

Ridgefield's Historic Districts

Ridgefield is a historic town well known for its great many historic houses and beautiful historic streetscapes throughout. Historic buildings and sites are a major factor to a community's character.

Ridgefield has two types of historic districts – Regulated and Recognized.

Regulated Historic Districts

The first group of historic districts has been designated by State and local statute as historic districts under purview and oversight of the Ridgefield Historic District Commission which helps manage change throughout the historic districts with the objective of helping to preserve the historic character of the neighborhoods.

The “regulated” Ridgefield historic districts are:

- Main Street Historic District
- High Ridge Avenue Historic District
- East Ridge Road Historic District

Recognized and Unregulated Historic Districts

The second group of Ridgefield historic districts are historic districts which are recognized on the National and State Register of Historic Places but they are not designated a historic district under State and local statute and, therefore, are not under the purview or oversight of the Ridgefield Historic District Commission and considered “recognized” but unregulated. These designations, which are not regulatory in nature, generally provide opportunities for possible Federal and/or State funding.

These “recognized” Ridgefield historic districts are:

- Ridgefield Center Historic District
- Titicus Hill Historic District
- West Mountain Historic District
- Ridgebury Historic District
- Weir Farm Historic District

Significance of the Ridgefield Historic Districts

The distinction of the architecture in the Ridgefield Historic Districts arises both from the excellence of individual structures and from the panoramic streetscapes that are composed of many buildings constructed over a period of three centuries. Colonial homes, Greek Revival structures, buildings constructed in 19th century picturesque styles, workers' homes from that era, and early-20th century examples exist side by side, in their original relationship to one another, providing an excellent visual summary of the history of American architecture in a country town. The buildings of the Ridgefield Historic Districts span three centuries in time and a full range of American architectural styles from the Colonial through the Art Modern. The buildings, most of them of frame construction, relate well to one another in terms of size, scale, materials, and spacing and are significant for their integrity and lack of intrusions. A walk through Ridgefield's Historic Districts is a walk through history as told by the architecture you see.

1713 – 1770	The Center Chimney Colonial
1780 – 1820	Federal: The Center Hall Colonial
1850 – 1850	Greek Revival

Victorian Styles

c. 1860	Gothic Style
c. 1865	The Villa Style
c. 1870	The Italianate Style
c. 1875	The High Italianate Style
c. 1880	Queen Anne
c. 1890	Shingle & Renaissance Revival

20th Century Styles

1895 – 1920	Georgian Revival & Colonial Revival
c. 1910	Bungalow & Arts and Crafts
c. 1915	The Four Square Style
c. 1920	Tudor Revival

Historical Points of Interest

Museums

Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center – 152 Main Street
Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum – 258 Main Street

Churches

	<u>Established</u>	<u>Current Structure</u>
The First Congregational Church – 103 Main Street	1712	1889
St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church – 351 Main Street	1725	1915
Jesse Lee Methodist Church – 207 Main Street	1789	1965
First Church of Christ, Scientist – 260 Main Street	1902	1965

Other Notables

The Lounsbury House – 316 Main Street
The Hawley House – 236 Main Street
The Cass Gilbert Fountain – In intersection of Main Street and West Lane
Bernard’s Restaurant – 20 West Lane
West Lane Inn – 22 West Lane
Fountain Inn – 114 Main Street

Ridgefield Center Historic District

The Ridgefield Center District Historic District (“Center District”) area is the heart of Ridgefield in terms of its founding, early history, its Main Street business center, the location of many of its civic facilities and its Town Hall and other municipal offices, as well as the destination for the great many of the visitors to Ridgefield. The Center District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.

Ridgefield Center District’s 18th, 19th and 20th-century houses, churches, and civic and commercial structures are built side by side and represent various types of ages and styles, sensitive to one another in scale and setting, and form a cohesive district of discrete components.

The area of the Center District covers almost 400 acres and at the time of its 1984 listing on the National Register included 241 buildings of historic significance otherwise known as “contributing buildings”.

Regulatory Historic Districts

The Center District incorporates Ridgefield’s three regulated historic districts established pursuant to State and Local statutes which provide regulatory oversight by Ridgefield’s Historic District Commission of the properties included in those districts. The Main Street Historic District runs from the blinking light at Main Street’s southern terminus to the corner of Governor Street. The High Ridge Avenue Historic District runs from West Lane to the corner of King Lane and includes West Lane from the fountain on Main Street to the intersection with High Ridge Avenue. Also included in the Main Street and High Ridge Avenue Historic Districts are King Lane, Jackson Court and Parley Lane as well as certain contiguous properties on Branchville Road, Peaceable Street, Rockwell Road, Shadow Lane, and Perry Lane.

The East Ridge Road Historic District includes the full length of the road.

Village District – Subject to Architectural Advisory Committee

The Center District also includes the area known as the “Village District” established by the Planning and Zoning Commission (“P&Z”) in 2007 pursuant to State Statute to protect the distinctive character, landscape, and historic structures within the Village District. The Village District encompasses the downtown central business district located on Main Street, Bailey Avenue and parts of Catoonah Street and Prospect Street. P&Z appointed an Architectural Advisory Committee to provide this oversight.

Center District Areas and Boundaries

The Ridgefield Center District includes the following areas within the heart of Ridgefield:

- **Main Street** – from its southern terminus north to the corner of Pound Street.
- **Wilton Road West** – from its intersection with Main Street south to the corner of Olmstead Lane.
- **West Lane** – from Main Street west to the corner of High Ridge Avenue.
- **Peaceable Street** – from the intersection with High Ridge Avenue west to the corner of Bryon Avenue.
- **Barry Avenue** – from High Ridge Avenue to Fairview Avenue.
- **East Ridge Road** – from the southeast corner of Governor Street to the southeast corner of Market Street.
- **Prospect Ridge** – from the southwest corner of Governor Street to and including #62 Prospect Ridge.
- **Streets included in the Center District in their entirety:**

Abbott Avenue

Bryon Avenue

Catoonah Street

Fairview Avenue

Gilbert Street

Governor Street

Greenfield Avenue

Griffith Lane

High Ridge Avenue

Market Street

Parley Lane

Titicus Hill Historic District

The Titicus Hill Historic District was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 2012.

The Titicus area was settled relatively early and with the Titicus River running through it gave rise in the 19th century to an industrial base of a sawmill, grist mills, a foundry, tanneries, a shirt factory, and craftsmen specializing in shoe making, hat making and harness making.

There are 28 properties within the historic district, two of which are commercial structures. Most of the houses in the district were constructed at the beginning of the 1900's with two dating from the 1700's. The majority of the homes are representative of the Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles.

District Area

The District area runs along the North Salem Road from its intersection with Main Street and Danbury Road north to the corner of New Street. Contiguous properties in the District are 101 and 103 New Street and the two commercial properties at 622 Main Street.

West Mountain Historic District

The West Mountain Historic District is a 425 acre historic area that was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.

District Area

The Historic District includes several large estates developed in the early 20th century and is home to Ridgefield Academy.

The West Mountain Historic District is roughly centered in the area of the junction of West Mountain Road and Oreneca Road and includes Oreneca Road; West Mountain Road from its intersection with Tower Road northwest to the intersection with Oscaleta Road; and, Old Mountain Road from its intersection with West Mountain Road to property number 162.

Ridgebury Historic District

The Ridgebury Historic District runs along both sides of Ridgebury Road from its northern border with Danbury south to its intersection with Old Stagecoach Road. The Ridgebury Historic District is listed on the State Register of Historic Places. It is unfortunate that Ridgebury was never able to become a regulated historic district despite studies and proposed ordinances to that effect in the early 1980's, having failed to acquire the two-thirds affirmative vote of residents so affected as required by State statute.

Ridgefield was founded in 1731 and had a vibrant cottage industry sometime after 1836. At that time Ridgebury was thriving and just before the Civil War, Ridgebury's population was greater than that of Ridgefield proper.

The history of Ridgebury is steeped in historical events and is an important Revolutionary War historic area. In September 1780, General Washington was in Ridgebury with LaFayette, Alexander Hamilton, and other members of his wartime cabinet. In 1779, with the British in control of New York City, the route connecting the Continental Congress in Philadelphia with New England passed directly through Ridgebury. In addition, Ridgebury is the site of British troops moving through Ridgebury in 1777 after having just burned Danbury and on their way through Ridgefield and the battle that ensued there. In 1781, Ridgebury was the site of the camps set up by Alexander Berthier and by Rochambeau when the French troops were moving south to join Washington's forces in the campaign that was to decide the outcome of the Revolutionary War. The Ridgebury Cemetery, established in 1743, holds graves from that period as well as from the Civil War.

Weir Farm Historic District

Weir Farm is a 68 acre national park which was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1990.

Weir Farm's area covers part of Ridgefield and Wilton, Connecticut. Weir Farm preserves the life and work of Julian Alden Weir, a leading figure in the American Impressionist movement. For information on Weir Farm, please go to [nps.gov/wefa/index.htm](https://www.nps.gov/wefa/index.htm).