

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

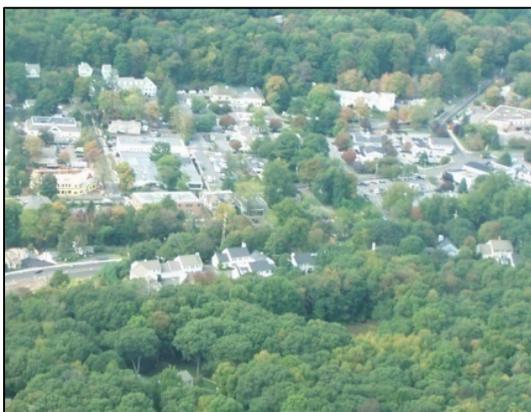
5

How a community wishes to grow (“development”) is a key component of a Plan of Conservation and Development. The term “Development” includes future business and residential development. Future development may include building on undeveloped parcels or the redevelopment of parcels that are already built upon.

Development should occur in ways that protect the environment and character, as outlined in the Conservation Strategies chapter. Certain land use patterns can also help to promote transportation goals. Placing land uses near one another can make it easier to walk or bike from one place to another. Placing housing and / or businesses near transit stations or along bus routes can promote transit use. Wilton is fortunate in that its existing “structure”, or physical organization, can help promote these alternative modes of transportation.

This structure, which is illustrated on the map on the following page, includes:

- Three **nodes** or village-like areas: Wilton Center, Cannondale, and Georgetown. Nodes are identifiable focal points with distinctive characteristics.
- Route 7, also referred to as the “**spine**” of the community. The character of Route 7 varies with strip-like development in some areas, smaller-scale neighborhood commercial areas, office campuses, and both high and low density residential areas.
- The remainder of Wilton is generally comprised of **lower density residential** development.



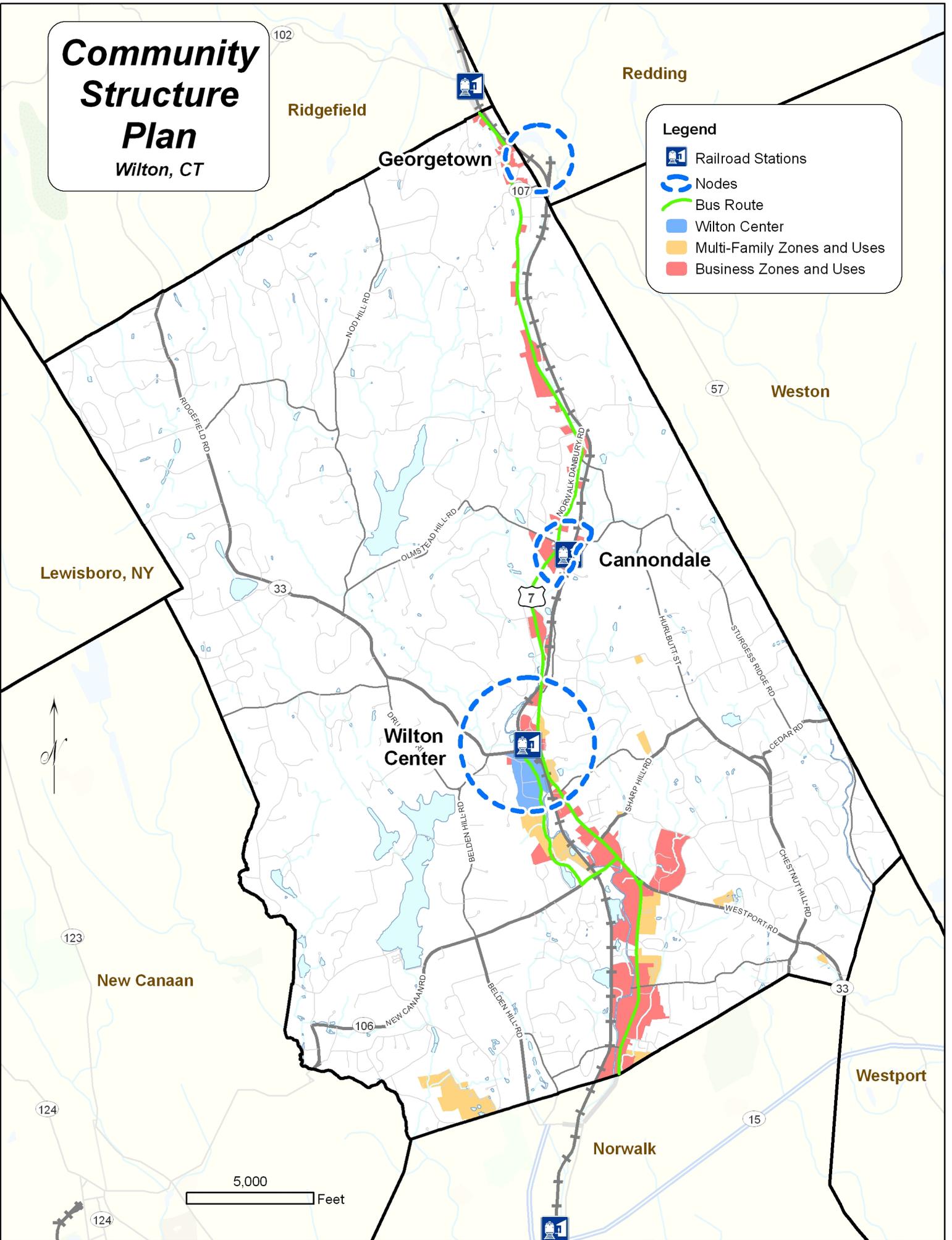
Wilton Center



Route 7

Community Structure Plan

Wilton, CT



Legend

-  Railroad Stations
-  Nodes
-  Bus Route
-  Wilton Center
-  Multi-Family Zones and Uses
-  Business Zones and Uses

5,000 Feet

Manage Residential Development

About 97 percent of Wilton is zoned for residential purposes. As a result, residential development patterns and types affect community character and peoples' overall perception of Wilton and its quality of life. Wilton should protect the character of its neighborhoods and ensure that future residential development does not detract from character.

Wilton will likely see an increase in the over-55 population over the next ten years and continue to see a need for affordable and workforce housing. Encouraging the retention of and creation of smaller houses could help to address existing and future demand. Meanwhile, Wilton may lose a large portion of its affordable units as deed restrictions on affordability expire.

Goal – Retain the low density pattern of housing while encouraging housing choices to address current and future needs.

Strategies include –

- **Protect residential neighborhoods**
- **Address housing needs**



Support for Managing the Scale of Houses

The telephone survey found that:

- 69% of Wilton residents agreed that *“Wilton should adopt regulations to ensure that new houses fit in with neighborhoods.”*
- 73% agreed that *“Wilton should adopt regulations regarding how a house looms over other houses and the street.”*

Tools for Managing the Scale of Houses

Zoning options include:

- Setback averaging – House setbacks can be based on the setbacks of adjacent properties.
- Stepped setback planes – This relates setback to height of building. Taller houses would need to be set back further.
- Cubic footage – This could regulate overall volume of a building. Regulations, such as Floor Area Ratio (FAR), only address square footage. Two buildings could have equal square footage, but if one has higher ceilings, the bulk is much different.
- Require Commission review of houses over a certain size. By examining the placement of the house, topography, and the existence of vegetation on the lot, the Commission can help guide the applicant in placing the house in a way that minimizes impacts.

Protect Residential Neighborhoods

The residential pattern of lower density housing contributes to Wilton’s character and residents have expressed a desire to protect that character. This pattern should be maintained.

As the Build Out analysis indicated, Wilton’s residential areas are fairly built out, so large-scale change is not expected to occur in the lower density areas. Most change that has been occurring in residential neighborhoods is when scattered, vacant lots are developed or when smaller houses are torn down and replaced with much larger houses.

This “tear-down” trend has raised concerns in the community in terms of the scale of the replacement houses and the loss of more modest priced houses. A large house located on a small parcel or situated in ways that overwhelm the streetscape can impact neighborhood character.

The majority of residents indicated support for Town action to address this issue of out-of-scale housing. Some zoning tools have been employed by other communities. The Town should evaluate which options might be best for the Town (see sidebar). As more communities grapple with this issue, more tools may become available to communities.

The Town should continue to protect established neighborhoods from incompatible uses, particularly those neighborhoods that are near Route 7. The zoning regulations do require increased setbacks when a business parcel abuts a residential district. This practice should continue and, if needed, the setbacks should increase.

Actions to protect residential areas:

1. Maintain overall residential densities.
2. Update zoning to address out-of-scale new housing, such as by adopting setback averaging; requiring stepped setback planes; regulating bulk; and / or requiring site plan review for houses over a certain size.
3. Ensure that development along Route 7 provides adequate buffers when adjacent to residential neighborhoods.

Residential Densities Plan

Wilton, CT

102

Ridgefield

Redding

Legend

 Explore Housing Opportunities Along Corridor

Residential Densities

-  Single Family Lowest : 0.5 units / acre
-  Single Family Low: 1 unit / acre
-  Multi-Family / Multiple House
-  Other Zones

Lewisboro, NY

57

Weston

7



123

New Canaan

106

33

Westport

124

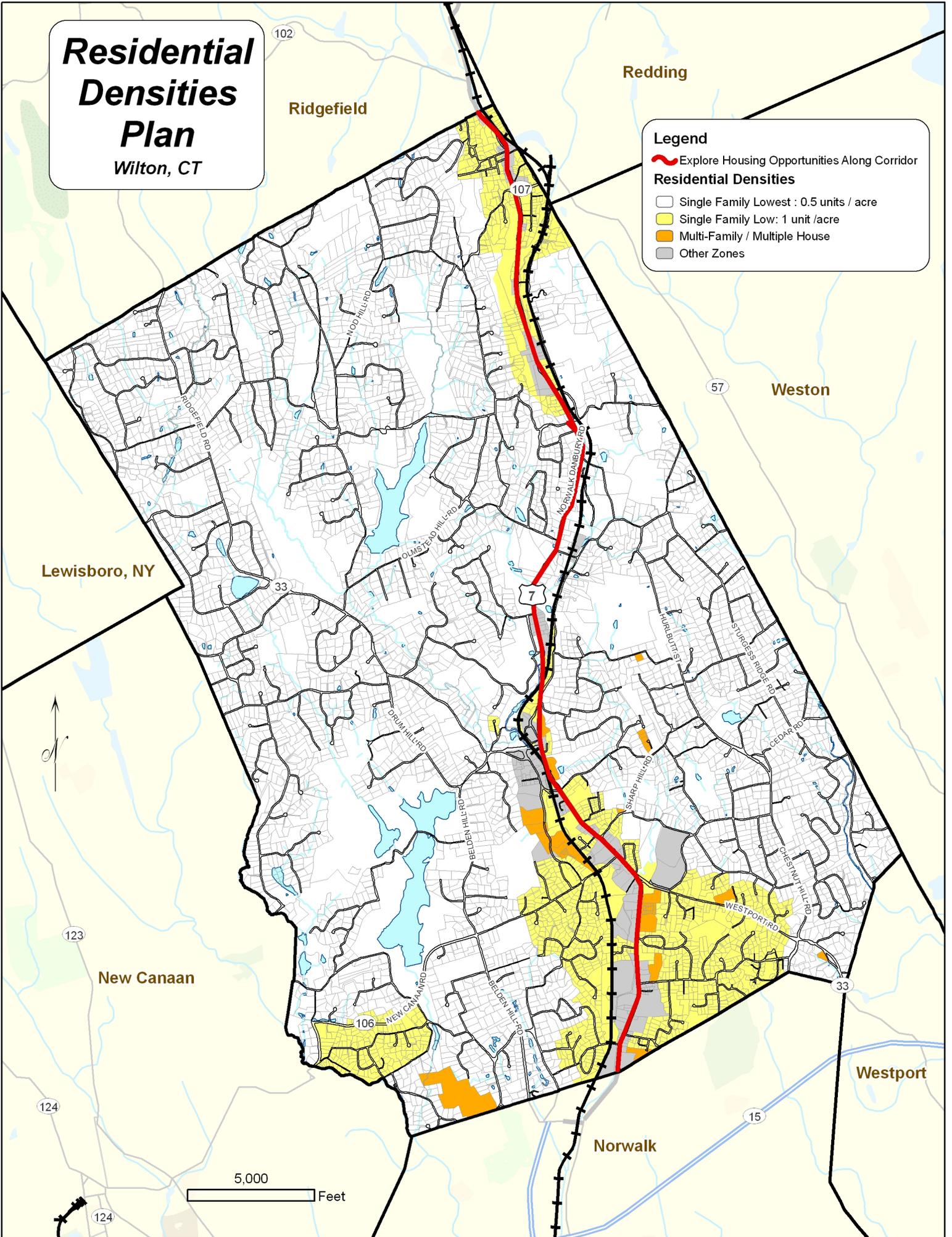
5,000

Feet

Norwalk

15

124



Types of “Affordable” Housing

Not all affordable housing qualifies towards the 10% requirement set forth in CGS 8-30g. CGS 8-30g addresses housing for low and moderate income housing, while the concept of “work force housing” is geared toward households earning a median income.

While work force units may be subject to rent restrictions, reduced rental rates or deed restrictions, the units do not count toward the 10% requirement of 8-30g. Work force housing income requirements are usually based on the median household income, which was \$176,384 in Wilton 2007.

Many communities have “Functional” or “Naturally Occurring” affordable units. These are housing units that have no resale restrictions placed upon them, but due to location, size, or condition, have a lower market value and are therefore more affordable than other units in Town. This would also include discounted sales of housing units between family members.

Address Housing Needs

Addressing housing needs for a variety of income levels and life stages can help people who grew up in Wilton to stay in Wilton, allows seniors to stay in town as they age, and can contribute to cultural and social diversity. It also is well understood that a lack of affordable housing, especially work force housing (see sidebar), impacts the economy as employers have trouble finding workers. In addition, many Town workers, including teachers, police officers, and firefighters cannot afford to live in Wilton.

When asked if they would support higher density housing to meet the needs of seniors and the elderly, 81% of residents expressed their support in the telephone survey. Just over half (55%) of residents expressed support for providing additional work force housing in Wilton.

Wilton has made progress in diversifying its “housing portfolio”, i.e., types of housing. A number of multi-family developments, including senior / elderly housing developments have been built or are currently being planned. The allowance of accessory apartments also helps to meet these needs. However, similar to other communities in Fairfield County, Wilton faces many challenges in providing housing options, mainly due to the high cost of land and limited vacant land that could support new housing. In addition, Wilton is seeing smaller houses torn down and replaced with larger, more expensive houses.

The overarching housing goal is to encourage the creation of and retention of smaller housing units. Smaller housing units may be more affordable and can provide more options for younger and older residents and others.

Explore tools to retain existing smaller housing units

As communities continue to experience the tear-down trend, it is possible that tools and incentives may emerge that encourage the retention of smaller homes. Wilton should continue to monitor the situation and explore possible tools. The Commission should also discourage applicants from consolidating smaller parcels with houses in order to tear the houses down and replace with one larger house.

One possible tool to retain smaller units and even “create” affordable units is to purchase existing units and resell the units at affordable prices with income restrictions. In some communities, developers have done this rather than including affordable units in their project. In other communities, affordable housing groups have purchased houses and sold them to income-qualified residents.

Look for opportunities to provide new housing that is smaller and more affordable

There are some areas along Route 7 that are zoned residential but are being used for industrial type activities. These areas may be an opportunity for building new smaller scale housing, such as under the Single Family All Affordable Housing district (SFAAHD) provision. Also, the Town could identify opportunities to create housing units on town-owned or state-owned parcels and vacant buildings. Other small-scale opportunities

may exist, such as by encouraging apartments above commercial businesses (Wilton Center, Cannondale, Georgetown, Route 7) and by continuing to allow accessory apartments.

Ensure that the location and appearance of new residential development complements Wilton’s character

The location and appearance of new housing should be carefully considered to ensure that new residential development contributes to Wilton’s character. New housing, whether as part of the SFAAHD or new multi-family development, should generally occur where infrastructure exists and near transit (see sidebar). New neighborhoods should provide a walkable environment and be well-landscaped with trees and greenery.

Work to retain expiring affordable housing units

Despite the Town’s progress in building its affordable housing supply, 62 of the 162 affordable units in Wilton will lose their affordability restrictions between 2016 and 2020. It is difficult to build new affordable housing due to environmental impacts, traffic concerns, and concerns often raised by neighbors, so it is critical that Wilton work to retain the affordability of these existing housing units.

The owners of the expiring units have met their obligations and are entitled to convert the units to market-rate units once the deed restrictions expire. There have been successful examples of communities working with property owners to retain the affordability of units. In some cases, tax breaks could be used as an incentive. In other cases, properties are due for renovations; providing zoning flexibility or allowing the addition of units during renovations can be an incentive to continue affordability of some number of units. The needs of each property owner will be different. It is critical to start discussions with each owner in the very near future to ascertain their plans and to start exploring options to retain the affordability of the units.

Facilitate the ability for seniors to remain in Wilton

A recent survey conducted by AARP showed that community leaders around the country find that their senior residents play vital roles in their community, from volunteer work to economic contributions to providing a mix of all age groups.

Factors that may cause seniors to leave their house, and possibly Wilton, include high property taxes, inability to maintain a larger house or yard, and physical challenges inside the house (e.g., stairs, doorways not wide enough for wheelchairs, etc.)

Wilton does allow tax breaks for elderly residents who meet income and asset requirements. This should continue. Some communities seek grants to help pay for upgrades, such as accessibility upgrades, to houses occupied by seniors. In other cases, the private market has responded with businesses that assist seniors with housing upkeep, errands and other activities that enable them to remain in their home.

Location Criteria

The following criteria can serve as guidance to the Town when determining appropriate areas for new residential neighborhoods:

- proximity to Wilton Center,
- proximity to train and bus service,
- provision of public water and public sewer,
- traffic impact of the development and the character of the roadway,
- character of the neighborhood,
- topography and other natural resources (like slopes and wetlands), and
- transition or buffering to adjacent single family residential uses.

Age in Place

Age “in place” means allowing older residents to stay in their homes comfortably, safely and independently as they age, regardless of physical challenges.

Some seniors will chose to or need to move. High housing prices and a lack of smaller, easy to maintain housing units may make it difficult for seniors to remain in Wilton in such cases.

Given expected demographic trends that project an aging population, there will likely be a continued need for various forms of senior housing – including smaller units with some level of daily assistance, such as the provision of meals, to facilities that offer a wider scale of services (e.g., assisted living) and nursing homes. Such facilities should be located in areas served by infrastructure and close to needed services, such as medical offices.

Make sure lenders and affordable housing developers are aware of the Town’s goals for affordable housing

The Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) requires banks to help meet the needs of low and moderate income households in the communities in which they operate. The Town may wish to establish regular meetings with local banks to ascertain their current CRA activities in Wilton and discuss how their future activities can help achieve the goals in this Plan. In addition, a number of affordable housing developers work on projects in the region. They should be made aware of the Wilton’s housing goals.

Consider establishing a Housing Committee

Many communities have established Housing Committees to address housing issues, particularly affordable, work-force and senior housing. Such a committee could conduct additional studies to determine housing needs, work with affordable housing providers, and seek grants and other funding for housing projects.

Actions to address housing needs:

1. Explore tools to retain smaller houses.
2. Identify opportunities for creating new, smaller housing units (e.g., surplus Town or state land, empty buildings) for a range of income levels and a range of ages, including seniors.
3. Ensure that new neighborhoods occur in appropriate areas and are well-landscaped and walkable.
4. Review zoning regulations to ensure that there are not disincentives to retaining existing houses.
5. Explore tools to convert existing houses into affordable units.
6. Explore options for retaining affordable units that are due to “expire.” The first step may be to meet with property owners to discuss their long term plans for the units.
7. Investigate programs to allow seniors to age in place.
8. Share the Town’s goals for meeting housing needs with lenders and affordable housing providers.
9. Consider establishing a Housing Committee.

Villages – Wilton Center, Cannondale and Georgetown

Wilton Center and other villages – Cannondale, and Georgetown – are unique and integral to Wilton’s character. While residents may have differing ideas over the boundaries of these villages, each has a unique identity.

All three areas present opportunities to provide a mixture of amenities, businesses, and housing in a manner respectful of Wilton’s heritage. These areas also provide an opportunity to reinforce development patterns that allow residents to get around on foot, by bicycle or via transit.

Goal – Enhance existing villages and encourage development in village-type patterns in appropriate areas.

Strategies include –

- **Wilton Center: Ensure that Wilton Center remains the cultural, social and business center of Town**
- **Cannondale: Explore development options in Cannondale that reflect the historic setting and scale of existing buildings**
- **Georgetown: Promote the shift from automobile-oriented development to pedestrian scale neighborhoods in Georgetown**



Main Street Program

“The underlying premise of the Main Street approach is to encourage economic development within the context of historic preservation in ways appropriate to today’s marketplace. The Main Street Approach advocates a return to community self-reliance, local empowerment, and the rebuilding of traditional commercial districts based on their unique assets: distinctive architecture, a pedestrian-friendly environment, personal service, local ownership, and a sense of community.”

-- www.mainstreets.org.

Wilton Center: Ensure that Wilton Center remains the cultural, social and business center of Town

Overall Wilton Center functions fairly well – it is a busy hub of activity and there is a distinct sense of place. Wilton Center is largely built out under current zoning parameters in that buildings cannot reach the maximum allowable floor area ratio (FAR) while providing the required amount of parking on site. As a result, large-scale change is not anticipated in the near future.

To ensure that Wilton Center remains the “center” of the Town, it is important that businesses continue to locate here and thrive and that residents are drawn to the Center. Residents have expressed some concerns about physical aspects of Wilton Center, such as the size and look of buildings, overall cohesiveness, the need for additional pedestrian amenities and traffic concerns. The Town should continue to preserve Wilton Center’s vitality, focus on immediate physical improvements, and move forward with the desired River Walk. The Town can also make it easier for residents to get to Wilton Center on foot or possibly via transit.

In addition, over the long term, parking may need to be re-examined. Having shared and central parking may enhance the pedestrian experience in Wilton Center. It also might provide landowners more flexibility because they would not need to use as much space for parking. This could result in better site design and room for amenities such as the River Walk.

Vitality

Wilton Center’s mixture of civic uses, stores, restaurants, entertainment, and services attracts residents to the Center and gives it a special identity. The Town should continue to support the variety found in Wilton Center.

Wilton should also consider joining support organizations, such as the Main Street program (see sidebar). Main Street programs promote a community’s “main street” (i.e., Wilton Center), encourage businesses to work together to improve an area, improve economic management, strengthen public participation, make downtown a fun place to visit, attract new businesses, rehabilitate buildings, etc.

As discussed later, better connecting Wilton Center to the train station and to surrounding neighborhoods with pathways can contribute to the vitality by making it easier for people to get to the Center. Specific efforts to help achieve this include:

- Build a pedestrian bridge connecting the train station to Wilton Center
- Provide sidewalks along northern roadways leading into Wilton Center
- Provide other pedestrian connections from Route 7 to Wilton Center
- Create the River Walk

The Town should also investigate the feasibility of providing shuttles or trolleys from other parts of Town to Wilton Center.

Other Physical Improvements

A number of improvements have recently been implemented. The installation of lighting fixtures creates a uniform look. Sidewalks have been improved and a committee recently created the Wilton Center Tree Plan.

Residents have noted an overall lack of “cohesiveness” in Wilton Center and point out one example being the varying types of sidewalk surfaces. Having unifying elements throughout Wilton Center can help enhance the overall sense of place. This may include ensuring that sidewalks are of common design and materials, using banners and having uniform street lighting throughout Wilton Center.

Other physical improvements within Wilton Center should include completing the sidewalk network along Godfrey Place and the southern section of Hubbard Road. Existing pedestrian connections between buildings and parking lots provide important connections; additional connections should be provided where needed. Providing benches is another important pedestrian amenity; benches can help make Wilton Center more accessible to the elderly and others who may need a place to rest when walking.

Pedestrian Elements to Encourage in Wilton Center



Sidewalk continues across driveway.



Attractive landscaping, good separation from traffic.



Pedestrian pathways.

Pedestrian Elements to Improve in Wilton Center



Incomplete sidewalk network on Hubbard Road.



Narrow sidewalk with little separation from traffic; different materials than other sidewalks in Wilton Center.



No connection to Train Station.

The concept of improving pedestrian connections via a River Walk is discussed in more detail in the next section. The Town should seek additional opportunities to provide pathways and sidewalks connecting Wilton Center to nearby neighborhoods.

Crossing Center Street and Old Ridgefield Road can be difficult for pedestrians. The Town should investigate additional ways to slow traffic on these roads. Building the Hubbard Road extension could alleviate some traffic from these roads.

The *Wilton Center Tree Plan* identifies actions to protect existing trees and provide additional greenery in Wilton Center. The Tree Plan should continue to be implemented.

Residents and local officials have expressed a desire to retain the “open” feel of Wilton Center which is created by larger front setbacks. The Tree Committee and Conservation Commission also have recommended that all new buildings have a 20 foot setback in order to provide adequate room for trees. The Town should continue to encourage larger, landscaped setbacks. However, flexibility is important since there may also be cases where requiring a 20 foot setback would make it difficult to provide other amenities.

River Walk

Creating a “river walk,” or pathway along the Norwalk River in Wilton Center is not a new concept. It has been called for in previous POCDs.

The last two POCDs, the 1999 and 1996, Plans called for the encouragement of the development of the proposed river walk along the Norwalk River.

The 1974 Amendments to *Wilton’s Comprehensive Plan of Development*, expressed hope that a “Norwalk River Walk,” would be completed.

River Walk

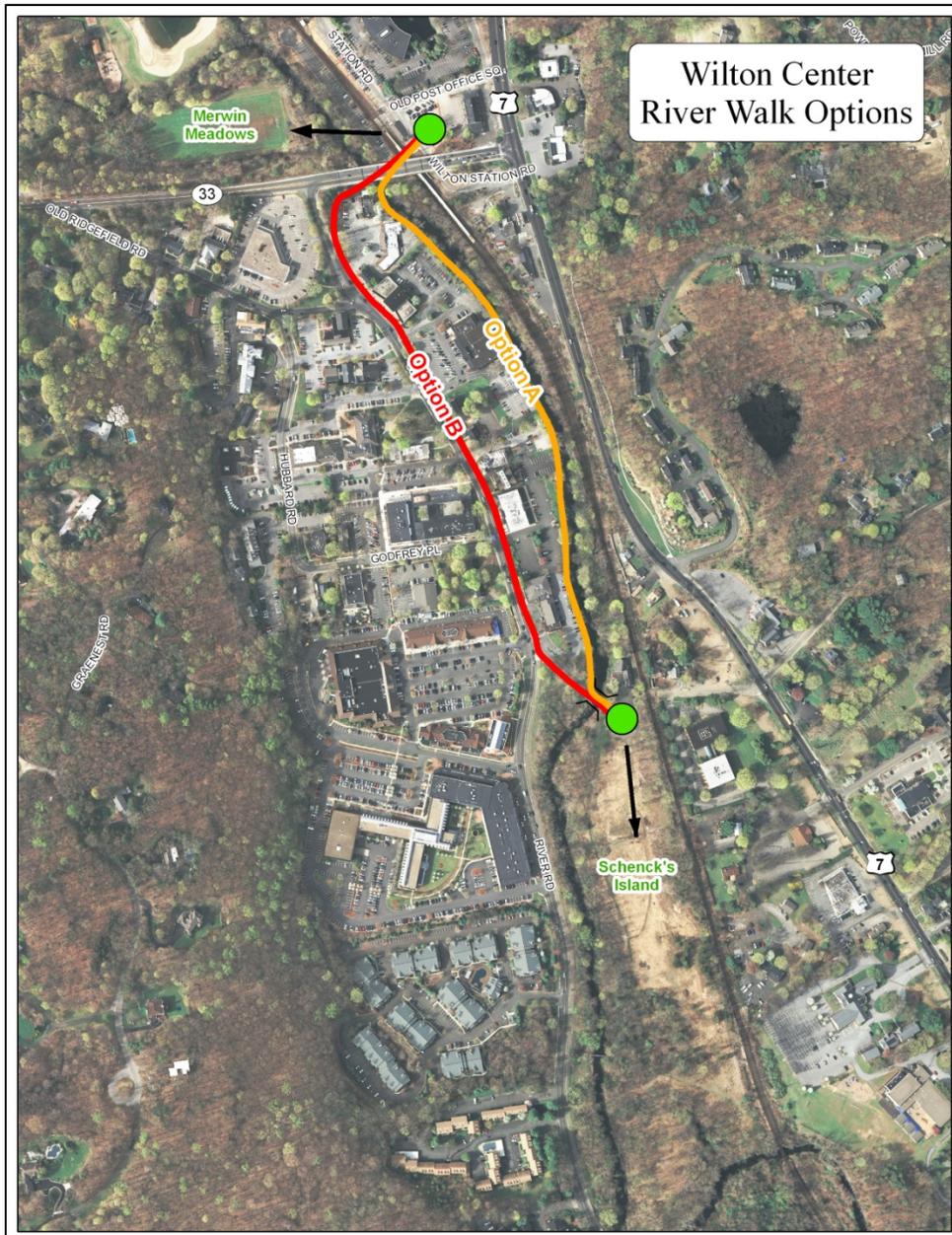
The Norwalk River Walk, as part of a larger greenway, could make the riverfront more accessible, provide a public amenity and connect areas north and south of Wilton Center with pathways. Creating a River Walk will be challenging, but not impossible. Some entity will need to take the lead and an incremental or modified approach may be needed, mainly due to constraints faced by the properties in Wilton Center along the Norwalk River.

Parcels adjacent to the River are generally developed to their fullest extent, with parking, dumpsters and in some cases, the building, situated very close to the River. It may be difficult to make room for a pathway. However, other communities have been able to work with property owners to create river walks. Also, over the long term redevelopment may provide opportunities. There may be two steps to account for these difficulties and move forward with the plan:

- Take an incremental approach, starting with “easier” portions of the River Walk. The Town should move forward with completing connections to Wilton Center from the north (the pedestrian bridge to the train station) and the south. Once those connections are in place, decisions will need to be made about how to incorporate Wilton Center.
- Consider an alternative path for the River Walk (see map). Ideally, the River Walk would run parallel to the river on the west side, behind businesses located on Old Ridgefield Road (option A on map). Challenges include the loss

of parking and room for dumpsters, and steep river banks. Even with the FAR incentive in the current zoning regulations, property owners cannot utilize that incentive because they cannot fit the increased parking that would be needed for a larger building on the site. Flood plain restrictions also make it difficult to increase the footprint of buildings. Property owners likely would need to build up (increase height) and have access to off-site parking to take advantage of the incentive.

Building the River Walk on the west side of the River appears to be the most practical approach due to topographic challenges along the east bank. In addition, a river walk on the east would require bridges connecting the path to Wilton Center and may require safety provisions, such as fencing, along the rail line.



Another approach is to focus on creating the River Walk just north and south of Wilton Center and then continue the “walk” along Old Ridgefield Road (option B). Proper signage could aid people in finding their way. The advantage to this approach is that it would not affect property owners along the River, and could even increase the customer base for some businesses if visitors patronize the businesses. A wider sidewalk along Old Ridgefield Road may be necessary to serve this new purpose. This could also be an interim approach until opportunities along the River open up.

Regardless of which approach is best for Wilton, the approaches require creating the north and south approaches to Wilton Center. This should take priority.

Actions for Wilton Center:

1. Consider establishing a Main Street Program to help promote Wilton Center Businesses.
2. Improve pedestrian connections leading into Wilton Center, including adding sidewalks and building pedestrian bridges from the train station to Wilton Center and from Route 7 to Wilton Center.
3. Complete the sidewalk network within Wilton Center and ensure that sidewalks are uniform to contribute to “sense of place.”
4. Provide additional pedestrian amenities in Wilton Center, such as benches.
5. Consider measures to slow traffic on Old Ridgefield Road.
6. Build the Hubbard Road connector.
7. Implement the Wilton Center Tree Plan.
8. Generally encourage larger, landscaped front setbacks in Wilton Center.
9. Move forward with the River Walk:
 - Conduct a feasibility study.
 - Focus on building the northern and southern sections of the River Walk and then focus on the route within Wilton Center.
10. Explore the possibility of creating shared, centralized parking.
11. Explore providing public transit to Wilton Center, such as bus service, shuttles or trolleys.

Cannondale: Explore development options in Cannondale that reflect the historic setting and scale of existing patterns

For the purposes of these recommendations, Cannondale includes Cannondale Village, Cannon Road and Route 7 immediately north and south of Cannon Road. It is recognized that there are varying thoughts about where Cannondale begins and ends; this is an important point that ultimately should be addressed.

Wilton is fortunate to have an area like Cannondale, comprised of historic buildings in a pedestrian scale setting, with a mixture of uses, and a commuter rail station. Some level of change is likely to occur in the short term in Cannondale; this may present an opportunity to enhance Cannondale in a manner that is compatible with a community vision.

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.

To ensure that new buildings and modifications to existing buildings respect the area's character, the Commission created a Village District Overlay zone for a portion of Cannondale. Density and dimensional requirements, however, are based on the underlying zones of General Business (GB), Design Retail Business (DRB), and R-2A Residence. These current zoning regulations may not allow flexibility in density or dimensional requirements that may be needed in the future.

The first step in planning for Cannondale's future would be to define the boundaries of Cannondale for planning purposes. Then, with the public, residents of Cannondale, Cannondale business owners, and landowners, create a vision and master plan for Cannondale. The plan should provide guidance on the types of uses, development patterns, and overall style of buildings that might be appropriate in Cannondale. The Town may wish to explore additional zoning tools, such as form based zoning, to implement the vision (see sidebar).

Other issues that should be addressed in a master plan for Cannondale include ensuring pedestrian connections are provided from Route 7 to Cannondale Crossing, addressing current parking issues at the train station, and ensuring that improvements to the train station reflect the historic fabric of the area.

Residents' Thoughts on Cannondale

- At a public workshop, residents indicated that they were proud of Cannondale and that retaining its historic village character is important. Some identified the area as an opportunity for moderate additional development.
- When asked in the telephone survey if there should be a mixture of more housing and more businesses in a village type pattern in Cannondale, 63% agreed.

Form Based Zoning

Most zoning regulations focus on uses and provisions to ensure that buildings are not too large, too tall, too close to property lines, and so forth. They tend to focus on what is not wanted rather than what is desired. Communities often find that buildings may not look appealing, even though the zoning requirements were met.

With form based zoning, the community determines the physical form it would like to see in an area and then establishes regulations to create the desired form. It looks at a larger area and determines how each parcel can contribute to the desired form of that larger area. Form based zoning is a tool to implement a vision for a specific area.

While the use of the building is still a consideration, often it plays a lesser role.

Actions for Cannondale:

1. Determine the boundary of Cannondale, for planning purposes.
2. Create a detailed vision for Cannondale and a master plan based on the vision.
The master plan should answer questions such as:
 - What types of uses should be encouraged?
 - What building styles and development patterns are appropriate?
 - What types of pedestrian connections, pathways and sidewalks should be provided?
 - How can Cannondale better benefit from the presence of the train station?
 - What types of improvements might be needed at the train station and how can the Town ensure that improvements reflect the historic nature of Cannondale?
 - What measures would help protect the Norwalk River?
3. Ensure that residents of Cannondale are engaged throughout the process.
4. Amend zoning as needed to implement the plan.

Georgetown

72% surveyed like the way Route 7, from Cannondale, through Georgetown to the Ridgefield line, has developed to date.

Georgetown: Promote a shift from automobile-oriented development to pedestrian scale neighborhoods along Route 7 in Georgetown

Georgetown is located in parts of three towns. The Georgetown section of Wilton includes residential neighborhoods and commercial areas and still retains a smaller-town, rural feel, despite the presence of a few larger commercial uses. There is a mixture of historic residential neighborhoods and neighborhoods with modest size houses. Of all stretches of the Route 7 corridor, residents were most pleased with how this stretch of the corridor has developed to date (see sidebar).

Some change is occurring, as evidenced by the addition of newer, larger houses. Further change is likely, due to the planned redevelopment of the Gilbert and Bennett factory site, just outside of Wilton’s borders. With new housing, retail, and possibly a new train station, the redevelopment could attract more residents and drive up housing values in Georgetown. This change could present an opportunity to transition from an auto-centric development pattern to patterns that reflect a more traditional, pedestrian-oriented form with housing and businesses. Changes could also increase the trend of tearing down smaller houses and replacing them with larger, more expensive houses.

Preserve the smaller scale commercial character of Georgetown

In the short term, to preserve the rural commercial feel, the zoning regulations could be amended to discourage larger retail buildings on larger parcels and instead encourage smaller scale buildings. The Commission should review the types of commercial uses allowed and lot coverage requirements in this area to ensure that they are not incompatible and ensure that neighborhoods behind the commercial zones are adequately protected with buffers.

Monitor progress, impacts and opportunities generated by the redevelopment of the Gilbert and Bennett factory site

Over the long term, the Town should stay up-to-date on redevelopment progress at the Gilbert and Bennett factory site and monitor trends occurring in the Georgetown section of Wilton, particularly in terms of real estate prices, tear down trends, and traffic patterns.

Create a master plan to capture opportunities in Wilton and enhance quality of life in Georgetown

Working with the neighborhoods and businesses in the area, the Town should create a master plan to capitalize on opportunities and to address housing affordability issues. Key opportunities may include the area around the Route 7 / North Main Street intersection and North Main Street itself. The plan should also explore options for the future use of the Town-owned Gilbert and Bennett school site (see p. 85).

Similar to Cannondale, it is important for the Town to plan ahead so that the community can capitalize on opportunities and ensure that any changes in Georgetown are consistent with the Town's goals.

Actions for Georgetown:

1. Review zoning provisions to ensure they encourage smaller scale development that fits with the more modest scale in this part of Wilton.
2. Explore tools to retain smaller housing units in Georgetown (see p. 58).
3. Monitor trends in Georgetown related to Gilbert and Bennett factory redevelopment.
4. Create a master plan to capture opportunities in Georgetown, with special attention on the future use of the Town-owned Gilbert and Bennett School site. The plan should explore creating a pedestrian scale village setting, focusing on opportunities around the intersection of Route 7 and North Main Street.
5. Ensure that residents of Georgetown are engaged throughout the process.

Manage Business Development

Wilton is attractive to many businesses due to traffic levels (Route 7), consumer demographics, labor force, the quality of life, and the availability of business zoned areas. At the same time, appropriate economic development is attractive to Wilton since it provides employment opportunities, goods and services, and a broad tax base.

The challenge of the Plan is to manage business development locations and patterns in order to meet community needs while preserving community character and minimizing detrimental impacts such as traffic congestion. Residents seem to concur with this goal; while 74% of residents agreed that Wilton should encourage additional business development, they placed a higher priority on managing the impacts from development and protecting character.

While this POCD supports opportunities for business development in Wilton Center and Cannondale, future business development will likely occur along Route 7. Allowing for business opportunities along this corridor while retaining the unique character of each segment of the roadway and managing development impacts will be critical.

To help achieve the business-related strategies in this Plan, the Town may wish to consider creating an Economic Development Commission (EDC). An EDC could improve the Town's capacity to attract the types of businesses that are appropriate for Wilton and help support existing businesses.

Goal – Allow for business development along Route 7, while managing the character and impacts of development.

Strategies include –

- **Maintain the gradual shift in development patterns along Route 7 from more intense uses in the southern corridor to more rural patterns in the northern corridor.**
- **Improve the appearance of the Route 7 corridor.**



Maintain the gradual shift in development patterns along Route 7 from more intense uses in the southern corridor to more rural patterns in the northern corridor

Currently, the intensity of business uses generally increases as one moves north from the Norwalk line, past Wilton Center, through Cannondale, to Georgetown. The Town may face pressure to change this gradation though. Much of Route 7 is undergoing a significant change as it is being widened to four lanes.

When it is completed, the widening is likely to impact the character and function of adjacent areas. The Town's coordination with ConnDOT on landscaping should help mitigate some aesthetic impacts and the addition of sidewalks along the corridor should be beneficial.

However, the road widening could generate interest in amending zoning to allow more commercial and automobile-oriented uses along parts of Route 7, where if developed commercially, could conflict with a desire to keep stretches of the corridor less intensely developed.

Managing growth along this corridor is a critical public concern expressed by residents. At the same time, Route 7 supports many businesses that provide jobs and services and contribute to the tax base. Channeling larger or more intense businesses to the appropriate locations will be important as will ensuring that regulations for the remainder of the corridor reflect the Town's desire to protect character.

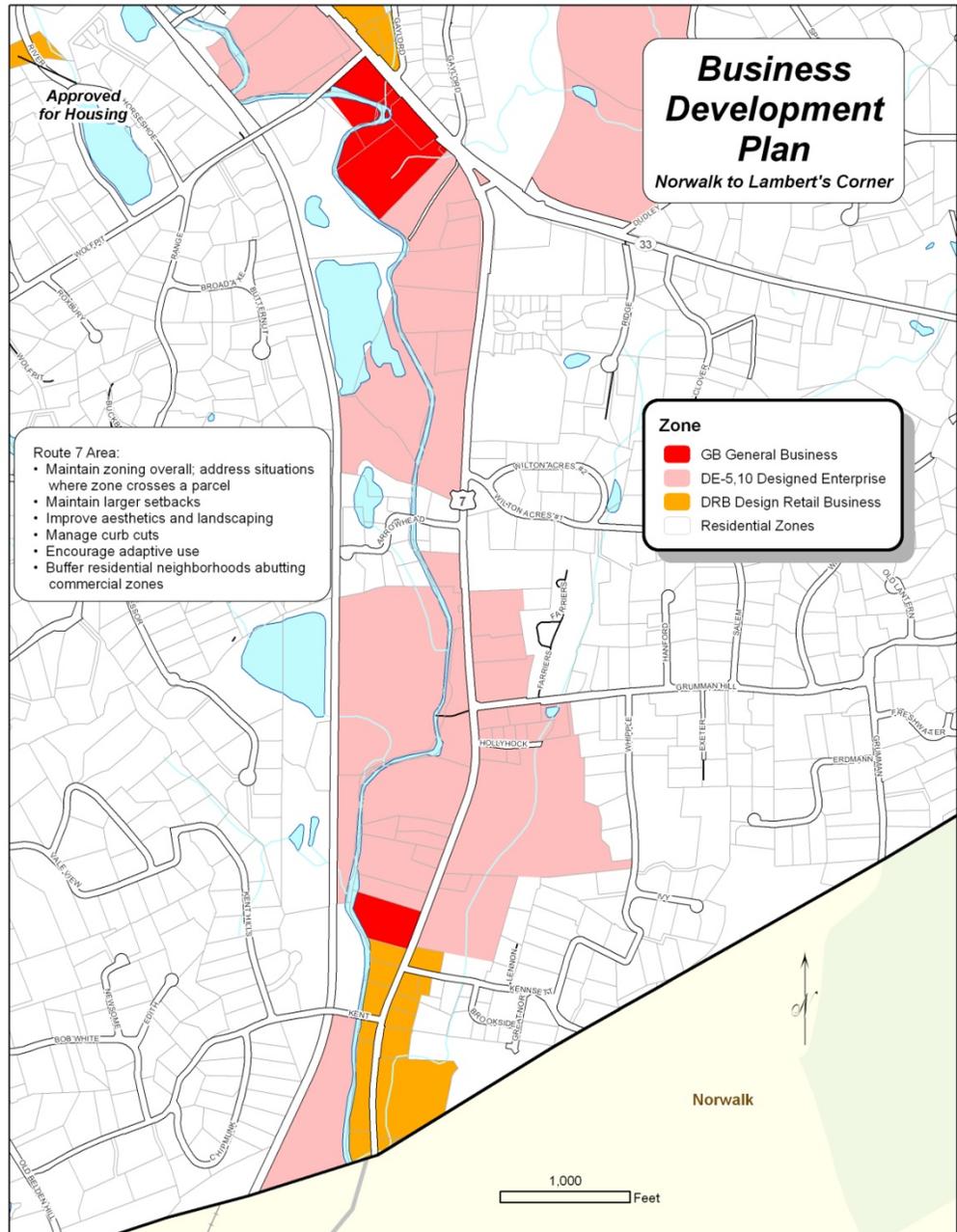
One concern that emerged during the planning process for this Plan is that there is not a clear grasp of the full development potential within business districts along Route 7. While there are very few vacant parcels, the extent of additional square footage under current zoning regulations is uncertain. Conducting a business build out analysis could help the Town understand the magnitude of potential development and redevelopment.

Strategies specific to each section of Route 7 follows. In addition, there are some overarching strategies that apply to all segments of Route 7.

Norwalk Town Line to Lamberts Corner

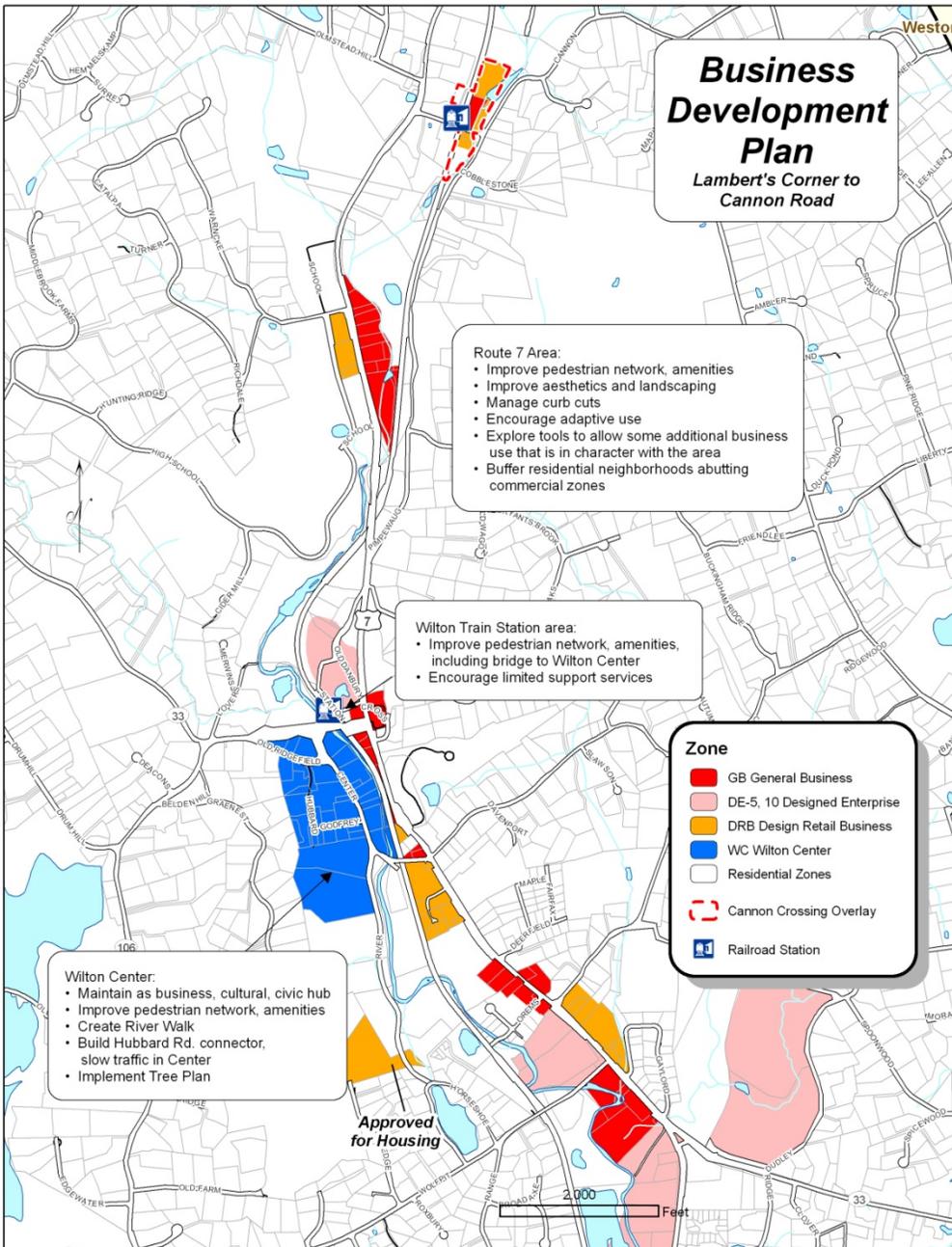
Wilton has been able to attract a number of large employers to this part of the corridor in the Designed Enterprise (DE) zones. There is not much vacant land, but there may be some opportunities for smaller parcels to be consolidated and redeveloped. The Town has also seen the upgrade of older office space into Class A office space and redevelopment of buildings into “green” buildings.

Overall zoning along this segment should be maintained, except for minor adjustments in cases where a zoning district cuts through a parcel. The overall aesthetics and landscaping should be enhanced and larger setbacks should be maintained. Additional adaptive use should be encouraged.



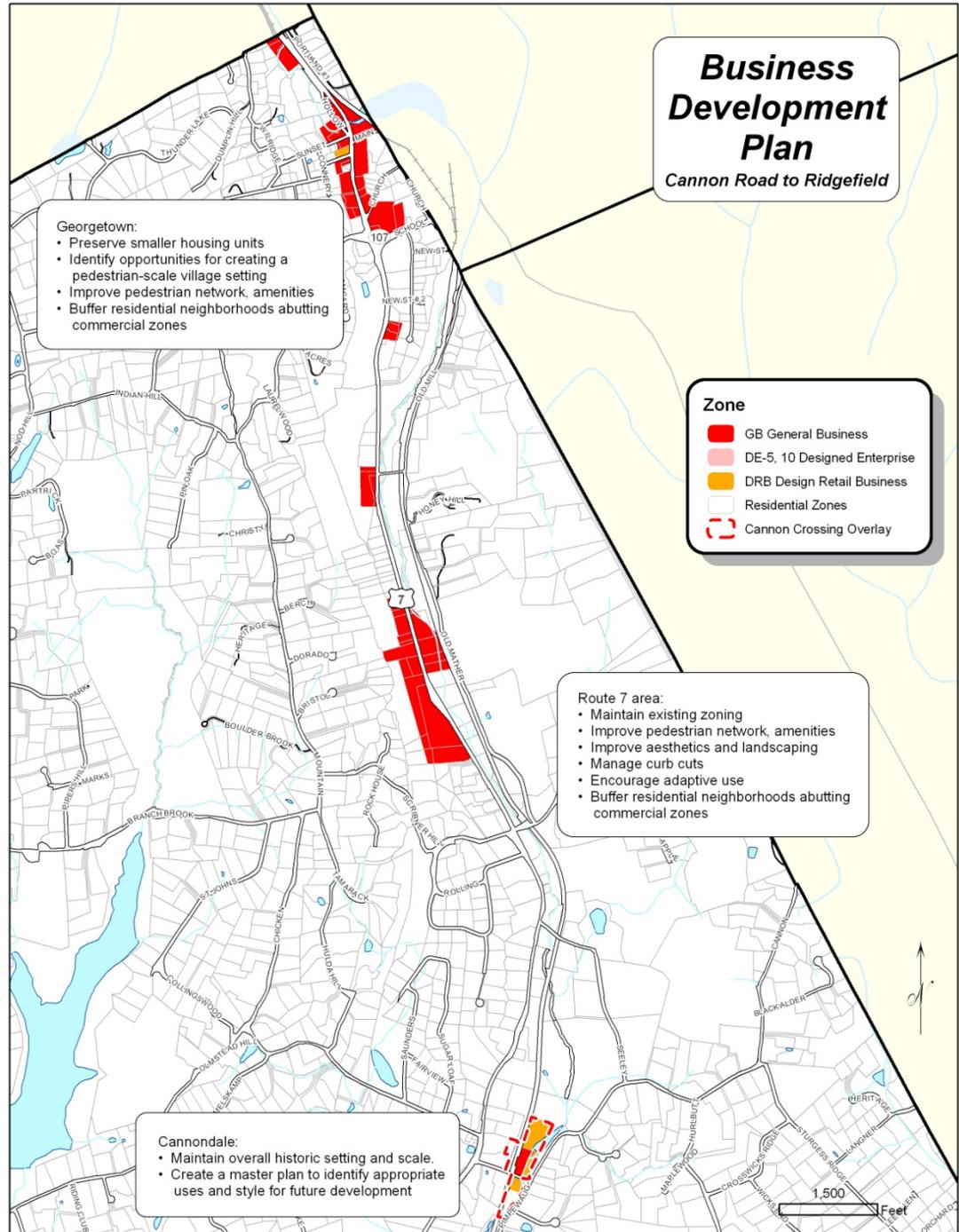
Lamberts Corner to Cannon Road

There is some concern as to whether the residential zones in this stretch can indeed be viable for housing. The Town should explore zoning tools that might allow some additional business use in these zones, provided such uses contribute positively to the overall character of this area. Additional adaptive use should be encouraged, the segment should be more pedestrian-friendly and aesthetics and landscaping should be improved. In the vicinity of the Wilton Train Station, limited support services should be encouraged and the area should be connected to Wilton Center with a pedestrian bridge.



Cannon Road to the Ridgefield Town Line

Except for those strategies specific to Cannondale and Georgetown, the overall strategy for this segment is to maintain the existing zoning. Residents were most pleased with how this section of the corridor has developed to date. General improvements such as providing pedestrian amenities and improving overall aesthetics and landscaping should be encouraged. Additional adaptive use should also be encouraged.



Adaptive Use Regulations

Continuing to allow adaptive use can help reduce the pressure to change the zoning, but adaptive use only applies to historic buildings. This tool has worked well at meeting its intended purpose – encouraging the continued use of historic buildings. However, if the goal along the residentially zoned areas of Route 7 is to retain the less intense, residential character, the tool might need to be adjusted because there are a number of houses along Route 7 that would not be able to use the current adaptive use provisions. The zoning regulations could be amended to allow existing residential structures along Route 7 – regardless of a structure’s age – to take advantage of the adaptive use provisions. In addition, the current provisions limit expansions to no more than 10% of the existing floor area. The Town may wish to increase the percentage to better meet modern business needs.

Manage Curb Cuts

Managing the number and location of curb cuts is important from public safety and aesthetic perspectives. The Town should continue to encourage or require land owners to close unnecessary curb cuts and share curb cuts when feasible.

Actions for maintaining Route 7 development intensities:

1. Conduct a commercial build out analysis for the Route 7 Corridor.
2. From the Norwalk line to Lamberts Corner:
 - Maintain existing zones with minor adjustments where zones do not correspond to parcel boundaries.
 - Maintain large setbacks, with landscaped frontage.
3. From Lamberts Corner to Cannon Road:
 - Explore zoning tools that might allow some additional business use in these zones, provided such uses contribute positively to the overall character of this area.
 - Improve pedestrian amenities.
 - Improve overall aesthetics and landscaping.
 - Encourage limited support services near the Wilton Train Station.
4. From Cannon Road to Ridgefield line:
 - Maintain existing zoning.
 - Improve pedestrian amenities.
 - Improve overall aesthetics and landscaping.
 - See earlier strategies for Cannondale and Georgetown.
5. Amend the adaptive use regulations to encourage greater use in the Route 7 corridor.
6. Continue to manage the number and locations of curb cuts.

Improve the Appearance of the Route 7 Corridor

Improvements to appearance should include:

- Improving frontage by providing landscaping, pathways and trees
- Ensuring good building design and architecture

A number of developments in Wilton have demonstrated that it is possible to provide attractive landscaping and pedestrian pathways along frontage. New development should continue this trend and opportunities to retrofit existing developed sites should be explored.

Mechanisms to retrofit may include zoning incentives (e.g., reducing parking requirements when a use is changed), seeking grant money, or providing design assistance / guidance.

Some “greening” of the corridor will occur as part of the landscaping when the widening project is completed. Replicating the Wilton Center Tree Plan for Route 7 can help identify specific desired landscaping improvements.

Frontage can also be improved by reducing the number and width of access driveways. A number of parcels, particularly along the northern part of Route 7 have curb cuts that span most of the frontage. These can cause safety issues and detract from the character of these smaller commercial areas. The PZC should continue to encourage driveway consolidation through its zoning regulations.

Extending design review to all commercial zones will also help ensure that buildings contribute to the character of the area. A design review committee could be charged with reviewing all site plans.

Actions to improve the appearance of the Route 7 corridor:

1. Ensure that new development includes landscaping / greenery and pedestrian amenities along the roadway.
2. Encourage existing development to retrofit or improve their frontage.
3. Continue to encourage the consolidation of curb cuts.
4. Replicate the Wilton Center Tree Plan for the Route 7 Corridor.
5. Ensure that the design of new buildings is appropriate by extending design review to all commercial zones.