

CHAPTER VI: HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Introduction

Residents and visitors alike are drawn to Wilton by its mix of rural character, historic charm, thriving downtown, and vibrant community. This unique combination of characters is a product of Wilton's heritage, which is manifested through the town's historic and cultural resources. It will be essential for future planning and development to respect, understand, appreciate, and enhance rather than diminish this heritage so valued by many Wilton residents. Moreover, given comprehensive understanding and careful planning, both new development and the Town can be enhanced and benefited through leveraging these valuable resources.

This chapter provides a narrative of Wilton's history, an inventory and general description of the historic and cultural resources, as well as a list of tools, resources, and strategies for historic preservation and enhancement to cultural resources – information that informs the Land Use Chapter of this Master Plan and enable the Planning Board and other town leaders to make informed decisions, especially concerning resources that may need special protection.

Vision

Wilton's unique heritage and culture will be regionally known and draw visitors and prospective residents to town. They will hear about Wilton's key festivals and events, alongside impromptu art and cultural activities, even before setting foot in town. Travelers who pass through Wilton by chance will be enticed by clear and attractive signage and markers to make unplanned stops in town.

Wilton's schoolchildren will both learn about and add to Wilton's heritage through educational programs and active involvement in the town's art and cultural events. Residents of Wilton will take pride in the preservation of historic resources and the promotion of cultural resources, which will be easily accessible to everyone. Wilton will continue to be a unique place to live, work, and play from one generation to another.

Historic Background

The history of Wilton is rich and varied, which would take more than the space of this chapter to narrate. The purpose of the following narrative is to provide historic background, with sufficient details, to describe the Town's heritage and identify the key historic and cultural resources in town. This narrative is not intended to be an official history of the Town as its limited breadth leaves out many notable details and people. An authoritative source on the Town's history up to the 19th Century and referenced by this narrative, is an 1888 book – *History of the Town of Wilton, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire* by Abiel Abbot Livermore and Sewall Putnam, which also includes a genealogical register of town residents at the time.

The Abenaki People

Before the arrival of Europeans, various tribes of Abenaki people inhabited a vast region of the northeast, spanning from the New England states to Quebec. Although it is quite certain that Abenaki

hunters had traversed the bounds of Wilton for game, perhaps due to Wilton's hilly terrain, there no long-term native encampments are known in Wilton. As reported in *History*, Town residents had discovered a remnant of a hunting camp in the pine woods west of the New Wilton Reservoir at the time. A few arrowheads, hatchets, and stone chisels had also been found in the past.

Three Abenaki tribes were active around Wilton – the Pawtucket based in Pawtucket Fall in present-day Lowell, Massachusetts, the Pennacook based in Nashua, New Hampshire, and the Souhegan based in Amherst, New Hampshire. The Abenaki people gave name to the natural landmarks across the region, including the Souhegan River, the Merrimack River, and Mount Monadnock.

Around the turn of the 17th to 18th Century, however, the Abenaki people were decimated due to a lack of immunity to diseases introduced by European settlers and armed conflicts with both Europeans and other native tribes. There was a tense period of about a decade when early settlers of Wilton were wary of native raids but, fortunately, none took place in Wilton. Eventually, most of the Abenaki people migrated north to French Canada while the few who stayed assimilated with the local population.

The Beginning of Wilton

In 1735, Colonial Governor of Massachusetts Jonathan Belcher chartered the region around the present-day towns of Wilton, Temple, and Lyndeborough as Salem-Canada and granted land to veterans from Salem, Massachusetts who served under Sir William Phips in the war against French Canada several decades earlier. In 1749, Section “Number Two” of Salem-Canada, which includes the present-day Wilton, was part of a royal grant given to John Tufton Mason and several other proprietors, who sold their lands to settlers.

Jacob and Ephraim Putnam, John Badger, and John Dale were among the first settlers to Number Two. After the settlers' petitioned to Colonial Governor of New Hampshire Benning Wentworth, the Town of Wilton was incorporated on June 25, 1762, named after the ancient borough town in Wiltshire, England. By 1773, the town residents had built a log meetinghouse, the Town Pound, the first schoolhouse, and the Vale End Cemetery in Wilton Center and a more formal meetinghouse was under construction.

Early development in Wilton concentrated around the meetinghouse and the adjacent commons at Wilton Center (where Wilton Center Road meets Isaac Frye Highway) but two other villages gradually emerged: West Wilton on the road to Temple (at the confluence of Blood Brook and Temple Brook where Temple Road meets West End Highway), and East Wilton on the road to Milford (at the confluence of the Souhegan River and Stony Brook; present-day downtown).

Until the mid-19th Century, Wilton was largely a farming community with several water-powered mills for agricultural and artisan manufacturing needs. By 1839, Wilton contained 8 sawmills, 5 gristmills, 3 tanneries, 2 fulling mills, and a bobbin manufacturer. Many of the early industries were located in West Wilton, which was the industrial center of the town until the arrival of the railroad.

Shift to Manufacturing

In mid-19th Century, the arrival of the railroad to Wilton allowed a convenient flow of raw materials and produced goods in and out of the town, as well as direct access to lucrative urban markets. The first

railroad station in town was constructed in 1851 in East Wilton. Taking advantage of the railroad connection and waterpower from Stony Brook and the Souhegan River, large mills were built along the Souhegan River to make cloth, furniture, and wooden boxes. Merchants' names such as Colony, Whiting, and Abbot came to figure prominently on these mill buildings.

As Wilton prospered and shift from agriculture to manufacturing, the center of commerce and politics shifted to East Wilton to be close to the river and the railroad. The neighborhoods on both sides of the Souhegan River grew to house the many mill workers while the businesses on Main Street expanded to serve new clientele.

Dairy farming also grew because the railroad allowed a morning milk run to Boston in just over an hour. The Whiting Dairy (later known as Hampshire Hills Dairy Farm) just above East Wilton was one of the region's largest dairy producers. The railroad also spurred the apple growing business, especially after a regional wholesaler by the name of Joseph P. Sullivan began distributing apples for small to medium-sized orchards. The orchards in Wilton – Badger Farm, Batchelder's, Holt's, Heald's, Kimball Heights, McLeod's, Parker's, Pomme-a-Lane, Stevens', Tallarico's, Whiting's, and Woodmont's created a significant apple growing, processing, and packing industry. The agricultural boom in Wilton lasted until the mid to late-20th Century when large-scale commercial agriculture in other parts of the country outcompeted New England producers.

Aside from commercial and industrial development, the local government also invested in social projects. From 1867 to 1885, Hillsborough County operate a County Farm near West Wilton, which was the result of a statewide effort and initiative of the local towns to improve overall living conditions for the state's paupers, insane, and infirm. During its operation, the County Farm was largely self-sufficient in terms of food production and often sold excess produce to generate revenue for the County Treasury. There were more than 500 residents at the height of the farm.



Tourism and the Three Fires

Around the late 19th Century, many urban-dwelling residents across the country began to rediscover and appreciate the rural lifestyle as a retreat to their busy lives. Located at the end of a rail line, Wilton became a popular destination for summer homes and rural retreats. West Wilton – the old center of town and almost abandoned for a time, became the locus of a new summer community as urbanites from Boston and as far as New York bought up old homes and built some new ones. Some purchased underperforming farms and convert them into “gentleman farms” while others built trails and cabins deep in the woods. This wave of development introduced a diverse mix of architectural styles to Wilton, as well as new residents.

The Honorable David A. Gregg of Nashua was a summer resident in Wilton, who donated the land, money, as well as an endowment, for the construction and operation of the Town's public library. The Gregg Free Library was dedicated in 1908 and remains the town's cultural center today. Aside from hosting many cultural events, the library also houses the Rollo Farm Collection – a collection of agricultural tools, machinery, and items donated by the farm's owners when the farm was closed and sold.

Not far from the library, hotels were built to accommodate the influx of tourists by train, including the four-story Whiting House Hotel. Passenger rail service to Boston and beyond was frequent and brought tourists to the town year-round. Despite three devastating fires repeatedly destroyed Main Street in 1874, 1881, and 1885, the town pulled together and rebuilt Main Street three times in 11 years. After voters approve to move the seat of town governance to East Wilton in 1883, the current Wilton Town Hall was completed in 1885 on the site of the old Whiting Hotel, which was burnt down in the 1874 fire.



Tourism in Wilton continued to thrive in the first half of the early 20th Century when Wilton was most known for its Winter Festival that took place between 1926 and 1936. The festivity drew many visitors every year and featured a large variety of activities and events across town, including a quarter-mile-long toboggan run through Carnival Hill and the adjacent towns.

Changing Times and Unique Institutions

Times were changing in the mid to later-20th Century – local industry, agriculture, and tourism all experienced major decline in Wilton, as well as the surrounding region. As industrial activities slowed and companies either left town or closed, the mill buildings were left vacant, fell into disrepair, and, with a few exceptions, were demolished. With fewer tourists and the rise of automobiles, the passenger railroad services faced declining use, with the last vestiges of passenger rail service from Wilton ended in 1952.

Like adjacent communities, Wilton became a bedroom town in the greater Nashua region, providing more affordable housing options and a more rural setting to those who work in the urban centers, especially after the completion of Highway 101 in the 1950s. The statewide population boom in the 1970s brought four decades of high population growth to Wilton and it was only in the 2010s that the population growth slowed. From the mid-20th Century to the present day, large agricultural tracts were subdivided for residential development, which includes some sizable residential subdivisions beyond the town centers.

Alongside new residents, new ideas and institutions found their way to Wilton. Some distinctive institutions in Wilton include the High Mowing School, Andy's Summer Playhouse, and the Temple-Wilton Community Farm. They offer unique perspectives and opportunities to education, art, and agriculture to Wilton and the surrounding communities. Alongside many others, these institutions continue to shape Wilton's heritage and are an integral part of Wilton's identity today.

Historic Character and Significant Historic Resources

Downtown Wilton (East Wilton)

Downtown Wilton is located where Stony Brook meets the Souhegan River, which is also where the railroad crosses both water bodies. The presence of two sources of waterpower – the Souhegan River and Stony Brook, and the railroad in East Wilton promoted industrial development and were key to the town's industrialization in the mid-19th Century. This resulted in a relatively developed downtown that contrasts with the rural countryside beyond it. On the other hand, the repeated fires in the 19th Century burned down the earlier buildings, resulting in a downtown dominated by architectural styles commonly found around the turn of the 19th to 20th Century. Only one building – the former town jail that currently houses a business, survived all three fires.



Industrial sites lined both sides of the river while the civic and commercial heart of downtown runs along Main Street. Residential neighborhoods are located uphill except for the neighborhood known as the "Island" immediately next to the former Colony Mill that used to house mill workers. The Main Street is defined by a line of predominantly brick buildings with ground-level storefronts on the side toward the river and civic buildings on the side toward the hill, with the Town Hall Theatre and the Wilton Public Library being the most prominent landmark in Downtown Wilton. A series of steel-truss railroad bridges cutting across the river occasionally come into view through breaks in the downtown façade, particularly at the Main Street Park.

The First Wilton High School and Second Congregational Church on the north and the 1925 Wilton Train Station on the south act as two bookends to the Main Street. The station building is no longer used for its original purpose, but rather, houses a mix of commercial office and private residence. However, the single railroad track, owned by the Milford-Bennington Railroad, is still active today with occasional gravel train running through.

To the south of the train station are several large industrial buildings along the river, with the manufacturing facility of Souhegan Wood Product most visible right behind the railroad track. To the west, the former Colony Worsted Mill (also known as



Abbot Mill) is visible beyond the railroad bridges and across the river. Currently known as Label Art for the company that owns and occupies the building, it is the best-preserved example of the mills from the late 19th Century. Most of these buildings are still in operation although not at their full capacity.

Starting at the Wilton Train Station, Park Street leads uphill to the residential part of Downtown Wilton. Featuring several elegant homes along the way, Park Street ends at the Whiting Park and the Florence Rideout Elementary School, which formed the center of this residential neighborhood. Most of the homes in this area were built between the 1860s and 1880s, in the clapboard neo-colonial architecture style. Nevertheless, such as the aforementioned homes on Park Street, some of them stood out with additional architectural ornaments and style variations. Additions and expansions added over the years were common on many houses.

Just north of Whiting Park, Park Street becomes Whiting Hill Road, which runs uphill toward Carnival Hill about 2,000 feet away, which is now a recreational facility with both an open field and ballfields.

Wilton Center

The original town center, Wilton Center was built on top of a hill above the Blood Brook. The main part of Wilton Center runs along the Isaac Frye Highway. The former Baptist Church, the First Town House (present-day Andy's Summer Playhouse), and the First Unitarian Congregationalist Church form the south end of Wilton Center. The remnant of the colonial-era Town Pound was located behind the Unitarian Church. There are also the sites of former buildings, including a stone marker commemorating the second congregational church that once stood south of the First Town House, as well as a gravel lot between the First Town House and Unitarian Church where the Second Meeting House once stood.



Along the Isaac Frye Highway and fanning out to the intersecting roads are a collection of private residences from different eras and in different architecture styles: late-18th Century / early-19th Century colonial homes, late-19th Century craftsman-styled vacation homes, 20th Century / 21st Century neo-colonial homes. Except for Andy's Summer Playhouse and two buildings owned by the Unitarian Church – the church building and the red brick house across the road, the present-day Wilton Center is predominantly residential.

Not far beyond Wilton Center lie three cemeteries, including two of the oldest cemeteries in town – Vale End Cemetery and South Yard Cemetery. These cemeteries, as well as others in town, are managed and maintained by the Wilton Cemetery Board of Trustees.

West Wilton

West Wilton is located at the confluence of Blood Brook and Temple Brook, where Temple Road meets West End Highway. The double-arch West Wilton Stone Bridge across Blood Brook and the two flanking 19th Century brick houses on Pettey Road mark the center of West Wilton. Fanning out from the center of West Wilton on both directions of Temple Road and West End Road are a collection of 19th Century colonial-style houses intermixed with several 20th Century neo-colonial and cape cod style homes.



Two mills from the pre-industrialization era – Red Mill and Seldon Mill sit on both ends of West Wilton, one along Blood Brook and the other along Temple Brook. These mills have long become private residences.

North of West Wilton and beyond Gibbons Highway / Route 101 is a road named Old County Farm Road that runs north to Burton Highway. Along this road was the site of the former Hillsborough County Farm. Sometime after the farm closed in 1885, the County subdivided and sold the land, which contains several large houses today.

The Countryside

Many historic resources in Wilton are located outside of the town and village centers: historic homes, mills, cemeteries, agricultural facilities such as farm buildings and fields, and town infrastructure from bridges to the two reservoirs. This section is a summary of each major categories. For the complete list of historic resources, see the tables and map of Wilton Historic Survey in the next section.

Some of the Town's most notable historic homes were built in the countryside. This includes three listed homes: Whiting Homestead, Hamblet – Putnam- Frye House, and Jonathan Livermore House. The first two are listed on the National Register and the last is listed on the State Register. Whiting Homestead was a large house built circa 1800s located on the former Old Whiting Farm, which was also the County Poor Farm for about two decades in the late 19th Century. The Hamblet-Putnam-Frye House is the residences for the owner of Frye's Measure Mill, which is also a historic building. Jonathan Livermore House is located along Russell Hill Road, just south of Wilton Center, and featured Georgian-style architecture. **[need to as Michael for a some more info on these houses]**

As in West Wilton, there were many pre-industrial mills built along the various brooks in Wilton, particularly in the northeastern part of town, including an area known as Davisville. The Frye's Measure Mill (also known as Daniel Cragin's Mill) is a good example with a functional workshop that functions as a tourist attraction today. Many others



such as the Baker Mill, Livermore Mill, and Hopkins and French Mill had been lost over the years, from demolition to being swept away in a flood. Nevertheless, their building sites were added to the inventory and the Heritage Commission had installed history placards to a few of the sites.

[Cemeteries, including the cemetery for the County Farm]

Even though the heydays of Wilton's agriculture were long gone, several agricultural facilities have been maintained and kept in production today. The most notable being Four Corners Farm and Barrett Hill Farm. Four corners Farm is owned and operated as the Temple - Wilton Community Farm (more information under the Cultural Resources section), and its farm buildings and fields are protected by a conservation easement owned by LCHIP, which is also supervised by NRCS. The easement covered both historic and natural resources.

[Barrett Hill Farm]

Besides the two farms, several agricultural fields are also under the NRCS conservation easement, which sent out teams to monitor the grounds periodically to make sure no illicit development had taken place.

- Recreation (Wilton's past as a popular rural retreat)
 - Trails and campgrounds
- Infrastructure
 - Roads and stonewalls
 - Bridges, dams, ponds, levees – for agriculture, industry, and flood protection
 - Town water – the two reservoirs (first established 1902) and the town pumps

Aside from the historic resources scattered across the rural parts of Wilton, the collective character of Wilton's countryside contributed to the Town's heritage – mixed-wood forests, active agricultural fields, abandoned orchards, mill ponds, stone bridges, hilltop lookouts, ravine valleys, and the iconic tree-shaded town road flanked by waist-high stone walls on both sides all share a part in defining the rural character of Wilton, which its residents both take pride of and treasure.

While some of these structures and features may be more fitting to be regarded and conserved as natural resources, as a whole, their historic nature must be recognized as an essential part of Wilton's heritage as their more defined counterparts, and warrant a similar consideration for mitigation, if not protection, against development.

Threats to Historic Resources

Historic resources are precious, fragile, and nonreviewable. They may be lost without awareness, respect, and adequate protection. Aside from documenting the historic background of Wilton and identifying key historic resources, including the contributing characters, a proper understanding of potential threats to historic resources is paramount to avoid their loss through sensitive future planning and development.

Awareness

The first step toward preserving historic resources is recognition of their values and the threats to these resources. On the flip side, a lack of awareness and respect toward historic resources will inevitably lead to their loss. Therefore, it is important to promote such awareness in the town government and among Wilton's residents, so that historic preservation will be considered in decision-making processes such as building renovations, building demolitions, transportation projects, and other major development in town. Ideally, municipal agencies and property owners may protect and preserve historic resources not merely for regulatory compliance but for a true appreciation of their value.

Deterioration and Obsolescence

All historic resources are susceptible to deterioration due to their age. For prominent historic and publicly owned landmarks such as the Town Hall and Public Library, maintenance is continually supported by municipal funding and community effort. For other least prominent and/or privately owned historic resources, finding a productive use for these resources is often the best assurance to their continual preservation.

Nevertheless, the old design and layout of historic resources often present a challenge to accommodate new uses. While some historic resources may function as museums or memorials of the past, such as the Frye's Measure Mill, the repurposing of many others would be a significant undertaking and require substantial effort and investment.

The use of federal tax credits and other government grants and incentives ...

[Anything the town is doing to address properties not maintained]

[emphasis on mill buildings – very visible and iconic landmark in town; even one in disuse will be very noticeable]

Development

For historic resources not hindered by barriers to development, development itself can be a threat. Such development may appear in various forms: a new residential subdivision along a scenic road, the rehabilitation and reuse for a historic mill, or an array of new solar panels installed on the roof of a historic building. The Town would need to strike a balance between promoting the development or reuse of historic resources and preserving the historic fabric of the resources. For example, the Town may consider: the requirement of appropriate buffer and screening of new development, an architectural review involving the heritage commission on a historic mill rehabilitation project, and adherence to the Secretary of Interior's Guidelines on Solar Panels.

One particular threat to the historic character of the rural countryside is a trend of increasingly dense residential development. While there is a demonstrated demand for housing in the region and Wilton, the town should take initiative in matching the appropriate type of development to the appropriate location. A best practice is to encourage denser development within or close to the downtown and areas serviced by the Town's water and sewer systems while discouraging such development farther

away. Moreover, the Town should also mitigate the impact of dense development by requiring adequate buffer and screening to existing residences, roadways, and vista points.

Preservation Action to Date

[Working with Michael Dell’Orto to update this section; will also need to reach out to the Main Street Association and EDL Team for any more recent update. Wilton Historical Society Section has been updated]

A fair amount of historical data collection and preservation action has been done in Wilton by private groups and individuals, as well as Town agencies. In the 1980s, five sites in Wilton were approved for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. In the same period, there was an effort to win voter approval for a commission to investigate the designation of Wilton Center as a historic district (not approved) and a study of the downtown area with recommendations for improvements (not implemented). Since the millennium, two additional sites have been added to the National Register of Historic Places and two sites have been added to the State Register of Historic Places. ~~Several roads have also been awarded State Scenic Road designations.~~ Seven roads had been designated as Scenic Roads through town meetings.

Wilton cherishes its history and has worked on several preservation efforts over the years. In the past, voters approved sufficient funds to ensure that needed renovations to the Town Hall (new windows, handicapped access, and painting) were in keeping with the building’s architectural style. Renovations to the Wilton Public and Gregg Free Library included restoration efforts and updates were done in accordance with the building’s style and history.

Wilton Historical Society

The Wilton Historical Society was organized in 1908. It became inactive during WWI but reorganized in 1937, inspired by the upcoming 200th anniversary of the town in 1939. At some point after that, the Society again became inactive but re-formed in October 1971. It has been in continuous existence ever since.

The Wilton Historical Society is housed on the top floor of the town library and meets monthly. The Society continues to maintain a collection of artifacts, documents, and photos that are located in the Historical Rooms. Many items in this collection were donated by Rollo Farm, soon after the library was built in 1908. The ever-growing collection is both interesting to the casual viewer and useful to those doing historical research. The collection is open to the public on Thursday afternoons. The Historical Society was responsible for publishing brochures and historical sketches for the town’s and the nation’s bicentennial celebrations.

Since [year], the Wilton Historical Society has hosted 4th-grade classes from the Florence Rideout Elementary School as the students studied the local history. Society members have also been instrumental in preparing applications for listing Wilton’s historic resources on the State and National Registers.

Wilton Heritage Commission

Established at the 2000 Town meeting, the Wilton Heritage Commission is a non-regulatory advisory commission that works to identify and protect Wilton's historically and culturally significant buildings and sites. Members are appointed by the Select Board after being recommended by the Commission. The Heritage Commission works closely with other Town Boards and organizations, including the Historical Society and the Cemetery Board of Trustees.

Since its inception, the Commission has worked to preserve many of Wilton's historic assets. Two successes include getting Wilton Town Hall listed on the Federal Register of Historic Places and designating Dwight Road as a scenic road. They have also created a historic resources inventory in conjunction with the Conservation Commission. The Heritage Commission monitors The Four Corners Farm for compliance with the LCHIP (NH Land Community Heritage Investment Program) Conservation Agreement pertaining to the building's exterior. This task includes submitting an annual report that notes the condition of the structure (such as the roof, foundation, and windows) and if any modifications have been made.

One of the Commission's main projects is developing historical signage for the Town. The Commission manages the Historical House Plaque Program, which homeowners can purchase for housings built before 1850. Thus far, 71 homeowners have purchased the plaques. They also produce historical markers that are placed throughout Wilton, which explain the different areas' cultural significance. Twenty-three markers and kiosks have been produced and the Commission continues to replace and refurbish older markers.

Other educational tools the commission has done include organizing historical presentations, creating an oral history archive, and publishing a self-guided tour brochure ("the Wilton Heritage Trail Project"), available for purchase in Town Hall. The Commission also continues to digitally archive all historical documents and photographs.

Cemetery Board of Trustees

Since 2006, Wilton has had a three-person elected Cemetery Board. The duties of the Board are to manage the South Yard, Vale End, and Laurel Hill cemeteries and assist with the management of Mt. Cavalry Cemetery. Since these are historic cemeteries, the Board helps residents with inquiries regarding family history and burial sites of deceased family members. The Board works with the Heritage Commission to map the cemeteries and repair broken headstones. The Board has also partnered with the Daughters of the American Revolution to work on projects. For example, permanent markers of John and Mary Ellinwood Dale were placed on the graves of their descendants John and Mary Dale in Vale End Cemetery on October 14, 2006.

Wilton Main Street Association

In 1998, Wilton was chosen to join the Main Street Program, a national program aimed at preserving and revitalizing commercial downtown areas. The Wilton Main Street Association (WMSA) is a volunteer organization of citizens and merchants who are working with town officials on various projects to improve the look and economic vitality of Wilton's downtown. The WMSA is chartered specifically to

drive improvements in the downtown area, preserve and restore historic buildings, collect historical data and photos, and improve public awareness of Wilton's historic and cultural resources. The Association has helped obtain façade improvement grants and managed and helped maintain the historic Wilton Falls building for many years, although the building has now changed ownership.

The Association helped promote the Wilton Scenic Railroad, which was a heritage railroad that operated seasonally from spring 2003 through fall 2005 by a private entity.

The Wilton Main Street Association owns a pocket park on Main Street that overlooks the Souhegan River and a railroad bridge. The park features a fountain, stone benches, and a Little Free Library. This is the site of many cultural events in Wilton including concerts, small festivals, visits with Santa & the Easter Bunny, a luminaria stroll, community meals, and in 2021 – a special Town Meeting. This park has become the heart of Downtown and is a frequent meeting spot for residents and visitors.

Wilton Economic Development Leadership Team

Formed in 2016, this ad-hoc committee's mission is to promote economic vitality in Wilton through the execution of programs and projects that will help diversify the tax base, build a vibrant downtown, and help make Wilton a destination. Part of their mission emphasizes historic preservation as an economic asset to the Town.

The Committee created the 2017 warrant article (which passed) that authorizes the Select Board to adopt the provisions of NH RSA 79-E Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive. This allows an owner of a qualifying structure who intends to substantially rehabilitate or replace a structure to apply to the governing body of the municipality in which the property is located for tax relief. The applicant must be in Wilton's eligible district, which is based around Wilton's downtown center. The rehabilitation project must be substantial, and the rehabilitation project must provide a public benefit. This tool can be used to restore many public buildings in downtown or historic homes that increase opportunities for downtown housing.

The Committee has also worked on improving a river walkway along the Souhegan River near the Police Station and is working on extending the walkway behind Main Street that may include historic markers and artifacts.

In July 2017, the Committee helped to organize a Plan NH charrette, which brought together diverse professionals to brainstorm recommendations to encourage downtown revitalization in Wilton. Representatives from the charrette team suggested Wilton consider adopting a demolition delay ordinance, pursue a National Register of Historic Places District for downtown, and re-adopting NH RSA 79-E with a longer tax relief period.

Opportunities and Tools for Preservation (previously Tools for the Preservation and Enhancement of Historic Sites and Areas)

Various methods are available to encourage the preservation or restoration of historic resources...

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's resources worthy of preservation. Established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and administered by the National Park Service within the Department of the Interior, the Register lists properties of local, state, and/or national significance in the areas of American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. Resources may be nominated individually, or in groups, as districts, or as multiple resource areas and must generally be older than 50 years. A National Register district must have the approval of a majority of property owners in the district.

The primary benefit of National Register listing is the recognition it affords and the appreciation of local resources which is often stimulated through such recognition. The National Register also provides for review of effects which any federally funded, licensed, or assisted project, most notably highway projects, might have on a property which is listed on the Register or eligible for listing. Register standing can also make a property eligible for certain federal tax benefits (investment tax credits) for the rehabilitation of income-producing buildings and the charitable deduction of donations or easements.

Contrary to many commonly held beliefs, National Register listing does not interfere with a property owner's right to alter, manage, dispose of or even demolish his property unless federal funds are involved. Nor does the National Register listing require that an owner open his property to the public. For a single, privately-owned property with one owner, the property will not be listed if the owner objects. National Register listing can be an important catalyst to change public perception and increase historic awareness but cannot in itself prevent detrimental alterations or demolition. Yet, it remains an important first step toward historic awareness, respect, and protection.

Statewide there is a growing list of more than eight hundred National Register listings, of which approximately a hundred of them are historic districts. Within Wilton, there are seven National Register listings, as shown in the table below.

Table 1. Wilton Sites on the National Register of Historic Places

Site	Location	Date Added to Register
Old County Farm Road bridge	Near Jct. of Burton Hwy and Old County Farm Road	5/14/1981
Wilton Public Gregg Free Library	7 Forest Road	1/11/1982
Whiting homestead	Old County Farm Road	3/9/1982
Daniel Cragin's Mill (now known as E. B. Frye and Son Mill)	Jct. of Davisville Rd. and Burton Hwy	3/23/1982
Barrett Hill Farm (also known as Stonyfield Farm)	Barrett Hill Rd	8/3/1983
Hamblet – Putnam-Frye House	293 Burton Hwy	6/22/2000

Wilton Town Hall

42 Main St.

4/20/2009

State Register of Historic Places

The State of New Hampshire Register of Historic Places program encourages the identification and protection of historical, architectural, archaeological, and cultural resources. The program provides for listing in order to encourage awareness of the historical significance of the listed structure but does not mandate protection. Benefits of listing include public recognition, consideration, and advocacy in the planning of local and state-funded projects, qualification for state financial assistance for preservation projects (i.e. LCHIP), and special consideration or relief in the application of some access, building and safety code regulations. Listing takes place through application to the NH Division of Historic Resources. There are over 450 places on the registry, two of which are in Wilton: James Livermore House and Four Corners Farm.

Table 2. Wilton Sites on State Register of Historic Places

Site	Location	Date Added to Register
Four Corners Farm	195 Isaac Frye Highway	7/28/2003
Jonathan Livermore House	65 Russell Hill Road	10/25/2010

Local Historic Districts and Neighborhood Heritage Districts

The term "historic district" can refer either to a historic district established by Town Meeting vote, previously discussed, or to a National Register Historic District. Both are useful preservation tools but differ in the way in which they are established and the protection they afford. A historic area may be both a locally designated historic district and a National Register District. Several communities within the region, including Amherst, Hollis, Mont Vernon, and Nashua have enacted local historic district ordinances.

The most comprehensive preservation tool available to local governments under New Hampshire state law is the creation and administration of a local historic district (RSA 674:45). The purpose of a historic district is to protect and preserve areas of outstanding architectural and historic value from inappropriate alterations and additions which might detract from an otherwise distinctive character. Historic districts should not attempt to "freeze" time but should preserve what is significant to a district while accommodating change and new construction in accordance with regulations based on a local consensus.

Historic districting can be an effective technique for protecting the character of an area by emphasizing exterior appearance and setting. Yet, unlike site plan review, historic districts allow officials to exercise authority over the construction and alteration of single-family dwellings. However, buildings alone need not comprise a district. Effective district preservation should involve streetscapes, landscapes, contributing views, and viewsheds, as well as buildings. It should be noted that historic districting is not an appropriate method for protecting all historical resources in an area, especially where properties are

widely scattered. Finally, it is worth noting that historic districting may not be the most effective means of protecting a significant land area, but districting can be effectively combined with other techniques.

There was an effort to establish a commission to investigate the designation of Wilton Center as a historic district in the 1980s but it was not approved at the town meeting... [need to investigate further on the details] Neither was a study of the downtown area with recommendations for improvements implemented by the Town. [What then? I will add a section to summarize any lesson learned and ways forward, such as helping the town residents, especially property owners, to understand the nature and benefits of local historic districts...]

Certified Local Government (CLG) Program

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 provides for matching grants-in-aid to the states from the Historic Preservation Fund for historic preservation programs and projects. Federal law requires that at least ten percent of each state's Historic Preservation Fund grant be designated for transfer to eligible local governments that apply for the money. A local government can participate in the program once the State Preservation Office certifies that the community has established its own historic preservation commission, district, and a program meeting certain federal and state standards. Matching grants are made each year to certified local governments for survey and planning projects, including preparation of National Register nominations and historic resource surveys. Currently, the CLG program represents the only source of state funds available for communities interested in preservation planning. In the Nashua Region, the only communities designated as CLGs are the City of Nashua and the towns of Amherst and Hollis.

Building Code Provisions

In seeking to protect the public's health and safety, standards such as building codes may present unique complications to the use or rehabilitation of a historic building. As a result, some communities have elected to amend local building codes to exempt historic structures from certain code requirements, other than life safety provisions. This allows historic buildings to continue to be used safely while not imposing a modern set of standards that are impossible for an older building to meet without a significant loss of integrity.

It should be noted that ~~Chapter 32 of the Basic Building Code of Building Officials and Code Administrators (BOCA)~~ Chapter 12 of the International Existing Building Code (IEBC), used by many of the region's communities including Wilton, specifically addresses the need for sympathetic treatment of historic structures through providing some exceptions to code requirements to buildings accredited as being of historic significance. ~~Under this section, buildings identified as historic buildings are not subject to the code when they are "judged by the building official to be safe and in the public's interest of health, safety and welfare regarding any proposed construction, alteration, repair, enlargement, relocation and location within fire limits."~~

[need some more research, including checking in with the Building Inspector]

Demolition Review

In [REDACTED], Wilton adopted a demolition review protocol as part of the Town's building permitting process. The protocol requires the Heritage Commission to be notified and allowed to evaluate potential historic resources before their demolition. Under the protocol provision, the Commission does not have the authority to deny a demolition permit but can request an opportunity to document both the exterior and interior of the resource before demolition.

[working with Michael and Michele to understand the current situation and potential improvement to the review protocol]

Innovative Land Use Controls

RSA 674:21 gives communities the authority to adopt a variety of innovative land use controls which may support the preservation of community character and consequently historic resources. Open space development, also known as cluster development, and transfer of development rights are two kinds of innovative land use controls relevant to preservation.

Open space development/cluster development allows for development to be located away from sensitive areas, agricultural lands, or historic areas, more so than otherwise required by the standard zoning ordinance. Development density bonuses may be offered as an incentive to protect such areas from development or the impacts created by adjacent development. Wilton's Land Use Laws and Regulations currently allow cluster developments in the General Residential and Agricultural Zone for tracts of land 15 acres or greater but require setting aside 40-50% open space depending on its proximity to downtown.

Transfer of development rights between land parcels is a technique used to permanently protect sensitive/agricultural/historic areas by redirecting development that could otherwise occur on the development-sensitive parcel to another that would be more suited for development. The rights transferred may be complete or partial, depending on the provisions of the regulations, existing conditions of the land, and preferences of the property owners. While the outcome on the development-sensitive parcel is often very similar to a conservation/preservation/agricultural easement, the outcome on the parcel with the transferred development rights will likely differ because the development rights enable more intensive development that would not be otherwise allowed. Wilton's Land Use Laws and Regulations do not currently allow the transfer of development rights.

Historic Resources Survey

Preservation through documentation is a basic, essential and noncontroversial preservation strategy. There are several reasons for maintaining a historic resources survey for the community. In addition to providing a permanent written and photographic record of local architecture, and other manmade resources, a good inventory is a foundation for other preservation initiatives. It can be of service to a Heritage Commission or Historic District Commission and it can be used to support grant applications or prepare nominations for the listing of historic structures in the National Register of Historic Places.

Maintaining a survey also encourages and enables understanding and appreciation of historic structures and sites by citizens. Historic resource assessments are also necessary for accomplishing environmental

reviews required by projects receiving federal funding, such as highway projects. As the beginning of a comprehensive historic preservation strategy, information gathered should act as a basis for future decision making, by identifying buildings suitable for and worthy of preservation or rehabilitation.

In June 2003, the Wilton Heritage Commission submitted an inventory of historical resources to the Conservation Commission for approval. This list was not an all-inclusive inventory but identified the major sites within Wilton and has been updated throughout the years. In 2009, the historic and cultural resources in the town were mapped as part of the Conservation Commission's Natural Resource Inventory (NRI).

The following Historic and Cultural Resources map was adapted from the 2009 NRI. Dots on the map represent existing buildings, bridges, dams, and natural and other features and correspond to the location of the resource on the parcel, which is listed in Table 3.

[any recent updates]

[map and list will be updated; review in progress]

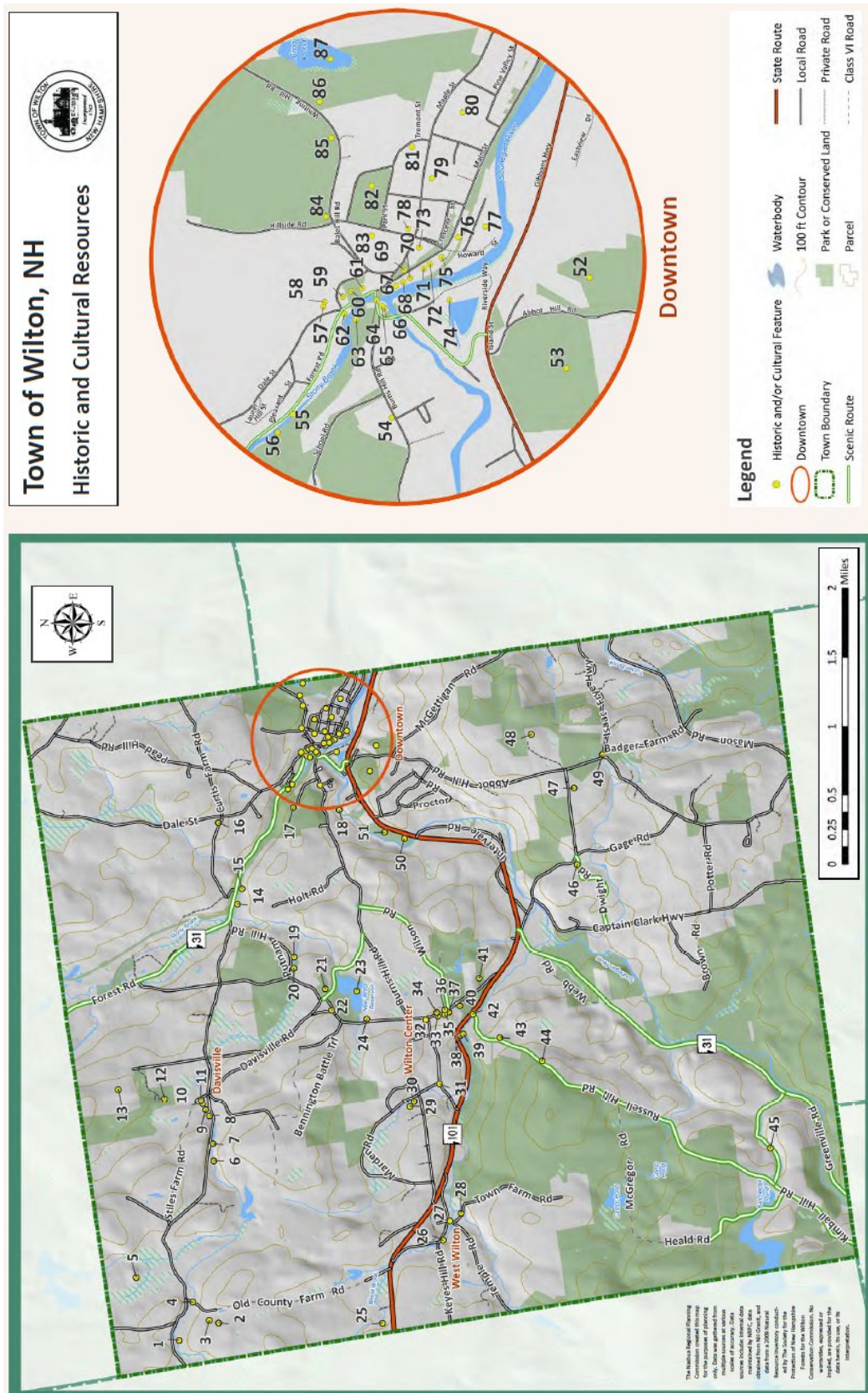
Table 3. Wilton's Historic and Cultural Resources

Key	Date	Name	Description	Comments
1		Mill Brook Dam	dam	
2	c.1800	Oliver Whiting Homestead	homestead	Listed on National Historic Register
3	1867	Old County Farm	farm	
4	1885	Old County Farm Road Bridge	bridge	Listed on National Historic Register
5	1867	Old County Farm Cemetery	cemetery	Mass cemetery for criminals, debtors, and the insane housed at a nearby farm
6		Hopkins Dam	dam	
7	c.1840	Barker Canal	canal	Filled by the Frye family in c.1900 to form a swimming hole
8	c.1820	Barker Mill Site	mill site	Dismantled in 1899. A part of the Hamblet-Putnam-Frye House.
9	c.1761	Hamblet-Putnam-Frye House	building	Listed on National Historic Register
10	c.1800s	Mill Brook Dam	dam	
11	1817	Frye's Measure Mill	mill	Listed on National Historic Register
12	1978	Hearthstone Community	farm	Community Land Trust
13	1803	Barrett Hill Farm/Stonyfield Farm Complex	farm	Listed on National Historic Register
14		Conrad Dam	dam	
15		Hopkins Mill Dam Site	dam	
16	1746	Curtis Farm Barn	farm	
17	1970	Wilton-Lyndeborough Cooperative School	school	
18		The Horseshoe	scenic area	
19		Garwin Falls	waterfall	
20		Old Reservoir	waterbody	
21	1752	Vale End Cemetery	cemetery	The oldest burial ground in Wilton
22		Granite Road Sign	marker	
23		New Reservoir	waterbody	
24	c.1900	Langdell Homestead Auction Barn	building	
25		Blood Brook Dam	dam	
26		Red Mill	building	
27	c.1810	West Wilton Stone Bridge	bridge	
28		Sheldon Mill	mill	
29		Peters Farm Pond Dam	dam	
30		Old Tannery Mill	building	
31		Granite Road Sign	marker	
32		Harry Gregg House	building	
33	1773	Wilton Town Pound	site	Colonial-era animal enclosure
34	c.1900s	Red House	building	

Key	Date	Name	Description	Comments
35	1860	Andy's Summer Playhouse	building	Wilton's First Town House (third meeting house)
36	c.1827	Former Baptist Church	church	
37	1860	First Unitarian Congregationalist Society	church	
38		Livermore Mill Site	mill site	
39		Livermore Dam	dam	
40		Original Congregationalist Church	building site	
41	c.1809	South Yard Cemetery	cemetery	The second oldest burial ground in Wilton
42		Russell Hill Bridge	bridge	
43	1770	Jonathan Livermore House	building	Georgian Style house listed on State Historic Register
44		Captain Greeley Marker	marker	
45		King Brook Road Arch Bridge	bridge	
46		Frye Farm	farm	
47	1942	High Mowing School	school	
48	1972	Pine Hill Waldorf School	school	
49	c.1760	Four Corners Farm	farm	Listed on State Historic Register
50		Hopkins and French Mill	mill site	
51		Recycling Center	building	An informal meeting place in Town; one of the oldest recycling centers in NH
52		Mount Calvary Cemetery	cemetery	
53		Laurel Hill Cemetery	cemetery	
54	1869	Fountain House	building	Victorian-style architecture
55		Curtis Cider Mill	building	
56		Stony Brook Dam	dam	
57		First Wilton High School	building	Former Odd Fellows Hall
58	1852	Second Congregational Church	church	
59		Emerson House	building	
60	1908	Wilton Public-Gregg Library	library	Listed on National Historic Register
61	1898	Masonic Temple	building	
62	1866	Bales and Putnam Blacksmith Shop	building	Horse-drawn carriage manufacturer
63		Stony Brook Riverwalk	riverwalk	
64		Whiting Mill Stone Bridge	bridge	
65		Stony Brook Dam	dam	
66	c.1850	Wilton Falls Building	building	Part of the Colony and Abbott Worsted Mills
67	1928	Wilton National Bank	building	

Key	Date	Name	Description	Comments
68	c.1900	Putnam Block	building	
69	1885	Wilton Town Hall	building	Listed on National Historic Register
70	c.1800s	Local Share (formerly Color Shop)	building	Once a jail, it was the only structure to survive 3 downtown fires
71		Main Street Park	park	
72	1880	Nelson's Candies/Local's Cafe	building	
73	1880	David Whiting Residence	building	
74	1882	Label Art	building	Formerly the Colony and Abbott Worsted Mills
75	1888	Stanton Block	building	Currently houses the Post Office
76	1892	Rail Station	building	
77	1865	Abbot Machine Shop	building	Currently the Riverview Artist Mills
78	1869	Liberal Christian Church Building	building	Currently the American Legion Bent-Burke Post #10
79	c.1880s	Sacred Heart Church	church	Timbered building now a residence
80	c.1900	Abbot House	building	
81		Old Episcopal Church	building	
82	1895	Florence Rideout Elementary School	school	
83	c.1885	Frederick Colony House	building	Victorian-style architecture
84	2007	Carnival Hill Community Garden	garden	
85		Carnival Hill Gate	gate	
86	1857	Whiting Dairy Barn	building	Operated until the 1960s
87	c.1920s	Frog Pond	waterbody	Man-made pond to serve as an emergency water supply for Hillsborough Mills

Map—Historic and Cultural Resources



Historic Structures Report

[this section is new]

The purpose of a historic structures report (HSR) is to develop an understanding of a building's physical history and condition, and provide specific, useable information for implementing a treatment plan. Buildings that are important in the history of a community have the potential to continue to serve that community in many ways after its original function is no longer viable. An HSR is a tool that analyzes such potential for the multiple values that a building represents, taking into consideration the meaning, use and cost to maximize the benefit to the community.

Historical Highway Markers

Originated by the NH Legislature in 1955, the aim of the Historical Marker Program is to erect appropriate markers designating events, people, and places of historical significance to the State of New Hampshire. Communities that would like to be considered for a marker, submit a request for consideration by the State Highway Department and Division of Historical Resources. There is generally no cost involved for a marker on a state-maintained road.

When a proposed text is approved, the marker can be ordered under the regular, state-funded marker program, which is limited to approximately 10 markers per year and can only be used for markers on the state-maintained highway system. Alternatively, co-operative markers can be ordered at cost when state funds have been exhausted or for placement on locally-maintained roads or municipal lands. However, sponsors of co-operative markers must assume full responsibility for the cost of the marker and future maintenance through a formal agreement with the state program.

Statewide there are approximately 250 historical markers but few have been erected in NRPC communities (Amherst, Mason, Merrimack, Milford, and Pelham) and none in Wilton. Wilton's Heritage Commission submitted two marker applications in 2002. One application received initial authorization but ultimately was not installed due to funding issues. The Heritage Commission opted to use Town funds to procure and install markers throughout Wilton.

Scenic Road and Scenic Byway Designations

New Hampshire State law enables a community to designate any road as scenic unless it is a Class I or II highway. A scenic road designation protects trees and stone walls located on the public right-of-way. After the designation of a scenic road, any repair, maintenance, reconstruction or paving work, tree removal, or stone wall removal cannot take place without the prior written consent of the planning board or official municipal body.

Designation of a road as "scenic" will not affect the Town's eligibility to receive State aid for road construction. It does however give communities a way to protect an important statewide resource and may also help to preserve the scenic quality around historic structures and stimulate respect for the existing landscape. Currently, ~~quite a number of Wilton's roads~~ seven town roads have the scenic road designation: Dwight Road, Heald Road, Kimball Hill Road, King Brook Road, Russell Hill Road, Sand Hill Road, Wilson Road, ~~Island Street, Greenville Rd, Dwight Street, and Forest Rd.~~

A scenic byway, on the other hand, is a designation established through the New Hampshire Scenic Cultural Byways Program in 1992 under RSA 238:19 and administered by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation to provide opportunities for residents and visitors to travel a system of byways that feature the beauty, culture, and history of New Hampshire. New Hampshire's program is one of the many state-level scenic byways programs, which are all tied to the National Scenic Byways Program. There are three categories of scenic byway designation – two are nationally designated categories, the third is a state designation.

Since the scenic byway designation highlight the distinctive beauty, culture, and history along its route, the designation is an honor to every community a byway passes through. Furthermore, as each byway will be highlighted in both highway signage and regional visitor's guide (and national ones for the nationally designed categories), the designation will promote local tourism and economic development. Lastly, the completion of a byway corridor management plan helps communities to be more competitive in pursuing federal and state funding to improve safety, protect contributing resources, and enhance visitor experience. Even though the designation is not intended to be a regulatory program, at the state level, it does regular billboards and other off-premises advertising along a designated byway.

Any municipality may nominate a state or local road or highway to the Scenic and Cultural Byway Council for inclusion in the statewide network of scenic byways. Among other requirements, the nomination requires the development of a corridor management plan, organization of public hearings, and demonstration of local, private, and public support. Some state-designated byways go on to become National Scenic Byways, which is administered by the Federal Highway Administration, comes with its own set of criteria and nomination process.

Route 31 and Burton Highway (Route 101) may classify as state-designated byways, which fit requirements set by the NH Scenic and Cultural Byways Council. [need to do more research on the set of requirements]

Historic Building Rehabilitation Federal Tax Incentives

The Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (HTC) was formally introduced by Congress in 1979. Previously, there was a 10% credit for non-residential buildings in service prior to 1936 and a 20% credit for structures that the National Park Service has deemed as historic. New Tax Legislation signed at the end of 2017 (Public Law No: 115-97) has eliminated the 10% credit.

To qualify for the 20% tax credit, the building must a certified historic structure per the National Park Service. The structure must be used for a business or other income-producing purpose, and a substantial amount of the tax credit must be spent on the rehabilitation of the building.

The investment tax credits provide some incentive to rehabilitate older buildings instead of undertaking new construction. Unfortunately, because these credits do not cover privately owned, non-income-producing residences, their use is somewhat limited to larger structures such as commercial or mill buildings, which would also ensure the sympathetic rehabilitation of the buildings.

Revolving Funds

[need to review with Michele and perhaps Matt]

Revolving funds are self-replenishing loan pools. The money in the pools comes mostly from donations and is used to restore buildings. The fund revolves when the restored building is sold. With a revolving fund, a non-profit organization can either acquire a deteriorating building, restore it, and sell it or make low-interest loans available to those who need to restore their historic buildings. The Town of Wilton is allowed to operate a revolving fund under RSA 35-B but is limited to recreation and parkland uses.

Easements \ Covenants \ Deed Restrictions

Across the country, preservation easements have proven to be an effective tool for protecting significant historic properties. An easement is a property right that can be bought or sold through a legal agreement between a property owner and an organization eligible to hold easements. Just as a conservation easement can be used to protect open space, scenic areas, waterways, wildlife sanctuaries, etc. from incompatible use and development, an architectural easement protects the exterior appearance of a building. If properly administered, easements are a superior method of conserving and protecting land, water, and historic resources; perhaps better and longer than zoning or locally designated historic districts.

Easements provide property owners with two important benefits. First, the character of a property is protected in perpetuity. In addition, the donation of an easement may make the owner eligible for certain tax advantages. If the property is listed in the National Register, in return for giving an easement, an owner is eligible under the Tax Treatment and Extension Act of 1980 to make a deduction from his taxes. The donation of an easement may also reduce estate and local property taxes.

Easements are also extremely beneficial to a community. The costs of acquiring easements may be significantly lower than buying properties outright to protect valuable resources, particularly when easements can be acquired by donation. Significant resources can remain in private hands but are protected from inappropriate alteration as the organization holding the easement is given the right to review any proposed change to the structure or property.

Covenants and deed restrictions are two similar tools that can protect historic properties by restricting the character and/or use of a property. In the context of preservation, they provide almost identical functions as easement but with varying degrees of legal formality and restrictiveness, as well as eligibility for charitable tax deductions.

[will add a list of examples if not an inventory]

Protection of Archaeological Areas

[this section is new]

Although few archaeological artifacts related to the Abenaki people had been discovered in Wilton over the years, the town should be mindful of potential discoveries in future development. Moreover, concerns for archeological areas are not limited to those related to Abenaki people but also others, such as the various cemeteries in Wilton.

It should be recognized that the preservation of areas of high potential for prehistoric and historic archaeological sites poses unique problems when compared to architectural resources. In comparison to historic structures, archaeological resources are more difficult to identify and protect. Each site is unique and fragile. Once a site is disturbed, information is lost. While there is often an urgent need to keep the location of an important archaeological resource confidential, the same confidentiality will often preclude public awareness. Acquisition of land or land development rights is often the only way to effectively preserve archaeological resources. Ironically, increased appreciation may also represent a very real threat to archaeological resources.

Rapid growth is the greatest threat to archaeological resources. The few applicable laws that protect archaeological resources are primarily federal. As a result of these laws, large highway projects or projects which require review by a federal agency usually have a review of impacts to cultural resources. In addition, there are mining laws that allow review of projects for impacts and there is the possibility of review within the dredge and fill process.

Since much of the region's growth is from private rather than public sources, archaeological evaluation is not required. In some cases, cooperative developers have permitted the recording of archaeological data which would otherwise be destroyed. The State Division of Historical Resources has very limited ability to review private projects for impact on archaeological resources. Local officials should consult the Division if a proposal will impact a known archaeological resource or if a project is in a location with a high probability of archaeological potential such as areas with proximity to water. In extreme cases, the Town may wish to ask developers to fund the recovery of archaeological data by hiring a professional archaeologist as a consultant to evaluate a property for archaeological potential and/or survey the area for unknown archaeological sites. This procedure is dictated by law in many neighboring states but is not currently required in New Hampshire.

Private Individuals and Organizations

Most building renovation is done by private individuals, developers, or groups. Unfortunately, improvement work undertaken with good intentions can often use techniques or materials inconsistent or insensitive to an older building. As a result, the integrity of the building is compromised or the work may actually damage the building it was intended to preserve. A wealth of specialized information covering topics sensitive to the needs of older buildings is available from the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources and other places. The town needs to make this kind of information conveniently available to individuals doing restoration or remodeling work on older properties.

Promoting Wilton's History

Hidden In Plain Sight is a series of short sketches written by Michael G. Dell'Orto which shine a light on the intriguing historical oddities and places that have made Wilton such an interesting town. Some of these articles were originally published in 2002-2005 for the Wilton Main Street Association. These are a wonderful resource for capturing some of the historical information that may not fit in traditional history storytelling.

Cultural Resources

While cultural resources often go hand-in-hand with historic resources, it is worth noting that part of Wilton's cultural heritage extends beyond tangible features, such as buildings and landscapes. It is also embedded in the artistic minds of its residents, the annual events that bring neighbors together, and the traditions that distinguish Wilton from its neighboring communities. Although some of the Town's cultural resources may not be widely known or promoted, or old enough to be considered as a "tradition", they remain critical to Wilton's identity and future as a charming rural New Hampshire town.

Unlike historic resources, cultural resources experience frequent ebbs and flows with changing people and trends. Long-held traditions may end with the departure of a key organizer while young events may become a sudden success found popular by Town residents. This chapter highlight the cultural resources currently active in town and addresses the need to sustain and further promote them, as well as cultivate new ones.

Inventory of Cultural Resources

[suggest adding a new map to this section to show the various cultural resources and venues, which will have a similar format as the historic resource map]

Cultural Events

[a short blurb for this category]

Folk Café – hosted by the Library

Sustainability Fair - hosted by the Conservation Commission, Main Street Association

Strawberry Fest – hosted by the Unitarian Church

Summerfest – hosted by the Main Street Association, parade, festival, and fireworks

Andy's Summer Playhouse productions – changes every summer

Old Home Days – once every five years

Memorial Day Parade

Lions Club Penny Sale

Community Book Club – hosted by the library

Haunting of Wilton – hosted by the Main Street Association

Halloween Yard Decorating Contest – hosted by the Main Street Association

Holiday/Luminaria Stroll

Stuff a Cruiser – hosted by the Police Department

Wilton-Lyndeborough Giving Tree – Wilton Lyndeborough Women's Club

Christmas/Holiday Fair – hosted by the Second Congregational Church

Daffodil planting - -- hosted by the Main Street Association

Lighting of the Seasonal Spiral

Nativity Pageant – Pine Hill/High Mowing School

Polar Express – at the Town Hall Theater

Town and Community Organizations

[a short blurb for this category]

Bent Burke Post 10 American Legion
Bent Burke Post 10 Ladies Auxiliary
Brookline/Wilton Grange #211
BSA-USA – Cub Scout Pack #10 and Troop #10
Crafters in the Rafters
Friends of the Wilton Public Library
Girl Scouts
Goss Park - Wilton Lyndeborough Youth Center
Lions Club
Mason Lodge 52
Sons of the American Legion
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Wilton Community Center
Wilton Fire Department Auxiliary
Wilton Lyndeborough Women's Club
Wilton Main Street Association
Wilton Camera Club
Wilton-Lyndeborough Junior Athletic Association
Wilton-Lyndeborough Winter Wanderers

Cultural Resources Tied to Historic Resources

Some cultural resources are tied to but not necessarily part of historic resources. For example, Frye's Measure Mill, listed on the National Register, is a recognized historic resource in Wilton and would warrant a level of protection against the building and perhaps the original mill equipment. However, the museum and gift shop within the mill, which feature the making of the shaker boxes, are distinctive from the building as cultural institutions. Here is a list of the notable ones in town.

Andy's Playhouse @ the First Town House
Frye's Measure Mill Museum/Gift Shop @ Fry's Measure Mill
Temple Wilton Community Farm @ the Four Corners Farm

[any others?]

Creative Businesses / Art Studios / Makerspaces

Private businesses that offer space and facility in promoting art, creativity, and entrepreneurship are valuable cultural resources.

New Art Gallery on Main Street

[other]

Cultural Venues

In addition to the wonderful characters that make Wilton the lively community that it is, several brick-and-mortar buildings house community gathering spots. Some of these have been part of the fabric of the town for generations, while others are relative newcomers.

The Wilton Town Hall Theater is on the upper levels of the Town Hall. It was first used as a playhouse for traveling shows and vaudeville, and then converted in 1912 to a silent film house. In the past, the Town Hall Theater hosted a movie festival. It continues to show movies, including recently released features, older films, silent movies, golden age films, and local films. This has become a focal point for many cultural events including parties, festivals, and annual cultural events like the showing of holiday movies.

The Riverview Artists Mill is a collection of working artist studios, small galleries, and shops in a renovated mill along the Souhegan River. These form a vibrant community of working artists that have regular open studio times to invite people to watch as art is created and interact with artists.

Theater and performance art is an integral part of Wilton and its history. Several arts groups and performers like the Red Trouser Show have gotten their start here. Andy's Summer Playhouse is an innovative summer youth theater located in one of Wilton's original meeting houses in the historic Wilton Center that dates to 1860. Founded in 1971, Andy's produces original works that are performed by local artists aged eight to eighteen, with direction and mentoring by professional artists from all over the country. Performances happen at the Playhouse as well as venues across the region, and numerous workshops are conducted focused on a range of theater arts, including design, playwriting, and storytelling.

Venues

American Legion

Andy's Summer Play House (private) – programs, special events

Florence Rideout Elementary School – meeting room, playground

Goss Park – summer recreation area (membership), swimming lessons, summer events

Historical Society Museum (Located in the library) – historic artifacts and programs

The Gregg Free and Wilton Public Library – meeting rooms, limited playground

Wilton Fire Station – meeting room, historic engines

Wilton Town Hall – historic building, meeting facilities, town records, historic documents

Wilton Town Hall Theater – first run and specialty movies, events, holiday programs

Wilton-Lyndeborough Cooperative Middle and High School – meeting room, athletic fields, disc golf

Parks? [not many Wilton's rec spaces are geared toward performance, but may host events, such as Whiting Park & Carnival Hill]

Libraries

The Gregg Free and Wilton Public Library is a rich cultural institution providing not only traditional library service of books, story times, research assistance, and instructional programs, but the library provides meeting space, hosts the Folk Café, art programs, and more. The Library strives to be a

resource to the community from birth to death by promoting learning from early literacy to lifelong learning programs. The Library offers patrons the ability to check out not just books, video, and audio materials, but also hands-on science kits, and other materials. The Library provides free wifi for the downtown area.

Cadmus Library, a private holding of books and magazines related to anthroposophy and Waldorf education, including some rare and out-of-print manuscripts.

Schools

Florence Rideout Elementary School

Grades 1-5

Pine Hill at High Mowing (private)

Grades K-8

Wilton-Lyndeborough Middle School

Grades -6-8

Wilton-Lyndeborough High School

Grades 9-12

High Mowing High School (private)

Grades 8-12

Restaurants with Live Music

[insert]

Promoting Cultural Resources

Capitalizing on Wilton's artist community can help promote economic development for the Town. Better marketing of current assets and nurturing an arts community can enhance Wilton both economically and culturally. Currently, several institutions and businesses in the Downtown district feature music and art on a regular basis including the Folk Café at the library and a number of restaurants in Wilton feature live musicians in the summer.

Many of Wilton's cultural resources are linked to its educational institutions, such as events put on by the Pine Hill and High Mowing Schools, the Wilton-Lyndeborough Cooperative School District, and the Town Library.

Local businesses and nonprofits play a prominent role in preserving the cultural heritage of Wilton. Events that honor the past while advancing Wilton's future include the Wilton Old Home Days celebration. The Wilton Main Street Association is also responsible for hosting many festivals, including the annual Summerfest. The Lions Club hosts the annual Penny Sale and the Duck Race. Wilton's cultural resources are connected to sustainability, natural resources, and agriculture, which bring many members of the community together.

At the conclusion of the emergency orders from the Governor, the Library staff conducted a series of focus groups to gauge what were the resources the community felt were missing and could be provided particularly through the library. There were approximately 10 people in each group and at least six formal groups, three groups of families, and two groups of seniors only who were all surveyed. Regardless of the makeup of the group, the same community needs were expressed across groups. The community needs a meeting place and a community calendar to share what is going on in that space. There is a need for a place for teens to meet, hang out, and contribute. There is a need for seniors to have a place to meet, hang out and contribute. The community desires a play space for young residents to meet and their parents to connect. Communication was a common theme and the desire for a community newspaper or newsletter.

The Town should actively recognize the value of the identified cultural resources ... [funding? Econ. Dev. Opportunities? Marketing? Placemaking?]

Conclusion

~~The Town of Wilton has treasured its historic and cultural resources as part of its community identity. There is a collective heritage within Wilton that exists through brick and mortar, through artifacts and records, and through memories and traditions. Once those memories are gone, they can never come back, so there is a need to preserve Wilton's historic resources from growth and development pressures.~~

[I think the section above need revising but the section below is good to stay; recommendations will have to be reviewed after the revision for all sections is complete]

Residents have consistently identified the importance of preservation and protection of not only physical structures, but also the rural character, open space, scenic views, and access to cultural activities, events, and resources, which enrich and educate residents and visitors. Fortunately, the Town of Wilton has the advantage of having a variety of mechanisms available to promote the preservation of natural, cultural and historic resources, including the energy of its Town residents. The following recommendations balance the need with preservation but allow for flexibility for future growth and development to ensure Wilton's character remains strong.

Recommendations

Historic Resources

- ~~The Planning Board should research the feasibility and impact of developing a demolition delay ordinance, which would give review power to the Heritage Commission. Currently this is informal but needs to be codified.~~ Improve coordination between the Building Inspector and Heritage Commission on carrying out the demolition review ordinance. Add the review on the building permitting checklist if it has not been done already.

- ~~2. Complete and digitize a historic resources survey for the Town of Wilton by consolidating previous surveys done by the Heritage Commission, the list of properties that have received a Historical House Plaque, and other pertinent lists. The list should include the resource's date, location, historical significance, and what preservation actions have been done.~~ Continue to maintain the inventory of historic resources survey, list of properties with the Historical House Plaque and other installed preservation signage, and other pertinent list, including the documentation of any newly identified historic resources.
 - a. Continue identifying structures that qualify for the State and/or National Historic Register and the Historic Landmark Designation Programs.
3. The Town should work to promote the benefits of the NH RSA 79-E tax relief program and evaluate its success after designated period determined by Town officials [need a review of the RSA 79-E program]
4. ~~Work with the NH Department of Historic Resources to conduct educational outreach programs to aid community members' understanding of preservation tools, such as the benefits of historic districts.~~ The Town should continue helping community members, especially property owners, to better understand the benefits of historic preservation and available preservation tools. This may include:
 - a. Continue working with the NH Department of Historic Resources to conduct educational outreach programs
 - b. Continue running historical educational and cultural outreach programs with local schools; consider expanding the program to other schools
 - c. Identify opportunities in the building permitting process to provide information to property owners, contractors, and/or developers.
- ~~5. Continue running historical educational and cultural outreach programs with local schools [included in 4 above]~~
6. Explore the establishment of a historic district, including reviewing factors that led to a lack of public support in the past and developing a historic district framework that fits Wilton's needs.
7. Establish a town Preservation Fund
8. The Town Boards should promote the upgrading, preservation, and protection of the Town cemeteries and other historical resources. This effort should complement actions to preserve and protect Wilton's rural character and open space, including areas of agricultural importance.
9. The Planning Board should evaluate ongoing development patterns against the need to protect Wilton's rural character and open space, and if necessary, guide future development through amending the Town's zoning ordinance and land use regulations.
10. Consider joining the Certified Local Government (CLG) Program.
11. Develop a procedure in case archeological resources are discovered in the future, including consultation with the State Division of Historical Resources.
12. Consider exploring Wilton's pre-colonial history by conducting archaeological investigations in Wilton through partnerships with educational institutions. [can be more specific if there is more information about past discoveries]

Cultural Resources

13. Continue to maintain the inventory of various cultural resources and cultural venues in town.
14. Continue to maintain the event calendar on the Wilton Town website and at Town Hall. Ensure that historic, cultural, event, and club information is kept current on the Wilton Town website and at Town Hall. Each organization should be responsible for making sure their respective information is up-to-date
15. Consider supporting a newsletter or Wilton newspaper to highlight key upcoming cultural events
16. Work with the Economic Development Leadership Team and the Wilton Main Street Association to better promote arts in Wilton through marketing efforts. Examples of initiatives include working to bring back the Wilton Arts and Film Festival, work with Andy's Summer Playhouse to have performances in downtown Wilton, and creating a cultural resources inventory. [need to evaluate the outcome of these recommendations]
 - a. Consider leveraging the Wilton Cares organization. This organization was created during the Covid-19 pandemic to provide services, meals, and personal protective equipment to Wilton residents.
17. The Town and the community should make a concentrated effort to identify important cultural aspects of the community and promote their uniqueness to fellow residents and other communities, including venues available for public use with or without prior scheduling.
 - a. The Town should support efforts of the Wilton Community Center and the Library to provide cultural enrichment programs, a physical meeting space for the community, and good communication with the community at large on events and programs
 - b. The Town should find ways to promote existing non-profit cultural institutions, as well as private culture-related businesses and encourage formation of new cultural entities. This may include a review of the town regulations, building codes, and land use codes to accommodate cultural venues such as performance spaces, art studios, and public art.
18. When the Planning Board updates this chapter in the future, they should develop separate Historic and Cultural Resources chapters, which should include detailed directories that highlight the Town's rich heritage. [the proposed update will cover part of this recommendation; we should evaluate whether it is still good to make the cultural resources section as a separate chapter]