

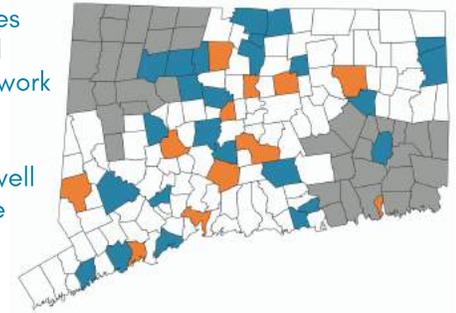


ADVOCACY PRIORITIES 2018-2019

To create an economically healthy state, Connecticut must encourage efforts to restore its downtowns and town centers to their historic place as drivers of the state's economy and leaders of innovation and opportunity.

Our mission is to be the catalyst that ignites Connecticut's downtowns as the cornerstones of thriving communities. We do this by providing education and technical assistance, and championing policies that encourage and support robust downtowns. Our statewide network of 75 member communities impacts 1.9 million residents across the state.

CMSC is supporting our Main Streets by advocating for specific legislative changes, as well as general policies that enhance our downtowns' walkability, expand housing, encourage business, enable inclusivity and foster innovation.



Place

1. Double the Cap on Historic Tax Credits: CMSC is working with CT Preservation Action, CT Trust and others to double the cap on the state's Historic Tax Credits. Doing so is an investment that generates a significant return for the State, with studies in Rhode Island and elsewhere showing a \$5 return to the state and municipalities for every \$1 of historic tax credit.

Economics

2. Protect Community Investment Act Funds: The State must protect Community Investment Act funds. These monies provide the source funds for many beneficial programs, including CMSC's award-winning Come Home to Downtown program, which aims to bring small, under-utilized downtown buildings back to life.

3. Grow Tools & Resources for Small Businesses: Our downtowns and commercial corridors are home to the majority of our small businesses, the lifeblood of Connecticut's economy. Providing financing, resources and technical assistance through programs like the Small Business Express Program gives small business owners the tools they need to be successful, strengthening the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit that makes Main Street so economically robust.

4. Encourage Use of Tax Increment Financing: Numerous studies show the positive economic impact of a healthy downtown, not the least of which is that money spent downtown, stays downtown. Local and state officials can help improve their town centers and other areas by encouraging the use of Tax Increment Financing Districts, made possible through the passage of PA 15-57, An Act Establishing Tax Increment Financing Districts. TIF is a tool that provides communities with a new source of funds for economic development projects, infrastructure investments, and downtown revitalization.



Inclusiveness

5. Support Diversity of People, Incomes & Uses in Our

Downtowns: More than ever, people want to live and work in interesting, walkable and authentic places. In fact, in Connecticut, quality-of-life – with features like transportation choices, affordability, parks and entertainment – is the most important factor for CT adults when choosing where to live. The state should support efforts to encourage and grow these types of areas by supporting policies and initiatives that enable innovation, offer a variety of housing choices at different price points, and encourage a diversity of people, incomes & uses.



Sustainability

6. Downtown Investment is Green Development: If you believe in smart growth, you must invest in downtown development. It's simply a better choice for environmental sustainability, public health and smart design, since a ready supply of buildings and walkable streets and parks means downtown is inherently green with multiple opportunities for healthier living.

Transportation

7. Facilitate Walkable, Connected Communities: The state should invest in connected communities that embrace a variety of transit options for people of all ages and abilities by continuing to fund *Let's GO CT!* – the State's 30-year vision for a best-in-class transportation system. Walkable, bikeable neighborhoods are highly sought after, with 48% of CT's adults wanting to someday live in an area within walking distance of shops and restaurants, according to a 2014 study from the Legislative Commission on Aging and the CT Chapter of the American Planning Association.

8. Incentivize Transit-Oriented Development: Moreover, to fully support Connecticut's \$1.5 billion investment in transit, the state also needs to support development around that transit. Transit-oriented development, or TOD, is best suited to our downtowns and Main Streets, where much of the infrastructure already exists to facilitate dynamic, walkable, mixed-use development that includes a variety of businesses, housing choices and transit options. Additionally, municipalities should continue to support and implement Complete Streets initiatives.



Stewardship

9. Support Managed Downtowns: Curating the many facets of a healthy downtown is essential to its success. Having downtown-friendly regulations, public/private partnerships and community engagement are just some of the elements that need to be cultivated and well-managed. At the local level, this means support for local main street management organizations, while support for statewide financing programs, policies and legislation that enhance our downtowns is imperative.