

# UNH Cooperative Extension Business Retention & Expansion

## Final Report Wilton, New Hampshire

March 8th, 2017



**Extension**

UNH COOPERATIVE EXTENSION  
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
131 Main Street, Durham NH 03824

# **Business Retention & Expansion Program**

## **Initial Survey Findings for UNH Faculty Review Meeting**

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# About the Business Retention & Expansion Program

A healthy local economy and an improved business climate are the goals of the Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Visitation program. The program promotes job growth by helping communities identify the concerns and barriers to survival and growth facing local businesses. This approach focuses on existing businesses. Studies show that 40% to 80% of all new jobs are created by existing firms rather than by new business attraction. Furthermore, business attraction efforts are less likely to be successful if existing businesses are unhappy with the local business climate.

## Goals of the Program

1. **Demonstrate** to local business that the community appreciates their contribution to the economy
2. **Help** existing businesses solve problems
3. **Increase** local businesses' ability to compete in the global economy
4. **Establish** and implement s strategic plan for economic development
5. **Build** community capacity to sustain growth and development

## The Process

1. **Firm Visits:** Local community leaders receive training on how to conduct the local BR&E Visitation program. After receiving training, Volunteer Visitors call on businesses and interview the firm manager or owner. A proven survey tailored to local communities is used for the interviews. The survey pinpoints business needs, concerns and development plans. Individual firm data are kept confidential.
  - **Immediate Follow-Up:** A local Task Force reviews the survey results and responds to the needs and concerns expressed by businesses. Support from resources within and outside the community becomes mobilized.
2. **Strategic Planning:** University faculty or other experts computerize the information and prepare an initial draft report for the Task Force. The report includes data analysis and suggests recommendations for improving the local business climate. The Task Force uses this report, its knowledge of the community, and a strategic planning process to develop an action plan.
3. **Implementation:** The action planning process fosters the development of local implementation teams. These teams spearhead efforts to achieve the goals in the action plans. Local businesses and a variety of agencies may be drawn into the process by these teams.

# Executive Summary

This is a summary of the most pertinent results from the Business Retentions and Expansion Survey that was conducted by trained community volunteers in late 2016 and early 2017. Also included are recommendations from the Faculty Review session conducted on February 17<sup>th</sup> by UNH Cooperative Extension. The Faculty Review was attended by three UNH faculty and one Cooperative Extension staff member in Durham and remotely by one UNH faculty member, one Cooperative Extension staff member, the Wilton Business Retention and Expansion Task Force and several community members.

## 1. High Level Results from BRE Survey and UNH Data Analysis

- Despite a declining population since 2000, Wilton is expected to see modest growth in the next decade.
- The population is aging with a median of **45.4** (this is higher than Hillsborough County or NH)
- Wilton has largely a commuting workforce with a vast majority commuting to other NH towns or out-of-state
- Relatively high income and low poverty (median family income **\$71,066**) and relatively well educated (**95%** high school or higher)
- Majority of respondents are locally-owned businesses started in Wilton and three quarters have a business plan (this is above average)
- There are several indicators of strong economy in Wilton including:
  - Businesses indicate substantial increase in number of employees over 3 years ago
  - **41%** report increasing sales; **40%** stable sales
  - Unemployment is quite low at **2.4%**, compared to **2.75%** for NH
  - Business owners rate Wilton higher as a place to live than as a place to do business
  - About **1/3** rate Wilton as “above average” or “excellent” as a place to conduct business
  - About **2/3** rate Wilton as “about average” or “excellent” as a place to live
- **Possible concerns for the future**
  - About half expect major technological innovations in their industry; many employees will require retraining/leaving
  - Three out of five lack succession plans for retirement
  - While most aren't considering changes in location, some are considering selling, moving, downsizing, closing or merging with another business
  - Competition for employees and inadequate labor skills is challenge
  - May be exacerbated by aging, declining population; low unemployment rate; high commuting rate (people willing to leave area for work)
  - Cost of housing not problem, but does housing meet needs of residents: aging and millennials? Are

# Executive Summary

- **Some positive considerations**
  - Most considering moving or expanding in another location are considering Wilton
  - Businesses recognize community assets
  - Two thirds rate it above average or excellent as a place to live
  - Value customer service, safety, friendliness, appearance of stores, sidewalks, and signage
- **Businesses cite opportunities for improvement**
  - Need greater variety of businesses and restaurant
  - Need for enhanced parking
  - Strengthen efforts to be business friendly
  - Address planning, zoning, signage
  - Need to promote town and attract visitors
  - Market cultural events, positive community and natural resource
  - Lack of coordinated store hours, advertising, public restrooms
  - Need for a Business Point Person to help businesses navigate zoning and other regulatory hurdles
- **Assets that can be leveraged**
  - Good highway access: Rt. 101, major NH East/West highway cuts through town
  - Location near other “destination” towns: Peterborough (arts community) and Milford
  - Walkable downtown of about 2 blocks
  - Available buildings for possible development (housing or commercial)
  - Natural resources: Souhegan River, nearby hiking trails
  - Attractions that bring people into the area: Town Hall Theater, Nelson’s Candy
  - Riverview Mill Arts/Business area and land adjacent to the river can extend size and appeal of downtown (riverwalk can connect to downtown)
  - Surplus of town services means there is room to grow.
  - Committed citizens who have a very favorable view of Wilton as a place to live and are willing to envision, plan, and act to improve town may be the strongest asset

# Faculty Review: Highlights and Recommendations

## **Build on Momentum**

There is opportunity to build on existing momentum. The town is starting now from a good place. Wilton can enhance its position by defining its assets and the town's brand. Determine: What is the town's value; its assets; its customers, both consumers and businesses; its competitors; and what are the needs of those living in and visiting the town?

## **Quality of Life**

The typical CEO lives 15 minutes from his/her business. How can Wilton build a community that attracts people who will live and do business there? What makes the town attractive to visitors? Enhancing green space, the walkable downtown, the river, arts and culture, local trails, and other local attractions would add to the draw of the community. Moreover, the costs of such enhancement could be kept to a minimum.

## **Engage the Community**

Engage citizens to support the town and enhance the efforts to make Wilton an attractive place in which to live and do business. Use visioning and public engagement to bring the community together. Educate residents about the benefit of change and make them partners in those efforts.

## **Support Local Businesses**

Promote "shop local." Support the business community. Make it easy to do business in Wilton. Develop a coordinated unified effort that sends the message that Wilton is a business-friendly town. Consider having one point person for business owners/developers to use for their questions and needs.

## **Online presence**

Complete a digital audit. Determine and enhance Wilton's online presence. Does the town website encourage businesses and site recruiters to further explore Wilton as a place to do business? Does the website promote an image of "business friendly?" Expand the number of restaurants and other businesses that are online through Yelp, Google Maps, Facebook, etc. Social media can enhance the town and its business community's appeal with limited expenditures.

Determine broadband and cellphone coverage and ensure that business owners are fully informed about technology advances.

## **Shared Working Spaces**

Consider the establishment of shared working spaces rented out to businesses, perhaps on a short-term basis that can be expanded to longer-term relationships, as success is achieved.

## **Online and Social Media for Businesses**

After the digital audit, offer classes and support to business owners to increase their use of online and social media marketing resources. Bring in an outside vendor to conduct the training; develop an internship or relationship with students to support business owners who may not be comfortable using social media.

# Faculty Review: Highlights and Recommendations

## **Business Succession Planning**

Offer resources and training in succession planning. A number of businesses reported having no succession plan, which will leave a gap in town services when the owner retires or closes the business.

The town reported that younger, less affluent families are moving into town, which is a welcome addition. However, their needs are potentially different than current residents and may present challenges for the school district and in terms of the limited availability of affordable workforce housing. Wilton needs to promote the development of affordable housing, which attracts and supports the needs of younger families who are needed to grow the town's available workforce.

As is true throughout the state, Wilton has an aging population, which may present problems for current and future labor needs. In addition, retiring business owners with no succession plans will potentially mean fewer businesses and more gaps in local services. What strategies can the town use to address the challenge of aging business owners and workforce? Moreover, how can the town create intergenerational activities that promote mingling of generations and groups within in the town?

## **Schools**

Good schools attract and retain younger families (and workers and business owners). While the quality of Wilton's schools go beyond the scope of the Business Retention and Expansion program, it is necessary to consider schools as an important component in making the community a place where people want to live and do business. Moreover, there is a lack of certain workforce skills in the town. How can the school district and town contribute to training and skill development of future Wilton workers?

Likewise, four of the ten largest "businesses" in Wilton are schools. The private schools bring people into the community every day. What are commuters' needs that translate into business opportunities? Moreover, the private schools are a seemingly isolated part of the community. Create opportunities to establish common space and engage the schools, private and public, in common goals.



# Projects to Consider: Wilton Economic Development Team

This list was created by the Wilton Economic Development Team in response to the analysis of the BR&E survey results and UNH Faculty review. These projects will be presented to the Wilton Annual Town Meeting in March 2017.

## **Digital Marketing**

Create a digital presence for merchants, historical sites and recreational activities in Wilton. Offer a class/workshop on digital commerce 101 and offer a student SWOT Team to provide support for Wilton retail interests, events and other attractions. A more effective digital presence will ensure local merchants, recreational and cultural activities can be found on the web.

## **Commercial Property Match-Making**

Determine what types of businesses that should be attracted that will thrive in Wilton's economic climate and provide basic services for residents. Proactively match-make available key properties with those desirable businesses. Determine our unique set of assets and what incentives we have or can create to attract small businesses.

Maximize use of existing commercial real estate to diversify the tax base and provide necessary services and social value to Wilton's residents

## **Develop the Wilton Brand Promise**

A competitive review of services and attractions in Wilton versus adjacent communities will determine Wilton's unique value proposition. Engage Wilton residents and business owners in the Plan NH design charrette to leverage learnings for the development of an authentic, timeless brand for the town. Create a consistent story-line and positioning that differentiates Wilton's uniqueness that will be reinforced through every event and marketing campaign allowing a compelling proposition to attract new residents and new businesses.

## **Town Business Plan**

Develop an ROI calculation on proposed projects showing short and long-term feasibility and impact will change the conversation from cost containment to revenue generation and long-term investments. Define an operating model, within the restrictions of municipal government, that provides for better and more regular public engagement, multiple avenues for identifying solutions, less reactive, more proactive management of town requirements, and increased integration of departments, projects and volunteer efforts.

## **Conclusion/Next Steps**

Wilton is far ahead of similar communities because of its engaged and motivated core of citizens who are committed to improving the business and civic ecosystem of the town. Wilton is also blessed with a beautiful natural environment that improves the quality of life for residents and can be a significant magnet for regional tourism. Wilton needs to get ahead of demographic trends, governance and infrastructure hurdles to become a welcoming and attractive place to do business. The future will be bright for Wilton if it can leverage its assets and create a brand identity and vision that will ensure growth for existing businesses and attract new businesses and residents to the town over the next decade.



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## Wilton Demographics

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# Background: Wilton Demographics

## Location

The Town of Wilton is located in Hillsborough County and is in the Nashua, NH-MA NECTA Division Labor Market (New England City & Town Area). Wilton is located about **25** miles from New Hampshire's largest city, Manchester. In addition, Wilton is close to several cities in the region: **60** miles to Boston, Massachusetts; **119** miles to Portland, Maine; **225** miles to New York, New York; and **264** miles to Montreal, Quebec.

The junction of Routes 31 and 101 are in Wilton and the Souhegan River and Stony Brook flow through. The Souhegan River provided water for the textile mills which historically were a main industry. Wilton has a Board of Selectmen form of government. The town has a total area of 25.8 square miles. Adjacent communities include Greenville, Temple, Mason, Milford and Lyndeborough.

## Largest Businesses in Wilton (NH Employment Security):

Largest Businesses	Product/Service	Employees	Established
Label Art, Inc.	Pressure sensitive labels	160	1963
Bur-Bak Machine Corporation	Injection molding	85	1970
Wilton-Lyndeborough Coop School	Education	69	
Wilton Elementary School	Education	55	
Kimball Physics, Inc.	UHV electron	50	1973
Monadnock Spring Water	Spring water	47	
General Machine & Foundry	Aluminun castings	30	1969
High Mowing School	Education	24	
Pine Hill School	Education	21	
S & Q Printers	Core plugs, winding cores	20	1940

## Transportation (NH Employment Security)

The majority of Wilton residents (**62.2%**) commute to work in another NH community. About a quarter work in Wilton (**26.1%**), while the remainder (**11.7%**) commute out-of-state. There is no public transportation.

## Population Trends (US Census Bureau & ACS 2010-2014):

According to the American Community Survey , there are approximately **3,679** people residing in Wilton (2014). The overall population trend for Wilton's population from 2000 to 2014 is negative. Population declined slightly from 2000 to 2010, and increased very slightly from 2010 to 2014. Population growth is increasing more quickly in Hillsborough County and in the state of New Hampshire.

Area	Population (2000)	Population (2010)	Population (2014)	Percent Change
Wilton	3,753	3,677	3,679	-1.97%
Hillsborough County	382,384	400,721	402,776	5.33%
New Hampshire	1,316,470	1,316,470	1,321,069	.35%

### Population by Age in 2014 (ACS 2010-2014):

According to the American Community Survey, the Wilton's median age is **45.4**; this is slightly higher than Hillsborough County (**40.1**) and the state of New Hampshire (**42.2**). Generally, Wilton's age distribution is very similar to that of Hillsborough County and the state. The population is 97.5% white.

Area	Total	Under 5 years	5-19	20-34	35-54	55-64	65+
Wilton	3,679	4.6%	19.7%	15.5%	32.8%	13.7%	13.8%
Hillsborough County	402,776	5.7%	19.4%	18.6%	30.2%	13.2%	12.8%
New Hampshire	1,321,069	5.0%	18.8%	17.8%	29.3%	14.4%	14.6%

### Projected Population Growth (OEP 2016):

The population of Wilton is predicted to decline from 2014-2020, followed by a small amount of growth from 2020-2040. Hillsborough County and the state of New Hampshire are predicted to continue to increase their population. By the year 2040, Wilton is expected to grow by **1.87** percent. However, compared to Hillsborough County (**7.8%**) and the state of New Hampshire (**8.45%**), Wilton is expected to see a much lower growth rate.

Area	Population (2014)	Population (2020)	Population (2040)	Percent Change
Wilton	3,679	3,642	3,748	1.87%
Hillsborough County	402,776	409,478	431,284	7.08%
New Hampshire	1,321,069	1,349,908	1,432,730	8.45%

### Unemployment (NH Employment Security, 2017)

Wilton's unemployment rate has held mostly steady from January 2016 to December 2016. On average, during this time, the unemployment rate was **2.4%**. Compared to the state of New Hampshire, where the average unemployment rate during this time period was **2.75%**, Wilton's rate of unemployment is slightly lower.

### Median Family Income (2011-2015 ACS 5-Year Estimates)

Based on American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2011-2015), Wilton's median family income is **\$71,066**. This is higher than the state of New Hampshire's median income, **\$66,779**, and slightly less than Hillsborough County's median income of **\$71,244**.

### Poverty Rate (2011-2015 ACS 5-Year Estimates)

Based on American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2011-2015), **4.3** percent of individuals living in Wilton are below the poverty level. This percentage is significantly lower than both Hillsborough County (**8.8%**) and the state of New Hampshire (**8.9%**).

### Education Levels (2011-2015 ACS 5-Year Estimates)

Based on American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2011-2015), **95.3** percent of Wilton's population is a high school graduate or higher. This rate is slightly higher than Hillsborough County (**91.2%**) and New Hampshire (**92.3%**).

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**Business Survey:  
A Key Component of Business Retention & Expansion**

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# About Businesses Who Took the Survey

44 businesses responded to the survey which was administered by trained community volunteers in late 2016 and early 2017. All questions were not answered by all respondents.

66% of those began their business in Wilton, NH. The vast majority (93%) are locally owned and they own their own facility. These businesses began in Wilton in:

**1980-1990: 11 Businesses**

**1991-2000: 2 Businesses**

**2011-2016: 5 Businesses**

Those that did not start in Wilton came primarily from other communities in NH. Eight businesses (19%) have multiple locations while the majority (81%) do not have multiple locations.

## Type of Facility as reported by survey respondents:

Facility	Percent	#
Headquarters	27.91%	12
Retail Sales Office	25.58%	11
Home-based business	23.26%	10
Manufacturing	18.60%	8
Office-operation (non HQ)	6.98%	3
Distribution	4.65%	2
Research & Development	4.65%	2
Branch	2.33%	1
Other	30.23%	13

## Other includes:

Restaurant
Farm CSA and Retail
Entertainment
Teaching; wholesale; art
Baseball, softball training
Wedding venue
Gift and antique shop
Towing auto truck repair
Healthcare
Small cafe

## North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) categories for those businesses that completed the survey:

Retail Trade	16.22%	Educational Services	2.70%
Accommodation/Food Services	13.51%	Real Estate/Rental and Leasing	2.70%
Manufacturing	13.51%	Transportation and Warehousing	2.70%
Health Care Services/Social Assistance	10.81%	Administration/Support/Waste Management/Remediation Services	0.00%
Arts/Entertainment/Recreation	8.11%	Finance/Insurance	0.00%
Construction	8.11%	Information	0.00%
Professional/Scientific/Technical Services	8.11%	Management of Companies & Enterprises	0.00%
Wholesale Trade	5.41%	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0.00%
Other Services	5.41%	Public Administration	0.00%
Agriculture/Forestry/Fishing/Hunting	2.70%	Utilities	0.00%

# Employees

Currently, the businesses (n=38) report **640** full time employees; **510** part-time employees and **36** seasonal employees.

Businesses (n=34) reported the following numbers for three years ago: **386** full time employees; **90** part-time employees and **32** seasonal employees.

**When asked if the number of employees changed over the past three years, respondents indicated the following as a reason for change:**

Reason for Change	# responses
Growth in demand	6
Expansion	4
Lack of demand	4
Corporate decisions/policies	3
Technological changes	2
Business did not exist 3 years ago	1
Change in profits	1
Change in subcontracting	1
Changes in worker efficiency	1
Entered new markets	1
Increased competition	1
New products/services	1
Change in management	0
Government regulation	0
Renovation	0
Other* See Below	7

**Other includes:**

Succession planning
Retirement
Illness of one of the owners
Impossible to find help and people willing to work
Employees moved away, no one available who could take their places

# Products & Services

**41%** of respondents indicate an increase in sales of products and services, **39.5%** indicated that sales are stable and **18%** indicated that they are decreasing.

When asked what is special or unique about their products and services, the common phrases reported were “high quality” and “service”. Respondents also indicated that as an owner they knew their product, service and customers.

# Employee Recruitment

## Recruiting Employees

According to respondents, 50% indicated that competition for employees to be the most challenging aspect of employee recruitment. Respondents found it challenging to recruit the following employees: unskilled service workers, skilled and unskilled manufacturing workers, and repair and skilled maintenance. It is less of a challenge to recruit to managers, IT, office and administrative workers.

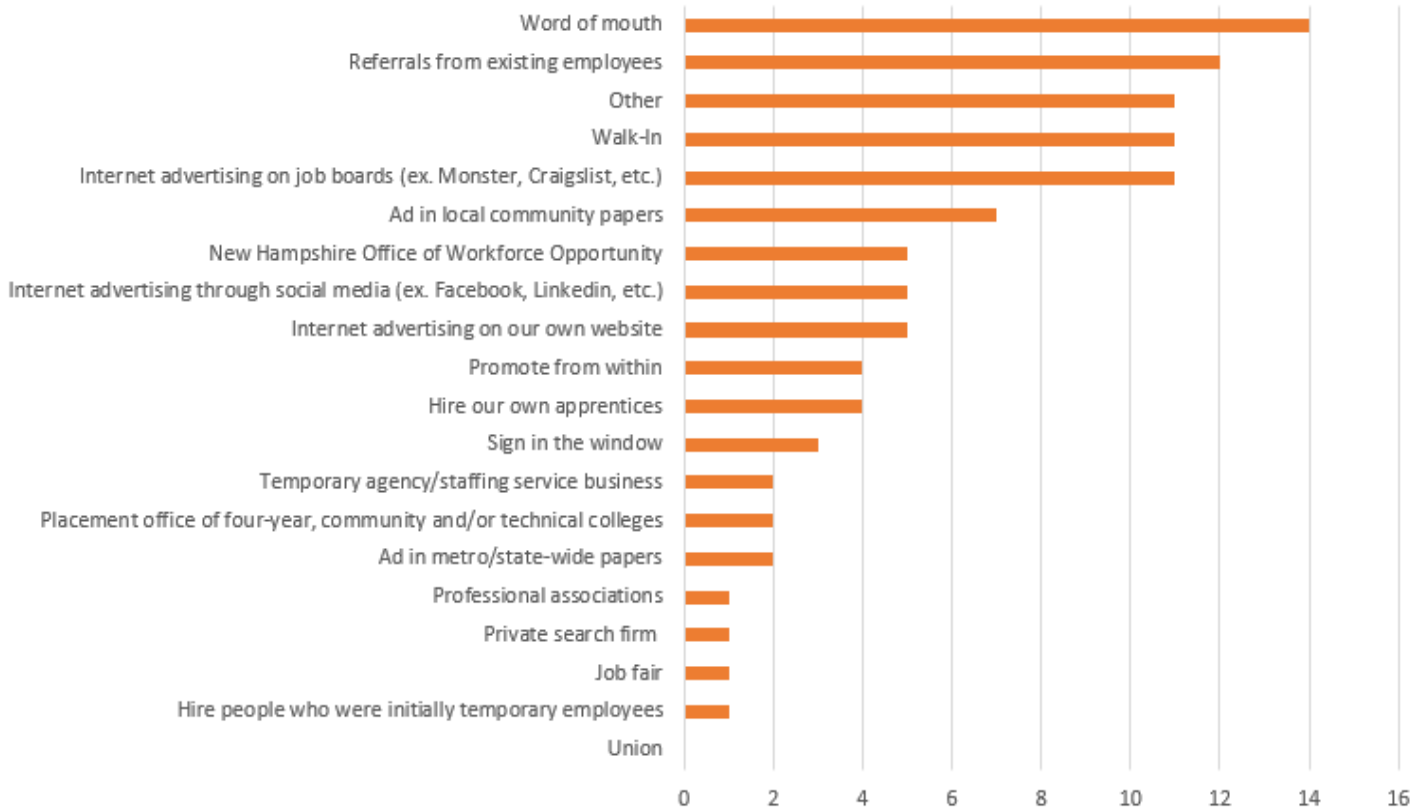
## Challenges for employee recruitment:

Challenges for Employee Recruitment	# Responses
Competition for employees	7
Inadequate labor skills	5
Poor work attitudes	5
Workers will not commute into the area	5
Workers cannot pass screening (drug, criminal record check, etc.)	4
Workers will not relocate into the area	3
High wage rates for labor	2
High cost of training employees	1
Lack of child care	1
Town/Region not attractive or appealing for relocation	1
High cost of housing	0
Workers lack documentation of legal work status	0
Other* See Below	5

## Other includes:

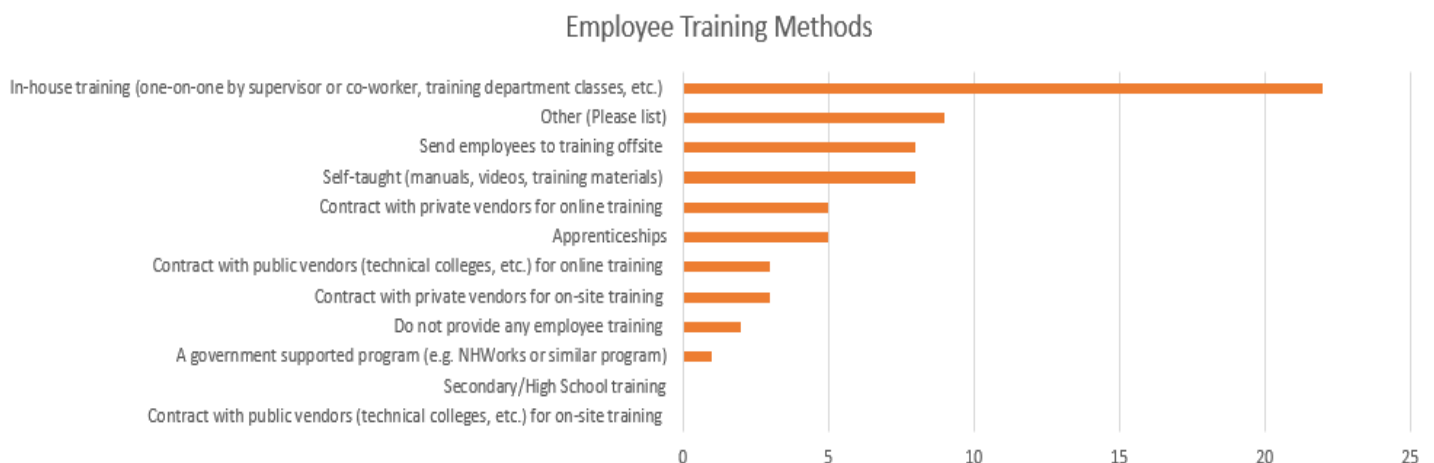
Lack of labor (skilled stone mason and equipment operator)
Language barrier
Young kids don't want to work anymore

**Resources used to locate new employees:**



**Other includes:** local high school for interns, banner hanging on property, signs around town, biodynamic association website, Indeed.

Out of **34** respondents, **58%** indicated that employees and/or owners do not need additional training. The majority of employees who need training, need High School GED training. Of those training employees, they are trained using the following:



**Other includes:** send to universities, coaches, UNH, seminars, send to wholesaler

# Future of the Businesses

**83%** have no exports primarily because the business serves a specific area or is too small.

**53.6%** indicate that major technological innovations in their industry might affect their company and of those, **50%** said this will require retraining of employees.

**72%** have a written business plan. Most indicate that they will have no change in operations.

**60%** of these companies do not have a succession plan.

**50%** have plans to modernize or expand their buildings or equipment. **57%** own their facility. For those renting or leasing, about half have an informal lease agreement.

**50%** indicate they have plans to change in operations over the next three years. Those expecting change are looking at change in the mix of goods and services; adding or subtracting product lines; change in production technology; expanding markets, retirement and new or expanded location.

**58%** of respondents indicate that they are not considering expanding, selling, moving, downsizing, closing or merging. Others respondents indicated possible changes they are considering:

	#
Expanding - at this location	7
Selling	6
Moving	3
Expanding - adding another location	3
Downsizing	2
Closing	2
Merging with or acquiring another business	1
Other changes to business plan	1

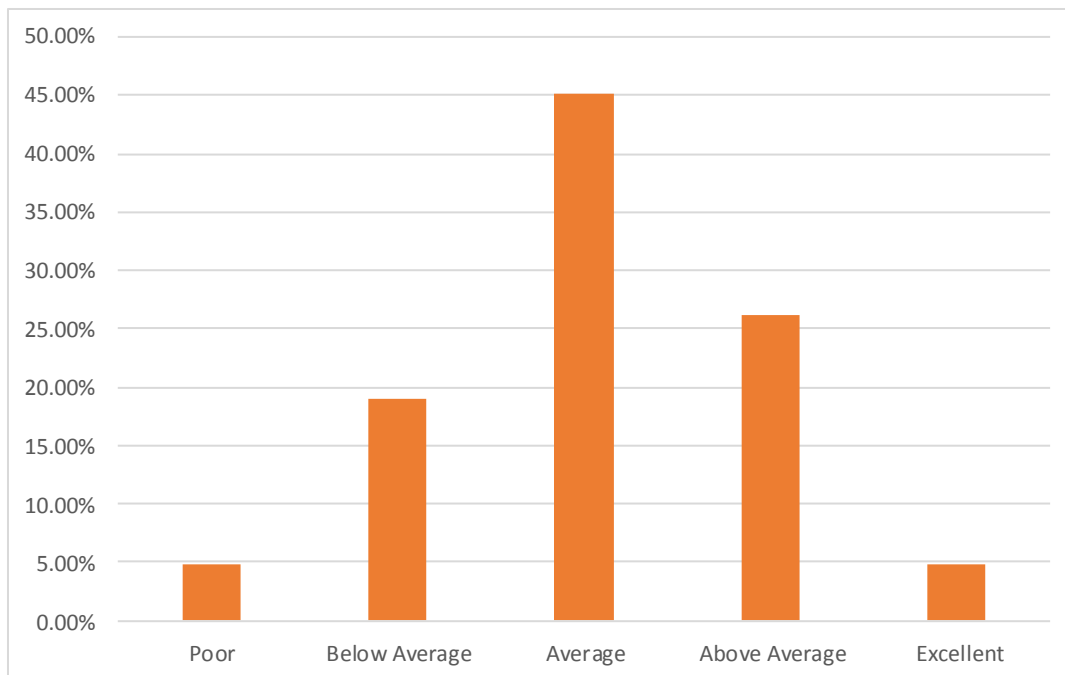
**10** respondents who indicated they may be considering downsizing, selling, moving or closing shared the following reasons:

	#
Retiring	6
Other	3
No land for expansion	2
Changing market conditions	1
Transportation problems	1
Rigid code enforcement (including ordinances and building codes)	1
High local taxes	1
Lease expiration	1

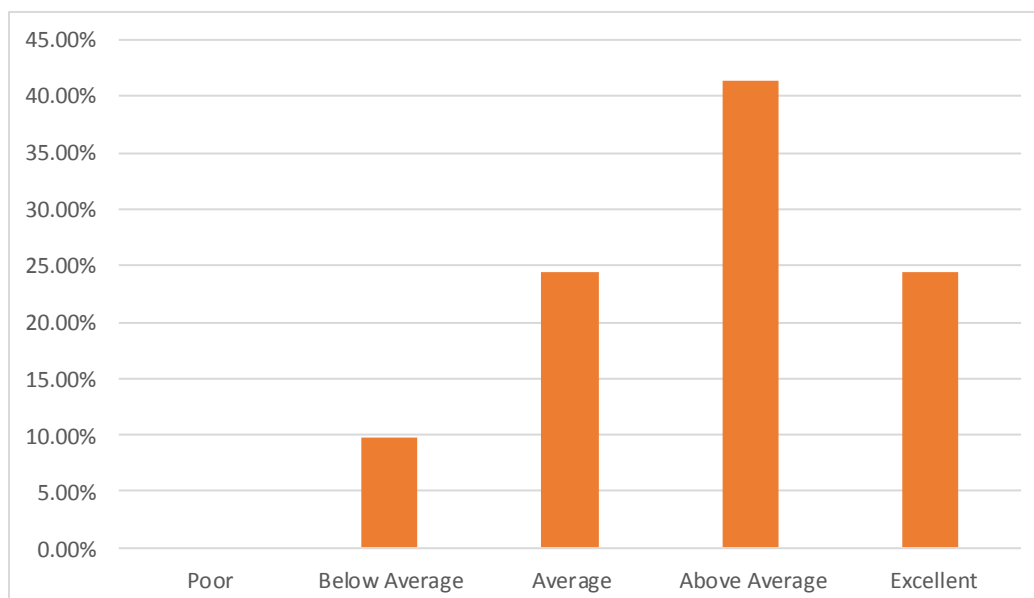
The following do **not seem to be factors** when considering change: overcrowded building, crime/vandalism, low work productivity, environmental concerns, high state taxes, poor telecommunications/internet, insufficient labor supply, another business opportunity, business incentives from other jurisdiction(s), trying to sell business but unable to sell it, high energy costs or local water/sewer costs.

If the business is moving or expanding at another location, **71%** are considering Wilton and **43%** are considering another city or town in the county while **15%** are undecided. **57%** have sufficient property for expansion with **37%** indicating they do not.

## Opinion of community as a place to conduct business:



## Opinion of community as a place to live:



## Community Factors in Selecting a New Location

When considering community factors if selecting a new location, respondents shared the following as being important or very important: (of those responding – not all responded)

Education:

**81%** K-12 education was important and very important

Workers:

**51%** said the availability of skilled workers was very important while only **26%** said the availability of unskilled workers was very important.

Transportation:

When considering transportation, **55%** said that highway accessibility was very important. Rail service, air service and public transportation are not important.

Land and Buildings:

Availability of buildings and land; cost of buildings and land; and availability and cost of loans are very important. Broadband reliability and energy reliability are very important, just slightly ahead of broadband cost and speed and cost of energy.

Local Support:

When considering local business support, **92%** of those reporting said that community attitude towards business was very important and **79%** felt community promotion of itself and business was very important. More respondents felt an economic development authority was very important than a chamber of commerce.

Quality of Life:

Quality of life factors important to survey respondents include (in order) schools, housing costs and supply, health care facilities, availability of child care, cultural opportunities, recreational opportunities and social organizations and networks.

## Broadband

Broadband (high speed internet) is important or very important to **68%** of the businesses. **20%** say it is not important. The businesses are nearly evenly split with cable (**35%**), DSL (**32%**) and fiber optics (**32%**).

**81%** use the internet for communicating with customers and **68%** use the internet for advertising. Just over **45%** use the internet for managing data, support services and research. **35%** use it for ecommerce. **27%** for recruiting employees, **20%** use the internet for training staff.

## **Community Assets and Improvement**

Survey respondents indicated their top areas for community improvement include a greater variety of businesses, greater variety of places to eat and enhanced parking.

The businesses indicated that the community assets include customer service, feeling of safety, friendliness of the community and the appearance such as the stores, sidewalks, signage etc.

Topics suggested for strengthening efforts for businesses include an effort to focus the town on being business friendly and addressing planning, zoning, signage and regulations for business.

The challenges to shopping in the area include a lack of coordinated store hours and evening hours; need for coordinated advertising and public rest rooms.

Town planning and zoning were often mentioned when asked about major issues in Wilton when starting, conducting or expanding business. Also noted were a sense of the lack of town support for promoting business and attracting customers to town. Some barriers noted when starting a business in Wilton include lack of support for business, available space, attracting people to town.

There is interest from the businesses surveyed to focus a marketing campaign on arts and cultural events, the positive community atmosphere and the natural environment.



# Notes: Economic Development Team Projects

## **Project: Digital Marketing**

### **Description:**

Create a digital presence for merchants, historical sites and recreational activities in Wilton. Run a class/workshop on digital commerce 101 and offer a SWOT Team (students) for follow-up implementations aimed at Wilton retail interests, events and other attractions

- Conduct a digital audit – explore search engine apps to enhance digital presence.
- Design an externally-focused website
- Centralize all the existing sources of merchant listings and keep updated. Update and leverage visit Wilton.com and WMSA FB Page, enable ongoing management of digital sites, update existing pages.
- 

**Outcomes:** Ensure the local merchants can be easily searched and found. Likewise, for recreational and cultural activities.

**Project Team:** Harry Dailey, Jackie Kahle, Mike McGonegal, Carissa Scenna, Jennifer Beck

**Timeline:** **Begin immediately – complete by May 1**

## **Project: Commercial Property Match-Making**

### **Description:**

Figure out what types of businesses we want to attract that will thrive in Wilton's economic climate and provide basics services for residents. Proactively match-make available key properties with those desirable businesses. Determine our unique set of assets and what incentives we have or can create to attract small businesses.

- Launch a site-recruiters' campaign to inventory skill sets, properties, existing businesses, schools, broadband availability, etc. that are decision criteria for business owners.
- Check with NH Dept of ECO DEV to create a data set for site recruiters – town website, labor force, wages, available commercial properties, etc.
- Meet with real estate agencies to understand issues, correct misconceptions and leverage as marketing channel

**Outcomes:** Best use of existing commercial real estate that adds to the diversification of the tax base and provides necessary services and social value to Wilton's residents

**Project Team:** Scott Butcher, Chris Devine, Dick Putnam

**Timeline:** **Begin Immediately – Complete by June 1**

## **Project: Develop the Wilton Brand Promise**

### **Description:**

Do a competitive review of services and attractions in Wilton versus Milford and Peterborough to determine Wilton's unique value proposition. Engage w=Wilton residents and business owners in the Plan NH design charrette and leverage learnings there for the development of an authentic, timeless brand for the town.

**Outcomes:** A consistent story-line and positioning for the town in all public communications and reinforced through every event and marketing campaign. Find the differentiator that allows for a compelling proposition to attract new residents and new businesses.

**Project Team:** Jennifer Beck, Jackie Kahle, Nancy Clark, Mike McGonegal

**Timeline:** **June 2017 – July 2017**

# Notes: Economic Development Team Projects

## **Project: Town Business Plan**

### **Description:**

- Develop an ROI calculation on proposed projects showing short and long term feasibility and impact.
- Change the conversation from cost containment to revenue generation and long term investments
- Define an operating model that allows for better visibility into the revenue side of the equation, town owned properties, projects new business ventures, etc.
- Build in a sensing mechanism to help anticipate the next social, environmental, economic trends so we can take advantage.

**Outcomes:** An operating model, within the restrictions of municipal government, that provides for better and more regular public engagement, multiple avenues for identifying solutions, less reactive, more proactive management of town requirements, and increased integration of departments, projects and volunteer efforts.

**Project Team:** Kermit Williams, Scott Butcher, Department Heads TBD, Jennifer Beck, Harry Dailey

**Timeline:** July 2017 – November 2017

**Invest in IT technology infrastructure and the Plan NH design charrette (1) Note: both already in 2017 warrant articles.**