

# CT Main Street Success Stories

## Simsbury Town Center

### 2010 Charrette

*A community decides  
how it will grow*

Wilcox Street Today



Wilcox Street Future



To understand the profound impact of the Charrette on its role in building consensus in Simsbury, it is necessary to understand the development climate in the community. The development of several areas in town was pending. The Town felt caught between property owners and residents, which was negatively impacting the community's image in the state, as battles were played out publicly in the media. It was critical to identify the right balance between needed development (which can ease the tax burden) and providing amenities to residents, while respecting the valued character of the town.

The Town embarked on a Charrette for downtown, hiring Code Studio out of Austin, Texas, **with the goal of creating a shared vision for the Town Center and translating that vision into new zoning regulations.**

The public was invited to participate interactively with Code Studio's team of urban planners, architects, historic preservationists, transportation and market analysis professionals—all of whom listened and turned the public's ideas into tangible drawings and computer renderings. As these products were created, the public was invited to react and give input, leading to more refined versions.

Over 400 people participated in some fashion during the week-long charrette process. Business & property owners, residents, civic organizations, and student groups from Simsbury High School all packed the room, clustered around small tables.

**The Charrette provided the vehicle by which members of the community were able to work together toward a common vision. This eliminated much of the earlier animosity, and each side walked away feeling that the process and early results were a victory for the entire town.** At the closing presentation, Code Studio received a standing ovation from a packed room. Towns throughout Connecticut are now calling Simsbury's Town Planner and First Selectwoman to find out how they might achieve similar results in their own communities.

The next steps result in the implementation of the charrette principles. By late 2010, Simsbury had codified the community's vision by way of a form-based code for the Town Center, translating what was identified as Simsbury's "character of place" into regulatory language.

Hands-on Session



At Connecticut Main Street Center we help inspire great Connecticut downtowns, Main Street by Main Street. We serve as the champion and leading resource for vibrant and sustainable Main Streets as foundations for healthy communities.

