

CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

2

History of Wilton

The Beginning

Wilton was originally part of the Town of Norwalk, established in 1651. In 1726, the families living in the northern reaches petitioned the Connecticut General Assembly for the right to establish Wilton Parish. The petition was granted and Wilton was incorporated as a “Village having parish privileges.” It was still part of Norwalk and subject to its Town Meeting. However, the church and the families of Wilton Parish were responsible for establishing schools, an animal pound, care of the roads and maintaining a militia for protection. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the “church” (the Congregational Church) was virtually synonymous with the “state.” The Meeting House served as church and town hall. This practice ceased when the “Town House,” or Town Hall was built across the road from the church in 1831.

The Churches

The first church was built in the vicinity of the Norwalk River and present day Wolfpit Road. Within ten years, a new structure was built near Sharp Hill Road. Though no traces of the churches remain, the early cemetery is part of Wilton’s continuing history.

In 1790, the current church was built on Ridgefield Road. It is the oldest continuously operated church in Fairfield County. In 1803, when animosity toward Tories subsided, an Episcopal Church was built on Danbury Road. In 1863, the building was replaced and the original was moved across the river to Wilton Center where it serves as a commercial building. During the 1830s and 1840s several small Methodist churches were built. Only two, Zion’s Hill and the Georgetown Church, remain active today.

Wilton Becomes a Town

In May, 1802, a group of leading citizens succeeded in gaining approval from the State Legislature to finally secede from Norwalk, become an independent Town and form its own Town Meeting to govern itself. Wilton was a rural Town of scattered small farms and home industries. Its road system consisted of a road which roughly followed the river to Danbury in addition to roads on each of the ridges to connect Norwalk to the towns northward. A few cross-town roads developed to connect the two ridges and the valley.

Reasons for Growth

Wilton has experienced major growth since 1940 for three reasons:

Access to New York Region

Wilton’s proximity to New York City has been a major factor in its growth and development. The extension of rail service, the construction of the Merritt Parkway and other transportation improvements have made Wilton more accessible.

Quality of Life

The semi-rural character, historic villages, preserved open space and good schools attract new residents.

Economic Conditions

Wilton’s growth pace relates to overall economic conditions. During economic booms, Wilton has grown rapidly.

The railroad came through Wilton in 1852. But by this time, the growth of Midwestern agriculture, large-scale industrialization and a continental transportation system made Wilton's small farms and home-based shoe making, shirt making, and comb and tool making obsolete.

Wilton's population had grown slowly from 1,728 in 1810 to 2,208 in 1860, but declined to 1,284 in 1920. With few opportunities locally, young people moved elsewhere.

In the early 20th century, prosperous New Yorkers, seeking quiet country summer homes, found Wilton's abandoned farms and farm houses to be attractive. By this time, travel from New York to Wilton was relatively easy by either train or motorcar. New owners improved properties without changing the basic character of the community, but the old timers were still quietly uneasy with the newcomers.

From Exurb to Suburb

The transformation of Wilton from a farming community to a suburban community occurred primarily after World War II. Farm fields became subdivisions, while schools, playing fields and other amenities were rapidly built.

The population grew from 4,558 in 1950 to 13,752 in 1970. By 1980, growth had slowed and the school population plummeted. As a result, the Town closed three schools.

By 2000, the school population had increased, but enrollment was still much smaller than it was during the 1970s. However, increased expectations and standards required the schools to be significantly expanded and upgraded.

Danbury Road and Adaptive Use

Danbury Road (Route 7) saw the beginning of commercialization and the demolition of some of Wilton's earliest homes shortly after World War II, to make room for office buildings and strip shopping plazas. Around 1970, the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) acquired properties for a proposed Super 7 expressway. Many houses were torn down before the expressway project was stopped.

A desire to avoid continuous strip development and to save the remaining 18th and 19th century houses led to the development of "Adaptive Use," a zoning regulation designed to allow appropriate commercial use of historic buildings along the corridor. Adaptive Use has worked well to avoid increased strip development, to improve buildings and to retain historic character.

Wilton Center

Anchored by the Sloan-Raymond-Fitch house on the corner of Danbury Road (this building has now been relocated), Ridgefield Road meandered across the river and up the hill to the Congregational Church and the Town Hall (Old Town Hall).

The “Center” developed with small homes and scattered buildings and provided basic services: a library, school, post office and a nearby train station.

In 1940, Wilton Center became a “dead end’ due to the relocation of the connection of Ridgefield Road to Danbury Road, and the later closing of a bridge.

During the mid 20th century, some newer buildings were added to the historic buildings there and the Center continued as a casual local shopping area. In the late 1980s, with the building of Stop and Shop and several multi-family housing complexes, it was essentially divided into two centers. What was Center Street was extended southward to Wolfpit Road in order to facilitate this development.

Wilton Today

Despite increased development and traffic, Wilton manages to maintain its semi-rural atmosphere. Second-growth trees cover the rolling hills and the roads are still lined with nearly 500 houses from the 18th and 19th centuries. The Town’s commitment to preserving open space, the protection of wetlands, slopes, vistas and scenic roadscapes contributes to this fairly bucolic character.

The challenge now is to maintain and preserve the past for the future, and avoid losing the attributes which drew most Wiltonians here in the first place.



Photo: Thomas J. Dodd Research Center

SWRPA

Wilton is a member of the South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA), along with Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, Norwalk, Stamford, Weston and Westport.

The region, which was home to almost 354,000 people in 2000, covers 225 square miles.

Regional Roles and Implications

The eight South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA) communities share strong economic and cultural ties to New York – a large number of residents work in New York and a large number of jobs in the region are filled by New York residents. These communities are home to a number of world corporations. All have high housing prices that make it difficult for even middle class families to afford.

A number of regional assets are found in Wilton. Route 7, which connects Danbury to Norwalk, traverses the Town north to south. Running parallel to Route 7 is the Danbury branch of MetroNorth, which connects residents and workers to lower Fairfield County, Westchester, and New York City.

Parts of the region get their drinking water from the South Norwalk Reservoir, located in the southern part of Wilton (though some of Wilton's drinking water comes from elsewhere). Residents from neighboring towns enjoy the restaurants, shops and other services located in Wilton Center and along Route 7. The only National Park Service Site in the State is located in Wilton (Weir Farm).

Wilton is a regional employment center. The Town is home to a number of large employers that provide jobs to the regions' residents. With more jobs in Wilton than employed residents, Wilton is a net "exporter" of jobs to the region.

A number of regional plans set forth recommendations and policies related to conservation and development in Wilton. These documents include:

- *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, 2006 – 2015* (SWRPA)
- *South Western Region Long Range Transportation Plan, 2007 to 2035 and FY 07 – 11 Transportation Improvement Program* (South Western Region Metropolitan Planning Organization)
- *Regional Housing Needs and Supply Assessment, 2007* (SWRPA)
- *Pre-Disaster Mitigation Strategy, 2005* (SWRPA)
- *Norwalk River Watershed Action Plan, 2004 Supplement; 1998 Plan* (Norwalk River Watershed Initiative Committee)

While many issues warrant regional solutions, the overall interests of Wilton can be best addressed by the community and its local boards and commissions.

People of Wilton

Growth and Reasons for Growth

Population growth has slowed in Wilton. Recent population estimates by the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) put Wilton’s population at 18,144 people in 2007 (an increase of 511 people from the 2000 Census count of 17,633, or a growth rate of 3%). By comparison, the Town grew by 10% from 1990 to 2000.

High and low population estimates are provided for future population growth in Wilton (see sidebar). A high estimate is provided by the Connecticut State Data Center (CSDC) and it projects continued population growth in Wilton through to the year 2030 at a rate of 8% to 9% per decade. However, it is uncertain if a growth rate of almost 10% can be sustained over three decades especially since there is little vacant land available.

Figures prepared by ConnDOT project slower growth; however, Wilton’s 2007 population has already surpassed ConnDOT’s 2010 projection, so these projections may be too low. Most likely, Wilton’s future population will fall between these high and low estimates.

Population grows when more people move to a community than leave and / or when the number of births outnumbers deaths. From 1950 to 1980, net in-migration was most responsible for Wilton’s growth. That trend is logical – it was during these decades that Wilton became more accessible to job centers, including New York. That trend changed dramatically over the next two decades. From 1980 to 2000, the majority of Wilton’s population increase can be attributed to natural increases.

Components of Wilton’s Population Change

	1950 to 1960	1960 to 1970	1970 to 1980	1980 to 1990	1990 to 2000
Total Population Change	3,468	5,546	1,779	638	1,644
Total Natural Increase (Births – Deaths)	713	665	29	471	972
Births	1,200	1,352	938	1,379	2,007
Deaths	487	687	909	908	1,035
% of Population Change due to Natural Increase	21%	12%	2%	74%	59%
Estimated Net Migration	2,755	4,881	1,750	167	672
% of Population Change due to Net Migration	79%	88%	98%	26%	41%

US Census; natural increase data from Connecticut Health Department reports.

Data Sources

This section uses the most recent available data during the planning process – generally from Spring 2008 to Spring 2009.

Wilton’s Population

Year	Population
1810	1,728
1820	1,818
1830	2,097
1840	2,053
1850	2,066
1860	2,208
1870	1,994
1880	1,864
1890	1,722
1900	1,598
1910	1,706
1920	1,284
1930	2,133
1940	2,829
1950	4,558
1960	8,026
1970	13,572
1980	15,351
1990	15,989
2000	17,633
2007	18,144

1810 to 2000 Census and CSDC.

Wilton’s Projections

	Low	High
2010	18,100	19,270
2020	18,470	20,958
2030	18,830	22,859

High projections from the Connecticut State Data Center. Low projections are from ConnDOT.

Caveats for Age Projections

Some of the age projections, particularly for the age 20 to 34 year olds, may seem unlikely due to many factors.

It is important to understand the limitations of projections. CDSC cautions “The calculations and assumptions that form the basis for these population projections are drawn from historical patterns of population change. Thus, these projections reveal how populations may evolve over the next twenty-five years - if these historical patterns continue to hold true. However, there is no guarantee that the projected trends will occur. A host of external influences, such as public policy initiatives at the state and federal levels or significant shifts in economic structure, may lead to new patterns of change in the population.”

Changing Age Composition

It is reasonable to expect that larger national and state demographic trends will have some influence on Wilton’s demographic profile. The two trends that may have the largest influence on Wilton’s future are:

- Continued cycles of growth and decline for the school age population
- Increases in the age 55 and over population

The needs for housing, jobs, transportation and other services for these and other age groups are shown below.

Age Composition in Wilton (1970 to 2030)

Ages	Actual				CSDC Projections		
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
0-4	896	643	1,112	1,417	1,335	1,419	1,450
5-19	4,789	4,581	3,281	4,421	5,442*	5,400	5,595
20-34	1,644	2,307	2,363	1,423	1,518	3,555	3,653
35 -54	4,234	5,166	5,812	6,389	6,417	4,715	5,647
55-64	1,053	1,529	1,726	1,827	2,300	3,106	2,299
65 +	956	1,125	1,695	2,156	1,867	2,372	3,824
Total	13,572	15,351	15,989	17,633	18,879	20,567	22,468

*Projections prepared by the Board of education are much lower than this figure. See page 83. 1970 - 2000 Census, projections by Connecticut Data Center (2007).

Changes in Age Groups in Wilton and Needs

Description	Age Range	Needs	1970 to 2000	2000 to 2030
Infants	0 to 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child care • Recreation programs 	↑	↑
School-Age	5 to 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School facilities • Recreation facilities, programs 	↓	↑
Young Adults	20 to 34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rentals, starter homes • Social destinations 	↓	↑
Middle Adults	35 to 54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family programs • Trade-up homes 	↑	↓
Mature Adults	55 to 65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller or second homes • Few have children in schools 	↑	↑
Retirement Age	65 and over	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax relief • Housing options • Elderly programs • Medical care • In-home services 	↑	↑

Housing in Wilton

Housing Stock

In 2000, there were 6,113 housing units in Wilton, according to the Census, representing an increase of 289 units (about 5%) from 1990. From 2000 to 2007, another 42 new units were built, representing a significant slowdown in the creation of new housing units.

This low growth rate may seem surprising since there was evidence of new housing construction throughout Wilton. But housing data shows that the number of permits for housing demolition almost equals the number for new construction. This means that despite the construction activity, the net number of new units is low. This trend in “tear-downs” has concerned residents since smaller, lower cost housing is usually replaced with larger, more expensive homes. This housing trend can impact the character of established neighborhoods and affect affordability.

Housing Unit Growth in Wilton

1980	5,099	
1990	5,824	14%
2000	6,113	5%
2007	6,155	0.7%

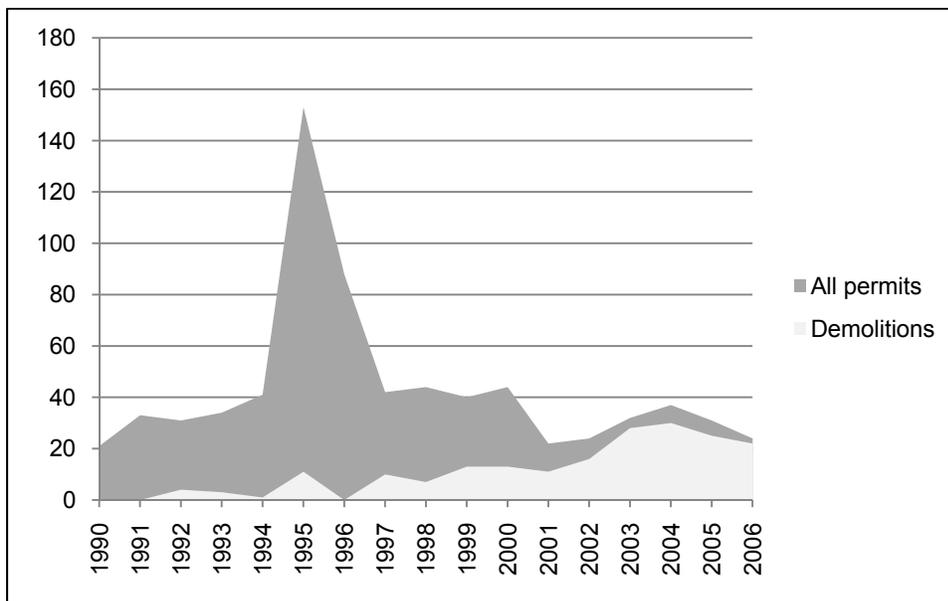
1980-2000 Census.
2007 data from CT DECD

Tenure in Wilton (2000)

Owner-Occupied Units	88%
Rental Units	12%

Census.

Wilton Housing Permits



CT DECD.

The majority of the housing units (92%) in Wilton are single-family housing units, according to DECD. Twelve percent of housing units in Wilton are rental units.

Given the expected increase in the older population, it is possible that the existing housing stock may not be able to effectively meet future housing needs.

Median Sale Prices (2007)

Greenwich	\$2,000,000
New Canaan	\$1,685,000
Darien	\$1,330,000
Westport	\$1,325,000
Weston	\$935,000
Wilton	\$891,000
Stamford	\$695,000
Norwalk	\$528,000
Fairfield Cnty	\$593,000
Connecticut	\$295,000

CT Economic Resource Center Inc. (CERC), 2009.

Affordable Housing

Definition

In order to qualify as an affordable unit under CGS 8-30g, a dwelling must be:

- assisted housing (funded under a state or federal program);
- CHFA-financed housing (financed under a program for income-qualifying persons or families); or,
- housing that is deed restricted to be affordable to low- or moderate-income persons or families for at least 40 years.

Until 10% of a community’s housing stock is affordable, it is subject to an affordable housing appeals procedure that shifts the burden of proof to the community to show that threats to public health or safety outweigh the need for affordable housing.

Affordable Housing

Stamford	13.53%
Norwalk	11.01%
Greenwich	5.08%
Wilton	2.65%
New Canaan	2.49%
Westport	2.15%
Darien	1.80%
Weston	0.03%

DECD 2007.

Affordability

Like the rest of Fairfield County, much of Wilton’s housing does not seem to be affordable to low and moderate income households.

One common measure of affordability is whether a household is paying more than 30% of its annual income for housing costs. According to 2000 Census data, 22% of homeowners and 36% of renters in Wilton are spending more than 30% of their income for housing.

The median sales prices of homes in Wilton is high compared to the State and County. In 2007, the median was \$891,000, which was much greater than the median sales price in both the State and in Fairfield County (see sidebar).

As of 2007, just under 3% of Wilton’s housing units met the State’s statutory definition of “affordable housing” (see sidebar).

Affordable Housing Units in Wilton

Governmentally Assisted Units	90
CHFA Mortgages	3
Deed Restricted Units	69
Total Assisted Units	162
% of Housing Units that are Affordable	2.65%

Source: DECD 2007 Affordable Housing Appeals List.

Seven units are also designated for middle income households, but those units do not meet the State’s definition of affordable housing. Additional affordable units are planned, but not yet built. The majority of the affordable rental units in Wilton are for the Town’s over 55 population and the disabled.

Each additional affordable unit helps the Town move closer to meeting the 10% goal and the Town has made great strides in adding affordable units to its housing inventory. However, this percentage can decrease despite the best efforts of a municipality. As new market rate units are built, the percentage of affordable units decreases unless new affordable units are also created.

Another challenge is that many deed restricted units “expire” after a set period of time. Once they expire the units can be rented or sold at market rate. Of the 69 deed restricted units in Wilton, 62 will expire between 2016 and 2020. This would represent a loss of 40% of Wilton’s total affordable housing stock within the next 12 years. This loss in affordable units would be a tremendous setback to the efforts of the Town and affordable housing providers.

Wilton's Economy

Wilton's labor force, which includes residents currently working or seeking a job, totaled 8,341 residents in 2006. According to the Connecticut Department of Labor (CT DOL), Wilton's unemployment rate was 4.7% in December 2008. This was lower than the State's rate of 6.6%. Over one third of Wilton's labor force works in Wilton. A large percentage of the Wilton's labor force (18%) commutes to Manhattan and most of the remainder work elsewhere in Fairfield County (see sidebar).

According to the CT DOL, 10,654 jobs were located in Wilton in 2007. This figure represents 2.5% of all jobs in Fairfield County. Wilton can be considered an exporter of jobs since there are 1.22 jobs for each working resident. This ratio is the second highest in the region.

Ratio of Jobs to Housing and Workers (2005)

Town	Jobs / Housing Ratio	Jobs / Worker Ratio
Wilton	1.66	1.22
Stamford	1.57	1.14
Westport	1.56	1.25
Greenwich	1.40	1.15
Norwalk	1.26	0.91
Darien	1.01	0.77
New Canaan	0.90	0.72
SWRPA	1.38	1.03
Fairfield County	1.19	0.90
Connecticut	1.16	0.89

As shown below, job growth in Wilton increased dramatically from 1960 to 1980. After a decrease in the number of jobs from 1980 to 1990, numbers rebounded though growth since 2000 has been slow. While exact figures do not exist, there is an estimated 3 to 4 million square feet of commercial space in Wilton (data from Wilson's Commercial Realty and Town Assessor).

Employment in Wilton

	Jobs	% Change
1960	1,840	--
1970	3,710	102%
1980	9,480	156%
1990	8,040	-15%
2000	10,190	27%
2007	10,654	5%

CT DOL, DECD.

Wilton Residents, Top 10 Places of Work (2000)

Wilton	2,212
Manhattan	1,110
Stamford	959
Norwalk	833
Greenwich	344
Westport	252
Ridgefield	153
New Canaan	145
Bridgeport	143
Danbury	133

CERC.

Wilton Residents Working at Home

	#	% of Workers
1980	32	1%
1990	554	7%
2000	710	9%

U.S. Census

Number of Jobs (2007)

Stamford	76,023
Norwalk	45,643
Greenwich	36,266
Westport	16,896
Wilton	10,654
Darien	7,555
New Canaan	6,520
Fairfield County	422,460
Connecticut	1,686,262

Connecticut DOL.

Definitions

Developed Land - land that has buildings, structures, or improvements used for a particular economic or social purpose (such as residential or institutional).

Committed Land - land that is used for a particular economic or social purpose (including open space).

Protected Open Space - land or development rights owned by the Federal government, the State, the Town, land trusts, or conservation organizations intended to remain for open space purposes.

Unprotected Open Space – private land owned by clubs, cemeteries, and other organizations and is used for other purposes but provides open space benefits. Unprotected open space possibly could be developed.

Undeveloped Land - land that is not developed or committed, including excess acreage on a lot.

Land Use in Wilton

Wilton contains approximately 17,500 acres. Roughly 16,000 acres, or 92% of the land, is either developed for residential, business, or industrial purposes, or committed to a specific use such as open space or municipal use. Conversely, nine percent of the land in Wilton is considered undeveloped. Residential land uses account for 63% of the developed or committed land. Open space comprises the next largest percentage of committed land at 20%. In 1994, Wilton had approximately 2,800 acres of undeveloped land or underdeveloped land. Today, less than half of that amount remains.

Wilton Land Use (2007)

Use	Acres	% of Developed & Committed Land	% of Total Land
Residential	10,150	63%	58%
Single Family	9,985		
Multi-Family	165		
Business	478	3%	3%
Commercial	467		
Commercial Recreation	11		
Open Space	3,292	20%	19%
Protected Space	1,883		
Unprotected Space	1,409		
Community Facilities	489	3%	3%
Municipal Facilities	327		
Institutional	163		
Utilities / Transportation	1,724	11%	10%
Road ROW (including Route 7 ROW)	1,664		
Utilities	17		
Water Features	43		
Developed / Committed	16,133	100%	92%
Undeveloped	1,361		8%
Undeveloped	688		
Underdeveloped	673		
Total Land Area	17,494		100%

Totals may not add due to rounding.
Land use information from Wilton with updates by Planimetrics.

Land Use Map

Wilton, CT

102

Redding

Ridgefield

Legend

- Single Family Residential
- Multi-Family / Multiple House
- Commercial
- Commercial Recreation
- Protected Open Space
- Unprotected Open Space
- Former Route 7 Right of Way
- Community Facility
- Institutional
- Undeveloped
- Water

Lewisboro, NY

Weston



33

7

123

New Canaan

33

Westport

124

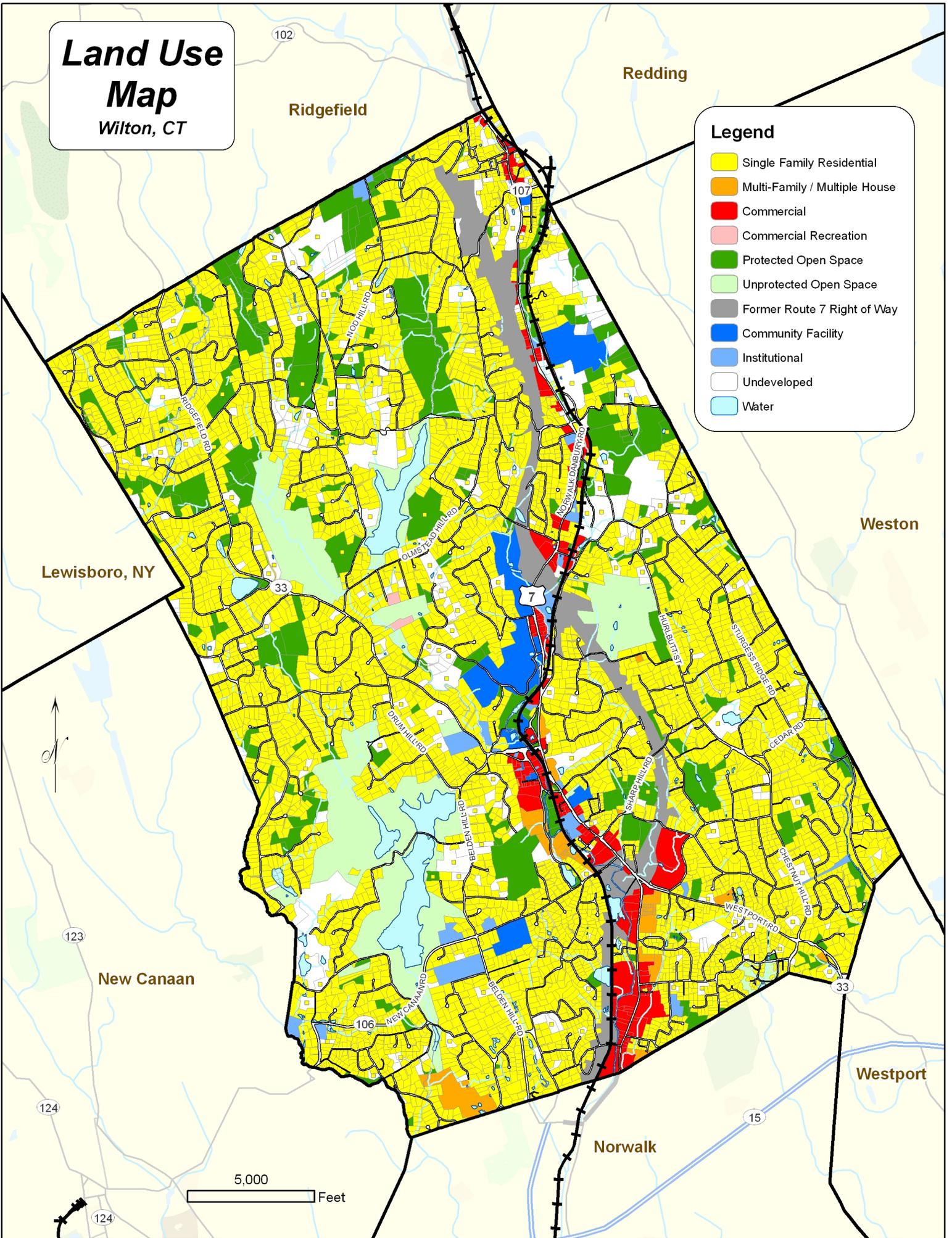
106

Norwalk

15

5,000 Feet

124



Zoning in Wilton

Like most communities, Wilton manages land use activities in the community by zoning areas for specific uses and intensities. For analysis purposes, zoning districts are categorized as single-family residential, other residential, and business and retail.

Wilton contains a variety of districts for residential development. Most of the land area in Wilton (97%) is zoned for single family residences. One district, the Affordable Housing in Multi-Family Residential District (MFAAHD), has not yet been applied to any parcels so it does not show up in this analysis.

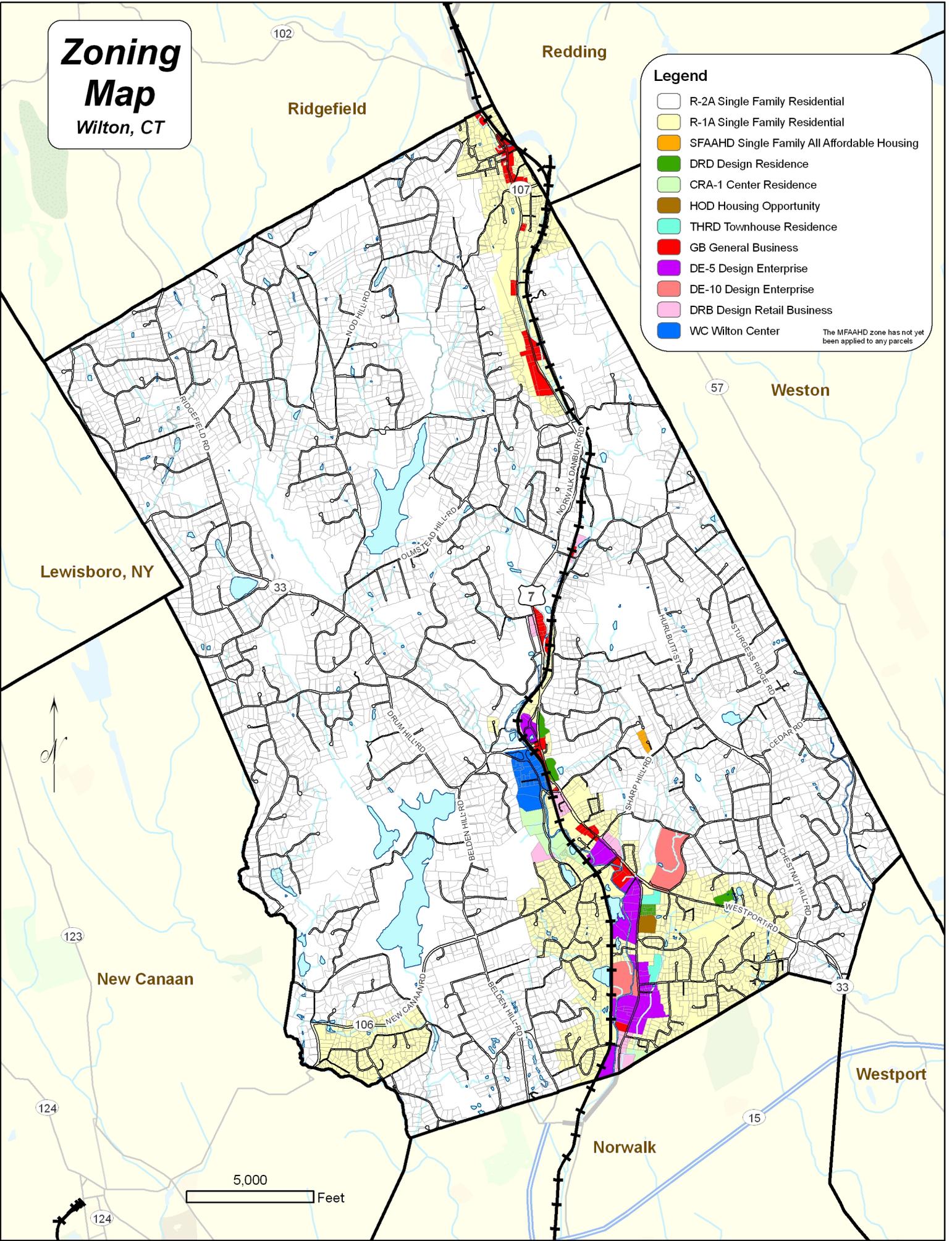
Wilton has five zoning districts for business development and other non-residential uses. In total, these districts comprise just under 3% of Wilton's land area. There are businesses located outside of business zones. This is commonly seen along Route 7 where residential structures have been preserved by allowing their re-use for commercial purposes.

Zoning Districts

Category	Zone	Acres	% of Land
Single Family Residence		16,884	97%
	R-2A Residence	14,904	
	R-1A Residence	1,975	
	Single Family All Affordable Housing District	6	
Other Residential		111	1%
	Center Residence Dist.	55	
	Design Residence Dist.	27	
	Townhouse Residence Dist.	17	
	Housing Opp. Dev. Dist.	11	
Business and Retail		499	3%
	DE-5 Designed Enterprise	162	
	General Business	123	
	DE-10 Designed Enterprise	91	
	Wilton Center	59	
	Design Retail Business	64	

Zoning Map

Wilton, CT



Legend

- R-2A Single Family Residential
 - R-1A Single Family Residential
 - SFAAHD Single Family All Affordable Housing
 - DRD Design Residence
 - CRA-1 Center Residence
 - HOD Housing Opportunity
 - THRD Townhouse Residence
 - GB General Business
 - DE-5 Design Enterprise
 - DE-10 Design Enterprise
 - DRB Design Retail Business
 - WC Wilton Center
- The MFAAHD zone has not yet been applied to any parcels

5,000 Feet



123

124

New Canaan

124

102

Ridgefield

Redding

107

57

Weston

Lewisboro, NY

33

7

33

Westport

15

Norwalk

Residential Development Potential

A build-out analysis was performed to gauge how much new residential development might occur on undeveloped lots under current zoning. The analysis is useful to understand potential future patterns and total growth. It is important to note that growth and new development can occur through other means that are not accounted for in this analysis (e.g., commercial redevelopment).

The land use analysis identified roughly 1,300 acres of undeveloped land and land that may be capable of supporting additional development in the future. For example, more houses possibly could be built on a 12 acre lot in a 2-acre zone that currently has just one single family house on it. Theoretically, unprotected open space (privately owned land that provides characteristics of open space, such as a golf course) also could have long-term development potential.

After considering zoning and development constraints (such as wetlands and watercourses), the analysis estimates that roughly 500 additional housing units could be built in Wilton. Of these, half might occur in unprotected open space. However, there is a low probability that unprotected open space, particularly the water supply land, would be developed in the near future. The analysis estimated that the remainder of the new units might occur on undeveloped land (146 units) or excess acreage (109 units). With a household size of 2.91, this analysis estimates the addition of 1,500 residents. The Build Out Map shows what the development pattern could be under this scenario.

The total number of new units in Wilton could be higher though if areas are re-zoned to multi-family use or if public, semi-public or institutional lands are developed for housing.

Potential New Residential Units

By Zone	New Units
R1-A	30
R2-A	480

By Current Land Use	
Undeveloped	146
Excess Acreage	109
Unprotected Open Space	255

Total	510
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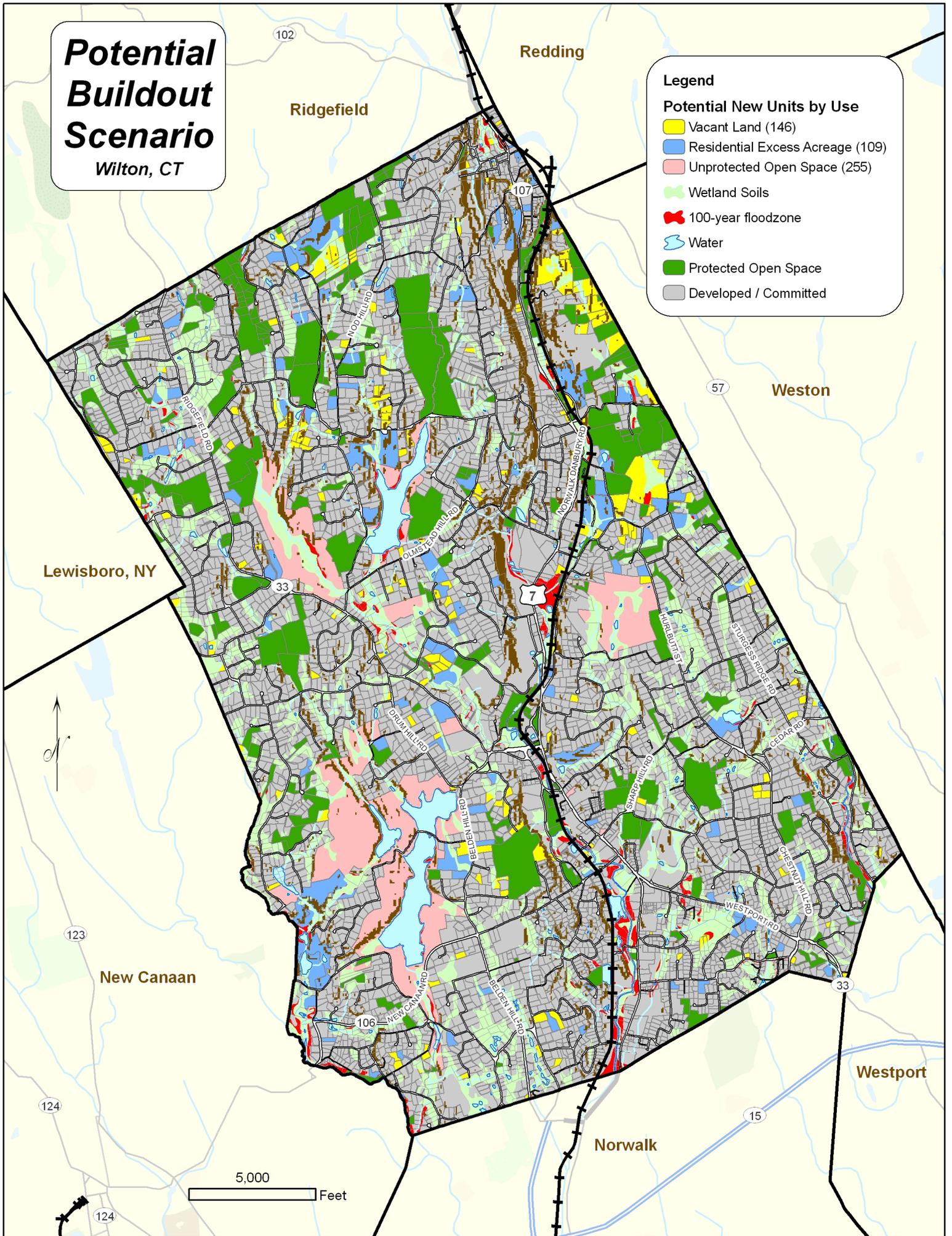
Potential Buildout Scenario

Wilton, CT

Legend

Potential New Units by Use

- Vacant Land (146)
- Residential Excess Acreage (109)
- Unprotected Open Space (255)
- Wetland Soils
- 100-year floodzone
- Water
- Protected Open Space
- Developed / Committed



**Per Capita Expenditures
(FY 2007)**

Westport	\$6,880
Weston	\$5,940
Greenwich	\$5,878
Wilton	\$5,480
New Canaan	\$5,463
Darien	\$4,857
Stamford	\$3,475
Norwalk	\$3,108

CT Office of Policy and Management (OPM).

**Per Capita Revenues
(FY 2007)**

Westport	\$6,978
Weston	\$6,101
Wilton	\$5,688
New Canaan	\$5,514
Greenwich	\$5,401
Darien	\$5,014
Stamford	\$3,472
Norwalk	\$3,164

OPM.

Fiscal Conditions

Wilton’s government expenditures grew by 28% from 2003 to 2007 (or 11% when adjusted for inflation), reaching roughly \$96,700,000. Education is the highest expense, comprising at least 65% of the total expenditures by 2007 (some expenditures for education come from the general fund; the exact percentage was not calculated for this Plan). Compared to other communities in the South Western region, Wilton ranks fourth in terms of per capita expenditures (see sidebar).

Wilton ranks third in the region when comparing per capita revenue; in fiscal year 2007, Wilton spent \$5,688 per person (see sidebar). Total revenues have climbed by 35% from 2003 to 2007 (or by 18% when adjusted for inflation). Property taxes comprise the bulk of all Town revenues (88% to 90%). For Connecticut as a whole, property taxes comprise 66% to 69% of revenues. In FY 2007, only 20 other communities in Connecticut had a greater percentage of its revenues derived from property taxes than Wilton.

Commercial land uses contribute to Wilton’s tax base since they generally require fewer Town services than residential development. In other words, tax dollars generated by commercial development help to support services provided by the Town to residents. Compared to other communities in the region, Wilton has the third highest percentage of its grand list derived from commercial and industrial properties.

Commercial Component of Grand Lists, 2006

	Commercial, Industrial, Public Utility Uses	% of Total Grand List
Norwalk	\$2,274,254,234	21.3%
Westport	\$1,385,253,003	13.3%
Wilton	\$463,156,594	12.1%
Ridgefield	\$377,967,604	8.9%
Darien	\$403,343,649	6.2%
Redding	\$86,876,723	5.6%
New Canaan	\$341,094,927	4.9%
Weston	\$17,600,732	0.7%
State	\$55,931,636,192	15.7%

This figure excludes taxes that may be generated by commercial vehicles and personal property.

A heavy reliance on property taxes for revenues coupled with the increasingly large percentage of spending dedicated to education pressures communities to find ways to grow the tax base. This puts some communities in a position of discouraging new housing that may add more students to the school system. This is a challenge faced by the majority of communities across the State. While the State has been having discussions over the past decade on property tax reform, any changes to the current system are likely years away. Communities must make fiscal decisions based on the current tax system.