



July 2022

Background

In 2018, the Friends of Wood Memorial Library & Museum applied and received approval for a 2-year Temporary and Conditional Permit to construct an outdoor Native American Village exhibit, and it was later renewed in 2020. Upon the completion of both final construction and a successful inaugural year, the Friends now **request a permanent special exception** as a nonprofit organization for the property now known as “Nowashe Village” at 787 Main Street in South Windsor.

Nowashe Village is a permanent outdoor exhibit of Indigenous life, unique to the Hartford region. The majority of funding was provided by a grant from the Department of Economic and Community Development. More than a quarter of spending on the project was made to Native Peoples or Tribal reservations for construction, the procurement of artifacts and other educational materials and for the development of programming.

About the Property and Impact on Neighbors

Nowashe Village is located on a parcel of land deeded to the Friends in 2016, which is located behind Wood Memorial Library. In the development of the Village, existing natural clearings in the wooded area were utilized for “classroom” sites, primarily in the rear of the property and not visible from Main Street or neighbors. These sites include a Sachem’s House, two additional wigwams, a “three sisters” garden and a general gathering area. All structures were built with traditional materials and via traditional methods and a series of nature trails connect the sites. Multiple groups can be instructed simultaneously, often within a structure to minimize noise impact on neighboring properties. Based on advice from South Windsor’s environmental officer and building department, all structures were built above the 100 year flood plain and securely anchored.

A palisade fence of tree saplings and branches runs along the eastern side of the property and is locked for security (the fence is all that can be seen from Main Street). This is indicative of the palisaded Native American fort that Dutch explorer Adriaen Block encountered in 1614 along the Connecticut River, not far from the site placement of Nowashe Village. Deer (wire) fencing runs along most of the northern side. An existing chain link fence runs along the entire south property line, with a locking gate installed in the rear of the property for emergency egress. Wildlife cameras have also been installed throughout the property. A hand-carved wooden sign was installed on the palisade fence in 2021 in brown and white, mimicking the library’s sign on Main Street.

Nowashe Village is a Certified Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation. The Friends regularly work to eradicate invasive plants, do not use chemical fertilizers and only introduce indigenous plants and trees, using natives whenever possible. The Friends follows industry best practices for historical

site and collections management and are members of the Connecticut League of History Organizations, the Archaeology Society of Connecticut, Connecticut Explored, New England Museum Association, the American Association of State and Local History, and the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries & Museums. In April of 2022, the Connecticut League of History Organizations recognized Nowashe Village with an Award of Merit and a Citation from the Connecticut General Assembly. In June of 2022, the American Association of State and Local History announced an Award of Excellence and a History in Progress award for Nowashe Village.

Access

Cars are able to utilize the newly paved and expanded parking lot at the adjacent Union School, made available to the Friends through a renewable license agreement by the South Windsor Historical Society. There is a permanent easement to Nowashe Village from Main Street along the north driveway of Wood Memorial Library. Additionally, the Friends of Wood Memorial Library & Museum currently has permission from the Wood Memorial Library Trust, owner of the Wood Memorial Library for car and pedestrian traffic to access the entry gate of the Nowashe Village (see attached letter).

Visitation

More than 1,000 visitors came to Nowashe Village in its inaugural year in 2021, from May into November. School, camp, community groups and general public visit between April and November, for two to four hours within a 9am to 4pm window, 2-4 days per week. School buses generally drop off and pick up students on the Main Street sidewalk directly in front of the library.