



The Jack Shannahan Prize for Public Service Awarded to the Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging

Established in honor of Jack Shannahan, the former director of the Connecticut Historical Commission and State Historic Preservation Officer; and a founder and first Board Chair of CMSC, the Jack Shannahan Prize for Public Service recognizes public sector individuals and organizations that exemplify a high standard of leadership with a deep commitment to the success of Connecticut's Main Streets. **CMSC is proud to present this award to Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging for their Livable Communities Initiative, which celebrates and supports components of a vibrant downtown, including community engagement, housing, planning & zoning, public spaces & buildings, and transportation.**

About Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging

Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging, a nonpartisan public policy and research office of the Connecticut General Assembly, provides information and inspiration for community leaders to prepare for the changing demographics of our state. For over twenty years, the Legislative Commission has worked to prepare Connecticut for its growing aging population while promoting policies that enhance the lives of the present and future generations of older adults.

Through its collaborative and long-standing work in changing how and where people receive long-term services and supports, the Commission on Aging knows that people want to stay in their homes and communities and to have choice, independence and dignity. And recognizing unprecedented longevity in Connecticut's population, coupled with sheer increases in the number of older adults, the Connecticut General Assembly charged Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging with facilitating the Livable Communities initiative in 2013.

According to the Commission on Aging, Livable Communities are defined as "places that foster independence and support residents across the lifespan. They offer affordable, accessible, and diverse housing and transportation options and public buildings and spaces; supportive community features and services; and vibrancy and opportunities for community engagement. They engage residents in civic and social life, and allow people to remain in their homes and communities. Done well, they enhance the quality of life for all residents, create tremendous economic value in towns and cities, promote healthy living and support environmental sustainability."

Although focused primarily on Connecticut's rapidly aging population, the Commission understands that great places are great for everyone, young and old. Many of the domains of their Livable Communities initiatives are the same components that foster robust downtowns, including having



varied transit and housing options. Moreover, they not only understand but celebrate the idea that the most vibrant communities are those that are inclusive – providing refuge and recreation to all. This inclusivity is a trait the staff members themselves share, and from which CMSC has benefitted greatly. Often at the forefront of creating and sharing useful data and information about the components of healthy communities, the Commission has been extraordinary in their ability to build partnerships that respect and encourage the works of others. In addition to nearly 60 other organizations, CMSC has signed on as a partner to the Commission’s Livable Communities Initiative, supporting their efforts to inspire communities that are just as great to grow up as they are to grow older.

About the Jack Shanahan Award

Connecticut Main Street Center (CMSC) established this award in honor of Jack Shannahan, former director of the Connecticut Historical Commission and State Historic Preservation Officer, and a founder and the first Board Chair of CMSC. For over 30 years, this man of unwavering character and consistent leadership created, protected, built, advocated, and led the way with a low-key approach that masked his tenacity and his passion for understanding and preserving Connecticut’s history.

During Jack's service to the state of Connecticut, over 70,000 properties were documented in the Statewide Historic Resources Inventory. Nearly 1,000 individual properties and 378 districts were listed on the National Register of Historic Places, for a statewide total of 45,680 properties. In 2003, Jack received the National Preservation Honor Award from the National Trust “for his innovative leadership and willingness to take risks to ensure the protection of Connecticut’s valuable historic resources”.

Not simply a “preservationist,” Jack Shannahan was the custodian of our heritage. Even in retirement, he remains a formidable champion of CMSC and Connecticut’s downtowns. In his own words, *“Main Street has fostered an ethic of saving neighborhoods – not just the buildings, but the very fabric of a community. In order to preserve our history and our neighborhoods, there must be a local presence on a regular basis. This is where the Main Street program fits in. Citizens own their downtowns and their involvement is crucial for the revitalization of their neighborhoods.”*

Previous Recipients

In 2008, Connecticut Main Street Center inaugurated this prize by honoring **Senator Don Williams and Senator Andrew Roraback**, the two public servants most responsible for the 2005 Community Investment Act, landmark legislation which created a yearly funding stream for farmland preservation, open space acquisition, historic preservation and affordable housing. It is this funding source that has provided the resources for the State Historic Preservation Office to support Connecticut Main Street Center’s *Preservation of Place Grant Program*. *Preservation of Place* grants allow our Main Street programs across the state to build and implement strategies to bring our historic main streets – the



vital hearts of our communities - back to life. These historic Main Streets are an essential component in sustainable growth and a competitive statewide economy.

In 2015, CMSC presented the Shannahan Prize to the **Connecticut Housing Finance Authority** for its pioneering efforts to revitalize our Main Streets through the Come Home to Downtown program. CHFA seeks to proactively address the state's housing needs, and contracted with Connecticut Main Street Center in 2012 to create *Come Home to Downtown*, a program aimed at rejuvenating our historic downtowns and town centers. This program provides planning and technical assistance to redevelop small, underutilized downtown properties into housing above commercial space (mixed-use development). CHFA provided source funds for this program from Community Investment Act (CIA) proceeds designated for the expansion of affordable housing opportunities that also further responsible growth and economic and community development strategies. CHFA has also further supported these efforts with the creation of a loan fund to help the owners of these properties undertake the necessary redevelopment to transform their buildings. CHFA has been unique in their design and approach to revitalizing our downtowns with housing and economic activity through mixed-use development, using the Come Home to Downtown program to reach an underserved population of smaller downtown properties.