



# Marketing Plan for the Town of Wilton

Jackie Kahle

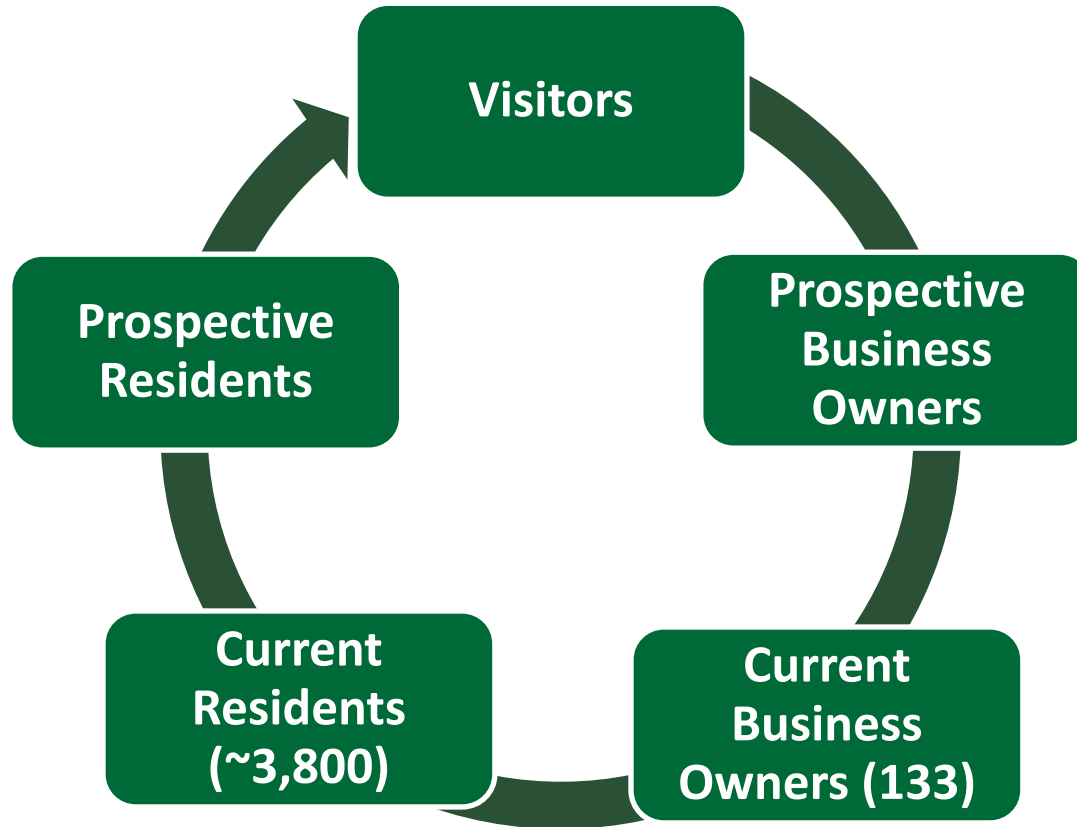
Marketing and Communications Manager

Economic Development Team

September, 2020

*Updated June, 2022*

# Who are we marketing to?



# Wilton's current marketing backdrop

## Positive:

- ✓ Wilton grew 6% (2010-2020), faster than neighboring towns.
- ✓ Key businesses are opening on Main St, filling major needs identified by residents, and ground-floor residences on Main St have been prohibited (also a residents' request).
- ✓ Memorial Park has been renovated to great acclaim by the residents; new signage around town is well-received, next phase of the Riverwalk opened with AARP grant
- ✓ Grant money is becoming available for projects, and Wilton continues to maintain an excellent reputation with partners, including the NRPC.
- ✓ Many marketing programs are working extremely well – website, social media, press relations, email marketing.
- ✓ The community continues to demonstrate a great willingness to come together in times of need, (e.g. Wilton Cares during the pandemic) and a new downtown Community Center has opened.

## Challenges:

- Poor reputation of the high school impacts both residents and businesses from locating here.
- Over-use of key recreational facilities (largely by out-of-staters) has resulted in closure of, or restricted access to, several water attractions.
- Challenging financial situation due to high costs of schools, impact of COVID-19 and upcoming major infrastructure spending (dams, MS-4) leaves little investment for projects to improve overall quality-of-life and recreational possibilities.
- Limited inventory of properties suitable for easy commercial development.

# Marketing objectives by audience

## Visitors

- Promote Wilton's image as a thriving, rural community.
- Raise awareness of town's dining, shopping, entertainment and recreational opportunities.
- Partner with other towns in marketing the Monadnock Region.

## Prospective Residents

- Promote Wilton has a great place to live.
- Provide easy-to-access and visually-appealing information about the town.

## Prospective Business Owners

- Promote Wilton has a great place for business.
- Provide easy-to-access information about town statistics, incentives, benefits to doing business in Wilton.

## Current Business Owners (133)

- Foster a sense of community.
- Provide regular communications to identify issues and opportunities.
- Provide visibility and information via the website.

## Current Residents (~3,800)

- Increase awareness of town's history and recreation.
- Increase \$\$\$ spent at in-town shopping and services.
- Encourage community involvement and volunteerism.
- Turn residents into supporters and boosters of the town.

# Wilton's image – summary of 2017 Brand Survey\*

- The words most often used to describe Wilton are: **small, rural, quaint, quiet, a charming New England town.**
- Advantages versus Milford: smaller, quieter, more rural, with less people and traffic; these also apply to Peterborough, with an added advantage of being closer to the highway with faster access to Nashua and Manchester.
- People chose to live in Wilton for reasons such as family ties, work, and the Waldorf schools. Often mentioned were the rural and small town character, and more affordable homes and land.
- Respondents' views of the people most likely to want to live in Wilton are artists, families with small children and empty-nesters.
- The things Wilton has to be most proud of: our rural character and small town charm, friendly people, conservation land, recreation opportunities, historic attractions, Waldorf Schools
- *Full report on the Wilton website [HERE](#).*

# Wilton's regional advantages

**Wilton has a number of anchor attractions that bring people to the Monadnock region:**

- Andy's Summer Playhouse
- Frye's Measure Mill (Historic Register)
- Nelson's Candies
- Wilton Town Hall Theater (Historic Register)
- Riverview Mill Artists, new Wilton Arts Market
- Wilton Public and Gregg Free Library (Historic Register)
- Historic Bridges: Boxed Pony Truss, Stone Arch, County Farm Bridge (Historic Register)
- Hiking, trails and recreation: Sheldrick Forest, Heald Tract, Frog Pond, Carnival Hill, Goss Park

**Q7 If you could capture the essence of Wilton in a few words or short phrase, what would it be?**

Answered: 94 Skipped: 45

Identity Little Beautiful Caring Place Struggling  
Community New England Village Charm  
Life Small Town Future Rural Waiting  
Quaint Cute Quiet Nice

*“Life in Wilton can be whatever you want. Slow your life down, go fishing with your kids, walk through downtown and get greeted by your neighbors. This town has the strongest sense of community that I've ever seen. People in this town are so quick to support in-town businesses if their neighbor is needed. It's a wonderful refreshing change. We love Wilton and I love my neighbors.” – Wilton resident*

# Wilton's brand positioning statement

## From the Wilton Website Home Page

*Welcome to our historic small town nestled in the Monadnock region by the Souhegan and Stony Brook rivers. Wilton is home to entrepreneurs, retirees, young families, students, artists, farmers, and many others. With friendly people, a vibrant arts community and modern infrastructure, it offers an affordable and ideal living, working and recreational environment. Explore our many attractions and see the fun things to do if you wander into Wilton!*



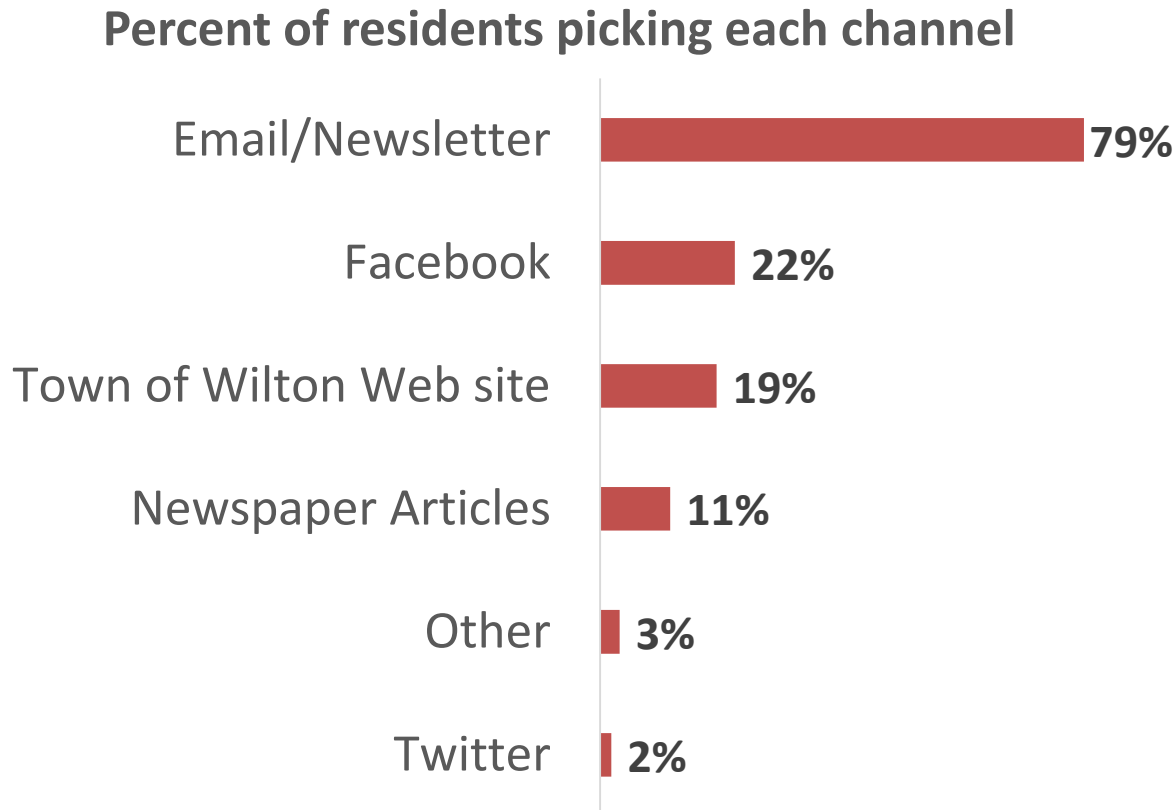
# Wilton's brand guidelines

- Based on our research, we developed a set of brand guidelines to be used on all our marketing materials, website and social media. They include:
  - *Logos is various sizes and formats*
  - *Brand colors*
  - *Website style guidelines*
- These guidelines are encapsulated in a Brand Identity Toolkit and made available on our website [HERE.](#)



# How do residents want to receive information?

In November, 2016 we conducted a Communications Survey (275 respondents) at Town Hall during Election Day, and asked residents how they preferred to be kept informed.



# Getting the word out – key marketing strategies

	Current Residents	Current Businesses	Prospective Residents	Prospective Businesses	Visitors
1. Web Site	X	X	X	X	X
2. Social Media	X	X	X		X
3. E-Mail Lists	X	X			
4. Newsletters	X	X			
5. Signage	X		X		X
6. Press Outreach	X	X	X	X	X
7. Associations	X	X	X	X	X
8. Events	X	X	X		X
9. Research	X	X		X	

# Marketing Strategy #1: Wilton Website

*New site launched in November, 2018*

## Key marketing advantages:

- Visually attractive, mobile-friendly, easy to use.
- Dedicated sections for Visitors, Businesses and Residents allow us to target messaging to specific audiences.
- News Articles and Calendar enable us to promote successes and events in town.
- Constantly updated and relevant content has dramatically improved our SEO and positioning in Google Search.
- Web statistics on users, page visits, downloads, etc. have been excellent, and site is attracting many out-of-town visitors, while still serving residents.



# Marketing Strategy #2: Social Media



- The Town of Wilton has accounts on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.
- Our Facebook strategy is to **promote Wilton** and **drive traffic** to our website.

## Town of Wilton account (990)

- Town's "official" voice
- Jackie Kahle and Kat Tighe are the only posters.

## Official Wilton - Lyndeborough Community Group (4,500)

- Jackie posts frequently to drive people to the website



Social accounts for an average of 15% of all website traffic.

- Our YouTube account is newer, and so far has been used to promote the short film *Wilton-Lyndeborough: A Shared History*, available [here](#).
- An edited version of the film to focus only on Wilton is being created, which we will leverage on our visitor's area of the website.

# Marketing Strategy #3: E-Mail Lists



- Using a free Mail Chimp account, we have created two e-mail distribution lists:
  - **Wilton Eco-Dev Interest List** was created in 2016 and has 519 addresses, mostly Wilton residents and businesses.
  - **Wilton Businesses List** was created in May, 2020 and has 94 addresses, representing 72% of all Wilton businesses.
- The Wilton Eco-Dev List is used to share information about ongoing projects, solicit participation in research surveys, and gather residents' opinions on various initiatives.
  - Our average open rate is **more than double** the industry average (47% vs 21%), and our click-through rate is **six-times higher** (16% vs 2.5%).
- The Wilton Businesses list will be used to send information to our businesses about programs and initiatives they can take advantage of, and solicit opinions and input.

# Marketing Strategy #4: E-Newsletters



## Wilton Economic Development Team News Update

- The Wilton Economic Development E-Newsletter was created by the Economic Development Team and has been distributed electronically 2-4 times a year since 2016.
  - Topics include research survey results, town initiatives, updates on the River Walk, zoning issues and many other topics of general economic development interest.
  - Newsletters go to the Eco-Dev Interest list, and are posted online [HERE](#).



# Marketing Strategy #5: Signage

- Residents approved a Welcome sign on 101 to attract visitors from the highway, as well as wayfinding signs spread around town to direct people to town attractions.
- We partnered with the Lions Club to rebrand their existing sign into a Welcome sign, which will point people to “Dining, shopping and entertainment”.
- There are four town-branded wayfinding signs as well as four blue state “tourist signs”.



*Also Sheldrick Forest and the Heald Tract*



# Marketing Strategy #6: Press Outreach

- We have built relationships with key press contacts from our two main newspapers:
  - Ashley Saari ([asaari@ledgertranscript.com](mailto:asaari@ledgertranscript.com)) from the Monadnock Ledger.
  - Jessie Salisbury ([jessies@tellink.net](mailto:jessies@tellink.net)) from the Milford Cabinet.
- Jessie and Ashley have been invited to cover key town events and unveilings.
- The Wilton Economic Development Team issues periodic press releases to drive awareness of key programs and celebrate successes. Copies of press releases can be found [HERE](#).



*The* **CABINET PRESS**

# Marketing Strategy #7: Associations

## *Wilton groups*

- [Wilton Main Street Association](#) (WMSA)
  - Focuses on enhancing the downtown area and promoting businesses and artists along Main Street.
  - Key programs: Wilton Folk Café, Wilton Summerfest, N.H. Open Doors, Holiday Stroll, Festival of Lights, Haunting of Wilton, bulb-planting and others.
- [Wilton Community Center](#) (WCC)
  - Seeks to promote community enrichment through programs for all ages in Wilton.
  - Key programs: community suppers, Health & Safety Days, children's programs and other activities in the Main Street Park, the Library, Edgewater and others.
- New [Wilton Collaborative Space](#) (WCS) has opened downtown.
- Others organizations include the Wilton Lions Club, the Wilton-Lyndeborough Women's Club, the Legion and the Library.

# Marketing Strategy #7: Associations (cont'd)

## External groups

The Wilton Economic Development Team partners with organizations outside Wilton to help promote Wilton and the wider region.

- **National Regional Planning Commission (NRPC)** – projects include 1) Riverwalk Study 2) Tax Incentives Study 2) Revenue Viability Study 4) Collaborative Workspace Study and Survey.
- **Plan NH** – hosted design charrette leading to plans for the River Walk.
- **University of N.H. Cooperative Extension** – Business Retention and Expansion Program and survey of current businesses.
- **Chambers of Commerce:** the greater Keene & Peterborough CoC has sponsored a taskforce to work on branding and marketing the Monadnock Region.
- **Tourism Websites:**
  - Visit NH (Monadnock Region) <https://www.visitnh.gov/the-regions-of-new-hampshire/monadnock>
  - Monadnock Travel Council <https://www.monadnocktravel.com/>
  - Discover Monadnock <https://discovermonadnock.com>
  - Xplore Monadnock <https://www.xploremonadnock.com/>



# Marketing Strategy #8: Events

- Many events in town are small and serve mostly residents, and are sponsored by organizations such as the WMSA, WCC, Wilton Collaborative Space, the Legion and the Wilton Lion's Club. Other events are held in the Library or the schools.
- In addition to Old Home Days held once every 5 years, there are two major town-wide events which attract visitors from beyond Wilton:
  - Wilton Summerfest – Sponsored by the WMSA every June, this one-day event takes place downtown (with Main St closed to traffic) and includes craft vendors, food, and entertainment.
  - Wilton Lions Club Penny Sale – this event is held every October and is a major fund-raiser for the Wilton Lions Club.
- There is a town-wide **Community Events Calendar** on the homepage of the Wilton website, which is used to promote various events in town.
- There remains some underserved populations which may need targeted events specifically for teenagers and young people.

# Marketing Strategy #9: Research

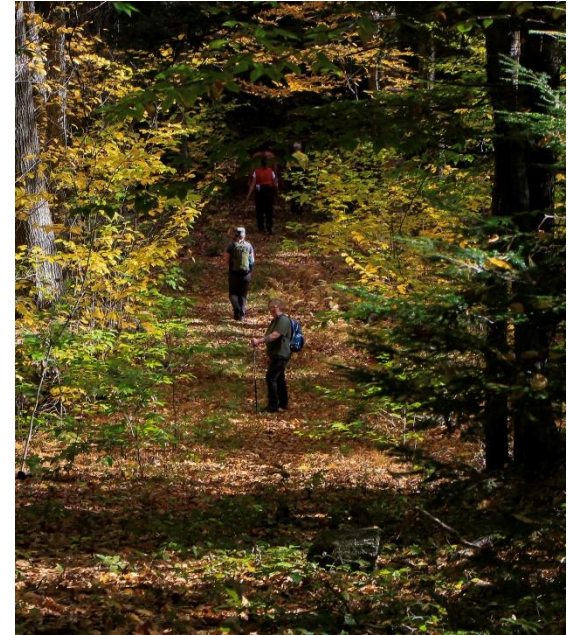
- Whenever possible, we use research to inform our marketing decisions and programs. Much of our original research is done via online surveys through a town-purchased Survey Monkey account.
- Since 2016 we have conducted eight research surveys:
  - 2016: Communications Survey – 276 completions
  - 2016: Economic Development Priorities -- ~500 responses to an in-person poll on Election Day
  - 2017: Wilton Brand Survey – 191 completions
  - 2017: Wilton Tag Line Survey – 139 completions
  - 2018: Riverwalk Residents Survey – 142 completions
  - 2018: Town Meeting Warrant articles survey – 27 completions
  - 2019: New Wilton Website User Survey – 55 completions
  - 2020: NRPC Collaborative Workspace Survey – 58 completions
- All survey results can be found on the website [HERE](#).

# Metrics – how do we know if our programs are working?

- ✓ Google Analytics (Wilton website) – monthly unique visitors, page views, sessions, downloads, time-on-site, geographical distribution.
- ✓ Social media followers, likes, and reach.
- ✓ Newsletter and mailing list metrics – open rate, click-through rate.
- ✓ Positive press articles and clippings.
- ✓ Event attendance, achievement of revenue targets (if any).
- ✓ New business openings on Main Street.
- ✓ Success of partnerships in raising visibility of Wilton.

# Future marketing focus and the road ahead

- As a small town with a zero marketing budget, we are successfully leveraging most of what is available to us to market the town.
- Future efforts must focus on building alliances and partnerships with other towns and regional organizations to partner on marketing the Monadnock Region as a whole.
- We also continue to encourage better coordination among various town groups who drive programs and events. Having a single consolidated Community Calendar is a good first step, but there is much more work to be done.





# A long-term vision for Wilton – built on experiences

## The Downtown Community Experience

- Leverages downtown spaces – Riverwalk, Main St Park, Riverview Mills, Town Hall Theater, shops, Tap Room
- Built around arts, food, shopping, entertainment, gathering spaces
- Attracts younger demographic and families
- Results in community gatherings, social events
- Development focus: 1) Riverwalk Gazebo, 2) Riverwalk at the Artists Mills 3) Downtown space for Andy's Playhouse 4) Downtown bridge

## The Nature Experience

- Leverages open spaces and wild places – Frye Field, Frog Pond, Sheldrick Forest, Heald Tract, Reservoir, 5 farms
- Built around connecting and publicizing natural resources and farms
- Attracts eco-tourists, regional visitors, locals
- Results in foot traffic and revenue for neighboring businesses
- Development focus: online maps and walks and tours of all areas

## Live/Work/ Stay Experience

- Leverages superior Internet infrastructure and empty buildings suitable for residential development
- Built around the proposition of a welcoming community for all ages and achieving work-life balance
- Attracts long term investments
- Results in new residents and businesses
- Development focus: more diverse housing and repurposing the downtown mill