



# Farm Wineries Work

Good for Somers,  
Good for Connecticut

# Why Farm Wineries Work for Somers

- ▶ **Open Space Preservation**
  - ▶ Protecting Somers farmlands/natural resources without using public funds
  - ▶ Fully consistent with Somers 2015 Plan of Development
  - ▶ They support Somers farms and farming
- ▶ **Responsible Tourism**
  - ▶ They bring in welcome tourist dollars to Somers
  - ▶ During and beyond COVID-19 pandemic, promote safe and responsible outdoor gathering
  - ▶ Residual benefits for local B&B, restaurants and businesses without extra infrastructure
  - ▶ Family-oriented, safe and quiet activity
- ▶ **Financial Benefits**
  - ▶ Increase Somers' tax base
  - ▶ Increase local job opportunities
- ▶ **Worthington Pond Farm: Run By Somers Residents**
  - ▶ Worthington Pond Farm is a family-run business with Somers roots
  - ▶ We operate in a responsible way at a site already approved for events
  - ▶ We are your neighbors and want to preserve the agricultural culture in Somers



# Why Farm Wineries Work for Somers

- ▶ Farm wineries are increasingly popular with Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y
  - ▶ In the past decade, the number of East Coast wineries has more than tripled.
  - ▶ [CT Wine Trail](#) & Passport Program growing in popularity
- ▶ They are local places to visit and enjoy the Connecticut countryside
  - ▶ To have a picnic in quiet, rural setting
- ▶ Farm wineries offer premium wines not typically available in stores
- ▶ They keep rural areas rural
- ▶ They offer opportunities to learn about growing grapes and the craft of winemaking
- ▶ They support farm-to-table practices
- ▶ They provide strong revenue possibilities for town
  - ▶ To keep Somers competitive with area towns





## A Well-Regulated and Respected Industry

- ▶ Farm wineries are well-regulated and taxed at both the state and federal level
  - ▶ Tight restrictions on types of wine that can be sold
  - ▶ Tasting hours limited to daytime/early evening
  - ▶ Current regulations and special permit process can review any concerns about noise, functions, recreational use, etc.
  - ▶ **Connecticut Grown:** State requires all licensed farm wineries to use a minimum of 25% CT-grown fruit in their wines.
  - ▶ **Connecticut Farm Wine Development Council** uses Community Investment Act funding each year to foster growth of the farm winery industry in the state.
  - ▶ They expand local farming opportunities with alternate crops, accessory farming uses and promote other local farming products



## Let's Grow Agriculture: Bring Farm Wineries to Somers

- ▶ Amending the Regulations to permit farm wineries as an accessory use is a sound, workable zoning framework that protects Somers and gives the Zoning Commission the tools to permit farm wineries.
- ▶ Let's Put Somers on the Connecticut Wine Trail:
  - ▶ More than 40 Connecticut towns have wineries and 13 Connecticut towns have farm wineries
  - ▶ Permitting such sites is an enhancement to the vast amount of agriculturally zoned property in Somers
  - ▶ Somers needs a regulation that provides flexibility, site review, and promote the open use of agriculture recreational spaces, both passively and actively



## Why the Proposed Regulation Is Too Restrictive

- ▶ No flexibility for site size, location or abutting properties
- ▶ Definition does not include use of fruit or other crops
- ▶ Conflicts with intent of maintaining open space
- ▶ No consideration for outdoor entertainment and recreation
- ▶ Private events shouldn't be addressed as they fall outside the Farm Winery scope
- ▶ Conflicts with COVID-19-based health/safety standards
  - ▶ Limits size of outdoor patio
  - ▶ Fencing requirements force people closer together
  - ▶ Increases risk of virus transmission
  - ▶ Inconsistent with Governor's COVID social distancing standards



## Why the Proposed Regulation Is Too Restrictive

- ▶ Requires regulatory review on an activity-by-activity basis and will create repetitive use of Town staff and resources
  - ▶ Special permitting should address the site issues, such as size, location, buffers, and abutting properties
- ▶ Regulates activities or issues that are already regulated, resulting in differential treatment
- ▶ Regulates matters already governed by state statute/regulations
- ▶ In regulating activities or events, places unreasonable restriction on property use, including limits to tasting room
- ▶ Proposed regulations inconsistent with state statutes
- ▶ Somers should rely on our own regulation - looking at other Towns' regulations is not always in the interest of the Town and its taxpayers.

## Let's Grow Somers, With Farm Wineries

- ▶ A growing, well-regulated industry that will benefit Somers and its residents
- ▶ Strong economic benefits to Town
- ▶ Farm wineries preserve open space and passive recreation of agricultural land
- ▶ Farm wineries can spur home-grown businesses run by Somers residents
- ▶ They avoid spot development of cluster housing on land that is best used as farmland.

Let's not lose any ground. Please build a sound and flexible framework to help make this happen.

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Good for Connecticut*

