



For Immediate Release
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Wilton Awarded AARP Community Challenge Grant for Next Phase of the Riverwalk

WILTON, NH – The town of Wilton, N.H. has been awarded an AARP Community Challenge grant to complete an ADA-compliant trail for the Wilton Riverwalk. This \$19,711 grant will fund the creation of a solar-lighted, ADA-compliant walkway along the northern bank of the Stony Brook River, with trees, plantings, a kiosk, placemaking signage, and access to fishing spots. This award represents one of only two awards issued by the AARP Community Challenge in New Hampshire, and 184 nationwide.

“We are incredibly excited to support the Town of Wilton as they work to make immediate improvements in the community, encourage promising ideas and jumpstart long-term change,” shared AARP New Hampshire State Director Todd Fahey. “Our goal at AARP New Hampshire is to support the efforts of our communities to be great places for people of all backgrounds, ages and abilities and the coronavirus pandemic has only underscored the importance of this work.”

The Riverwalk project has also been aided by the generous contribution of TDS Telecom in Wilton of an easement for the land they own along the river. The TDS land will form the basis of the extended Riverwalk, and will eventually link up to a new pedestrian bridge across Stony Brook. TDS has been a valued presence in downtown Wilton for more than 17 years, and the town is grateful for their contribution to the multi-year Riverwalk project.

“TDS has always been a proud community partner and we couldn’t be more pleased to play a role in this project that will positively impact Wilton for years to come ,” says Andrew Petersen, senior vice president of Corporate Affairs.

Spearheaded by the Wilton Economic Development Team as a joint project with the Wilton Conservation Commission, the Wilton Riverwalk is intended to “create an attractive amenity for residents and visitors alike to encourage people to come and spend more time downtown, to walk and enjoy our rivers as a downtown asset and - as they stay longer – patronize downtown businesses”, said Jennifer Beck, Chair of the Wilton Economic Development Team. “The plan is designed to be built in phases with a variety of creative funding strategies including local fundraising, state and federal grants, and private-public partnerships”.

The Wilton Riverwalk Project began in 2017 with the opening of a walkway along the Stony Brook River near the Police Station downtown. The initial work on Phase 2 was completed in

May of 2020, and comprised a full restoration of the veterans' Monument Park, including removal of over-grown vegetation, new plantings, lighting, a new flag, benches and installation of a handicap accessible walkway and parking space. The new walkway funded by the AARP grant will now enable the full completion of Phase 2, and will eventually link to the proposed pedestrian bridge spanning Stony Brook to complete a full loop around the western section of downtown. For an overview of the complete Riverwalk plans, go to https://www.wiltonnh.gov/government/boards_and_committees/economic_development_leadership_team/wilton_riverwalk.

“Wilton is blessed to have a varied population including artists, entrepreneurs, farmers, philanthropists, small business owners, retirees and young families as well,” said Matthew Fish, Chair of the Wilton Select Board. “The Riverwalk is an opportunity to give everyone, including visitors, a downtown gathering place that encourages community-building for everyone young and old, and we are grateful to AARP and TDS for helping us achieve the next phase of this vision”.

The *Community Challenge* grant program is part of AARP's nationwide Livable Communities initiative, which helps communities become great places to live for residents of all ages. View an interactive map of all of the *Community Challenge* projects and AARP New Hampshire's livable communities work at www.aarp.org/livable.

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