

Missing Silverlight? WebAssembly-Based OpenSilver Comes To The Rescue

PARIS, France, March 9, 2020 — Userware announced today that it has released OpenSilver (Technology Preview), an open-source reimplementation of Silverlight that runs on all browsers via WebAssembly.



“Since most browsers stopped supporting plug-ins such as Microsoft Silverlight, .NET developers found themselves without a way to build rich client-side applications that run in the browser,” says Giovanni Albani, CEO of Userware. “But with the advent of WebAssembly — an open standard that is now supported by most desktop and mobile browsers — this is no longer the case.”

OpenSilver is a modern, plugin-free, open-source reimplementation of Silverlight, that uses Mono for WebAssembly and Microsoft Blazor. “It brings back the power of C#, XAML, and .NET to client-side Web development,” says Albani. “When it comes to the development of Rich Internet Applications (RIA) or Single Page Apps (SPA), Silverlight offered a level of productivity and power that has remained unmatched ever since.”

OpenSilver relies solely on open standards, and it runs on both desktop and mobile web browsers. It is compatible with .NET Standard, so the code can be shared between the client, the server, and other platforms. It is also compatible with JavaScript, so existing JavaScript libraries can be directly imported and used from C#.

“The vision to revive the Silverlight glory and to make it even better is ambitious, but it is achievable,” says Albani. “The Silverlight story does not end in 2021. Its story is just being written.”

Migrating from Silverlight

With Silverlight reaching the end of support in October 2021, OpenSilver can also serve as a migration tool for bringing legacy Silverlight applications to the modern web.

Migrating Silverlight code to OpenSilver provides multiple benefits, one of which is lower costs. Userware says it can be 3 to 5 times less expensive to migrate a Silverlight application to OpenSilver than to rewrite it from scratch using another technology.

Another benefit is that developers do not need to learn a new programming language, and they can reuse most of the original code. This implies fewer risks of functional bugs, greater efficiency to maintain the application after migration, less time spent on writing functional and technical specifications, and the ability to keep coding while the migration project is in progress.

The current Technology Preview supports approximately 60% of the Silverlight API and covers most of the functionality used in typical applications. Subsequent releases will further increase coverage, and if a feature is not yet supported, developers can work around it by importing .NET Standard or

JavaScript libraries that provide similar functionality. A tool is also available to analyze XAP files — the equivalent of executable files for Silverlight applications — and report missing functionality.

Userware, the company behind OpenSilver, has also launched today a migration service that takes charge of migrations from beginning to end. “Our team has already started migrating applications with hundreds of thousands of lines of code,” says Albani. “We want to save companies the hassle, risk, and cost of rewriting everything from scratch.”

Roadmap and availability

Some key features that are planned for 2020 include support for Open RIA Services and support for third-party libraries such as Telerik UI for Silverlight.

Significant performance improvements are also expected when the Mono team at Microsoft completes adding support for "Ahead-of-Time" compilation, a feature that is also eagerly awaited by the Microsoft Blazor community.

A Technology Preview of OpenSilver was released today and is available for download at: <https://www.opensilver.net>

About the company

Userware is a software company founded in 2007 by two experts in Microsoft technologies. It is based in Paris, France, and has a portfolio of products with more than 25,000 customers in over 75 countries.

Specialized in Microsoft technologies and developer tools, the company is also behind CSHTML5, a Visual Studio extension that is able to compile C# and XAML code into HTML and JavaScript. Userware has continuously improved CSHTML5 for the past 6 years and is now leveraging its codebase to deliver OpenSilver quickly, replacing JavaScript with WebAssembly for native execution and improved .NET compatibility.

OUR VISION:

“We are .NET developers who believe that Silverlight was the best platform ever for developing line-of-business (LOB) applications. We are sad to see Silverlight die due to the lack of support for plug-ins in modern browsers, so we want to save it by reimplementing it using modern, open, and standards-based technologies. We want to make it even more awesome than before, so that developers have the tools to build amazing products that can change the world.”
