Restoring a Community Asset

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

October 2023

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 Kulkowski, Planning subject area expert

Consultants:
• Tighe & Bond
• UCONN Technical Assistance to Brownfield Program (TAB)
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 40th 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.
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.
Safety, Site Aesthetics, 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)

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 Machine Shop buildings.
  - Implement building stabilization repairs.

- Funding sources: Grants (SHPO, DECD, STEAP); Town (Site Service Fees); Town (Capital project)
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)

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)
Ongoing & Longer-Term Actions

- **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**

Accomplishments: 2022-2023

- **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 Grant application, no-cost service

- **Public Update Meetings & Information Sharing**
  - Site Visits
  - Site Maintenance
  - Environmental Studies
  - UCONN TAB Support Services
Goals: 2024-2025

SAFETY
Implement site safety recommendations developed by Tighe & Bond.

AESTHETICS
Improve site aesthetics, site management, and lease control.

STABILIZE
Develop building stabilization bid documents ready for solicitation.

PLAN
Develop a public use implementation plan.

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 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
Financial Status

Budget Recommendations

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<th>Building Stabilization</th>
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<tr>
<td>Town Match for SHPO Planning grant</td>
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<td>Temporary Building Stabilization</td>
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<td>Improvement contracting</td>
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<th>Planning Studies</th>
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<td>Phase I - III, Georgetown Planning</td>
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<td>Economic Studies</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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Comments from Georgetown Village Restoration

“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.

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.” – Ralph Bosch, outgoing president, now treasurer

“Happy [the Committee is] 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.” – Lisa Devine

“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
Envision the Future: a Vibrant Georgetown

Envision the Future: a Community Gateway
Envision the Future: a Clean Multi-Use Site

Envision the Future: Public Access
Envision the Future: Waterfront Park

Envision the Future: Zig-Zag Footbridge
Envision the Future: Riverfront Patio

Envision the Future: with History Retained
Let’s Envision the Future ....

.... and Make it Happen