

CONNECTICUT PLANNING

Spring 2023

A publication of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association



American Planning Association
Connecticut Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Greetings fellow planners! It was wonderful to celebrate the start of spring and see so many of you at the recent National APA conference in Philadelphia. I hope that you left as energized as I was by the great presentations and networking with other planners across the country. I gravitated towards sessions on resiliency, housing, and infrastructure funding opportunities but also urban redesign sessions for cooler and safer streets that provided targeted economic development including more outdoor dining, creative placemaking, and improved multi-modal accessibility. Sadly, upon my return to Connecticut, I was shocked by the death of a former co-worker struck by a motor vehicle while crossing the road in an area where his presence as part of that roadway system was neither acknowledged nor invited. As a parent, I have felt intense fear at letting my sons ride or walk on the same roadway near where this death occurred. These fears are often echoed by others in my community who have relayed stories of near misses and feeling unsafe while they jog, walk, or ride. As we celebrate the warmer weather and spend more time outside in the communities where we live and work, it's a great time as planning practitioners to relook with fresh eyes on the spaces that we can improve in partnership with our engineering colleagues for greater inter-modal mobility and accessibility. Take advantage of this time of year to get out there in your local neighborhoods to assess roadway shortcomings and observe danger hot spots, then visit places near and far on your summer vacations with shared roadway best practices, and bring these back to our communities where we live and work. Roadways designed with only vehicle users in mind will unfortunately only result in more future fatalities — whether alternative users chose a different mode by choice or necessity. As planners, we need to elevate our professional voices, courteously interject ourselves in the spaces where these conversations happen, and advocate to provide safer environments for all.

Enjoy your summer and be safe out there. 🌞

— Emmeline Harrigan, AICP, CFM 

P.S. Save the date for our annual Hot Topics Program on June 9 and SNEAPA in New Haven on October 5-6. Hope to see you there!

Cover image: Oregon Department of Agriculture (Flickr)

CONNECTICUT PLANNING

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Amanda E. Kennedy, AICP
Executive Director
Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments
Ph: (860) 889-2324
akennedy@seccog.org

Layout/Advertising:
Jeffrey H. Mills
J.M. Communications
Ph: (860) 454-8922
jmcommunications@comcast.net



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Recreational Marijuana in the Land of Steady Habits: How Towns in Connecticut are Zoning for Recreational Cannabis Use

by Evan Seeman, Esq., Ryan Hoyer, Esq. and Christopher Schaut, AICP

The legislation that legalized cannabis use also empowered the state's municipalities to regulate adult recreational cannabis establishments through local zoning codes or ordinances. So, how are the municipalities handling it?

In June of 2021, the State of Connecticut became the latest state to sign the legalization of recreational adult-use cannabis into law. As with other States that have legalized recreational use, Connecticut's objective was to capitalize on the significant economic benefits that come with legalization. There is also potential for substantial economic benefits for Connecticut's municipalities that provide for these establishments. Recreational cannabis sales in the State have rapidly increased since the sale of cannabis officially began this past January 10. As reported by the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP), sales totaled more than \$5 million in January, \$7 million in February, and \$9.5 million in March. The legislation that legalized cannabis use also empowered the state's municipalities to regulate adult recreational

cannabis establishments through local zoning codes or ordinances. So, how are the municipalities handling it? The authors of this article surveyed the state's 169 municipalities to identify regulatory trends and varying approaches taken by communities across the state.

Under General Statutes Section 21a-422f, municipalities may either permit or prohibit cannabis establishments. We have seen many communities prohibit cannabis outright or impose temporary moratoria while they decide whether to permit such establishments and, if so, how to do so. Municipalities that wish to permit cannabis establishments may take one of two approaches: The first, more common approach, is to develop "reasonable restrictions" for such establishments through their zoning codes or ordinances.¹

(continued on page 5)



The Botanist Cannabis Dispensary in Uncasville.

Marijuana, cont'd

The second approach is to do nothing and instead rely on the statutory default under which cannabis establishments are deemed “zoned as if for any other similar use.”²


A municipality’s “chief zoning official” must report to the Office of Policy and Management and DCP “any zoning changes adopted by the municipality regarding cannabis establishments” within 14 days of the changes being adopted.³


The State maintains a list of those municipalities that have reported changes. The State’s list contains only 90 municipalities. In the course of our research, it became clear that the State’s list is outdated, as municipal cannabis regulations change almost weekly, if not daily, and we also found regulations for many of the 79 municipalities not on the State’s list.

Before diving into the results of our research, please consider the following disclaimers. First, it is almost certain that

(continued on page 6)

There are at least 90 municipalities that permit some form of cannabis establishments ... of these municipalities, 72 of them have enacted their own regulations.





**Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association**




HOT TOPICS

in Land Use Law and Practice 2023

Friday, June 9, 2023
Mark Twain House Museum
351 Farmington Ave, Hartford, CT

8:15 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.	Registration and Breakfast	Event Sponsors  TORRANCE SANDAK HENNESSEY LLP
8:45 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.	Chapter Meeting	
9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	Annual Legal Update and Q&A Session	
11:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.	Break	
11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.	Legislative Front – Issues and Topics from 2023 CT General Assembly and Looking Ahead	
12:15 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.	Lunch	 PLANNING & POLICY GROUP
1:15 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.	EDI in action: Community Engagement Successes and Tools for Self-Evaluation	
2:15 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.	Break	
2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	Ethics – Right, Wrong, and Everything in Between	



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One municipality has included a chart in its zoning regulations explicitly identifying each cannabis establishment type, the corresponding similar use, and in which zones the use is permitted and prohibited

Marijuana, cont'd

as of publication of this article, there have been additional changes to cannabis regulations in some communities. Second, there are clearly more zoning authorities in the State (for example, boroughs, fire districts, etc.) than there are municipalities. Our research was limited to the State's 169 municipalities and did not include any other zoning authorities. Third, there are eight municipalities for which we have been unable to locate any cannabis regulations, and which have not responded to our inquiries. Rather than assume that they allow cannabis establishments by statutory default, we have put these municipalities aside. Finally, this article purposely avoids identifying any municipality by name. Our aim is to inform municipalities of the varying techniques established to regulate cannabis, not to single them out for scrutiny.

How Many Allow it?

There are at least 90 municipalities that permit some form of cannabis establishments (defined by statute to include "a producer, dispensary facility, cultivator, micro-cultivator, retailer, hybrid retailer, food and beverage manufacturer, product manufacturer, product packager, delivery service, or transporter"⁴). Of these

municipalities, 72 of them have enacted their own regulations. Eighteen municipalities permit cannabis but have chosen to rely on the statutory default rather than enact new regulations. Thirty-six municipalities prohibit recreational cannabis establishments and another 33 have imposed temporary moratoria that remain in effect. Finally, at least two municipalities have taken no action to prohibit cannabis establishments but when asked about their community's stance, indicated that they believe that such establishments are prohibited. These municipalities contend that cannabis is prohibited because their zoning codes are permissive in nature (i.e., if a use is not expressly allowed, then it is deemed prohibited). However, the statute cautions that "[u]nless otherwise provided for by a municipality...a cannabis establishment shall be zoned as if for any other similar use, other than a cannabis establishment, would be zoned." It remains to be seen whether this approach would pass judicial muster.

Where Establishments are Permitted

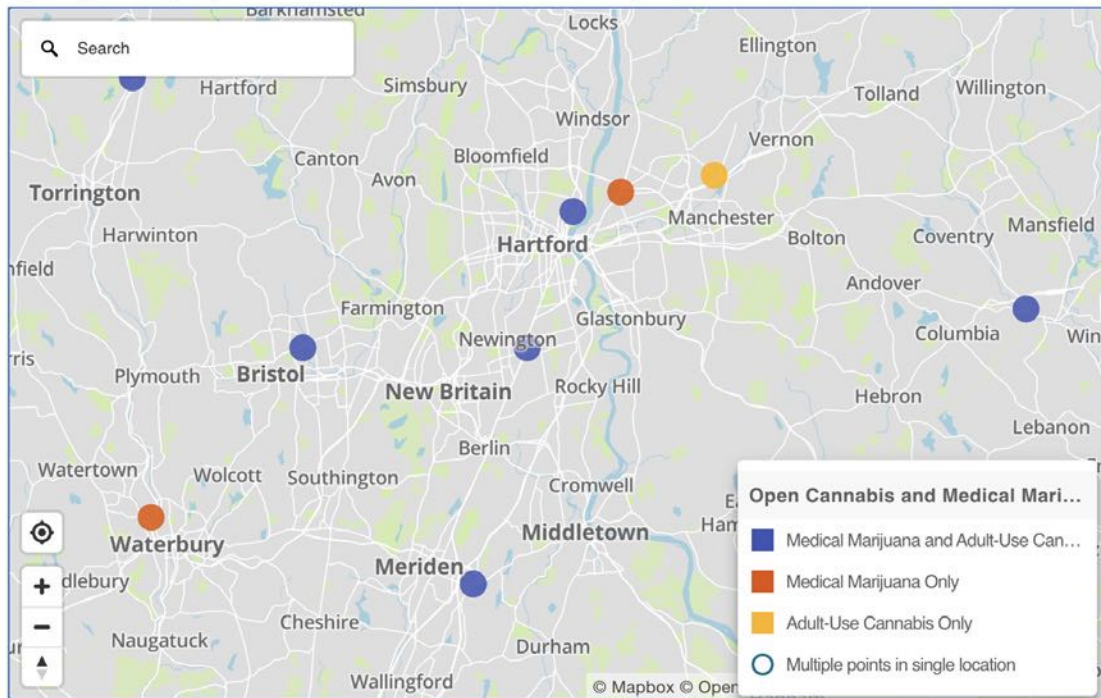
Perhaps unsurprisingly, the vast majority of municipalities that have enacted new regulations to permit cannabis establishments limit them to commercial or industrial zones. However, at least 15

(continued on page 7)



Licensed Cannabis Retailers and Medical Marijuana Dispensaries

Operating hours may vary. Contact the business or visit their website directly to learn more.



Source: portal.ct.gov/cannabis

Marijuana, cont'd

municipalities permit cannabis establishments in zones that also allow residential uses, with an even smaller subset of those municipalities (only two) permitting cannabis establishments in zones described by the municipality as explicitly residential. Of these 15 municipalities, the majority of zones are development zones or commercial zones that also permit mixed-use or multi-family residential, though some also permit single and two-family housing. At least two municipalities permit cultivation in rural agricultural zones, but not retail or production. In communities which have not enacted their own cannabis regulations, there may be unintended consequences of having cannabis establishments in residential zones.

Nine of the 17 municipalities that have not enacted their own regulations provide guidance in their zoning codes as to which existing uses are to be deemed analogous to different types of cannabis establishments. Some municipalities choose to treat cannabis retailers similar to a package or liquor store for the purposes of permitting and/or parking requirements. One municipality has included a chart in its zoning regulations explicitly identifying each cannabis

establishment type, the corresponding similar use, and in which zones the use is permitted and prohibited. For example, cannabis food and beverage manufacturers are treated as a manufacturing establishment and allowed in the applicable business zones but are not allowed in the residential zones and cannot be considered a cottage food operation. This municipality also treats cannabis delivery services and transporters as business service establishments in the business zones and may allow such establishments in residential zones as a home enterprise by special permit, provided there is no on-site storage of cannabis products. For those that do not provide guidance, there is significant ambiguity as to which existing use a zoning commission would consider analogous to a cannabis establishment. For example, is a cannabis cultivator to be treated as a florist, a greenhouse, an agricultural use, a research and development facility, or some other use category?

Types of Establishments Permitted

Most municipalities that permit cannabis establishments allow all types of establishments, including retail

(continued on page 8)

Nine of the 17 municipalities that have not enacted their own regulations provide guidance in their zoning codes as to which existing uses are to be deemed analogous to different types of cannabis establishments.

Under the enabling legislation, a “special permit or other affirmative approval” is required “for any retailer or micro-cultivator seeking to be located within a municipality.” The statute does not appear to address what is considered an “affirmative approval” ...

Marijuana, cont'd

(recreational, hybrid, and medical), production, and cultivation. Of the 72 municipalities which permit some cannabis establishments by specific regulation, the vast majority of these municipalities permit all types of cannabis uses. At least three municipalities prohibit retail and production and only permit cultivation, while at least two municipalities only permit retail uses. At least two municipalities permit hybrid retail of converted medical dispensaries, but do not otherwise permit retail uses. A number of municipalities note that cannabis cultivation cannot be considered an agricultural use, though at least one municipality permits cultivation by right as an accessory use in residential zones.

Capping the Number of Establishments

There are at least 15 municipalities that have capped the number of cannabis establishments that may locate within their jurisdiction. Twelve cap the number of retail facilities, five cap

micro-cultivators, one rural community allows a single cannabis establishment total, another rural community allows a single permit for each type of cannabis establishment, and another limits the number of recreational distribution establishments. Municipalities either set arbitrary limits on the number of establishments (i.e., up to five retailers or hybrid retailers) or base it on population size (one micro-cultivator for every 25,000 residents). Interestingly, one municipality allows no more than one retail or hybrid retailer per 25,000 residents but has a total population of only 5,000.

Permitting and Procedural Considerations

Under the enabling legislation, a “special permit or other affirmative approval” is required “for any retailer or micro-cultivator seeking to be located within a municipality.”⁵ The statute does not appear to address what is considered an “affirmative approval,” so it is not clear if this approval must come from a zoning

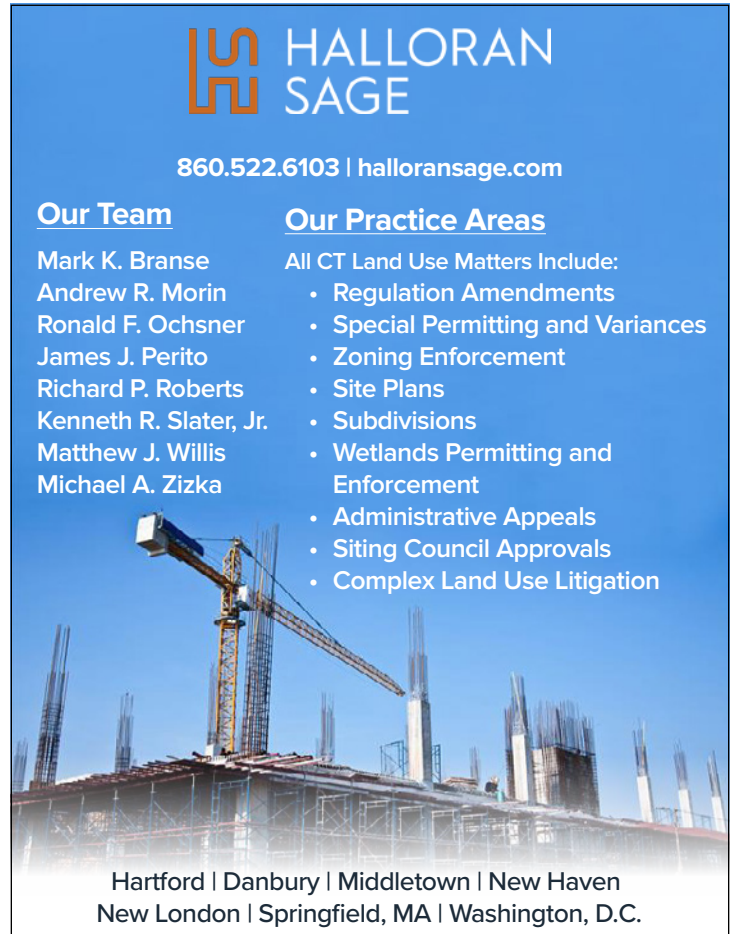
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Marijuana, cont'd

commission or if it could be provided by the commission's authorized agent. The statute does not address whether an "affirmative approval" is required for cannabis establishment types other than retailers and micro-cultivators. The vast majority of municipalities that allow cannabis establishments have opted to require approval of a discretionary special permit or special exception by the commission. A couple of municipalities, however, have slightly different approaches as to what is an "affirmative approval." In one municipality, approval of the city council is required in addition to obtaining the applicable zoning approvals. In another, cannabis retailers are allowed as a conditional use in certain zoning districts if they meet specific requirements, unless the location abuts a lot in a residential zone (in which case, a special permit is required).

Additionally, at least two municipalities require that the special permit issued for the cannabis establishment be

renewed on some periodic basis, allowing those communities to impose new controls and re-review the establishment on a regular basis.

Distance Separation Requirements

Separation requirements between cannabis establishments and other sensitive uses or other cannabis establishments are ubiquitous. The most common examples of sensitive uses include places of worship, public buildings, recreation areas, schools, and daycare facilities. However, some municipalities list only schools, while others include hospitals and homeless shelters.

Of the 72 municipalities which permit some cannabis establishment by regulation, only 10 do not have separation requirements. Of those 10, two do not permit retail sales and one only permits hybrid sales. Among the various separation requirements, the most common is 500 feet from other sensitive uses and 1,500 feet from other cannabis establishments. But these requirements vary

(continued on page 10)

Separation requirements between cannabis establishments and other sensitive uses or other cannabis establishments are ubiquitous. The most common examples of sensitive uses include places of worship, public buildings, recreation areas, schools, and daycare facilities.



EXPERIENCE COUNTS

"The only source of knowledge is experience.
You need experience to gain wisdom."

Albert Einstein



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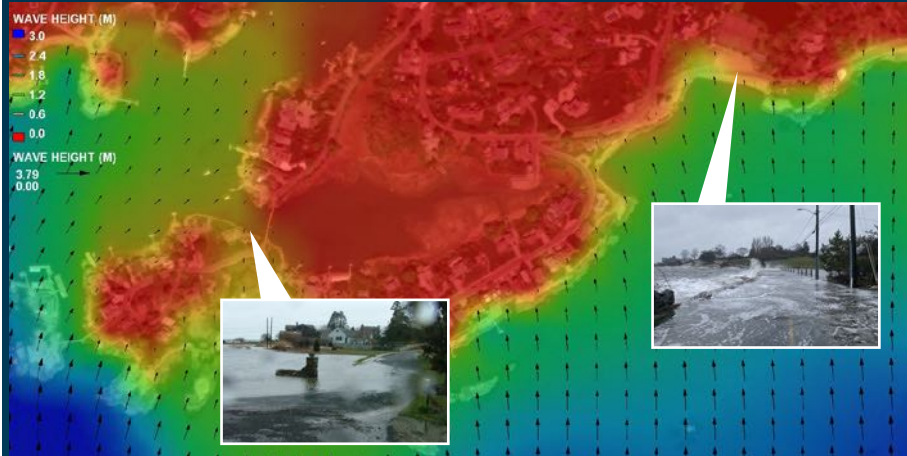


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Many municipalities also require information on security, odor mitigation, signage, and traffic from applicants. Of the 72 municipalities which permit some kind of cannabis establishment, at least 30 require an odor mitigation plan and at least 32 require that the applicant provide a security plan.

Marijuana, cont'd

significantly, with at least one municipality requiring only that cannabis establishments not be in the same building as another retail use. Other municipalities require anywhere from 100 feet to 3,000 feet of separation between cannabis establishments and other sensitive uses and between 500 feet and 6,000 feet of separation between individual cannabis establishments.

Security, Odor, and More

Many municipalities also require information on security, odor mitigation, signage, and traffic from applicants. Specifically, of the 72 municipalities which permit some kind of cannabis establishment, at least 30 require an odor mitigation plan. The odor mitigation requirement is limited to production and cultivation facilities in most communities, though some require odor mitigation for retail as well. At least 32 municipalities require that the applicant provide a security plan, and some of those require that

the police department review such a plan. At least 29 municipalities have signage requirements that are specific to cannabis establishments or otherwise require the applicant to provide information on proposed signage prior to any approvals, in addition to any statutory requirements. Finally, at least 17 municipalities require a traffic plan from the applicant.

There are also unique requirements that apply within some communities. At least one town specifically requires disclosure of any fertilizers to be used in cultivation. Another requires cultivators to show that they can operate for at least a week during a power outage.

Visibility of Products

The statutes permitting recreational cannabis establishments prohibit displaying “cannabis or cannabis products so as to be clearly visible to a person from the exterior of the facility used in the operation of a cannabis establishment,” and prohibit “display signs or other printed material advertising any brand or any kind of can-

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Marijuana, cont'd

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nabis or cannabis product on the exterior of any facility used in the operation of a cannabis establishment.”⁶ Multiple municipalities have added specific regulations on top of this general ban. Though a commonly used planning technique for achieving pedestrian-focused streetscapes, minimum storefront visibility requirements for cannabis establishments do not appear to be desired in most municipalities in Connecticut. At least seven communities have some form of restriction in their zoning regulations prohibiting the display of cannabis products at retailers if visible from the exterior of the facility. In contrast, one

municipality requires that any windows which allow visibility into a cannabis facility maintain at least 50-percent visibility into the store interior.

Conclusion

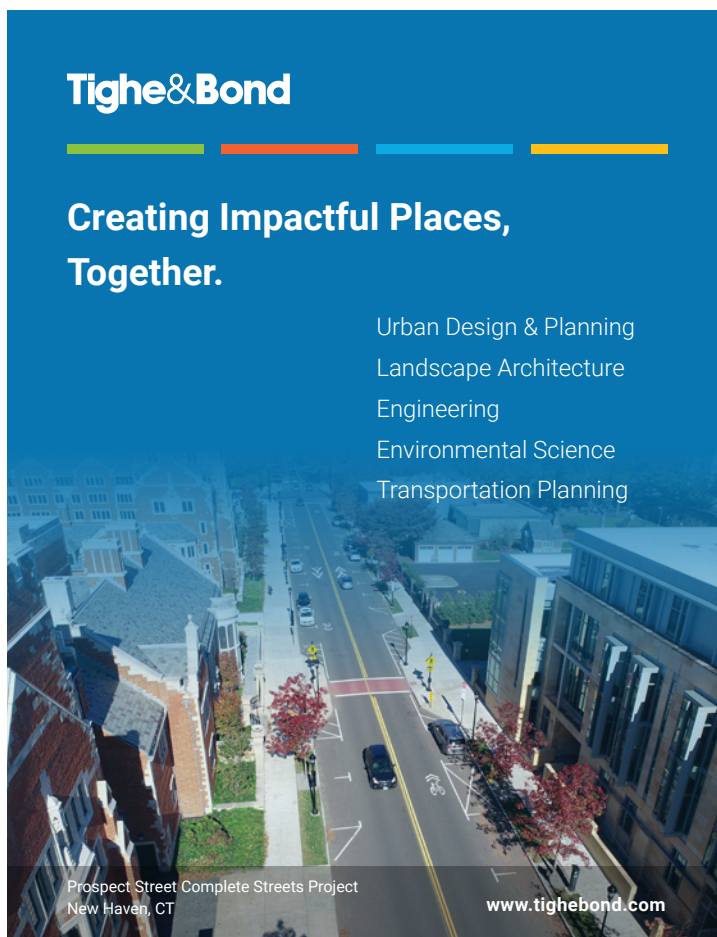
We hope that the results of our survey are helpful to municipalities grappling with this issue or going through growing pains in regulating cannabis. If you have any questions, we would be pleased to discuss them with you. ■■■

— *Evan Seeman, Esq., Ryan Hoyler, Esq., and Christopher Schaut, AICP, are members of Robinson & Cole's Real Estate and Development group in Hartford.*

Endnotes

- ¹ Conn. Gen. Stat. ¶ 21a-422f(b).
- ² Conn. Gen. Stat. ¶ 21a-422f(c).
- ³ Conn. Gen. Stat. ¶ 21a-422f(b).
- ⁴ Conn. Gen. Stat. ¶ 21a-420(4).
- ⁵ Conn. Gen. Stat. ¶ 21a-422f(g).
- ⁶ Conn. Gen. Stat. ¶ 21a-421bb(11).

Though a commonly used planning technique for achieving pedestrian-focused streetscapes, minimum storefront visibility requirements for cannabis establishments do not appear to be desired in most municipalities in Connecticut.



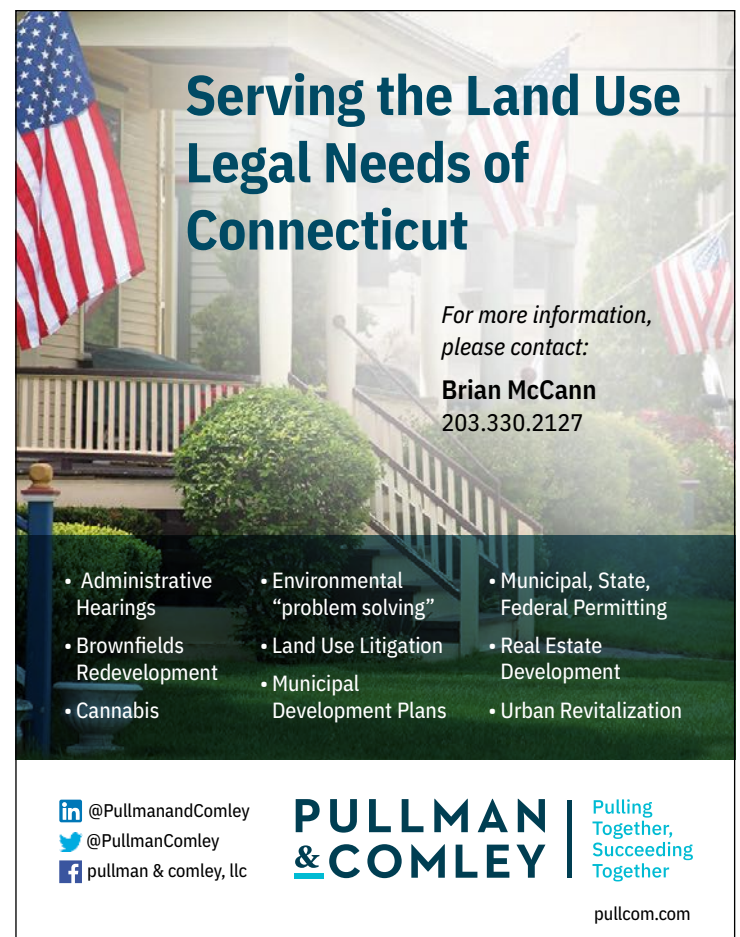
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2022 Connecticut Planning Awards

Each year the Connecticut Chapter of APA invites nominations for its annual Planning Awards to showcase outstanding projects, people and places. The chapter recognized eight winners in its 2022 awards competition, unveiling them in December at a luncheon program in Middletown. The 2022 award winners are presented here.

CUTTING EDGE CODE AWARD

ZONE BRIDGEPORT – City of Bridgeport

ZONE BRIDGEPORT (Zone-Bridgeport.com), a fully digitized code tied to the City's online GIS program, establishes a new benchmark for easy-to-use and fully integrated municipal zoning codes. Users need only click on a property to see a pop-up box that shows the designated zone description and provides hyperlinks to permitted uses, building types, building designs, site designs, historic districts, and more. It is clear, concise, visual, illustrative, dynamic, easy to search, and easy to use. The ZONE BRIDGEPORT code is the product of extensive public input

and seeks to preserve neighborhood architectural character and scale, to reclaim neighborhood waterfront for clean public use, to encourage transit-oriented development downtown, to foster the development of quality housing, and promote diverse small businesses all in a greener, more resilient city. It is a state-of-the-art form-based zoning code custom fitted for an older urban landscape with all the power of 21st-century technology. The code allows a majority of uses as of right; entirely



removes off-street parking requirements; introduces a Certificate of Location Approval which expires after five years to certain controlled or otherwise “special” uses such as cannabis and firearm sales, adult uses, and liquor; and protects mature trees and requires the planting of additional trees.

BEST STATEWIDE PLANNING PROGRAM AWARD

Resilient Connecticut – CIRCA

[Resilient Connecticut](#) is a multi-pronged vulnerability assessment focused on flooding and extreme heat, and identification of climate adaptation and resilience opportunity areas. Developed by the Connecticut Institute for Resiliency and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA), Resilient Connecticut was a planning effort funded by the Natural Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC) (appropriations from Superstorm Sandy routed through HUD), awarded to the State of Connecticut to advance climate adaptation and foster resiliency in the pilot project area (Fairfield County and New Haven County). The planning effort began in mid-2020 and included direct

municipal and COG engagement. The regional and community planning phase was completed in January 2022 with issuance of a final report that described 64 climate adaptation and resilience

“opportunity areas.” The resulting project phase, which commenced in mid-2022, includes concept designs in seven municipalities (Ansonia, Branford, Danbury, Fairfield, New Haven, Norwalk, Stratford) to address unmet climate change-driven needs.



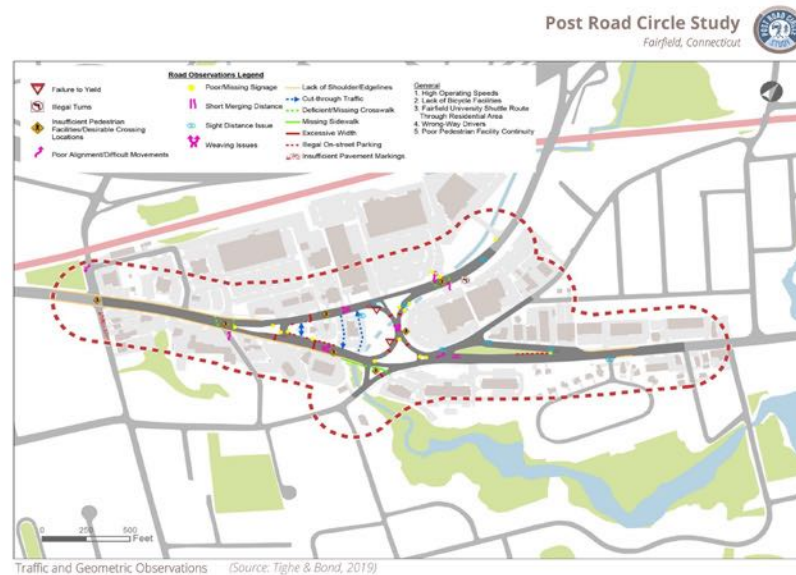
ENGAGING WITH GRAPHICS AWARD

Post Road Circle Study – Town of Fairfield

The **Post Road Circle Study** developed a new vision for a key gateway to the Town of Fairfield, involving both U.S. Route 1 and CT Route 130. The Post Road Circle Study managed to distill large amounts of both quantitative and qualitative information, communicate this information effectively, and produce viable solutions for this complex gateway. The attention to detail and communication strategy throughout the process enabled this project to achieve community consensus on a new vision for a “peanut roundabout,” the preferred alternative, and serves as a master plan for future improvements. Colorful and clear graphics were created to communicate existing issues and depict solutions. Interactive slider bars on the project website, for example, made it easy for viewers to understand existing vs proposed solutions. Innovative use of

technology, including drone footage analysis of traffic patterns and speeds, was utilized to understand the complex transportation network issues. This study is worthy of recognition for many reasons, but particularly because it exemplifies how a municipal engineering project

can successfully engage community members by establishing a strong vision, demonstrate efficacy through ground-breaking technical evaluation, and build community support with engaging visual models. The result of these efforts is a study that has successfully positioned the Town of Fairfield for future funding and implementation of a gateway that will be safer, comfortable, and efficient for all users.



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EXEMPLARY SITE-SPECIFIC MASTER PLAN AWARD

Higganum Cove Park Project – Town of Haddam

The Higganum Cove Master Plan is the culmination of over 20 years of planning efforts to realize the vision set forth by the Higganum Cove Committee. Higganum Cove was envisioned to be a town park used for passive recreation and educational activities while protecting the natural features found in the Cove. The cove has a rich history as the industrial center of the community, dating back 300 years and leaving its mark on the land. Designation as a Superfund Site led to remediation of soils and removal of contaminated debris and sediments. The committee then brought on landscape architecture firm, Kent + Frost, to help envision the potential for the site. In April 2022 the firm conducted a site tour with the Town planner and a committee member. By May, project principal Brian Kent presented potential opportunities to the Committee, including a passive recreational lawn, event space, boardwalk access, kayak put-in, and a pavilion. Several programming elements were identified as project



goals such as access to nature, greenway connectivity, recreational activities, gathering spaces, and educational opportunities through historical and environmental exhibits. The landscape design for the site includes a wide selection of native plants that will enhance the natural features and aesthetics of

the site. The vision set forth by the Higganum Cove Committee has been realized on the master plan. Because of the many planning efforts involved, the Higganum Cove will again serve as a prominent place in the community, honoring the past while creating new opportunities for the future.

THE POWER OF ONE PLANNING AWARD Sandy Fry – City of Hartford



Sandy Fry started her Connecticut career in 1999 as a Principal Transportation Planner with CRCOG, where she spent 12 years focusing on bike, pedestrian, and transit systems, bringing creative and innovative ideas into the region in the field of bike and pedestrian planning. After leaving CRCOG, Sandy spent time grant-writing and doing procurement work with the Greater Hartford Transit District, including leading a partnership with CRCOG to explore the potential of a regional shared micro mobility system. Sandy's last five years of employment have been with the City of Hartford where she served as the City's first Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator. She retired in 2021. Sandy's many years of dedication and passion for bike and pedestrian safety and commitment to equity have been transformative for many of our communities. Of note was her advocacy work on a [traffic-calming project in the north end of Hartford](#) which aimed to make the area safer, improve quality of life, and encourage healthy exercise. Emily Hultquist, Sandy's co-worker from CRCOG, reflects on Sandy as being a "true advocate and that lived by example." Sandy has been a "faithful champion", extremely passionate about her work, and advocating wherever she went.

ART FOR ALL AWARD

Jubilee Mural – City of Norwich

Created by Connecticut artist Ben Keller, the [Jubilee Mural](#) was an initiative of Castle Church in tribute to individuals and communities of resilience, and is part of the future Jubilee Park, a collaboration with Yale School of Design. The mural prominently features two notable black history figures: James Lindsey Smith and Sarah Harris Fayerweather, contemporaries in the nearby Historic Jail Hill Neighborhood. Smith escaped slavery in Virginia in 1838 and eventually settled in Norwich, where he raised a family, served as a minister, and operated a shoemaking business. Fayerweather boldly requested attendance at Prudence Crandall's all-girls school in Canterbury, becoming the first black student there before mob violence shut it down; she went on to become a



conductor on the Underground Railroad and an active abolitionist. The mural project is worth recognition because of its universal message of resilience and perseverance through adversity. It is a visually beautiful addition to the downtown and a step towards converting a

small previously blighted property into a welcoming, vibrant community space/pocket park. The project is a terrific example of placemaking. The mural was unveiled in downtown Norwich on June 18, 2022, in celebration of Juneteenth.



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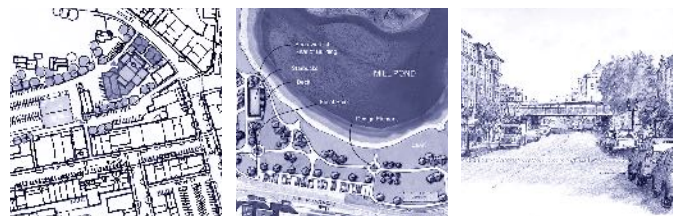


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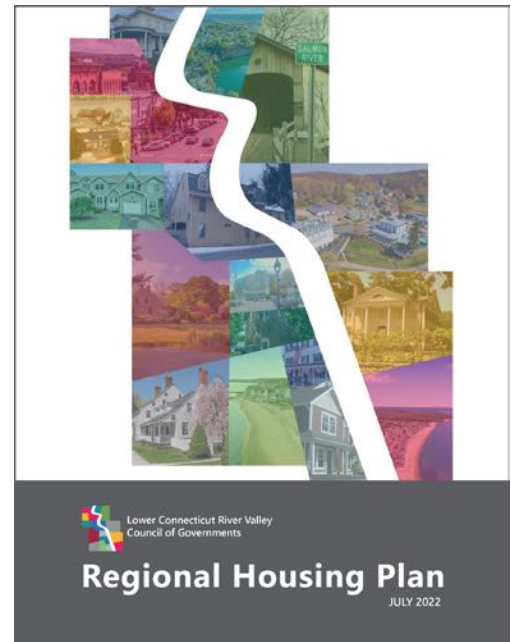
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A MODEL FOR REGIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLANS AWARD

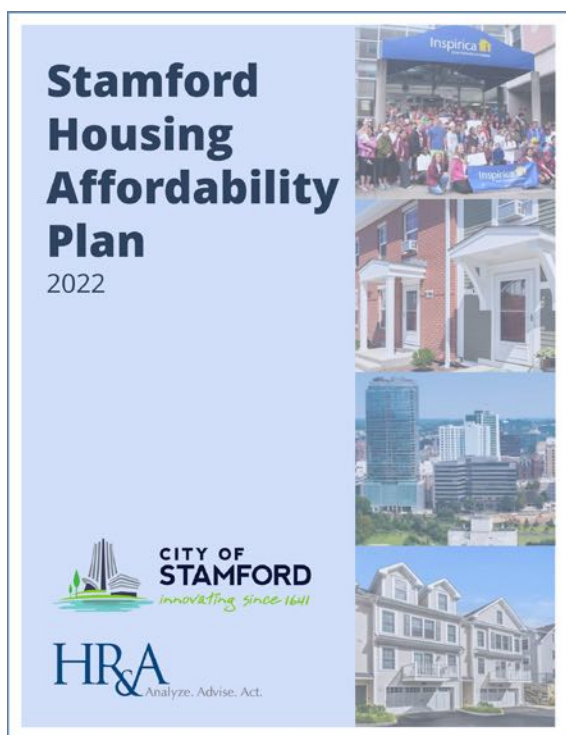
RiverCOG


During the creation of the Lower Connecticut River Valley Plan of Conservation and Development for 2021-2031, it was acknowledged that the region must address housing options to increase diversity among the residents. In pursuit of that goal, the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments (RiverCOG) took an innovative approach to developing housing plans for its constituent municipalities, capitalizing on the efficiencies of planning regionally. The plan evaluated housing needs across the region holistically and developed a framework for addressing those needs in a coordinated and sustainable way. Using that framework, RiverCOG and its consulting team — consisting of Goman and York, Tyche Planning, and SLR Consulting — spearheaded the completion of the 8-30j plans for 12 of the region's 17 municipalities. The recommendations of the [Regional Housing Plan](#) provide actionable steps and tools for the towns to implement their 8-30j plans, create a mechanism for coordination between towns, non-profits, and developers to get housing built, and further efforts toward transit-oriented development. In addition to gathering data and creating a housing plan at the regional level, RiverCOG was able to proceed with the preparation of Municipal 8-30j Plans using a uniform template which resulted in efficiencies that saved both time and money for the participating municipalities.



THE PARADIGM FOR LOCAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLANS AWARD

City of Stamford



The [Stamford Housing Affordability Plan](#), the City's first housing plan in nearly two decades, lays the groundwork for the next era of housing policy in Stamford. The Plan supports increased housing supply, expanding access to homeownership, and improving rental affordability by consolidating the management of housing programs, increasing investments, and revising land use policies. The Plan was the highest scoring in Fairfield County according to Fairfield County's Center for Housing Opportunities' recent Affordable Housing Plan Scorecards, and has been highly regarded for its inclusive and robust public outreach strategy. The Stamford Housing Affordability Plan outlines a variety of tools to address complex and ever-evolving housing challenges. Since the planning process began, Stamford has allocated \$1.7 million to the development of affordable homeownership and supportive housing projects; amended the zoning code to allow for Accessory Dwelling Units on the majority of single-family lots; rezoned land around Stamford's major train station to allow for more transit-oriented development; closed loopholes in its inclusionary zoning program; reduced barriers for residential conversions in underutilized corporate parks; increased funding for housing through linkage fees; and expanded the Down Payment Assistance Program using HUD funding in partnership with the Housing Development Fund. 

Communities Challenge Grant Aimed at Revitalizing a Historic Groton Neighborhood

by Sam Eisenbeiser, AICP, Town of Groton, CT



Poquonnock Bridge Village is a historic neighborhood in the shoreline town of Groton, Connecticut. The village is home to local-serving commercial districts, multifamily and single-family housing, public facilities, parks, open space and coastal access, all within a largely walkable district. For decades, this gem of a neighborhood has been overlooked.

The Communities Challenge Grant (CCG), administered by the State's Department of Economic and Community Development, offered a mechanism for unlocking the potential of this under-invested community. Round 2 Awards, announced in December 2022, included \$8.4M in funding to support housing development and multi-modal infrastructure in Poquonnock Bridge Village. This award, the largest among all Round 2 Awardees, promises to help revitalize the area by improving connectivity and adding residential density on underutilized sites, addressing the town's critical housing shortage.

One of Groton's Many Historic Neighborhoods

Located along Route 1 just to the east of Groton's primary shopping district, Poquonnock Bridge Village is bounded by a collection of natural features including the Poquonnock River to the west, Bluff Point State Park to the south, and preserved open space to the north and east. Now just a memory, the trolley rails running across the Poquonnock River in the early 1900s led to increased local development, and what is now Route 1 became the main thoroughfare between Mystic and the City of Groton.

A number of notable historic structures still remain in the village, ranging from 18th century residential structures to 20th century bungalows to World War II-era temporary navy housing. These homes are interspersed with multiple town-owned buildings and community facilities. This unique array of features classified Poquonnock Bridge Village as a special focus area in the 2016 Town Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).

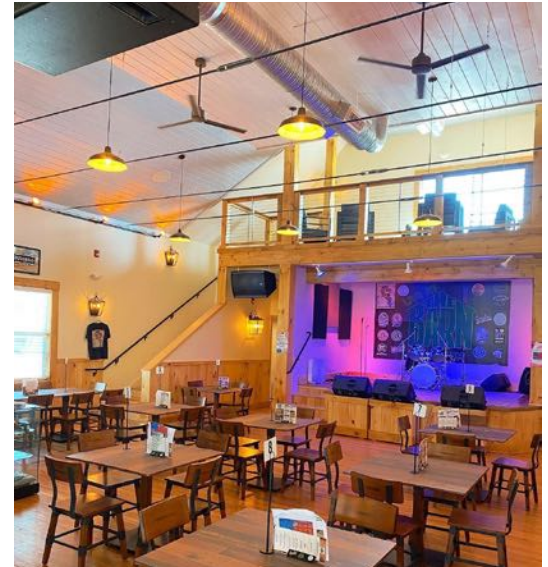
Revitalization Began as an Idea

Groton's 2016 POCD recommended tailoring growth in this area to enhance the historic and cultural resources of the village. The area has good vehicular access and utility services, making it a promising

(continued on page 18)



The town grange, once a fire station, was converted into The Barn, a brewpub and live music venue,



The Poquonnock Bridge Village study set the table for new development, facilitating thoughtful design and highlighting the neighborhood's promise.

Historic Groton Neighborhood, cont'd

candidate for infill development. The POCD suggested creating design guidelines to accommodate future investment in a way that enhances its sense of place.

In 2017, the Town of Groton Office of Planning and Development Services partnered with [Union Studio](#) to initiate a village study. Extensive community outreach was conducted resulting in substantial resident and business participation. Outreach efforts included local advertising, direct mailing to residents and businesses and workshops that included visual preference surveys and detailed exercises in developing neighborhood-appropriate design guidelines and zoning regulations.

Aimed at cultivating a "sense of place," the resulting Design Guidelines for the Mixed Village Center positioned the Poquonnock Bridge node as the community's institutional corridor with town

facilities and recreational spaces dispersed among a historic mixed-use village pattern.

Investment Finds Opportunity

The Poquonnock Bridge Village study set the table for new development, facilitating thoughtful design and highlighting the neighborhood's promise. Small investments started taking shape as property owners, businesses and investors saw the possibilities with their own eyes.

Notable among these early investments was The Barn, a town grange before it was a fire station, now converted into a brewpub and live music venue. While funding for expansion of The Barn was not included in the CCG award, nonetheless, the spot serves as an example of a community anchor that elevates the aesthetics of the neighborhood while bringing people to the area night after night.


Another key investment that led up to the grant application was The Villages

(continued on page 19)



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Historic Groton Neighborhood, cont'd

at Bluff Point, a 19-unit townhouse complex. Tenants there have ready-access to the Poquonnock River Boardwalk and are just down the road from Bluff Point State Park, 800-acres of open space known for shoreline views, mountain bike trails and sheltered coves. Fully occupied upon completion, The Villages at Bluff Point brought needed housing to the neighborhood, a small but important contribution to a larger issue facing the Town of Groton.

Housing: Groton's Chief Concern

A 2021 [Housing Market Study conducted by Camoin Associates](#) validated concerns that the lack of affordable and modern housing options in Groton is a strain on the town's economy. The study forecasts a demand for upwards of 5,000 housing units through 2030 due to anticipated hiring at Groton's largest employers: General Dynamics Electric Boat, Pfizer, and the U.S. Naval Submarine Base. The growing [BlueTech sector](#), comprised of offshore wind energy, undersea



robotics, and aquaculture, will add to that baseline demand.

The Poquonnock Bridge Village Revitalization project aims to help mitigate this housing shortage by leveraging the grant award of \$8.4M to support investments totaling over \$80M in public and private funding. The proposed housing supported through the grant includes about 200 units of market-rate housing with modern amenities and over 50 affordable housing units. About 12,000 sf of commercial space will also be built.

The Villages at Bluff Point, a 19-unit townhouse complex.

(continued on page 20)



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Historic Groton Neighborhood, cont'd

This project will improve non-motorized access for residents and visitors to multiple public facilities in the neighborhood, including Groton Public Library, Thrive55+ Senior Center, Town Hall and the Groton Community Center, as well as parks and coastal access points. Initiatives to improve sidewalk connectivity, build a pedestrian bridge across Poquonnock River, and replace the Poquonnock River boardwalk will be funded through the grant award.

When the Connecticut Communities Challenge Grant was first announced, the program seemed tailor-made for revitalizing this historic neighborhood. The comprehensive village study completed just a few years earlier laid the groundwork for infill development to enhance this already walkable neighborhood. The study validated a shared vision for the local community and put the regulatory infrastructure in place to make that vision possible. Groton's CCG award promises to leverage an emerging trend of investment to bring the neighborhood to its full potential. ■

— Sam Eisenbeiser, AICP, is an Economic Development Specialist for the Town of Groton, CT. Learn more at exploremoregroton.com.



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Safer Streets and Roads are Coming Soon!

by Elizabeth Sanderson, AICP, RLA

Like many people in Connecticut, I too have been personally affected by roadway tragedies — the boy killed crossing the street one evening, days before Christmas; injuries sustained by a family struck by a drunk driver; a runaway truck colliding with and killing people in their cars, while stopped at a red light on their way to work. When people die or suffer from traffic-related incidents it has a lasting effect, not only on immediate family and friends, but on the entire community. We may not be able to control behavior, but for the first time in decades, we have access to knowledge and resources to mitigate negative outcomes. Visible crosswalks, defined intersections, median barriers — these are measures we can plan and implement to prevent deaths and injuries on our roads.

By enacting the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act/Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) in 2021, the federal government acknowledged what many of us already know — planning is critical to solving complex problems. The BIL allocates \$1.2 trillion towards addressing America's failing infrastructure and is gaining momentum in Connecticut. Earlier this year, the [Capitol Region Council of Governments \(CRCOG\)](#) learned its Joint Application with the City of New

Britain for a U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant was selected for award. Five other applications in Connecticut were awarded planning grants, for a total of \$2.4 million in federal funding for the state.

CRCOG is no stranger to big plans. As the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Regional Planning Organization (RPO) for the metro-Hartford area, CRCOG has been churning out plans and studies for decades. Talented and professional staff, both past and present, have funded and assisted in the planning, development, and construction of many projects throughout the region. Additionally, the [Capitol Region Purchasing Council](#) offers services that achieve economies of scale, saving time and money on common goods and projects for over 100 municipalities and agencies across the state.

In its first round of the SS4A program, the federal government prioritized planning, emphasizing the creation of new or revised comprehensive safety action plans. For Round 1 of SS4A, 473 out of 510 awarded applications were for new or supplemental safety plans. Only 37 implementation grants were

(continued on page 22)

CRCOG will use federal and local funds to prevent deaths and serious injuries on roadways through the development of a data-driven safety plan focused on all users.



Preliminary data for 2022 shows serious injuries and fatalities in the CRCOG are up in all but one category.

(Source: The Connecticut Transportation Safety Research Center)

In 2021, the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) established the Vision Zero Council of Connecticut to develop policy and an interagency approach to eliminate traffic-related deaths and serious injuries.

Safer Streets, cont'd

awarded nationwide — congratulations to our neighbors in Springfield, MA and Providence, RI, who were among those selected! Like all programs enacted through the BIL, SS4A seeks to distribute funds equitably by requiring 40% of federal funding be allocated to areas of persistent poverty and historically disadvantaged communities, per the Justice40 Initiative. U.S. DOT intends for safety plans to serve as the basis for investment and implementation of projects and strategies in future funding rounds.

CRCOG will use the \$958,000 from the SS4A federal grant, along with \$239,500 in local funds, to carry out the program's goal to prevent deaths and serious injuries on roadways through the development of a data-driven safety plan focused on all users: pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation users, motorists, micromobility users, commercial vehicle operators, and more. All 38 municipalities within the CRCOG will benefit from the updated safety plan, with the City of New Britain featured as a case study.

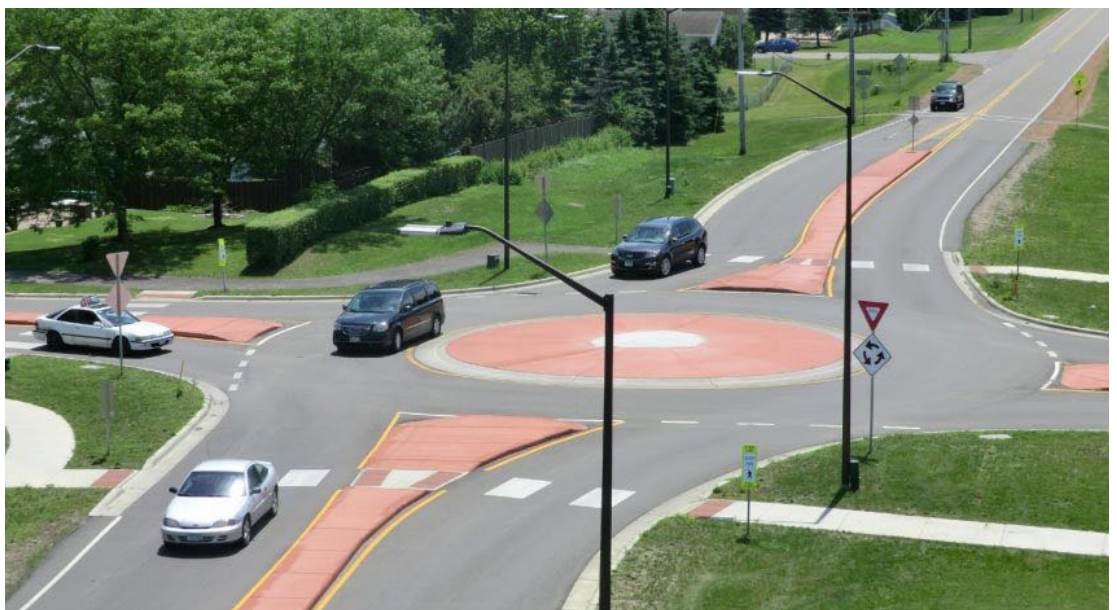
This funding comes at an opportune time. The latest preliminary data for 2022 from the Connecticut Transportation Safety Research Center (CTSRC) reports 386 traffic-related deaths in Connecticut. This represents an increase of 27% over the prior year, and a 54% increase since 2019. In the CRCOG, a total of 422 traffic-related fatalities and type A

serious injuries were reported, representing a 5% increase over the previous five-year average. The numbers are trending in the wrong direction, and more must be done.

In 2021, the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) established the [Vision Zero](#)

[Council of Connecticut](#) to develop policy and an interagency approach to eliminate traffic-related deaths and serious injuries. Members of CRCOG staff participated on Council subcommittees, which developed policy proposals for consideration by the CGA during the 2023 legislative session. Many municipalities in the capital region have adopted Complete Streets plans and/or policies that acknowledge the need to create sustainable transportation

(continued on page 23)



Source: FHWA



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U.S. DOT intends for safety plans to serve as the basis for investment and implementation of projects and strategies in future funding rounds.

Safer Streets, cont'd

opportunities to benefit all users. In January 2023, following a series of pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries, the West Hartford Town Council adopted a Vision Zero Initiative to address traffic and pedestrian safety.

CRCOG's current safety plan, the [Capitol Region Regional Transportation Safety Plan \(RTSP\)](#), was initially prepared by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) using data of traffic-related injuries and fatalities obtained from the [University of Connecticut Crash Data Repository](#). This data was analyzed to identify high crash intersections and corridors throughout the region. A list of recommended countermeasures to reduce crashes and improve roadway safety was provided. Appendix A of the safety plan includes individual reports for each municipality, which include maps of high crash locations and local input about the findings.

For the update, CRCOG will coordinate a planning process rooted in data, research, assessment, community outreach and engagement to define the full scope of the problem and underlying causes. We will update crash data and supplement the plan with findings derived from recent

(continued on page 24)

*This new roundabout improves traffic flow and safety at Route 74 and Route 286 ("Five Corners") in Ellington, CT.
(Source: CTDOT)*

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CRCOG will coordinate a planning process rooted in data, research, assessment, community outreach and engagement to define the full scope of the problem and underlying causes.




Two roundabouts located on Hebron Avenue, Glastonbury, CT. (Source: Google Maps)

Safer Streets, cont'd

plans and studies, such as the Roundabout Screening Study that is underway. The safety plan will incorporate the Safe System Approach outlined in the U.S. DOT National Roadway Safety Strategy. We will work to adapt roadway infrastructure, considering known and anticipated human capabilities and limitations, and implement proven countermeasures and strategies to save lives. This will be an interactive and iterative process. We look

forward to collaborating with our partners, making plans and taking action, to put these federal dollars to work towards creating safer streets and roads for all.

It is an exciting time to be a planner, and I am grateful to be part of this project and the Vision Zero initiative. We have the privilege and duty to creating safe, accessible places for people. I appreciate the efforts of design professionals, policymakers, and federal delegates who have worked so hard to bring the BIL programs to life, helping shift the pendulum towards human-centered design.

The historic BIL funding will help transform plans into reality. CRCOG is grateful for the support from local, state, and federal leaders, and look forward to leveraging our plans into future rounds of funding for implementation. With vision, drive, and determination we can develop actionable plans, and see these plans through to fruition. 

— Elizabeth Sanderson is the BIL Coordinator and Principal Program Manager for the *Capitol Region Council of Governments* (CRCOG).

Sources and Resources:

www.transportation.gov/grants/SS4A

<https://highways.dot.gov/safety/zero-deaths>

www.trafikverket.se/en/startpage/operations/Operations-road/vision-zero-academy/This-is-Vision-Zero/

<https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures>

<https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersection/index.cfm>



U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal, City of New Britain Mayor Erin Stuart, CRCOG Executive Director Matt Hart, CT Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Team Deputy Program Advisor for Infrastructure Stephen Nocera at a recent press conference announcing the \$958,000 federal grant award.

(Photo: Office of Senator Blumenthal)

Market to Metacom — Adaptation and Economic Development Plan

by Arnold Robinson, AICP, NCI, WEDG

The Town of Warren, RI, has a well-established history of adapting to changing conditions. In the 18th century, the town was a bustling whaling port ship-building center. After being raided by British forces during the Revolutionary War, the town rebuilt and reinvented itself as a commercial trading port. In the 19th century, the town transformed itself into a textile and manufacturing hub after a decline in maritime commerce. Now, like so many towns and cities in New England and across the county, the Town of Warren finds itself at a crossroads. It is facing challenges on two fronts: protecting itself from the effects of climate change and reinvigorating a declining area of commercial strip malls. But like it has many times before, the Town of Warren is investing in itself

and has created a plan to combat both of these challenges with one united solution titled “Market to Metacom.”

After receiving grant funding from the Southeast New England Program (SNEP) of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (administered by Restore America’s Estuaries), the Town of Warren worked with civil and environmental engineering firm Fuss & O’Neill to develop a neighborhood plan for the low-lying coastal area between Market Street and Metacom Avenue. The project area is a dense, mixed-use neighborhood (both commercial and residential) that faces tidal flooding impacts, is threatened by projected sea level rise impacts, and has a high percentage of paved impervious surface areas that produce a large volume

(continued on page 26)

Like so many towns and cities, the Town of Warren is facing challenges on two fronts: protecting itself from the effects of climate change and reinvigorating a declining area of commercial strip malls.



Conceptual Plan — a rendering of the project area. (Source: Union Studio)

The low-lying Market Street neighborhood and around Belchers Cove during a flood event.



Market to Metacom, cont'd

of stormwater runoff (affecting water quality). The Market to Metacom Plan addresses both the challenges of bringing in new development opportunities and ensuring that those opportunities are protected from environmental effects.

An important component of the Plan was to actively engage the community (residents, property owners, business owners, etc.) to develop a true and honest vision for this project. Hearing from those who walk the streets, who operate private businesses, who will be impacted

by construction, and who understand the day-to-day challenges of living in this area provides invaluable information that leads to informed decision making. After Fuss & O'Neill collected and analyzed existing conditions (land use, property values, infrastructure, regulations, flooding, and projected sea level rise impacts), three public workshops were led by Fuss & O'Neill and Union Studio to present these existing conditions and to gather input from the community.

After considering the existing conditions and the community's input, the Plan

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A street view of the existing conditions of the site.



Market to Metacom, cont'd

is a phased approach that implements two complimentary scenarios. The first scenario would implement a buy-out program for properties in the Market Street Neighborhood that are threatened by frequent flooding, while, at the same time, making area transportation corridors more resilient to climate change impacts to maintain regional and local transportation connectivity. The second scenario for the Metacom Avenue Corridor would change the zoning in the project area to a simpler Form-Based Code and allow higher density, mixed-used development that encourages both commercial development and upper-floor residential housing of various price points.

Redevelopment projects would need to conform to updated site development regulations, which would result in less impervious area and improved and nature-based stormwater management. This has the potential to significantly improve water quality in area rivers and Narragansett Bay. The current width of Metacom Avenue presents an opportunity for a reconfiguration that can still accom-

modate a high level of service for vehicular traffic while adding a center turning lane, adding bike lanes, and improving sidewalks. This type of alternative road configuration has traffic-calming effects and is associated with vehicular and pedestrian safety improvements — both of which encourage economic development. When transportation improvements are implemented, there will be opportunity to integrate improved stormwater infrastructure, which will improve water quality.

As this is community opportunity, it is important to the leaders of this Plan that the community be constantly involved. A project website ([Market to Metacom](#)) was created to allow 24/7 accessibility to ongoing project information. The website encourages feedback and facilitates interaction with stakeholders. The website is routinely updated as the project progresses. In addition to the project website, social media channels (Facebook and Twitter) are actively used to communicate and update stakeholders. To pictorially communicate goals, a vision plan was created, which included: an economic model for the overall project (featuring redevelopment build-out, infrastructure

(continued on page 28)

A project website was created to allow 24/7 accessibility to ongoing project information. The website encourages feedback and facilitates interaction with stakeholders.

A rendering of redeveloped Metacom Avenue parcels.

(Source: Union Studio Architecture and Community Design)



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The Market to Metacom Plan makes the Town of Warren a forerunner in integrated community development and resilience planning. The Town did more than learn from its past, it is creating its future.

Market to Metacom, cont'd

costs, and nature-based systems benefits); a regulatory system concept for a storm-water management district; a final report summarizing findings and conclusions (prepared to be accessible to a broad audience); and a Case Study Presentation in PowerPoint format.

The Town, Fuss & O'Neill, and Union Studio have created several proof-of-concept site plans and graphics, and the Town is exploring partnerships with experienced development companies for redevelopment proposals. The Market to Metacom Project has attracted the attention of Congressional leaders, infrastructure funders, and the local leadership structure. As a result of the project and the support it has garnered, the Town is in the process of several actions to encourage and incentivize redevelopment in the Metacom Avenue Corridor, including:

- Updating the Comprehensive Community Plan to establish legal basis for regulatory and infrastructure changes;

- Drafting and adopting new Zoning Ordinance (allowing mixed-use by right, allowing higher density of housing, density bonuses available for development of workforce and affordable housing, Form-Based Code format to provide clarity of permitted building forms, and expedited permitting for projects that comply with Form-based Code);
- Working with private property owners to build consensus for the redevelopment vision and connect them with development partners with experience in high-density mixed-use redevelopment;
- Creation of a Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) district to generate funding for infrastructure improvements and climate change adaptation preparation;
- Securing federal and state funding to upgrade and increase infrastructure capacity to support higher density development; and
- Collaborating with the RI Public Transit Authority to increase bus service trip frequency for commuters to Providence and Newport.



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The town's Plan has set a bold vision for the future, with a goal of creating a regulatory and incentive environment that motivates private sector developers. Work to date has identified opportunities for 500-800 residential units and 100,000+ ft² of commercial development. The Market to Metacom Plan makes the Town of Warren a forerunner in integrated community development and resilience planning. The Town did more than learn from its past, it is creating its future. 

— *Arnold Robinson is an Associate and Regional Planning Director for Fuss & O'Neill, Inc.*

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by Christopher J. Smith, Esquire, Alter & Pearson, LLC

The Science of Substantial Evidence Continues with McLoughlin

We all know that decisions by a land use board, commission or agency must be supported by “substantial evidence;” but what is “substantial evidence?” The Courts now look for expert testimony and evidence to substantiate the denial of most land use applications. Let’s review recent history.



evidence required to deny a special exception application. The Court also held that where there is uncontroverted expert testimony that traffic will not be adversely impacted, the commission may not deny the application based on traffic.

In the recent decision of *McLoughlin, et al. v. Planning and Zoning Commission of the Town of Bethel*, 342 Conn. 737 (2022), the Court addressed what constitutes substantial evidence required to deny a special permit application based on impacts to property values, businesses and future development in a neighborhood. *McLoughlin* involved a special permit application for a crematory. During the public hearing, a number of property and business owners, along with the town’s Economic Development Commission, provided testimony of perceived adverse impacts to their properties, businesses and prospective development in the neighborhood. The Commission denied the application.

On appeal, the Court held that the Commission’s denial can be premised on general standards for special permits found in the zoning regulations, such as adverse impacts to property values, businesses and the neighborhood. However, the impacts must be “based on facts specific to the proposed site” and supported by substantial evidence. The Court held that testimony concerning potential environmental impacts attributed to emissions, possible impacts on businesses regarding concerns of employees and patrons, anticipated reductions in property values, and perceived impacts on the developability of the neighborhood, were

speculative and general in nature. The alleged impacts were not substantiated by expert testimony or evidence. Therefore, the Court found that the Commission’s denial was not supported by substantial evidence. The Commission was ordered to approve the special permit application for the crematory.

McLoughlin is consistent with the aforementioned Court decisions addressing what is required to substantiate the denial of a land use application; in particular, wetlands, special exception, special permit and affordable housing applications. General testimony of perceived or speculative harms (the proposal *may* adversely impact the wetlands, traffic or property values) is no longer enough. Expert testimony or evidence that identifies and quantifies adverse impacts associated with the specific facts before the Commission is required.

One might say that “science” has taken a more prominent role in the review of land use applications. This is probably not a bad thing. Land use is governed by regulations in derogation of property rights. It makes sense that the application of these regulations be governed more by certainty, not on perceived or speculative impacts. ■

— Chris Smith has a statewide land use practice. He practices at the law firm of Alter & Pearson, LLC, and may be reached at csmith@alterpearson.com.

Arguably, this started with wetlands applications where in *River Bend Associates, Inc. v. Conservation & Inland Wetlands Commission*, 269 Conn. 57 (2004), the Court held, in part, that “[e]vidence of general environmental impacts, mere speculation, or general concerns do not qualify as substantial evidence.” The Court held that evidence identifying and quantifying an adverse impact is required to deny a wetlands application.

Similarly, “sufficient evidence” identifying and quantifying an actual harm to a substantial public interest is required to substantiate a denial of an affordable housing application under Section 8-30g. See *Garden Homes Management Corporation, et al. v. Town Plan and Zoning Commission of the Town of Fairfield*, 191 Conn. App. 736, 752-754 (2019); cert denied, 333 Conn. 933 (2019).

In *American Institute for Neuro-Integrative Development, Inc. v. Town Plan and Zoning Commission of the Town of Fairfield*, 189 Conn. App. 332 (2019), the Court held that speculative concerns regarding adverse impacts associated with traffic do not constitute substantial

After several years of laying the groundwork, numerous pro-housing advocacy groups, including DesegregateCT and Growing Together CT, seemed to have learned lessons and had prepared more polished, sophisticated legislative strategies on incentivizing or requiring the development of more housing opportunities to move forward in 2023.

CCAPA Legislative Update

2023 Legislative Mid-Season Report: Big Ideas, Modest Expectations

by John Guskowski, AICP, CCAPA Government Relations Co-Chair

This longer session of the two-year legislative biennium seemed to be brimming with big, bold proposals. After several years of laying the groundwork, numerous pro-housing advocacy groups, including DesegregateCT and Growing Together CT, seemed to have learned lessons and had prepared more polished, sophisticated legislative strategies on incentivizing or requiring the development of more housing opportunities to move forward in 2023. Even the Governor's legislative proposal seemed to finally take a somewhat bolder approach on housing development — including a potential \$600 million in new housing funds targeting affordable housing and home ownership. The public hearing processes in the Planning & Development, Transportation, and Housing Committees were as active as ever with housing advocates and keepers of the community flames.

CCAPA's Government Relations Committee was as active as ever, submitting testimony on fourteen raised bills. We provided support for both the Fair Share bill (HB 6633) from Growing Together CT and DesegregateCT's "Work/Live/Ride" TOD proposal (HB 6890). We also pushed for some old-standby priorities such as online publication of legal notices (HB 6556), allowing ZEOs to grant certificates of location for motor vehicle dealers and repairers (HB6748), giving towns more tools to address short-term rentals (SB 1137), expanding the Department of Public Health's jurisdiction over larger onsite wastewater systems (SB 1001), and making some needed reforms to the process by which our State Conservation & Development Plan gets updated and adopted (HB 6647). We are pleased to say that the great majority of the bills we supported made it out of Committee, and several that we opposed did not.

But now, we enter the final quarter of the legislative session. The bill intro-

ductions, the public hearings, the joint-favorable-substitute votes, and the more public hubbub are mostly behind us. We are getting into deep Schoolhouse Rock "I'm Just a Bill" territory. The process from this point depends a great deal on the specific legislative champion for each proposal. For each controversial bill, a legislator — generally the Committee Co-Chair — has to introduce the bill in each chamber and defend it against opposition questioning in order to get it to the finish line of a vote. That places a great deal of responsibility on the knowledge, commitment, passion, and oratory acumen of committee leadership... and this is where the road may get complicated for some of these higher-profile proposals.

The legislative wonks among you may recall that longtime Planning & Development Committee Co-Chair Rep. Cristin McCarthy Vahey moved over to chair the Public Health Committee at the start of this session, and her Co-Chair, Sen. Steve Cassano, did not run for re-election. Replacing them are two relative newcomers — Rep. Eleni Kavros DeGraw is in her second term in the CGA and her first year on Planning & Development; and Sen. MD Rahman is newly elected, taking over Sen. Cassano's former district in Manchester. These two new Co-Chairs have been very engaged and diligent, and have been thoughtful and receptive to the input both during the public hearing process and in individual meetings with CCAPA members. We are optimistic that they, particularly Rep. Kavros DeGraw, will provide strong leadership for the Committee for years to come.

For this year, however, the lift may be too heavy. Both the Work/Live/Ride and Fair Share proposals have complex combinations of incentives and requirements, default zoning regulations and new authorities assigned to the Office of Policy & Management. While there is

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Legislative Update, cont'd

very little disagreement that Connecticut is in significant need of broader housing opportunities, the forces aligned against major regulatory change are well organized. Until Committee or overall legislative leadership meets this resistance with a combination of passion and policy fluency — including in the sometimes difficult language of zoning densities — this may not be a likely victory. It is much more likely, in this situation, that the Governor's proposed bond funds for housing investment will be combined with some internal grant-ranking preferences for TOD areas or something similar.

While that somewhat dim view of major change may be discouraging to some, a silver lining may come in the form of a more robust "consent calendar." This calendar consists of a number of low-controversy bills vetted by legislative leadership that are able to be passed relatively quickly and easily through the General Assembly. Some of our priorities of many years such as ending the ZBA review of motor vehicle dealers and repairers could very easily land on these lists and could move forward, at long last. We will continue to track and advocate for these, as we proceed through the final month of the session.

Finally, in this year of new leadership, we are pleased to welcome Kyle Shiel, AICP, as a new Co-Chair of the Government Relations Committee. Kyle is a Principal Planner at CRCOG and has been a long-time member of the Committee. He takes over for Karen Martin, AICP, who recently took a job at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission in Massachusetts. We are grateful to Karen for her work at the beginning of this session, and are looking forward to Kyle's new leadership role.

As always, if you have questions about CCAPA's Government Relations Committee or our involvement with the State's legislative processes (including offering your help or support), please reach out to us at ctplannersgovrel@gmail.com. ■

— *John Guskowski, AICP, is Principal of Tyche Planning & Policy Group, LLC and Co-Chair of CCAPA's Government Relations Committee.*



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PDO Corner

A Message from CCAPA's Professional Development Officer

by *Jeremy DeCarli, AICP, CZEO*

As we head into the second half of the year, I want to take the opportunity to remind all AICP members that the current two-year Certificate Maintenance reporting period will come to an end on December 31, 2023. Please remember to log all credits for any eligible events you may have attended. Keep in mind, all AICP members must have a total of 32 credits logged, one credit in each of the following topics: Law, Ethics, Equity, and Sustainability and Resilience. Those last two required credits are new for this cycle, so do not forget about them! If you've already logged 32, remember, you can carry over up to 16 credits into the next reporting period. If you need assistance finding credits to fill out the necessary 32, feel free to reach out to me. Keep in mind, SNEAPA will be held October 5-6 in New Haven and will offer many opportunities to catch up on credits.

The Connecticut Chapter held the annual spring AICP Classroom on Saturday March 25 for those interested in taking the AICP exam. The event was held virtually and well attended without about 30 participants. A huge THANK YOU to Robert Flanagan, Rista Malanca, Erin Mannix, Michael Piscitelli, Don Poland, Chris Smith, and Savannah-Nicole Villalba for graciously giving up a part of their weekend to speak during the session. For anyone interested, the next classroom session will be held at SNEAPA. Keep an eye out when the program is available. 🏡



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