

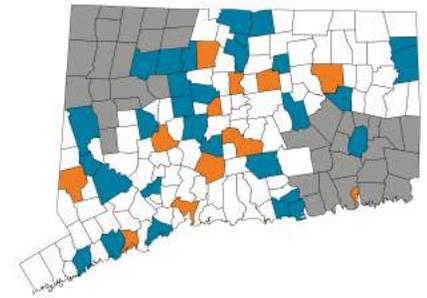


2021 ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

To save the social & economic heart of our communities, Connecticut must prioritize our downtowns & town centers as the drivers of the state's economy, leaders of innovation & opportunity, and reinvigorate a Main Street spirit severely shaken by Covid-19.

Connecticut Main Street Center (CMSC) is the expert resource for developing and sustaining vibrant downtowns that fuel our state's prosperity. Our mission is to assess, educate, convene, and advocate to develop and grow our traditional downtowns, village centers, and urban mixed-use neighborhoods. Our statewide network of 80+ member communities impacts 1.9 million residents across the state.

CMSC supports our Main Streets by advocating for specific legislative changes and general policies that enhance our downtowns' walkability, expand housing, encourage business, enable inclusivity and foster innovation. We actively participate in the Downtown Working Group chaired by Reps. Quentin Phipps (Middletown) & Jane Garibay (Windsor/ Windsor Locks). We encourage other legislators to join the Working Group to learn more about how we can better serve Connecticut's downtowns & Main Streets now and as we move forward.



Economics

1. Grow Tools & Resources for Small Businesses: Our downtowns and commercial corridors are home to the majority of our small businesses, the life-blood of Connecticut's economy. However, many small shops and restaurants have been devastated by the lingering effects of the coronavirus. Providing additional financing, resources and technical assistance for small business owners is imperative for helping these merchants survive, so they can continue to be successful innovators, strengthening the entrepreneurial spirit that makes Main Street so economically resilient and lively.

2. Protect Community Investment Act Funds: The State must protect Community Investment Act funds. These monies provide the source funds for many beneficial programs that enable historic preservation, support affordable housing and protect open space.

Place

3. Provide Communities Tools to Address Abandoned and Blighted Properties:

Clean, safe, attractive and fun are the key elements of a thriving downtown. Properties that are neglected and abandoned create a negative perception and often attract criminal or unwanted behavior. The State should remove the municipal population threshold for certain parties to petition the Superior Court for appointment of a receiver for a blighted and abandoned property.

4. Maintain or Increase the Historic Tax Credit Cap: These tax credits are an invaluable tool in preserving and adapting CT's historic buildings. Maintaining or increasing the credits is an investment that generates a significant return for the State, with studies in Ohio and elsewhere showing a \$6.20 return to the state and municipalities for every \$1 of historic tax credit invested.





Inclusiveness

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

More than ever, people are recognizing that many in our communities have been shut out of opportunities to succeed. CMSC has signed on as a supporter of DesegregateCT in calling for zoning reforms that will help address housing supply & diversity. The state should support these efforts to encourage and grow a variety of housing choices at different price points, as well as encourage a diversity of people, incomes and uses in all Connecticut cities and towns.

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 mean downtowns are inherently green with multiple opportunities for healthier living.

Transportation

7. Facilitate Walkable, Connected Communities: The state should prioritize and invest in connected communities that embrace safety and a variety of transit options for people of all ages and abilities. Legislative changes that would increase pedestrian safety at crosswalks, create pedestrian safety zones, enable municipalities to change speed limits on municipal-owned roads, and require motorists to yield to pedestrians will encourage walkable, connected neighborhoods for all to enjoy.

8. Incentivize Transit-Oriented Development: Moreover, to fully support Connecticut's 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.

