

2023

# Restoring a Community Asset

Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee Annual Report



October 16, 2023

# Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee

## Annual Report: 2023

### Contents

<b>COMMITTEE CHARGE</b> .....	<b>II</b>
<b>LETTER FROM THE CHAIR</b> .....	<b>II</b>
GOAL 2029 SITE PLAN.....	III
GILBERT & BENNETT ADVISORY COMMITTEE .....	III
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>IV</b>
<b>RECOMMENDED ACTIONS</b> .....	<b>1</b>
SITE AESTHETICS, SAFETY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS.....	1
BUILDING STABILIZATION .....	2
PLANNING FOR GEORGETOWN .....	3
PUBLIC ACCESS.....	4
ON-GOING AND LONG-TERM ACTIONS.....	5
<i>Project and Site Management</i> .....	5
<i>Public Outreach and Communications</i> .....	5
<i>Site Economics and Financial Resolution</i> .....	5
<b>2022/2023 ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS</b> .....	<b>6</b>
GRANT/SERVICE APPLICATIONS & AWARDS .....	6
PUBLIC UPDATE MEETINGS & INFORMATION SHARING .....	6
SITE VISITS .....	6
SITE MAINTENANCE.....	6
ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES .....	6
<i>UCONN TAB Support Services</i> .....	7
<b>MOVING FORWARD: 2024/2025</b> .....	<b>8</b>
GOALS .....	8
PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR THE COMMITTEE.....	8
WORKING GROUPS .....	8
<b>FINANCIAL STATUS</b> .....	<b>10</b>
2022-2023 FINANCIAL STATEMENT .....	10
2024-2025 AND NEAR-TERM TOWN FUNDED BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS.....	10
<b>PROGRAM SCHEDULE</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>14</b>
TABLE 1 IMMEDIATE ACTION STABILIZATION BUDGET (2014).....	14
COMMENTS FROM GEORGETOWN VILLAGE RESTORATION.....	15
PRESENTATION TO THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN, OCTOBER 16, 2023 .....	17

## Committee Charge

*“The Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee, formed by the Board of Selectmen, is established to advise the Board of Selectmen on matters related to the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill redevelopment to aid the development process. The Committee will provide reports and/or updates to the Board of Selectmen as needed.”*

Approved by the Board of Selectmen (BOS) on 10/13/2022

## Letter from the Chair

The Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee (the Committee) is enthusiastic about the redevelopment possibilities for the Wire Mill property and welcomes the opportunity to provide guidance to the Board of Selectmen and relevant Town Commissions to move the site forward now that the Town has gained ownership. We recognize the complexity of the site in all aspects, but also its key role in unlocking the potential of Georgetown. There is a synergy between the Wire Mill and Georgetown that calls for coordinated stewardship and planning efforts within and outside the site that will complement each area.

To this end, we propose establishing a goal for 2029, the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wire Mill closure, of reopening the Wire Mill Property to the public. This would be accomplished over the next five years by enhancing the Main Office and surrounding area as the gateway to the site, completing a public accessway to the pond and through the site, improving site aesthetics, re-opening connections between Georgetown and the surrounding community, and remediating portions of the site. This is an ambitious goal; we feel that establishing a target timeframe to implement visible site improvements at the Wire Mill would improve the overall value of the area and is a key to generating enthusiasm for the Wire Mill site and Georgetown. This goal should be supported with, and the first step in, formal planning for the entire area to inspire and guide development within and surrounding the Wire Mill site.

This report documents the results of the Committee’s first year of work and provides our observations and recommendations. We look forward to the comments and insights of the Board of Selectmen and relevant Town Commissions that will help guide our future endeavors.

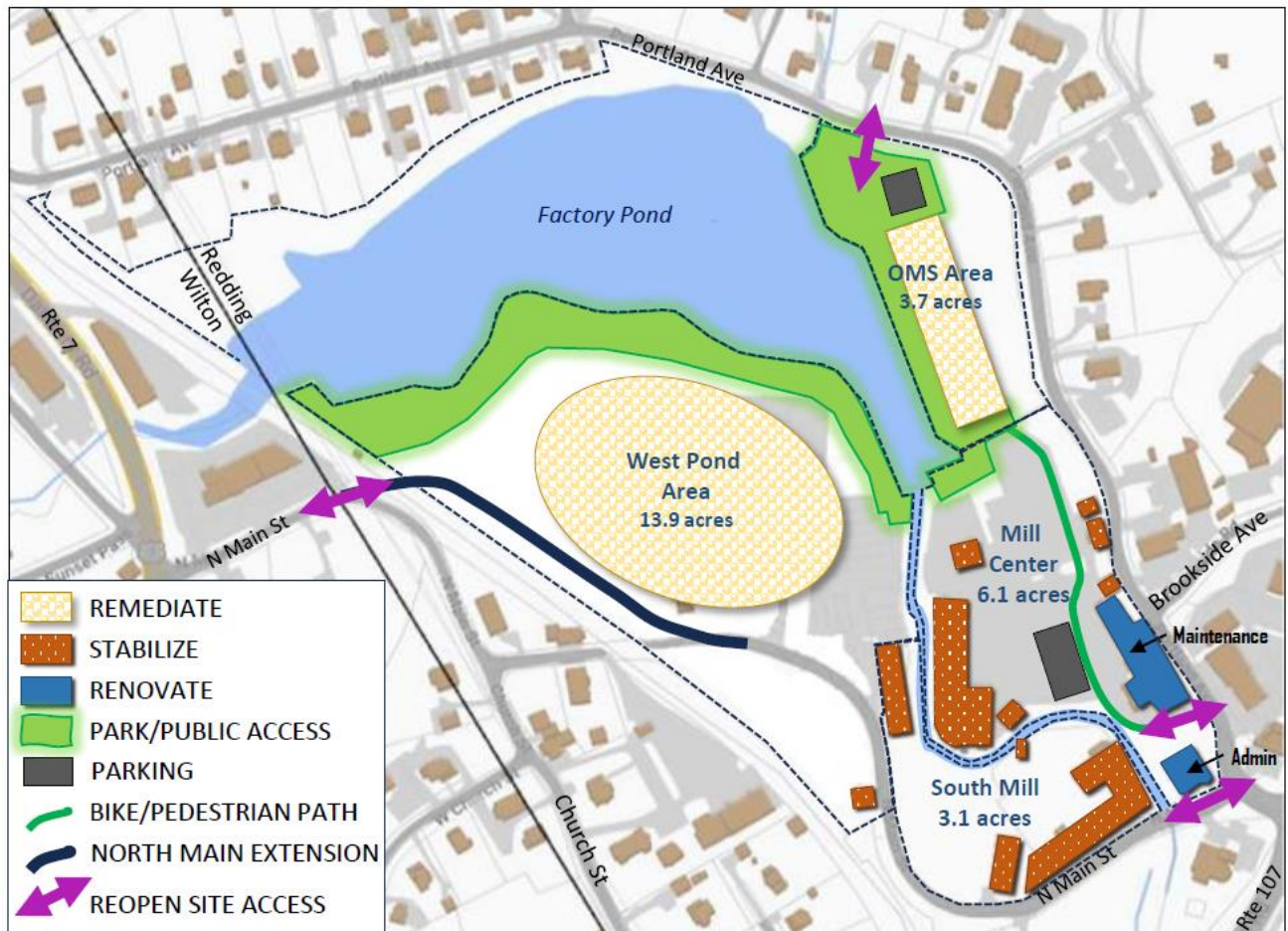
My sincere thanks to all Committee members for their assistance in preparing this report.



Amy Atamian

Chairperson, Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee

## Goal 2029 Site Plan



### Gilbert & Bennett Advisory Committee

Amy Atamian, Chairperson  
Julia Pemberton, First Selectperson (ex officio)  
Aimee Pardee, Land Use Officer  
Daniel Barrett, Planning Commission Chairperson  
Dave Pattee, Conservation Commission Chairperson  
Rob Dean, Board of Finance  
Matt Lecher, Zoning Commission Chairperson  
Pam Elkow, Environmental subject area expert  
Regina O'Brien, Planning Commission  
Richard Wenning, Redding Economic Development Committee Chairperson  
Tracy Kulikowski, Planning subject area expert

### Consultants

Tighe & Bond  
UConn Technical Assistance to Brownfields Program (TAB)



## Executive Summary

Since the formation of the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee in October 2022, the Committee has overseen environmental investigations performed by Tighe & Bond. These investigations are scheduled for completion by November 2023 and funded through an initial grant awarded in 2021 by the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD).

As we begin our second year, the Committee looks forward to overseeing the completion of supplemental environmental investigations and development of remedial action plans for select areas of the site under a second DECD assessment grant awarded in 2023 that, with future funding, will support site improvements. In parallel, the Committee has engaged with the UCONN TAB program to develop an inventory of potential municipal uses for the Wire Mill site, with concepts for site development. We recognize success involves a phased approach to opening the site for public access and re-establishing connections with the surrounding community.

Branching out beyond the initial environmental assessments, Committee activities will broaden through focused working groups to address issues such as: environmental/aesthetic oversight, planning and integration with Georgetown, financial/economic issues, communications/public outreach, infrastructure planning, and grant development.

Based on work completed to date, the Committee recommends these four key “near-term” actions:

- Improve site aesthetics and address safety issues.
- Stabilize existing buildings to limit further deterioration.
- Engage a professional planning firm to begin comprehensive planning of Georgetown, including and integrating the Wire Mill.
- Design and implement interim public access and use that can be completed in an aggressive timeframe.

The Committee recognizes that resolution of the site’s financial status and funding site re-development will be a long-term endeavor. These recommended actions constitute an initial phase focused on providing stewardship through improving the appearance, value, and stability of the Wire Mill so that the public can begin to appreciate the site, setting it on a path toward solid transformation from a liability to a community asset.

## Recommended Actions

### Site Aesthetics, Safety, and Environmental Concerns

Tighe & Bond completed several studies that identified safety and environmental conditions that should be addressed in the near-term.

The Site Safety Summary identified immediate safety risks from failed roofing, loose bricks, compromised flooring, accessible openings, and lack of fall protection along the river wall. Other studies, including the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, Data Gap Evaluation and Building Assessments, identified several environmental issues that have the potential to expose the Town to liability from ongoing uses, including exposed asbestos-containing building materials, storage of landscape materials in proximity to the river, and storage of vehicles and machinery that could result in a release of hazardous substances or materials.

Observations of current site uses, such as storage of “junk” unregistered vehicles, extensive and expanding firewood processing operations, dumping of vegetative and other debris, and lack of vegetative maintenance and debris management demonstrate ineffective property oversight. Along with deteriorating façade conditions, especially of the Maintenance and Weaving Buildings, the site is an eyesore from the vantage of the surrounding commercial and residential area.

The Committee recommends the following:

- Immediately address safety issues and restrict access to dangerous areas of the site to protect site workers, tenants, and visitors.
- Review ongoing uses that could result in a release of hazardous substances or materials and phase out these uses.
- Audit all leases for compliance with lease terms and to ensure that expansion, change of use, or subleasing is not occurring without proper approvals.
- Optimize site conditions - landscaping, debris management, and blight removal - to provide opportunities for additional and potentially higher-value near-term uses.
- Assign a Town employee as the point-of-contact responsible for thoroughly enforcing site management best practices. This may require a new hire specifically responsible for site management or expanding the responsibilities of one or more current employees.

#### *Funding Source:*

- Local Funds (site service charges)

## Building Stabilization

The Building Structural Evaluation performed by Tighe & Bond and the 2015 Historic Preservation Feasibility and Concept Design report prepared by WASA/Studio A identified structural issues that, if left unaddressed, will result in further deterioration and potential collapse of historic buildings. Issues include: water intrusion from roofs and windows, compromised brick work, falling masonry and roofing tiles, and unsealed access points. The Town should address these structural issues with the goal of stabilizing the existing buildings to preserve them for future use.

To start the stabilization process, the Committee recommends applying for a Survey and Planning grant from the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) to develop the stabilization scope, an estimate of stabilization construction costs and bid specifications for each existing site structure. The SHPO planning grant is capped at \$20,000 for all buildings on-site and requires a 1:1 Town match. Funding for renovation costs is not typically available through grant funding without a targeted use plan, therefore the Town will need to seek alternate funds for interim building stabilization construction costs.

Grant funding would be available to restore buildings with a targeted end-use, with all upgrades consistent with state and federal standards for historic structures. This could apply to buildings that are currently in use: the Main Office Building and the Maintenance Building.

The Main Office Building is the gateway to the site. It currently supports office rentals and occasional meetings. This building is an asset the town should improve with upgrades to bring it into compliance with current building and ADA requirements, weatherized with system upgrades, refinishing and landscaping. These improvements would increase rental potential and could serve as a satellite office for town staff, which would add an on-site presence.

The Maintenance building, where the Town currently has tenants, could support additional rental space on the upper floors with improvements. A different tenant mix can improve the income stream to support better site management and maintenance; more tenants who are physically present on-site will notice and report maintenance issues. The Small-Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant, applied for in August 2023 for renovations at the Maintenance Building, is a good example of an improvement that could generate higher value uses. Increased occupancy and a re-use plan for the Maintenance Building could leverage remediation funding to address hazardous building material abatement and perform other renovations targeted towards attracting additional tenant uses.

### *Recommended Action(s):*

- Authorize expenditure of \$20,000 matching funds to seek a SHPO Survey and Planning Grant.
- Upon award by SHPO, prepare building stabilization bid specifications conforming with state and federal standards for historic structures.
- Directly fund or seek funding to:
  - Prepare renovation/remediation plans for the Main Office and Maintenance buildings.
  - Implement building stabilization repairs.

### *Potential Funding Sources:*

- State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Grant (\$20,000 initial planning study)
- Site service fees to match SHPO Grant (\$20,000)
- Town and grant funds for temporary building stabilization
- DECD and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) for targeted-use remediation/renovations
- SHPO for targeted-use historical restoration (with 75% non-state matching funds required)

## Planning for Georgetown

As the Town nears completion of environmental assessments, we are beginning to envision future site uses and the site's relationship with the surrounding community. We recognize redevelopment will be a long term and complex process and envision a path forward that will involve good site stewardship and coordination with Georgetown Village to enhance site aesthetics and the appeal of the village area, enable public access to the site, and engage the community and stakeholders to produce a desirable outcome for the site and neighborhood.

To help visualize potential future uses, the Committee applied for and was accepted into the University of Connecticut Technical Assistance for Brownfields (UCONN TAB) Summer internship program with guidance to catalog and illustrate potential municipal uses for the Wire Mill site. UCONN has now extended this program through the fall and spring semester Senior Thesis program which will provide planning, engineering, and traffic design services. In our view, this is a means to help envision a future possibility for the site and build public awareness of the site's potential.

As an outcome of the May 22 public update, the Committee has separately initiated a conversation with the Yale Urban Design Workshop (YUDW), specialists in integrating former industrial sites into the surrounding communities, to potentially bring their knowledge of regional and international best practices to support planning for the site and all of Georgetown. The Committee held a successful site visit with YUDW on Sept. 8, and YUDW is interested in an engagement with the Town to support planning efforts for the area. Their approach is community-oriented in nature and may suit the needs of Georgetown better than a consultant oriented towards maximizing near-term development.

It is quite likely that development in Georgetown Village will proceed at a faster pace than is possible at the Wire Mill site. Comprehensive planning for all of Georgetown would provide a set of explicit development goals and standards that are consistent for all of Georgetown Village, including the Wire Mill, and sensitive to the complimentary uses, market needs, connectivity, traffic patterns and infrastructure needs of the entire area. With an inclusive conceptual plan, private property owners without the same financial limitations as the Wire Mill site would be able to implement projects based on a common neighborhood vision and may be able to progress at a faster pace while the Town works out these issues for the Wire Mill.

Rather than separate the Village from the Wire Mill in terms of planning efforts, economics and market assessments, the Committee recommends expanding the scope of this Committee to include planning inclusive of the Georgetown Village area beyond the Wire Mill site, with reporting and recommendations to the appropriate town Commissions for action. Land-use commissions are adequately represented on the Committee; empowering the Wire Mill Committee to include Georgetown Village would expedite planning recommendations that each land-use Commission could then address and formalize, thus avoiding potentially misaligned or redundant activities prepared specifically for either the Mill or Village.

### *Recommended Action(s):*

- Expand the scope of the Wire Mill Advisory Committee to include planning for all of Georgetown.
- Engage a planning firm for Georgetown-Wire Mill integrated planning.

### *Potential Funding and Support Sources:*

- USEPA-funded TAB Programs (UCONN, potentially New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) in conjunction with YUDW)
- DECD/USEPA grants



## Public Access

Investigations conducted to date have identified two areas of the site, those areas south (West Pond) and east (“OMS”) of Factory Pond with limited soil contamination that could be targeted for early clean-up with portions made accessible for public recreation in a footprint complimentary with future reuse options of these areas. There is also a tremendous need for public parking in Georgetown, and there are potentially areas of the site that could be remediated through capping for this use. These uses would safely open portions of the site to the public, generate interest in the site, and potentially improve connectivity between the site and surrounding neighborhoods. Site improvements should also address the physical environment of access and parking for the site’s existing commercial tenants to boost the quality and quantity of these tenants.

Our recommendation is to utilize the 2023 DECD assessment grant to finalize any outstanding environmental investigations in specific areas for targeted re-use. The Wire Mill property could be subdivided to create several new lots reflecting intended reuse. As reuse plans are developed, Remedial Action Plans reflecting those uses could be the basis for remediation grants. Logistics include entering these areas of the site into the Abandoned Brownfield Cleanup Program, which will provide liability relief, but will require the Town to remediate these areas and in the timeframe laid out in state statutes.

Any interim public uses must be complementary with any future development. Providing a targeted public access plan for these areas would allow the Town to pursue remediation and development funding specific to these portions of the site and proposed uses.

### *Recommended Action(s):*

- Engage the public in planning sessions related to public access uses at the Wire Mill site and to prepare a public access design concept.
- Utilize the 2023 DECD and other grant sources to prepare a public access design, Remedial Action Plans, and cost estimate for a public access project that the Town can implement by 2029.
- Coordinate with appropriate Land Use Commissions and legal counsel regarding any subdivision, zoning changes, or other issues as required to implement the plan.
- Seek additional funding for plan implementation.
- Enroll in the Abandoned Brownfield Cleanup Program.

### *Potential Funding Sources:*

- Local Funds – Site service charges
- TAB Programs
- DECD/USEPA grants

## On-going and Long-Term Actions

### Project and Site Management

As we move past the assessment phases of work to planning and implementation, more consultants and contractors will be involved, and funding accountability and reporting will become more stringent. The Committee has recommended that the BOS hire a project manager to oversee these activities to coordinate work, ensure work meets expected scope, schedule and budget, and all reporting requirements are appropriately submitted. We urge the BOS to proceed with this recommendation.

This planning for project management may be appropriately combined with the need for site and tenant management as mentioned under “Site Aesthetics, Safety, and Environmental Concerns” section of this report. The development of qualifications and job description(s) for these positions will benefit from a combined examination of all site, tenant, and project management needs.

### Public Outreach and Communications

Public interest in the Mill Site has been high as evidenced by attendance at past Committee Update Meetings and anecdotal conversations about town. We intend to offer another update meeting this fall. These meetings have proven to be a useful way to inform the public of on-going activities, and the Town website provides information about the status and site history. However, these communication methods have not been designed to engage with and solicit input and feedback from the community on a more regular basis.

We recognize the need and desire for community involvement in the planning process and ultimate plans for the Mill Site and Georgetown and will ensure this will happen as the planning process unfolds. The UCONN TAB program includes public outreach as will the planning firm addressing all of Georgetown. We should also consider enhancements to the town website and implementing another contact mechanism to engage with the public. As an early step, we look forward to public input on this document and its recommendations, which will help shape and improve our communication channels and content going forward.

As we move forward in our engagement with UCONN and potentially with YUDW or another planning firm for Georgetown, we will work to enhance communication channels with the community and will need the guidance of professionals experienced in the combination of community outreach, industrial site reuse, and urban planning.

### Site Economics and Financial Resolution

An unresolved fiscal matter pertains to the status of existing bonds associated with the Special Taxing District. Resolution of the outstanding bondholder claims will be a crucial step in realizing the commercial potential of the site following the initial progress outlined in this document leading to 2029, the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the factory closure.

The Committee feels the bondholder resolution is an issue to be led by the First Selectman, BOS, and Board of Finance (BOF). The Committee will establish a working group to address financial issues and budget recommendations related to proposed near-term actions and can participate in resolution issues upon request.

## 2022/2023 Activities and Accomplishments

### Grant/Service Applications & Awards

The Committee has been tracking grant opportunities at the state and federal level. The Town was awarded a second DECD assessment grant that will be funded this fall for an additional \$200,000. The Town also applied for and was accepted for support services through the UCONN TAB program and was accepted into the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG) Regional Brownfield Partnership.

- Second \$200,000 DECD Environmental Assessment grant awarded
- Accepted for UCONN TAB 2023 Summer Intern Program, which UCONN extended through the Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 semesters, no-cost service
- Accepted for UCONN TAB Fall 2023 assistance with EPA Multipurpose Grant application, no-cost service

### Public Update Meetings & Information Sharing

The First Selectman, with support from the Committee and Tighe & Bond, held two updates on work performed under the Round 16 DECD assessment grant. The Committee is planning a third update for this fall, in which we expect to include a discussion of short-term re-use ideas to solicit community feedback.

The Town Website was updated with the 2022-2023 Tighe & Bond reports and presentations, the video “A Georgetown Story”, and drone surveys of the facility and surrounding area.

- June 2022, Phase I Environmental Assessment Results
- May 2023, Additional Environmental Assessment Results
- Fall 2023 (Phase II/III Assessment; potential short-term re-use, anticipated)

### Site Visits

The Committee organized site visits for funding and planning organizations and organizations to provide an opportunity to see the site and discuss potential re-use opportunities.

- June 2023, UCONN TAB
- July 2023, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- Sept 2023, Yale Urban Design Workshop (YUDW) and DECD
- Oct 2023, UCONN TAB

### Site Maintenance

Limited site maintenance, including trash removal, brush clearing, and landscaping was performed to clear debris and improve site appearance and access to the site for environmental investigations.

### Environmental Studies

Tighe & Bond completed several significant environmental and structural site assessments, and identified several data gaps that are being addressed through activities conducted this summer. Some tasks initially proposed under the 2021 DECD Grant, including the Remedial Approach Re-Evaluation and Development of Revised Opinion of Remediation Cost, will be deferred until completion of the environmental site assessment under the new 2023 grant. Based on previous discussion with DECD, the remaining funds under the 2021 grant will be re-allocated so that grant can be closed out before the new 2023 grant is used.

### *Studies Completed*

- Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA)
- Environmental Data Gap Analysis
- Hazardous Building Materials Review
- Site Safety Memorandum
- Building Structural Evaluation
- River Wall Evaluation
- Ecological Evaluation

### *Studies Currently Underway (Phase III ESA)*

- Phase III ESA Workplan
- Supplemental Soil Testing at the New Warehouse Area and Post Office Parcel
- Soil Testing at Former Manufactured Gas Plant Locations
- Site-Wide Groundwater Monitoring
- Water Supply Well Receptor Survey
- Limited Phase III ESA Report

### *Studies Authorized, (Deferred until completion of Phase III ESA)*

- Remedial Approach Re-Evaluation
- Development of Revised Opinion of Remediation Cost
- Development of Opinion of Cost for Abatement and Demolition
- Program and Permitting Evaluation

### *Proposed Activities under the 2023 Assessment Grant*

- 2023 Round 17 DEDC Assessment Grant funds will be used to continue and finalize site assessments. The funds will also be used to advance environmental planning in parallel with site planning as the two are closely interrelated.
- Tighe & Bond will complete the Development of Opinion of Cost for Abatement and Demolition Report following further testing of hazardous building materials under the new 2023 grant and following the implementation of site planning and determination of the adaptive re-use options for specific buildings.

### *UCONN TAB Support Services*

UCONN TAB selected the Wire Mill site through a competitive application for a summer internship to identify potential municipal uses and provide a rendering of the site. After beginning work on the summer internship, the TAB program administration realized the complexity of the site and offered to extend their support program, at no cost to the Town, through the Spring 2024 semester. Work performed to date includes:

- Aggregated and reviewed past site data
- Developed a broad site reuse plan
- Began work on a reuse plan for the OMS area
- Brought in a planning consultant
- Began work on an EPA Cleanup Grant for submission in Nov. 2023

## Moving Forward: 2024/2025

### Goals

- Implement site safety recommendations developed by Tighe & Bond.
- Improve site aesthetics, site management, and lease control.
- Develop building stabilization bid documents ready for solicitation.
- Develop a public use implementation plan.

### Planned Activities for the Committee

- Develop a 5-year timeline (2024-2029) for a realistic action plan to complete a public site access project by 2029, the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of plant closure, and complete Year 1 actions by November 2024.
- Hold public meetings in Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 to provide a status update, solicit community feedback and input for public site access, and strengthen overall public communication about progress.
- Authorize matching funds for the SHPO Survey and Assessment grant, apply for the grant, develop building stabilization scope and specifications, and begin building stabilization.
- Apply for an EPA Cleanup Grant to support remediation and implementation of the selected public access project.
- Establish staffing recommendations for site, tenant, and project management after carefully considering qualifications and job description(s).

### Working Groups

As the scope of Committee work expands to multiple areas beyond environmental assessments, the Committee has formed working groups responsible for distinct aspects of Committee work and reporting back to the full Committee. These groups include:

#### *Environment/Aesthetics*

(Pardee, Pattee, Letcher) Responsible for managing work conducted by the environmental consultant and overseeing the development of specifications for building stabilization, improving site management, and aesthetics. Actions may include:

- Develop recommendations for improving site aesthetics.
- Coordinate specifications for building stabilization.
- Provide recommendations for site management and oversight.
- Provide recommendations regarding permitting/environmental programs.
- Coordinate with environmental subcontractor.

#### *Site/Georgetown Development Planning*

(O'Brien, Kulikowski, Lecher) Responsible for coordinating with the planning subcontractor to develop an overall Georgetown "plan" and specific plans for near-term public access use on-site. Actions may include:

- Coordinate with planning subcontractors and public outreach.
- Lead development of a near-term implementable plan for public access to portions of the site.
- Develop draft recommendations for site reuse/reuse phasing.
- Coordinate with other workgroups as needed regarding plan feasibility.
- Provide recommendations for revisions to Planning and Zoning regulations and facilitate needed permits and approvals.



### *Economic/Finance*

(Dean, Wenning) Responsible for evaluating consultant cost estimates, scoping, and overseeing market demand and economic assessments as needed, and developing annual and long-term finance recommendations. This working group is also tasked with supporting the BOF and BOS as needed regarding bondholder issues. Actions may include:

- Provide recommendations regarding sources of financing, budgetary costs, and feasible development options throughout the Georgetown area including the Wire Mill site and the existing Village commercial district.
- Coordinate a market study and economic assessment of proposed redevelopment plans throughout the Georgetown area.
- Provide support, as requested, to BOF/BOS regarding bondholder resolution.

### *Communications*

(Wenning, Pemberton) Responsible for coordinating public communication plans, including outreach to community members to provide information and solicit input and feedback. Actions may include:

- Coordinate with public outreach consultant regarding community interests for the site.
- Provide recommendations for effective communications about the site to different target audiences.
- Provide recommendations on soliciting and capturing public feedback and comments.
- Coordinate G&B Content of the town website.
- Coordinate with media.

### *Grant Development/Management Support*

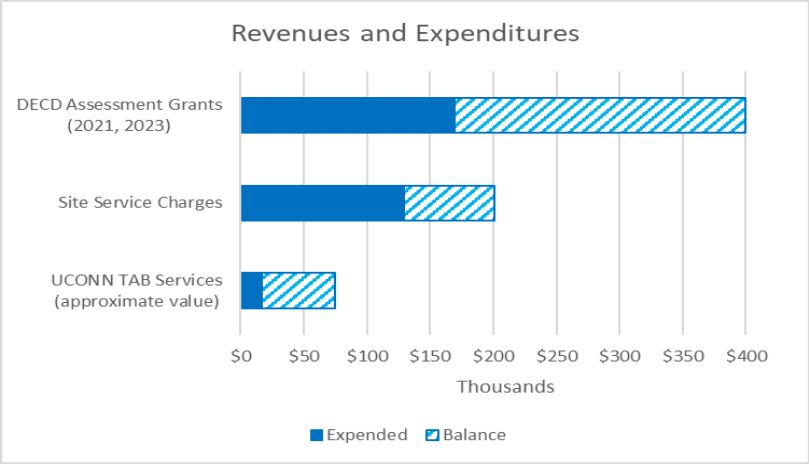
(Atamian, Kulikowski) Responsible for researching funding opportunities and developing grant applications in coordination with the needs identified by other working groups. Actions may include:

- Research grant availability and recommend suitable grants to apply for.
- Prepare/review grant applications/supporting material.
- Support grant project management.

# Financial Status

## 2022-2023 Financial Statement

The Town has received funding and services from three primary sources: DECD Assessment Grants, site service charges, and no-cost services provided by the UCONN TAB program. A breakdown of revenues and services to date is provided in the chart below:



### 2024-2025 and Near-Term Town Funded Budget Recommendations

The Committee recommends the Town budget funds for the following key areas in fiscal year 2024/2025 to maintain the site as a Town asset, primarily focused on building stabilization and site aesthetics and safety. Additionally, we recommend engaging a planning firm to begin the planning process for all of Georgetown, including the reuse planning for portions of the Wire Mill site to meet 2029 goals and as a basis for additional grant funding.

Preliminary cost estimates are provided below, which the Committee intends to refine prior to the December/January budget review. These are costs that do not fit into a grant-funded framework, and therefore the Committee urges the Town to directly invest in the site to sustain its viability and the viability of existing tenant spaces, to provide for on-site public engagement and demonstrate the Town’s commitment to the site, and to leverage future grant opportunities. Of note is the recommendation for a capital project to stabilize buildings with the anticipation that matching funds may be available to support this project. Submitting this proposal to a funding referendum will be a clear indicator of the community’s level of interest in sustaining the Wire Mill.

Budget Recommendations	
<b>Building Stabilization</b>	
\$ 20,000	Town Match for SHPO Planning grant
\$ 500,000	Temporary Building Stabilization
<b>Site Aesthetics, Safety, Property Management</b>	
\$ 60,000	Improvement contracting
\$ 50,000	Property Manager
<b>Planning Studies</b>	
\$ 200,000	Phase I - III, Georgetown Planning
\$ 50,000	Economic Studies
<b>\$ 880,000</b>	<b>Total</b>

### Building Stabilization

- \$ 20,000 1:1 town match for SHPO Planning Grant to develop stabilization bid specifications
- \$500,000 for temporary stabilization (10-year life)

The basis for the \$500,000 figure includes the 2015 report by the Cecil Group, “Implementation Strategy, Preservation of Historic Resources at the Gilbert & Bennett Mill” and cost estimates provided by WASA/Studio A (See Table 1 below). The report estimated \$400,000 in design and construction costs for the temporary stabilization of six buildings (not including the Post Office and other ancillary buildings). Stabilization fees will likely escalate to over \$500,000 given construction cost increases and further deterioration that has occurred in the past ten years.

Funding from a SHPO Grant with town matching funds should be used to update this estimate to 2024/2025 costs considering current building conditions and an evaluation of the Post Office building to stabilize and preserve these buildings from further deterioration until an appropriate reuse plan is developed for each building.

Building stabilization is an immediate concern, without which further deterioration and potential collapse in some areas could occur. Typically, grant funding is not available without a reuse plan; therefore, temporary stabilization costs and supplemental funds for bid specifications will need to be Town-funded.

### *Site Aesthetics, Safety Improvements and Property Management*

- \$60,000/year - Improvement contracting
- \$50,000/year - Part-time Property Manager

With a goal next year of improving the safety and appearance of the site, the Committee recommends allotting funds for contracting services to continue the removal of trash and debris and secure areas of the site that are hazardous based on the Tighe & Bond Safety Report. The Environment/Aesthetics working group will develop specific recommendations on site aesthetics and include recommendations to improve the condition of the Main Office building.

The Advisory Committee also believes the Town should place a high emphasis on managing the site as a Town asset, including continual review of the current lease agreements/tenant site usage to ensure safe housekeeping practices and consistency with lease terms, and to direct resources towards site aesthetics and building management. To facilitate these activities, the Committee feels there is a need to hire a part-time property manager to oversee lease compliance and coordinate site cleanup and building maintenance with the support of relevant town departments.

### *Planning Studies*

- \$200,000 - \$250,000 Planning Studies (Phase I – Phase III; Market/Economic Studies)

The Committee recommends hiring a planning firm to help the town develop a strategic vision for the Wire Mill site and its relationship with the surrounding community. The 2007 Master Plan was prepared from the perspective of a for-profit developer and had the potential to leave Main Street and the surrounding residential areas outside of the active community envisioned for the Wire Mill property. Now that the Town owns the Wire Mill, there is an opportunity to integrate the site and surrounding community more deeply with a common and complimentary vision that would provide guidance to Georgetown property and business owners and lay out a process to manage redevelopment within the Wire Mill site. Since many development issues between the Wire Mill site and surrounding area are

common, combining the planning study for all of Georgetown would eliminate redundancy, and could address issues that are currently constrained on the Wire Mill site.

YUDW described an example three-phase approach starting with Phase I: a high-level review of goals for the area and public engagement; Phase II: presentation of best practices and example design proposals; and Phase III: culminating in an agreed-on scheme for Georgetown/Wire Mill development. For budgetary purposes, YUDW recommended a planning budget of \$200,000 over a 1-1 ½ year timeframe. For comparison, less complex master plans for sites like Branchville and Brookfield, as described to the BOS by FHI in April 2023, were in the \$150,000 range. Market and economic studies, to determine the desirability and economic feasibility of proposed redevelopment alternatives, would likely be needed at additional cost.

## PROGRAM SCHEDULE

The draft schedule below provides a high-level timeline to accomplish the goal of enhancing site aesthetics, providing public access to the site and stabilizing structures by 2029.

	2023				2024				2025				2026-2029			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4				
<b>Environmental Investigations</b> <i>ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS</i> <b>Phase II/III Assessment</b> Remedial Action Plan Groundwater River Sediment					<i>DECD R17</i>											
<i>Future work authorized under current and Round 17 DEDC Grant Funding</i>																
<b>Building Stabilization/Abatement</b> <b>SHPO Review/Grant Application</b> Architectural Assessment Design & Spec Documents/Contracting Construction					<i>SPECIFICATIONS/BID DOCS</i>											
<i>Grant/Funding Applications &amp; Awards Determine priorities based on funding</i>																
<b>Reuse Planning</b> <b>* UCONN TAB, G&amp;B Reuse Study</b> Public Access Project Plan Georgetown/Wire Mill Planning Market & Economic Assessments					<i>UCONN TAB</i>				<i>VILLAGE PLANNING</i>							
<i>Town funding supplemented by grants Scope influenced by any legal restrictions</i>																
<b>Site Preparation</b> Site Aesthetics/Safety Select HBM Abatement North Main Extension to Route 7/Utilities River Walls & Dam					<i>SAFETY &amp; AESTHETICS</i>											
<i>Dependent on Master Plan, legal restrictions and grant funding</i>																
<b>Site Redevelopment</b> Public Access West Pond OMS Mill Center																
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<b>GOAL: SITE GATEWAY &amp; PUBLIC ACCESS BY 2029</b>																
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<b>Finance/Grants</b> DECD SHPO USEPA STEAP WestCOG/NVCOG																
<i>Ongoing grant applications, cost estimates, Town budget recommendations, support for bondholder resolution</i>																

COMPLETED
  IN-PROGRESS
  PLANNED



## References

Table 1 Immediate Action Stabilization Budget (2014)

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	COST
<i>Building Stabilization, Immediate Action *</i>		
Blue Building	Temporarily repair roofing and flashing at leak locations	\$5,000
Sawtooth Building	Temporarily repair roofing at southeast Wing and Sawtooth Chapel	\$20,000
	Stabilize dangerous masonry condition at South Addition Building/Chapel	\$25,000
	Temporarily repair and secure open windows and doors at Chapel Bldg.	\$10,000
	Remove remaining deteriorated skylight elements at open Sawtooth portion	\$10,000
Market Building	Temporarily repair roofing and flashing at leak locations	\$10,000
	Temporarily repair and secure all open windows doors	\$10,000
	Provide temporary repairs at deteriorated façade masonry areas and remove wood at east parapet	\$25,000
Weaving Building	Temporarily repair roofing and flashing at leak locations	\$10,000
	Temporarily repair and secure all open windows and doors	\$20,000
	Provide temporary infills at open façade masonry areas	\$25,000
1914 Building	Temporarily repair and secure all open windows and doors	\$5,000
	Provide temporary infills at open façade masonry areas	\$10,000
1919 Building	No temporary work needed at this time	
Soft Costs	Design and construction phase professional fees, legal costs to secure covenants or deed restrictions, escalation and design contingency for unexpected conditions	\$100,000
Maintenance Contingency	Repairs during 10 year stabilization period for damage, vandalism, and other issues	\$100,000
<b>TOTAL STABILIZATION BUDGET</b>		<b>\$400,000</b>

*Source: Implementation Strategy: Preservation of the Historic Resources at the Gilbert & Bennett Mill, Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation Vibrant Communities Initiative, Cecil Group, Inc. Feb 12, 2015, p 28-29, cost estimate prepared by WASA/Studio A for Temporary Stabilization/Costs per Building (10/24/2014)*

## Comments from Georgetown Village Restoration

From: **Kate Perry** <kateheslin@gmail.com>  
Date: Wed, Oct 11, 2023 at 10:36 AM  
Subject: Re: Gilbert & Bennett Annual Report  
To: Amy Atamian <alatamian@gmail.com>  
Cc: Richard Wenning <rich@befoundation.org>

Hi Amy,

I heard from the rest of GVR's exec committee. **This is from Ralph Bosch, outgoing president, now treasurer:**

I fully agree with the recommended Site Aesthetics, safety and environmental Concerns action items. They all make sense as immediate needs and priorities. I also think that we should look into the possibility of some phyto-remediation in the appropriate contaminated areas. If we are looking at a ten-plus-year process that is enough time for the phyto process to help with improving the contamination at relatively minor costs. The plantings would also greatly enhance the aesthetics.

What is the status of the relationship with Weir Farm? Is that a long term relationship that will continue? Does that open up federal funding options that might not be there otherwise?

Agree 100% on expanding the planning to the entire village. It is the only way to get to GVR's ultimate mission of making all of Georgetown a contiguous village. Just as it was for most of its history.

It is imperative that this committee and the Town Boards continue to share information on the process and progress at the site. Once there is some "buzz" within the general public it can potentially open doors or inspire people to consider Georgetown for their business and residential needs. There will be a tipping point when people start to believe that something can and will happen on the site. That will almost certainly start on Main Street, Old Mill, and Portland Ave as well as Smith and Church Streets.

I agree that building stabilization needs to be an immediate priority. Unless implemented promptly the ongoing deterioration will make the salvage of these historic structures either impossible or frightfully more expensive. Town funding of this stabilization will allow this to happen more quickly and it will also send a clearer message than has been sent before that the Town of Redding is willing to put some of "our money" into the project both at the Wire Mill site but also into the village as whole.

I agree that a property manager for the site would be an important step and a priority need. Without that, the ongoing deterioration and contamination will ultimately cost far more money than the token rents collected now.

The stabilization budget seems a little light. [\$500,000] doesn't buy you much today. Is the date of 2014 correct on this report? If so, those numbers are 10 years old and certainly light.

Overall I think this committee has done an excellent job of shepherding the town through this process which is not simple. I fully support the recommendations made here. It represents a clear, practical path to move this forward from where we are to where we want to be.

Congratulations to Amy and her committee for the good, hard work they have done so far. I hope that GVR will be able to assist them going forward towards a shared vision of what Georgetown Village can be ( again).

**And this is from Nic Palazzo, incoming president:**

After reading through this report I agree with Lisa on all counts. I found it very detailed and thorough and a step in the right direction. The only way to eat the elephant is one bite at a time. I especially appreciate the suggestions to correct the tenant situation and to bring on a property manager to reduce liability to the town of further contamination and begin making small improvements & maintenance to the property. Great work.

Thank you very much for letting us read through the report. We are all thrilled with your progress! We're here when you need us.

All the best,  
Kate

From: Kate Perry <kateheslin@gmail.com>  
Date: 10/6/23 7:20 AM (GMT-05:00)  
To: Amy Atamian <alatamian@gmail.com>  
Cc: Richard Wenning <rich@befoundation.org>  
Subject: Re: Gilbert & Bennett Annual Report

Hi again Amy,

I read through the report. You all really put so much hard work into it! I found it comprehensive and concise, and I think it hits all the points I (and I think also the community) would want to see. I hope the town will share this far and wide and post it in an easy-to-find place (I still struggle to find the wire mill page on the town website and hope they make the committee's recommended improvements). This will be a great document to point the community to for wire mill details, as many residents aren't aware of all the behind-the-scenes work that is happening. (Though it has definitely gotten a whole lot better now that we have the Sentinel!)

I sent it to the GVR exec committee and asked for feedback by the 11th. So far I've heard from **Lisa Devine, who is very involved in GVR's work in Georgetown. She said:**

I think it looks great! Hoping Julia shares all this info with the public, as I find this exciting. Happy they are pushing to include the whole village and I like that they feel comfortable using YUDW instead of a regular consultant. This shows that they really want to develop this thoughtfully and I think that's very wise.

I will be in touch when I hear from the other two, but wanted to share in the meantime that Lisa and I are thrilled with the report. Thank you very much to you and to the wire mill committee for all your hard work wrangling this incredibly complex project!

More soon,

Kate

# Restoring a Community Asset

2023 Annual Report of the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill  
Advisory Committee

October 2023



1

## Gilbert & Bennett Advisory Committee

*“The Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee was formed by the Board of Selectmen to advise on matters related to the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill redevelopment to aid the development process. The Committee provides reports and/or updates to the Board of Selectmen as needed.”*

- Amy Atamian, Chairperson
- Julia Pemberton, First Selectperson (ex officio)
- Aimee Pardee, Land Use Officer
- Daniel Barrett, Planning Commission Chairperson
- Dave Pattee, Conservation Commission Chairperson
- Rob Dean, Board of Finance
- Matt Lecher, Zoning Commission Chairperson
- Pam Elkow, Environmental subject area expert
- Regina O’Brien, Planning Commission
- Richard Wenning, Redding Economic Development Committee Chairperson
- Tracy Kulikowski, Planning subject area expert

2

# Presentation Agenda



GOAL 2009



RECOMMENDED  
ACTIONS



2022/2023  
ACCOMPLISHMENTS



2024/2025 GOALS &  
ACTIVITIES



FINANCIAL STATUS &  
RECOMMENDATIONS



PROGRAM  
SCHEDULE

3

## Goal 2029



The Gilbert & Bennett Advisory Committee recognizes the complexity of the site, but also its key role in unlocking the potential of Georgetown. The synergy between the Wire Mill and Georgetown calls for coordinated stewardship and planning efforts within and outside the site that will complement each area.



To this end, we propose establishing a goal for 2029, the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wire Mill closure, of reopening the Wire Mill Property to the public and transforming it from a liability to a community asset.

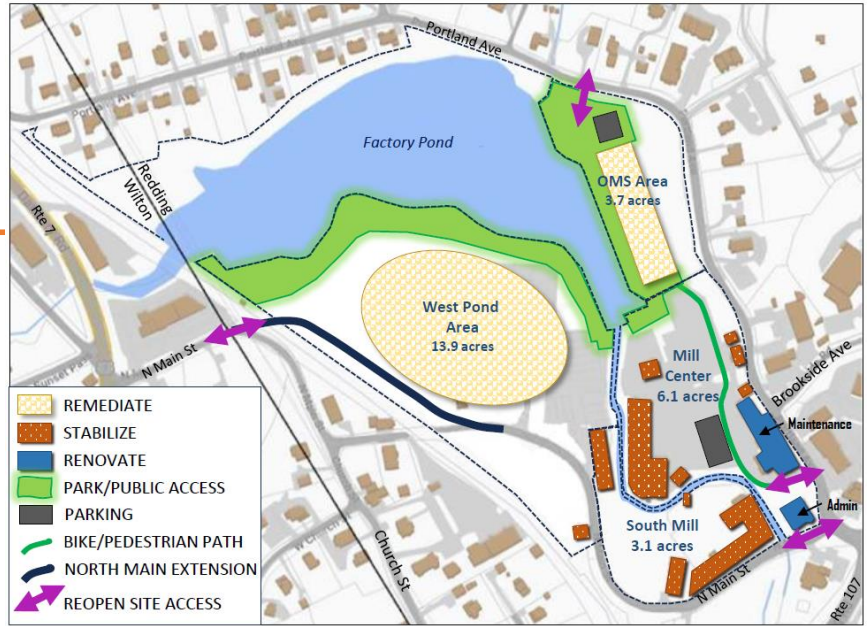


This would be accomplished over the next five years by enhancing the Main Office and surrounding area as the gateway to the site, completing a public accessway to the pond and through the site, improving site aesthetics, re-opening connections between Georgetown and the surrounding community, and remediating portions of the site.

4



# Goal 2029 Site Plan



5

# Goal 2029: Recommended Actions



### Improve

Improve site aesthetics and address safety issues.



### Stabilize

Stabilize existing buildings to limit further deterioration.



### Engage

Engage a professional planning firm to begin comprehensive planning of Georgetown, including and integrating the Wire Mill.



### Design and implement

Design and implement interim public access and use that can be completed in an aggressive timeframe.

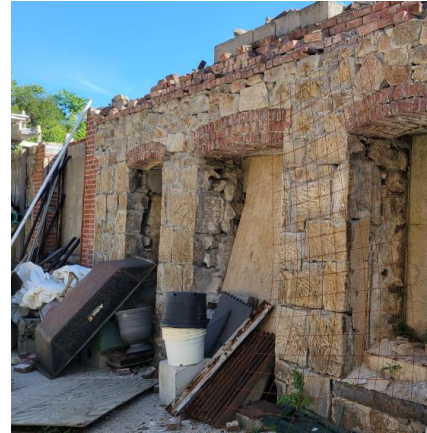
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## Site Aesthetics, Safety, Environmental Concerns

- Address safety issues and restrict access to dangerous areas of the site to protect users.
- Review and phase out any ongoing uses that could result in a release of hazardous substances or materials.
- Review all leases for compliance with terms and ensure that expansion, change of use, or subleasing is not occurring without proper approvals.
- Optimize site conditions - landscaping, debris management, and blight removal - to provide opportunities for higher-value near-term uses.
- Assign a Town employee as the point-of-contact responsible for site management.

Funding source:

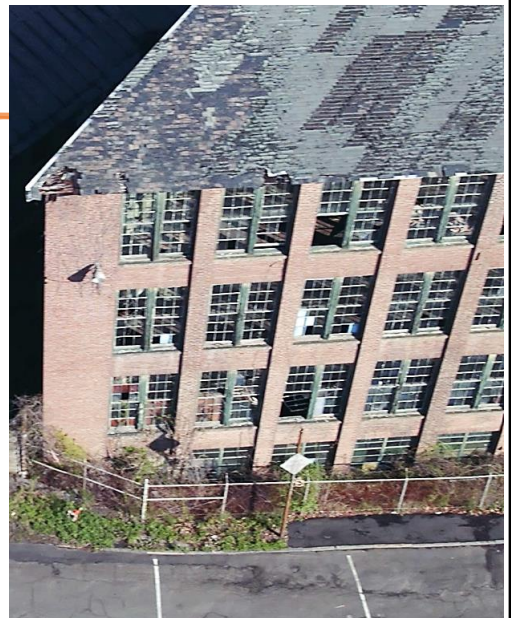
Town (Site Service Charges)



7

## Building Stabilization

- Authorize \$20,000 in Town matching funds to seek a SHPO Survey and Planning Grant
  - Prepare building stabilization bid specifications conforming with state and federal standards for historic structures.
- Directly fund or seek funding to:
  - Prepare renovation/remediation plans for the Main Office and Maintenance buildings.
  - Implement building stabilization repairs.
- Funding sources: Grants (SHPO, DECD, STEAP); Town (Site Service Fees); Town (Capital project)



8

# Planning for All of Georgetown

- Expand the scope of the Wire Mill Advisory Committee to include planning for all of Georgetown.
- Engage a planning firm for Georgetown-Wire Mill integrated planning.

Funding sources:

TAB Services; Grants (DECD, USEPA)



9

# Public Access

- Engage the public in planning sessions related to public access uses at the Wire Mill site and to prepare a public access design concept.
- Utilize the 2023 DECD and other grant sources to prepare a public access design, Remedial Action Plans, and cost estimate for a public access project that the Town can implement by 2029.
- Coordinate with appropriate Land Use Commissions and legal counsel regarding any subdivision, zoning changes, or other issues as required to implement the plan.
- Seek additional funding for plan implementation.
- Enroll in the Abandoned Brownfield Cleanup Program

Funding sources:

Grants (DECD/USEPA); TAB Programs; Town (Site Service Charges)

10

## Ongoing & Longer-Term Actions

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- **Project and Site Management**
  - Project Manager & Site Manager needed
- **Public Outreach and Communications Enhancement**
  - Update meetings
  - UCONN TAB Outreach
  - Town Website – G&B Resource Page
  - Targeted audience discussion forums
  - Facilitated input sessions with hired planners
  - Other channels as suggested
- **Site Economics and Financial Resolution**

11

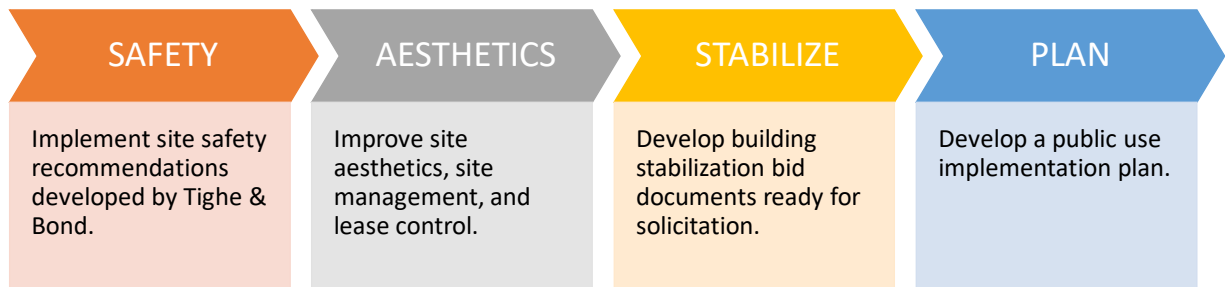
## Accomplishments: 2022-2023

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- **Grant/Service Applications & Awards**
  - Second \$200,000 DECD Environmental Assessment grant awarded
  - Accepted for UCONN TAB 2023 Summer Intern Program, which UCONN extended through the Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 semesters, no-cost service
  - Accepted for UCONN TAB Fall 2023 assistance with EPA Multipurpose Grant application, no-cost service
- **Public Update Meetings & Information Sharing**
- **Site Visits**
- **Site Maintenance**
- **Environmental Studies**
- **UCONN TAB Support Services**

12

## Goals: 2024-2025



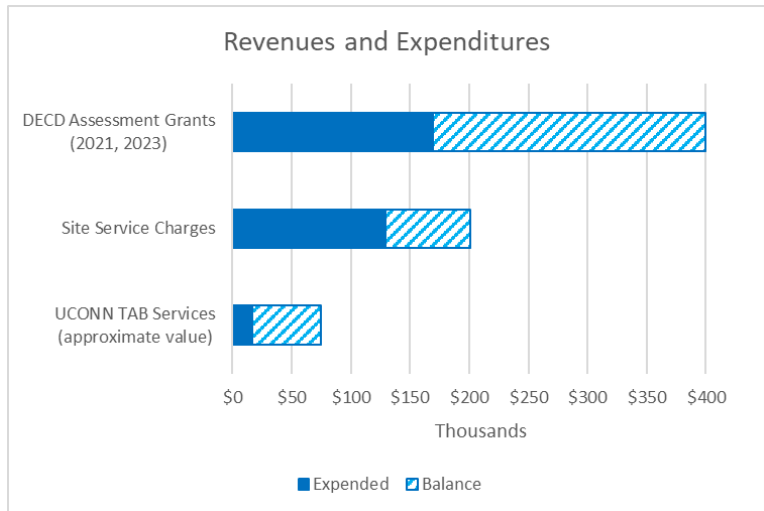
13

## Activities: 2024/2025

- Develop a 5-year timeline (2024-2029)
- Public meetings in Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 to provide a status update, solicit community feedback and input for public site access, and strengthen overall public communication about progress.
- SHPO Survey and Assessment grant; fund planning and begin stabilization.
- EPA Cleanup Grant to support remediation and implementation of the selected public access project.
- Establish staffing recommendations for site, tenant, and project management after carefully considering qualifications and job description(s).
- Committee Working Groups
  - *Environment/Aesthetics*
  - *Site/Georgetown Development Planning*
  - *Economic/Finance*
  - *Communications*
  - *Grant Development*

14

# Financial Status



15

# Budget

Budget Recommendations	
<b>Building Stabilization</b>	
\$ 20,000	Town Match for SHPO Planning grant
\$ 500,000	Temporary Building Stabilization
<b>Site Aesthetics, Safety, Property Management</b>	
\$ 60,000	Improvement contracting
\$ 50,000	Property Manager
<b>Planning Studies</b>	
\$ 200,000	Phase I - III, Georgetown Planning
\$ 50,000	Economic Studies
<b>\$ 880,000</b>	<b>Total</b>

16



# Timeline

	2023				2024				2025				2026-2029			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4				
<b>Environmental Investigations</b> <i>ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS</i> <b>Phase II/III Assessment</b> Remedial Action Plan Groundwater River Sediment	Future work authorized under current and Round 17 DEDC Grant Funding				DECD R17											
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<b>Site Preparation</b> Site Aesthetics/Safety Select HBM Abatement North Main Extension to Route 7/Utilities River Walls & Dam					SAFETY & AESTHETICS Dependent on Master Plan, legal restrictions and grant funding											
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<b>Communications</b> Public Update Meetings Communication Strategy Public Outreach	Committee working group - strategy/periodic public updates; Public outreach supported by planner															
<b>Finance/Grants</b> DECD SHPO USEPA STEAP WestCOG/NVCOG	Ongoing grant applications, cost estimates, Town budget recommendations, support for bondholder resolution															

■ COMPLETED    
 ■ IN-PROGRESS    
 ■ PLANNED

17

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*"I found [the report] very detailed and thorough and a step in the right direction. The only way to eat the elephant is one bite at a time. I especially appreciate the suggestions to correct the tenant situation and to bring on a property manager to reduce liability to the town of further contamination and begin making small improvements & maintenance to the property. Great work.*

*Thank you very much for letting us read through the report. We are all thrilled with your progress! We're here when you need us."* – **Nic Palazzo, incoming president**

*"Overall, I think this committee has done an excellent job of shepherding the town through this process which is not simple. I fully support the recommendations made here. It represents a clear, practical path to move this forward from where we are to where we want to be.*

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*"I found [the report] comprehensive and concise, and I think it hits all the points I (and I think also the community) would want to see."* – **Kate Perry**

18



## Envision the Future: a Vibrant Georgetown



19

## Envision the Future: a Community Gateway



20



## Envision the Future: a Clean Multi-Use Site



21

## Envision the Future: Public Access



22



## Envision the Future: Waterfront Park



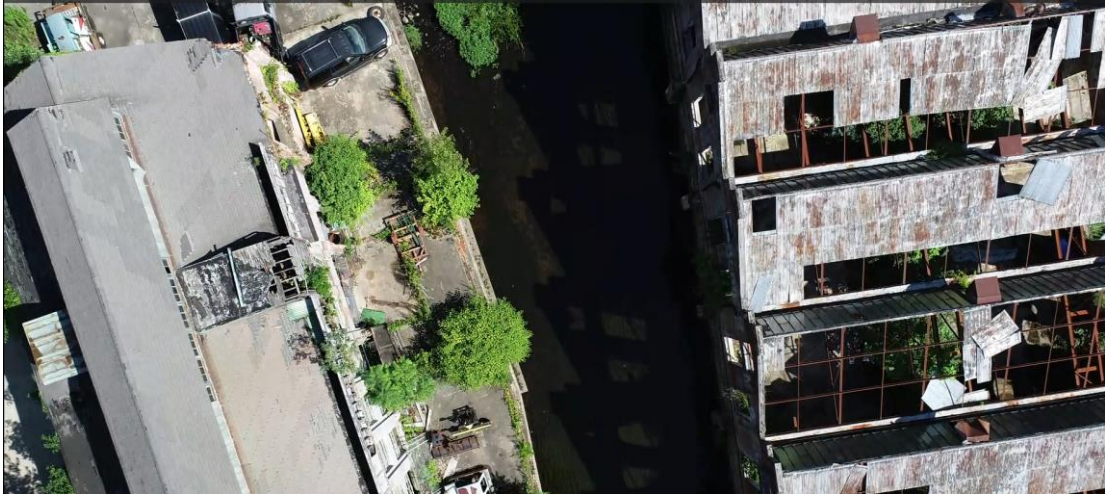
23

## Envision the Future: Zig-Zag Footbridge



24

## Envision the Future: Riverfront Patio



25

## Envision the Future: with History Retained



26

# Envision the Future

