercial corridor and Town Center, and prioritize locations for development and re-development

It is essential that Wilton continue to intentionally enhance its physical design and beauty to keep the Town charming, prosperous, and viable as a place to live, work and play. The Town of Wilton is made up of various critical areas including Downtown Wilton (or the Village Center), the Route 7 corridor, Historic Cannondale and Georgetown.

Recommend the creation of a long-term, holistic, strategic blueprint for Wilton's commercial corridor

The Town needs to invest in creating a strategic, long-term / multi-year (e.g., 10-year) plan for the future development / re-development of Wilton's commercial corridor (including the Town center) and address specific factors and challenges of each of the following areas:

- **Downtown Wilton:** is widely recognized as the heart of the community and a primary reason why Wilton draws visitors who support local businesses, both in the Village Center and elsewhere in the community. It has a good mix of national and local tenants. The buildings are well maintained and there are not many retail vacancies. Recent upgrades of the sidewalks and lampposts have enhanced the "village feel". The Town Center is nearly fully developed.
 - The proliferation of temporary signs has reached the point of negatively impacting the Village Center. While obviously the WEDC wants all Wilton merchants to succeed, the WEDC recommends that existing zoning regulations be enforced regarding the use of temporary signs.
 - Coupled with that, it is recommended that permanent sign regulations be reviewed. The WEDC has received complaints that the current regulations are burdensome and result in unnecessary expense and delay.
- **The Route 7 corridor** has been successfully developed and contains many Class A office buildings with national tenants. The adaptive use regulation has recently been liberalized. However, there are still many residential zoned properties on Rt. 7 that should be reviewed. The Town Hall and the train station are in residential zones.
 - Undertake a comprehensive review of the zoning map of Rt. 7. Determine if there are properties zoned residential that should be zoned for business.
 - As in the Village Center enforce current zoning regulations regarding temporary signs.
- **Historic Cannondale** is a unique and charming mix of historic buildings with a variety of uses. Most importantly, it has a commuter rail station. Unfortunately, Cannondale Village is currently in poor repair and has many retail vacancies. As stated in the 2010 Wilton Plan of Conservation and Development (the Plan):

"The town should take a proactive approach in determining appropriate uses, building scale, the overall pattern of development, and how new development will complement and relate to existing buildings in Cannondale Village."

The current owner of Cannondale Village submitted a plan in 2009 that asked that a residential portion on the north end of the village be rezoned to multifamily so that 24 townhomes could be constructed. Under the plan, the existing structures would be largely retained and

renovated. The plan met extensive opposition from neighbors and was eventually withdrawn without obtaining approval. While the EDC does not have an opinion of the owner's plan, it does strongly feel that the development of Cannondale should not be determined on a piecemeal basis by individual owners. Perhaps it should be through the use of form-based zoning as described in the Plan of Conservation and Development.

It is the recommendation of the WEDC that the town budget funds necessary to hire an expert consultant to evaluate the development of Cannondale. Such a study would answer the questions: (i) exactly where does Cannondale begin and end, (ii) what is the cost of bringing water and sewer from Route 7 to the Village, and (iii) what is the ideal mix of retail, office and housing.

The current owner of Cannondale Village has met with the WEDC Commissioners and would like to sell or develop his property. Key Cannondale properties are currently listed for sale. It is important that the town act before the opportunity to shape this extraordinary asset is lost.

- **Gateway:** The area in south Wilton known as Gateway is immediately over the Wilton Town line on both sides of US Route 7 and was developed for retail uses in the 1950s & 60s. Today, some buildings have been updated, mostly on the east side of the road. The west side of the road however is mostly occupied by sub standard wood frame buildings in poor condition creating a negative initial impact of our Town. This area needs redevelopment with buildings that meet modern day standards. Redevelopment will be complicated by the fact that a substantial portion of the structures are in a condominium form of ownership. Despite the complications of redevelopment this area is in need of immediate attention to remove the blighted buildings, doing so will attract new quality national retailers to the area making Gateway once again an asset to the Town of Wilton.
 - Explore the possibility of some type of private/public partnership to improve the facades and landscaping at Gateway
 - Explore the possibility of using our bonding powers to provide low cost loans to property owners to be used for an approved list of exterior property improvements and landscaping

- **Georgetown:** has no municipal government and is located within the towns of Wilton, Ridgefield, Redding, and Weston with Redding having the most influence over its future. Formally a center for manufacturing of wire products, Georgetown is now in transition to become a retail and residential complex with a commuter rail station. Approvals for the redevelopment of a fifty acre site in the heart of Georgetown (former Gilbert & Bennett factory complex) were granted prior to the 2008 financial crisis but the project has languished due to difficult market conditions. A change in ownership and an improving real estate market should provide a foundation on which the project can proceed. Additionally, the former Gilbert & Bennett School owned by the Town of Wilton on a parcel of land at the corner of US Route 7 and Route 107, this parcel has redevelopment potential.

Recommendation for prioritized development / redevelopment of specific existing property

A list of pre-evaluated and sometimes pre-permitted sites is one of the most necessary characteristics a community can have in order to be competitive in the economic development arena. The WEDC recommends taking a proactive approach and the following properties have been identified as having the greatest potential to generate new or enhanced revenue to the town and should be prioritized for development /redevelopment. Most of these properties are privately owned so ultimately the owner will decide the timing of development or redevelopment. The Town, whether through WEDC or otherwise, should be in communication with each owner to be aware of future plans. The Town should be actively working with these owners to achieve development that enhances the Town while also increasing revenue.

<p>Location: Potential: Size & Zone: Character:</p>	<p>Gateway-Route Seven immediately north of Norwalk town line Redevelopment to meet modern retail standards 3.27 acres - zoned retail Most of west side of street makes a very poor impression on someone entering Wilton</p>
<p>Location: Potential: Size & Zone: Character:</p>	<p>111 Danbury Road, Cube Smart, west side opposite Wilton Acres Redevelopment, underutilized site with one storage building 23.08 acres in two parcels one owned by State of CT, zone DE-5 Industrial building and subject to flooding</p>
<p>Location: Potential: Size & Zone: Character:</p>	<p>Wolfpit Road and east side of Horseshoe Road Redevelopment to multifamily use with public utilities now in place 7.51 acres in eight privately owned lots with houses, zoned R-I Neighborhood in transition, one new house on Wolfpit a negative</p>
<p>Location: Potential: Size & Zone: Character:</p>	<p>Former Homequity Site leased to Stop-n-Shop, expires 1.5 years Reuse of existing 40,000 SF office building or redevelopment 5.138 acres, zoned commercial Has traffic light, directly across street from town hall</p>
<p>Location: Potential: Size & Zone: Character:</p>	<p>Crossways on Route Seven, intersection with Route 33 Redevelopment of all or portion of site; currently listed for sale 3 acres +/- zoned WC and highly visible, high traffic location 1 office building, 1 retail building, 1 apartment building</p>
<p>Location: Potential: Size & Zone: Character:</p>	<p>Original Wilton Motors site, corner Route Seven and Route 33 Development for a commercial/transportation oriented use 1+ acre, site owned by State of CT used for parking Parking lot for railroad station, highly visible, high traffic location</p>
<p>Location: Potential: Size & Zone: Character:</p>	<p>West of Route 7, north of Teen Center and new Wilton Commons Vacant land owned by the Town 7.41 acres in four parcels, R-I & DE-5 zones Somewhat isolated but central location off Route Seven</p>

<p>Location: Potential: Size & Zone: Character:</p>	<p>Cannondale east of Route 7 and both sides of railroad line Redevelopment into historic village with a railroad station Approximately 30 acres in five zones, numerous parcels, possible "Form Zoning" site as part of the Plan of Conservation and Development Colonial village atmosphere, historic buildings, river, RR station</p>
<p>Location: Potential: Size & Zone: Character:</p>	<p>Georgetown, Gilbert & Bennett School, corner Route 7 and 107 Reuse of historic school and development of mostly vacant land 8.75 acres in three parcels owned by the town, zoned R-1 Key location with excellent exposure from Route Seven</p>
<p>Location: Potential: Size & Zone: Character:</p>	<p>Georgetown Motors site extreme north Route 7 Upgrade and reuse existing structures GB, 2.1 acres Heavily impacted by Norwalk River</p>

Action Steps

1. Board of Selectmen to determine whether to act on all or part of the recommendation above
2. Board of Selectmen establishes a Town Task Force (including but not limited to the EDC and Planning & Zoning Commission and/or staff) to undertake this project on an ongoing basis
3. Town engages an external organization to create Create a multi-year plan and strategic blueprint for development / re-development of the commercial corridor
4. Task Force works with external organization on holistic plan as well as identifies parcels and assesses their potential, size and zone, and character as well as the development/re-development feasibility
5. Task Force contacts the property owner(s) of sites identified as most developable to ask about willingness to develop and/or combine parcels with adjacent owners.
6. Task Force presents findings to Planning & Zoning Commission, Board of Selectmen and others as appropriate. List sites for development on CERC's SiteFinder Inventory and elsewhere as appropriate.
7. Undertake a comprehensive review of the Zoning Map along Rt. 7
8. Work to eliminate over use of temporary signs
9. Review current permanent sign regulations to make it easier and less expensive

5. RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

A. Decision to implement recommendations

It is the decision of the Board of Selectmen as to which of these recommendations should be implemented. For each recommendation prioritized for action a dedicated leader/owner and detailed project/action plan will need to be created and necessary resources and budget assigned.

B. Status and future role of the WEDC

At its inception, WEDC members were asked to serve a 2 year term. At the close of June 2014 an approach should be in place for next steps.

The management of economic development for the Town is too complex and demanding to be left to volunteer commissions. The most significant action the Town can execute is to create an Office of Economic Development. The Office of Economic Development would partner with the Chamber of Commerce, the Town Planner, and Planning and Zoning Commission to help position Wilton as a business-friendly town and ensure the effective implementation of all economic development efforts. The most impactful approach would be to staff this office with a dedicated director (even if part-time), who would have the power and influence to create programs, events and communications to attract and retain businesses in Wilton. An alternative (but with less impact) would be to allocate existing town resources to handle some of the daily tasks that need to be performed in order to support economic development initiatives.

The WEDC recommends this Commission continue with an evolved design and membership (see Appendix G)

- The size of the Commission should be increased to 11 members and a more intentional approach be set up for staggering the 2 year terms
- A representative from the Chamber of Commerce should be invited to be a member of the commission.
- The Commission needs to consist of the members whose talents best support the design and objectives of the Commission and selected approach going forward.
 - Rapid Response Team lead and members
 - Nurturing Program Coordination
 - Website owner and content management
 - Marketing Initiative coordination
 - Additionally, it will be critical for the Town to give the WEDC not only the responsibility but also the authority to act, and to provide the necessary budget to implement the selected initiatives

C. Economic Development initiatives for future consideration

The following initiatives for Economic Development were discussed and considered by the inaugural WEDC as having merit, but it was determined that the necessary resources were not yet available to implement them effectively.

- Address the residential elements of economic development in the Town
- Develop a plan to improve the vibrancy and level of activity in the Town, e.g., Identify and advance under-utilized Town “gems” e.g., Clune Center
- Foster an economic development climate within Wilton
 - Establish the guidelines to foster a business-friendly climate for economic development with

consistency in mission, approach, and implementation across the town. Build awareness and engagement to encourage public officials, property owners, developers, real estate professionals, private investors, entrepreneurs and the public to work jointly in advancing Wilton's economic development initiatives

- Explore incentive and business assistance programs in partnership with Chamber of Commerce, regional entities and state/federal agencies
- Develop and execute a comprehensive marketing plan for the town and drive business, retail and residential opportunities more holistically through articles, advertising, networking, internet and public relations

Appendix A – References

Town of Wilton, CT website: <http://www.wiltonct.org/>

- Wilton’s Plan of Conservation and Development

Town of Berlin CT website: <http://www.town.berlin.ct.us/>

Town of Fairfield, CT website: <http://www.fairfieldct.org/>

- Fairfield, CT economic development website:
<http://www.fairfieldct.org/ced-ecdev.htm>

Town of Newtown, CT website: http://www.newtown-ct.gov/Public_Documents/index

- Newtown, CT economic development website:
<http://www.newtown.org/>
- Strategic Plan for Economic Development, Nov 16, 2011

Town of Ridgefield, CT website: <http://www.ridgefieldct.org/>

- Ridgefield Connecticut Economic Development Action Plan, adopted January 11, 2010.

Town of Rocky Hill, CT website: <http://www.rockyhillct.gov/>

Town of Stamford, CT website: <http://www.stamfordct.gov/>

- Stamford, CT economic development website:
<http://www.stamfordct.gov/economic-development>

Town of Trumbull, CT website: <http://www.trumbull-ct.gov/>

- Town of Trumbull, Connecticut Economic Development Plan, May 2008

Town of Windsor, CT website: <http://www.townofwindsorct.com/>

Town Profiles, CT: <http://www.cerc.com/TownProfiles/county.asp?county=Hartford>

Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC): www.cerc.com

Doody, Ben and Jennifer Swift. “Rating the Towns,” *Connecticut Magazine*, November 2013, pages 49-65.

Powell, Jim. “How Did Rich Connecticut Morph Into One Of America’s Worst Performing Economies?” *Forbes*, August 1, 2013. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jimpowell/2013/08/01/how-did-rich-connecticut-morph-into-one-of-americas-worst-performing-economies/>

Appendix B - History of Wilton⁴

The Town of Wilton... Preserving Its Past for the Future

Wilton is a suburban residential town rich in New England history. The first written records of the areas that are now Wilton date back to 1640, when Roger Ludlow and his friends purchased land from the Indians between the Norwalk and Saugatuck Rivers and "a day's walk into the country." This land was called Norwalk.

The first settlers, called the Proprietors, arrived in Norwalk in 1651 and owned 50,000 acres in common. On the outskirts of Norwalk's settled area, the Proprietors were allowed private ownership of acreage in a common planting field, but cattle, sheep, and hogs were grazed in a communal pasture area. The outer limit of this pasture approximates Wilton's present southern boundary.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the Norwalk Proprietors began to sell off the northern lands for settlement. The first non-Indian settlements in what is now Wilton were in the fertile lands of the Norwalk River valley, and on the ridges of Belden Hill, Chestnut Hill, and Ridgefield Road. In order to till the lands, the settlers had to clear the forests and remove hundreds of glacial rocks, which became the stone boundary walls that we treasure today.

The families who bought land in Wilton did not have their own church and were required to attend service in Norwalk each Sunday. When demand for Wilton lands increased in the early 1700's, the Proprietors realized that the land would be worth more if Wilton settlers did not have to make such a long trek each week.

By 1725 there were forty families living in Wilton who wanted their own meetinghouse. Therefore, in 1726, with the approval of both the Proprietors and the Wilton settlers, a petition to the General Court in Hartford created Wilton Parish, "a village enjoying parish privileges" but still part of the town of Norwalk. A copy of the petition is framed and on display in the Town Hall.

The Wilton Parish, organized as an ecclesiastical society, dealt with many problems of a secular nature as well. It dealt with such things as communal flocks, pounds for animals, and the regulation of the trades and taverns. The state of the roads was a constant source of comment in the society meeting, as was the inevitable subject of taxation. Although the village parish did not have the right to send a representative to the state legislature, it did have complete charge of both local education and military training. The first minister, Mr. Robert Sturgeon, was also Wilton's first schoolmaster.

As soon as the first meetinghouse was built in 1726, Wilton had a "center" of town, although other areas such as Belden Hill, Drum Hill, Pimpewaug and Chestnut Hill had already been settled by self-sufficient farmers. By 1738 the first meetinghouse had become too small, and a second was built on the corner of Sharp Hill Road. Less than sixty years later, this second meeting house had fallen into such disrepair that a third church was built in 1790 on Ridgefield Road where it still stands as the oldest church building in Fairfield County, Connecticut.

⁴ The Town of Wilton – preserving its past for the future. <http://www.wiltonct.org/info/history.html>. Date Unknown.

During the Revolutionary War, a surprisingly large number of over 300 men from Wilton served in a military unit. The War came to Wilton briefly in 1777 when the British had to retreat through the village after their invasion of Danbury. Although several Wilton houses were set afire, none were destroyed since the retreat was too rapid. About fifty-two Revolutionary veteran graves are still identifiable in Wilton cemeteries.

In 1802, despite Norwalk's objections, the people of Wilton sought and were granted separate Town government status by an act of the Connecticut General Assembly. The town chose the traditional New England Town Meeting-Selectmen form of government, which has been retained to this day.

In the nineteenth century, education became the responsibility of the school societies of nine separate school districts in Wilton. In addition, many Wilton children and those of well-to-do families of Norwalk and Stamford attended five private schools and academies in Wilton.

Wilton's population grew slowly from 1,728 in 1810 to 2,208 in 1860. Most of the land was farmland used for dairy herds, horses, or marketable crops. Farmers found their yield from the rocky soil to be very low at the same time that midwestern produce, made readily available by the railroads, began to compete with homegrown products, home industry expanded.

Industries such as shoemaking, shirt making, carriage building, and distilleries were common. Mills of various types were built along the streams and the Gilbert and Bennett Manufacturing Co. began producing wire sieves in 1834.

During the years prior to the Civil War, the antislavery movement was strong in town, and Wilton served as one of the stops on the Underground Railroad, a loosely organized escape route to Canada for runaway slaves. The Civil War itself, however, had little impact on Wilton, except that the continued success of local businesses was due largely to the demands of the war effort.

Wilton's first railroad station, built in 1852. It has been moved and preserved by the Wilton Historical Society and is currently in use as office space under the adaptive-use program.

The coming of the railroad in 1852 did not bring many advantages to a community of home industry and farming; instead it offered easy access to the bountiful western lands. After the Civil War, Wilton's population declined as cities grew, industrialization increased, the market for home products dropped, and farms were abandoned. About 30% of the population was lost between 1860 and 1900. By 1900, the census showed only 1,598 people living in Wilton.

Today Wilton is grateful for this long dormant period in its history because it saved many of the eighteenth and nineteenth century homes from demolition and suburban development. Beginning in the 1910's, abandoned farms were discovered by New Yorkers for summer homes and in the 1930's, there were noticeable stresses at Town Meetings between the "old-timers" and the "new people." The community was changing from agricultural to one of commuters.

Originating in its colonial origins, Wilton had developed in a rather haphazard, individualistic way-a house here and a store there. Shortly after World War II, a new phenomenon brought a new look to Wilton's landscape-the builder subdivision.

Light industry began moving into town. In order to plan for orderly growth, town zoning was adopted. With the growth in population and businesses came the corresponding need for new schools, new roads, executive offices, and more support services. The period of greatest growth was from 1950 to 1970, when the population grew from 4,558 to 13,572.

The transformation from a small farming town to a suburban residential community of approximately 18,000 has been carefully controlled by zoning and through the preservation of the town's older colonial landmarks.

The town has had the foresight to preserve almost 1,000 acres of open space for active and passive recreational use. Although there is limited land remaining for development, Wilton retains much of its open feeling and rural atmosphere. Winding back roads with trees, streams, ponds, woods, and rolling hills are all part of the Wilton's beauty and charm and afford privacy as well as a pastoral setting. The Norwalk River winds through the valleys of Wilton.

There exists among both new residents and those with established roots a strong commitment and concern that Wilton, whatever its future, shall retain some part of its rural heritage.

Appendix C - Connecticut Economic Resource Center – Wilton Profile 2013⁵

Wilton, Connecticut

CERC Town Profile 2013

Town Hall
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, CT 06897
(203) 834-9200

Belongs to
Fairfield County
LMA Bridgeport - Stamford
Southwestern Economic Dev. Region
South Western Planning Area



Demographics

Population (2011)				Race/Ethnicity (2011)				
	Town	County	State		Town	County	State	
2000	17,633	882,567	3,405,565	White	16,562	698,200	2,796,198	
2010	17,874	905,342	3,545,837	Black	223	97,022	347,941	
2011	17,973	911,196	3,558,172	Asian Pacific	869	41,711	135,435	
2020	17,827	940,616	3,690,997	Native American	0	1,207	8,104	
'11-'20 Growth / Yr	-0.1%	0.4%	0.4%	Other/Multi-Race	319	73,056	270,494	
				Hispanic (any race)	510	149,907	463,407	
Land Area (sq. miles)	27	626	4,845	Poverty Rate (2011)	2.1%	8.3%	9.5%	
Pop. / Sq. Mile (2011)	667	1,456	734	Educational Attainment (2011)				
Median Age (2011)	42	39	40	Persons Age 25 or Older	Town	%	State	%
Households (2011)	5,977	332,139	1,360,115	High School Graduate	925	8%	678,312	28%
Med HH Inc. (2011)	\$159,720	\$82,558	\$69,243	Associates Degree	514	5%	176,216	7%
Age Distribution (2011)				Bachelors or More	8,435	74%	861,770	36%
	0-4	5-17	18-24	25-49	50-64	65+	Total	
Male	486 3%	2,463 14%	403 2%	2,294 13%	2,002 11%	1,022 6%	8,670	
Female	644 4%	2,149 12%	414 2%	2,880 16%	1,802 10%	1,414 8%	9,303	
County Total	57,191 6%	169,833 19%	71,385 8%	315,468 35%	174,818 19%	122,501 13%	911,196	

Economics

Business Profile (2012)			Top Five Grand List (2012)		Amount	% of Net
Sector	Units	Employment				
Total - All Industries	901	10,712	Connecticut Light and Power Inc.		\$92,819,550	2.2%
23 Construction	63	343	Wilton 40.50.60 LLC		\$86,856,450	2.1%
31 Manufacturing	NA	NA	TIAA-CREF		\$80,767,550	1.9%
44 Retail Trade	76	1,032	KIMCO Realty		\$42,958,370	1.0%
52 Finance and Insurance	99	1,055	Avalon Properties		\$34,328,390	0.8%
54 Professional, Scientific, and Techni	155	1,772	Net Grand List (2012)		\$4,234,003,260	
Total Government	14	1,158	Top Five Major Employers (2012)			
Local/Municipal Government	11	1,122	ASML Lithography Systems		The Neisen Company	
			Deloitte & Touche, LLP		Ryan Partnership	
			Bridgewater Associates Investme			

Education

2010-2011 School Year	Town	State	Connecticut Mastery Test Percent Above Goal							
Total Town School Enrollment	4,361	548,313	Grade 4		Grade 6		Grade 8			
Most public school students in Wilton attend Wilton School District, which has 4,315 students.			Town	State	Town	State	Town	State		
			Reading	91 63	93 76	92 75				
			Math	92 67	93 72	90 67				
			Writing	88 67	87 65	88 65				
			Average SAT Score							
For more education data see:	Students per Computer	Town	State	Average Class Size		Town		State		
http://sdeportal.ct.gov/Cedar/	Elementary:	3.6	4.1	Grade K	19.5	Grade 2	22.0	Reading	610	502
WEB/ResearchandReports/SSPRReports.aspx	Middle:	2.8	2.7	Grade 5	21.5	Grade 7	21.8	Writing	598	506
	Secondary:	2.4	2.9	High School	21.5	Math	598	506		

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www.cerc.com

No representation or warranties, expressed or implied, are given regarding the accuracy of this information.

⁵ Town Profiles – Wilton, Connecticut. CERC Website:

<http://www.cerc.com/TownProfiles/county.asp?county=Fairfield#Wilton>. November 2013.

Wilton Connecticut



Government

Government Form: Selectman-Town Meeting		Annual Debt Service (2011)	\$9,110,955
Total Revenue (2011)	\$112,607,514	As % of Expenditures	8.2%
Tax Revenue	\$101,459,644	Eq. Net Grand List (2009)	\$6,283,042,966
Non-tax Revenue	\$11,147,870	Per Capita	\$349,582
Intergovernmental	\$8,951,916	As % of State Average	232%
Per Capita Tax (2011)	\$5,645	Date of Last Revaluation (2011)	
As % of State Average	223.6%	Moody's Bond Rating (2011)	Aaa
Total Expenditures (2011)	\$111,339,137	Actual Mill Rate (2011)	20.16
Education	\$74,243,675	Equalized Mill Rate (2011)	15.81
Other	\$27,984,507	% of Grand List Com/Ind (2009)	12.6%
Total Indebtness (2011)	\$66,079,327		
As % of Expenditures	59.3%		
Per Capita	\$3,677		
As % of State Average	162.6%		

Housing/Real Estate

<i>Housing Stock (2012)</i>	<i>Town</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>State</i>	Owner Occupied Dwellings (2011)	5,429	233,684	937,339
Existing Units (total)	6,205	360,423	1,481,396	As % Total Dwellings	87%	65%	63%
% Single Unit	90.7%	63.9%	64.4%	Subsidized Housing (2012)	236	31,049	161,379
New Permits Auth. (2012)	8	2,138	4,669	<i>Distribution of House Sales (2010)</i>	<i>Town</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>State</i>
As % Existing Units	0.13%	0.59%	0.32%	Number of Sales			
Demolitions (2012)	5	386	955	Less than \$100,000	0	136	1,114
House Sales (2010)	155	4,096	17,157	\$100,000-\$199,999	3	510	5,005
Median Price	\$755,000	\$375,000	\$246,000	\$200,000-\$299,999	7	788	4,614
Built Pre 1950 share (2011)	14.6%	30.2%	30.6%	\$300,000-\$399,999	6	734	2,589
				\$400,000 or More	139	1,928	3,835

Labor Force

<i>Place of Residence (2012)</i>	<i>Town</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Connecticut Commuters (2010)</i>			
Labor Force (Residence)	8,379	476,033	1,879,473	Commuters into Town from:	Town Residents	Commuting to:	
Employed	7,881	439,765	1,722,407	Norwalk	1,333	Wilton	1,142
Unemployed	498	36,268	157,074	Wilton	1,142	Stamford	831
Unemployment Rate	5.9%	7.6%	8.4%	Stamford	691	Norwalk	699
<i>Place of Work (2012)</i>				Bridgeport	570	Greenwich	292
# of Units	901	33,097	111,933	Danbury	519	Westport	271
Total Employment	10,712	407,893	1,628,028	Fairfield	455	New Canaan	181
2000-'12 AAGR	0.4%	-0.4%	0.2%	Ridgefield	364	Danbury	163
Mfg Employment	NA	36,614	165,206	Bethel	312	Ridgefield	118
				Stratford	296	Darien	113
				Trumbull	289		

Other Information

<i>Library (2011)</i>		<i>Families Receiving (2013)</i>		<i>Residential Utilities</i>
Public web computers	60	Temporary Assistance	6	Electric Provider
Circulation per capita	18.7	<i>Population Receiving (2013)</i>	89	Connecticut Light & Power
		Food Stamps		(800) 286-2000
<i>Crime Rate (2011)</i>	<i>Town</i>	<i>Distance to Major Cities</i>	<i>Miles</i>	Gas Provider
Per 100,000 Residents	657	Hartford	55	Yankee Gas Company
		Boston	147	(800) 989-0900
		New York City	46	Water Provider
		Providence	113	Aquarion Water Company
				(800) 732-9678
				Cable Provider
				CABLEVISION OF CONNECTICUT, LP
				(203) 847-6666

Appendix D - Strengths and Weaknesses of Wilton as a Location for Business

Environment Analysis

Strengths:

- Location
- Affordability
- Reputation as a quality, suburban residential community
- Accessibility to Railroad
- Proximity to Connecticut's gold coast and New York City
- Nationally recognized school system
- Tradition of supporting the preservation history, nature, and culture
- Multiple vibrant community facilities e.g., Library, Clune Center and Teen Center
- Fiscal strength

Weaknesses;

- No overarching, and integrated residential, commercial and recreational development plan
- Difficulty in working with town departments
- Not a destination town
- Fractured zoning and planning
- Limited amenities
- Evolving downtown
- Limited pedestrian friendly areas
- Unconnected open spaces
- No town identity or branding consistency
- Dated commercial space
- Southern part of Route 7 Gateway doesn't accurately represent the town

Opportunity:

- New bike path
- Focus on green building and living
- Continued development and greening of downtown by being more pedestrian friendly
- Consistency in town branding

Threat:

- Competition increasing for target market
- Surrounding towns further ahead in business promotion strategies
- Large amounts of Class A commercial space coming on line in other towns
- Economy
- Technology changing the need for space retail/commercial space
- Empty retail space sends a negative message to prospective business

APPENDIX E - Original Wilton Economic Development Commission Vision, Mission, Objectives and Duties

Vision:

To enhance Wilton's reputation as a community where the quality of life for local residents, professionals and workers make Wilton a "first choice" (preferred) option to start a new business, to relocate an existing business, or for current businesses to remain in Wilton and flourish.

Mission:

Consistent with *Wilton's Plan of Conservation and Development* and in keeping with the overall character, history and aesthetics of the town, Wilton's Economic Development Commission shall work in concert with other local agencies, commissions, boards and departments to promote orderly and planned economic development in Wilton that will:

- Increase and diversify the town's commercial tax base.
- Grow tax revenues without increasing demand for additional or new public services.
- Encourage retail investments that fill current product and service voids.
- Support sustainable jobs that contribute to the local economy.
- Enhance the quality of life for local residents and employees.
- Maintain the semi-rural character of the town.

Objectives:

Develop a plan and make recommendations that will:

- Help attract new businesses and homeowners to Wilton.
- Encourage and assist current business owners to continue to operate and expand here in Wilton.
- Increase present and future occupancy of available commercial space in Wilton.
- Expand the commercial sector of Wilton's overall Grand List.
- Promote a "business-friendly" climate and culture that eliminates unreasonable, unnecessary and unintended obstacles to growth and development in Wilton.

Duties:

- Meet monthly — all meetings to be properly posted — and report regularly to the BOARD OF SELECTMEN.
- Propose to the Selectmen for their consideration and approval recommendations explicitly related to growth and development in Wilton.
- Update the BOF, Chamber of Commerce, and other local agencies regarding the status of WEDC's work.
- Work closely with Wilton's Planning and Zoning, Inland Wetlands and Conservation Commissions, as well as both regional and State agencies to promote economic development in Wilton.
- Seek advice and counsel from Wilton's real estate professionals, both commercial and residential.
- Draw upon the knowledge and experiences of other EDCs in Connecticut and elsewhere (in particular, from Ridgefield's experience with the Branchville project).

- Develop communication and relationships with existing/prospective businesses and major corporate stakeholders.
- Schedule community presentations to inform the public regarding WEDC's progress.
- Create and maintain a dedicated, "user-friendly" EDC website to include data and information of interest to both businesses and prospective homebuyers.
- Develop and execute a comprehensive marketing plan for the town.
- Sponsor events and other opportunities that encourage public officials, property owners, developers, real estate professionals, private investors, entrepreneurs, and others to work jointly in advancing Wilton's economic development initiatives.
- Maintain a current inventory of unused public land and commercial property — vacant and occupied, developed and undeveloped — that would attract new businesses or appeal to existing businesses looking to expand.
- Develop a profile of the type of new businesses Wilton seeks to attract, specifically those that fit with Wilton's character history and aesthetics, and those that are consistent with principles espoused in *Wilton's Plan of Conservation and Development*.
- Review and make recommendations regarding the town's current policies, regulations, procedures, and infrastructure that unreasonably or unintentionally discourage or impede commercial development in Wilton.
- Apply for federal and state grants to fund infrastructure projects related to promoting economic development in Wilton.

APPENDIX F - Draft WEDC proposal presented to Wilton Board of Selectmen

April 1, 2013

“CAN DO” recommendations

1. Commit:

Dedicate ongoing resources to Wilton’s Economic Development

- a. Dedicate Resources. In order for the strategies and tactics of an economic development plan to succeed, resources specifically dedicated to implementing the various activities are necessary:
 - Create an office of Economic Development with a dedicated resource(s), e.g., a Director of Economic Development
 - Create a group of advocates/liaisons (can be volunteers) to:
 - guide prospective businesses in locating to Wilton
 - nurture existing businesses to remain/expand in Wilton
 - Provide funding for marketing programs and website
- b. Establish a set of guiding principles for economic development to be adopted across town policy makers and stakeholders including but not limited to:
 - Board of Selectmen
 - Town Planner
 - Planning & Zoning Commission
 - Zoning Board of Appeals
 - Building Inspectors Board of Appeals
 - Capital Projects Steering Committee
 - Energy Commission
 - Historic District and Historic Property Commission
 - Village District Consultant Committee
 - Inlands Wetlands Commission
 - Water Pollution Control Authority
 - Chamber of Commerce
- c. Continue to incubate and implement new ideas with the ongoing existence of the Wilton Economic Development Commission and include a mixture of new and existing members
 - The original 9 members all have the same term of July 2012 – June 2014. Suggest setting up an intentional rotation e.g., annually
 - Suggest bringing new skills and expertise to the WEDC to execute and advance initiatives

2. Attract:

Create and put into action a marketing plan for the Town of Wilton to attract and onboard commercial and retail businesses

- a. Create and implement a Marketing Plan for the Town
 - Articulate “Target Market”
 - Identify what types of businesses are already here and why
 - Define what Wilton “wants to be known for” from a business perspective e.g., Financial, Marketing, Entrepreneurial...
 - Understand the needs of the Target Market

- Create “Why Wilton” – Branding, Elevator Pitch, Package of “sparklers”
 - Articulate the Town’s Value Proposition to potential customers and residents
Work – Live – Play
 - Reasons to move to Wilton (based on feedback) for:
 - Commercial & retail customers
 - Residential
- Build “Marketing Wilton” programs and materials in cooperation with businesses and organizations within the town
 - Identify existing town efforts such as Halloween, parades, etc.
 - Identify opportunities and recommendations for the town
 - How to improve vibrancy and level of activity
 - Under-utilized town “gems” e.g., Clune Center
 - Create new events targeted to employees of commercial businesses and residents e.g., restaurant week, shop Wilton, etc.
 - Develop a business-to-business matrix
 - Create Marketing Materials (digital and/or hard-copy)
- b. Implement programs to attract new businesses to Wilton
 - Create and maintain inventory of open commercial and retail space
 - Create an inventory of retail product and service voids that would make Wilton more attractive
 - To residents (#1 reason for moving the business to Wilton is residential location of senior leadership)
 - To employees of businesses
 - Identify potential new commercial & retail customers (actual candidates for outreach)
 - Develop outreach programs to attract new businesses, including retail and entertainment business to fill gaps
 - Increase abilities to quickly respond to multiple inquiries with direct, personal contacts
 - Create a group of advocates/liasons (can be volunteers) who are enabled to respond quickly and guide prospective businesses through the process and policies
 - Create a handbook to simplify navigation of process and policies
 - Create a “Welcome” package for onboarding of new businesses and their employees
 - Implement a tool to track and monitor multiple inquiries
 - Develop a management system to review and evaluate lessons learned
- c. Create a Website (independent of, but connected via a link on the Town’s site)

3. Nurture:

Design a nurturing program for existing businesses to support retention and expansion

- a. Create a group of advocates/liasons (can be volunteers) to nurture “Top” business customers in town; perhaps expand the role of the Chamber of Commerce (CoC currently aligned for small business & retail, but not larger commercial business)
 - Would need to provide guidance and training to these advocates
e.g., a document of FAQs (frequently asked questions) so that individuals would know how to respond to questions such as Mill Rates
- b. Identify “Top” business customers in Town to nurture
- c. Create and launch nurturing program (link with Marketing plan)
 - Practice outreach e.g., calls, meetings (breakfast, lunch, dinner), etc.
 - Quarterly seminars; Annual business development roundtable
 - Programs for employees of the businesses

- d. Ensure there is a feedback / closed-loop process so that real concerns are addressed in a timely manner

4. Develop:

Build a development / re-development plan for the Town of Wilton to ensure it is utilizing its retail and commercial space to the fullest benefit

- a. Leverage *Wilton 2010 Plan of Conservation and Development* as a guide
 - e.g., “Conduct a commercial build-out analysis for Route 7”
- b. Review other towns’ plans in depth, model and build a plan for leveraging development to increase the tax base
 - Identify specific development projects, sites for development / re-development and promote to developers e.g.,
 - Cannondale
 - Train Station
 - Revitalize entrance to Wilton Center
 - Beautification of Route 7
 - Have a professionally executed Zone Map Review and Assessment to identify residential zones for conversion to commercial
 - Define what is feasible according to State and Local regulations and requirements
 - Ensure sensitivity to property owners’ rights e.g., suggestions vs mandates
- c. Define, develop and implement a “Quick Track” program to pre-approve properties and land for use or development
- d. Identify opportunities for public / private partnerships
- e. Provide subsidies for development of undeveloped or under-utilized space
- f. Provide low cost financing to improve buildings e.g., at Gateway
- g. Identify and promote state programs such as C-PACE (Commercial & Industrial Property Assessed Clean Energy)

5. Optimize:

Establish the guidelines to foster a business-friendly climate for economic development with consistency in mission, approach, and implementation across the town

- a. Become “One Wilton” with consistency in mission, approach and implementation of economic development by socializing and embedding established guiding principles throughout town policies, processes and procedures
 - Communicate with and educate other town boards, councils and commissions regarding “One Wilton” Economic Development guidelines
 - Identify, coordinate and integrate existing town organizations e.g., Chamber of Commerce to present an image of “One Wilton”
- b. Review and identify town policies, regulations, procedures etc. that are creating barriers to attracting and retaining businesses, as well as tactical needs and barriers to expansion
 - Understand existing policies and procedures as well as which state and local requirements are mandated
 - Compare Wilton policies, regulations, procedures etc. with surrounding communities
- c. Identify which policies etc. to preserve and which require amendments; make recommendations to revise Town policies, regulations, procedures etc., that reflect current and future business trends and needs, to create a more “business-friendly” climate and culture

- Work with Planning and Zoning and other town regulatory agencies to clarify and revise regulations to reduce barriers e.g.,: adaptive use for existing businesses
 - Re-write governance protocols for commercial and retail development
 - Understand risks and barriers to change
- d. Expand direct links between small and large businesses and appropriate town officials to provide smooth communications and problem-solving procedures
- e. Foster ongoing reviews of zoning regulations and infrastructure investment to support attracting new and expanding existing businesses e.g., power, cell towers, roadways, etc.

APPENDIX G - WEDC Phase 2 Commission Recommendations

At its inception, WEDC members were asked to serve a two year term. July 2014 begins a new term for the Commission and with this new term is the opportunity to bring onto the Commission new skills that are aligned with the mission for the next phase. At the February 24, 2014 meeting of the Board of Selectmen and the WEDC the following were discussed:

- The BoS agreed with the WEDC recommendation to increase the size of the Commission to 11 members and that one of those members is from the Chamber of Commerce.
- The BoS agreed that a more intentional approach be taken to identifying the next set of Commission members, both staggering terms and getting the right skill/talents to best support the design and objectives of the Commission. For this latter item, the BoS asked for our recommendations.

The second phase of the WEDC is anticipated to focus on designing, delivering, maintaining and advancing the following initiatives:

- WEDC Strategic Recommendations Phase 2
- Website
- Rapid Response Program
- Nurturing Programs
- Strategic Blueprint
- Marketing Programs

Therefore, the following is a recommendation for the mixture of knowledge and skills that would be valuable for the makeup of the Commission:

WEDC Knowledge & Skills Profiles Needed	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic development & re-development • Real estate (Commercial, Residential) market and processes • Planning, zoning and Town regulations 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business expertise and experience • Network of, and ability to interface with, existing and potential commercial clients 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing, Advertising • Writing, Communications 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website Design • Social Media 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Management 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative from Chamber of Commerce 	

