

PRESERVATION CONNECTICUT NEWS

2024 LEGISLATIVE ISSUE

Preservation at the Capitol

The 2024 session of Connecticut's General Assembly started on February 8, with preservation on the agenda. In the meantime Congress is still considering funding for federal programs, including historic preservation.

This issue of Preservation Connecticut News serves as an introduction to some of the issues facing preservationists. It starts with brief overviews on the national and state levels. Then, we offer an update on the economic impact of preservation federal and state incentive programs, followed by a detailed report on proposals to modify how the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office reviews state-funded projects for their impact on historic resources. Finally, several statewide partner organizations describe their priorities for the General Assembly session.

The session is a short one, so these articles can only offer a snapshot of how things stand at the end of February. For updates and action alerts, follow Preservation Connecticut's website and social media feeds, as well as those of our partners.

George F. Landegger
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Highsmith's America, Library
of Congress, Prints &
Photographs Division

What's happening in preservation legislation: two overviews

THE NATIONAL SCENE

Report from Preservation Action

In January, Congress passed another Continuing Resolution extending current funding levels into March. Funding for the Department of Interior and National Park Service, which includes several historic preservation priorities, runs out on March 8. In addition to ongoing disagreements over spending levels, lawmakers are also navigating partisan disagreements over a desire to combine government spending with supplemental spending for allies and an agreement on border security, adding more obstacles to the debate.

Meanwhile the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) still remains unauthorized. Advocates continue to seek support of the bipartisan *Historic Preservation Fund Reauthorization Act* (H.R. 3350) which would reauthorize the HPF for 10 years and increase the program's current authorization from \$150 million to \$250 million. (see sidebar) Despite growing workloads for SHPOs and THPOs and the expansion of HPF-funded competitive grant programs, the HPF's authorization has never been increased.

Preservation advocates are also calling for support for the *Historic Preservation Tax Credit Growth and Opportunity Act*, or "HTC-GO" (H.R.1785, S.639). They argue that improving the Federal Historic Tax Credit will encourage more building reuse and more redevelopment in small, midsize, and rural communities. HTC-GO will bump up the credit to 30 percent for projects with less than \$2.5 million in qualified expenses. HTC-GO will make more buildings eligible by lowering the



substantial rehabilitation threshold. HTC-GO will increase the value of HTCs by eliminating the requirement that the value of the HTC be deducted from a building's basis (property's value for tax purposes), and it will make it easier for non-profit owned buildings to partner with developers, which would facilitate reuse for schools, community health centers, and affordable housing.

Preservationists from around the country will be in Washington from March 4 to 7 for National Historic Preservation Advocacy Week, hosted by Preservation Action and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers.

For more information, visit Preservation Action:
<https://preservationaction.org/>.

AT THE CONNECTICUT STATE LEGISLATURE

From Preservation Connecticut's lobbyist, Focus Government Affairs

Since this year's session is a short one, the legislature has just a mere three months to accomplish its legislative priorities. To kick things off, Governor Lamot delivered his annual State of the state address outlining his agenda. At the top of the list of his priorities was the hot topic of fiscal constraint. Lamont broadened his message beyond fiscal issues as he mentioned his administration would be addressing cell phones in schools, support for childcare, regulating Artificial Intelligence and expanding the housing and workforce. Largely, both parties seemed pleased with the Governor's proposals, but it remains to be seen how it all plays out.

There are programs feeling the budget constraints. In February, advocates took to the Capitol to urge lawmakers to restore funding for Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU). This

continued on page 19

Historic Preservation Fund

The Historic Preservation Fund, approved through the annual Congressional appropriations process, is key to promoting the historic and cultural places of importance across the nation. Key elements in the requested funding for fiscal year 2025 include:

- \$70 million: State Historic Preservation Offices
- \$40 million: Save America's Treasures
- \$34 million: Tribal Historic Preservation Offices
- \$28 million: African American Civil Rights Grants
- \$17 million: Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants
- \$36 million: grants for HBCUs, Semiquincentennial celebration, equal rights history, and underrepresented communities

Source: Preservation Action

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Welcome to our March issue with a special focus on legislative reports. As we go to press, the **2024 legislative session** is underway. Preservation Connecticut is closely following the legislative proposals concerning the State Historic Preservation Office. You can read about it on page 4. It is a short session and things are moving quickly; we urge you to follow PCT's website and social media for updates. Find information on other bills that we are tracking at the state and national level in this issue concerning preservation funding and programming.

One carryover from last year's session is the Preservation Toolkit, conceived to provide stakeholders with step-by-step guidance for various situations related to historic preservation. House Bill 6595, passed last year, called for the creation of this online resource and for it to be housed on Preservation Connecticut's main website, www.preservationct.org. The team overseeing the project recently selected Runyon Heritage Associates to create content for the Toolkit using the final report of the Working Group Regarding the Protection and Preservation of Historic Properties. Watch for a launch in the summer.

Development and Special Projects Manager **Jordan Sorensen** recently completed a Sustainable Preservation Graduate Certificate from Cornell University. Through the course she learned skills to assess the economic value and impact of sustainable preservation while also promoting preservation standards. Congratulations, Jordan! We look forward to putting your new skills to work.

On February 10, PCT members and friends celebrated Valentine's Day with tea at the **Jonathan Sturges Cottage** in Fairfield, a Gothic Revival house that is a National Historic Landmark. Special thanks to Polly Roessler and Lenie Epifano, descendants of Jonathan Sturges, who opened the house and its treasures to us, as well as pianist Robert Foley and Gruel Britannia, who prepared tea sandwiches and sweets.

The spring promises other events. In March we're offering another series of **Talking About Preservation** online at noon on Wednesdays. Currently scheduled:

- May 1: "Jane Jacobs, urban planning activist" in advance of Jane's Walk: Connecticut
- May 8, "Connecticut's industrial development in the early 20th century," with historian Donald Rogers

- May 15: "Preservation in the Beman Triangle, an antebellum free Black neighborhood," with Jesse Nasta, Middlesex County Historical Society
- May 18: "TAP on-location: Barnes Museum, Southington," with curator Christina Volpe

We're coordinating **Jane's Walks** across the state for Saturday, May 4. Given in memory of the writer, urbanist and activist Jane Jacobs, the walks are intended as mobile conversations where participants tell stories about their communities, explore the places where they live, and connect with their neighbors. As we go to press, there are about a dozen walks planned in communities around the state. For a list and more information visit preservationct.org/janes-walk-connecticut.

Then, on Thursday, May 9, join us at the New Haven Country Club for our annual **Connecticut preservation awards**. Staff and board members are currently reviewing nominations, and we can promise it will be an evening of celebration. Join us! 🌿


—Jane Montanaro

Preservation Connecticut is a statewide nonprofit membership organization established as the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation by a special act of the State Legislature in 1975. Working with local preservation groups and individuals as well as statewide organizations, it encourages, advocates, and facilitates historic preservation throughout Connecticut.

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UPDATE: As we go to press, the Community Investment Fund board, administered by the Department of Economic and Community Development, approved PCT's application for \$5 million to repair historic churches in Bridgeport. *Stay tuned for more!*

Upcoming Meetings

Connecticut Historic Preservation Council

April 10, 2024, at 9:30 a.m.
May 1, 2024, at 9:30 a.m.

To participate, contact Jonathan Kinney
(860) 500-2380; Jonathan.Kinney@ct.gov

Meetings are hybrid meetings, held in person at the State Historic Preservation Office, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, and virtually via Microsoft Teams.

For more information call (860) 500-2343 or visit portal.ct.gov/DECD/Services/Historic-Preservation/About-the-State-Historic-Preservation-Office

State-funded projects

Proposed updates to SHPO procedures

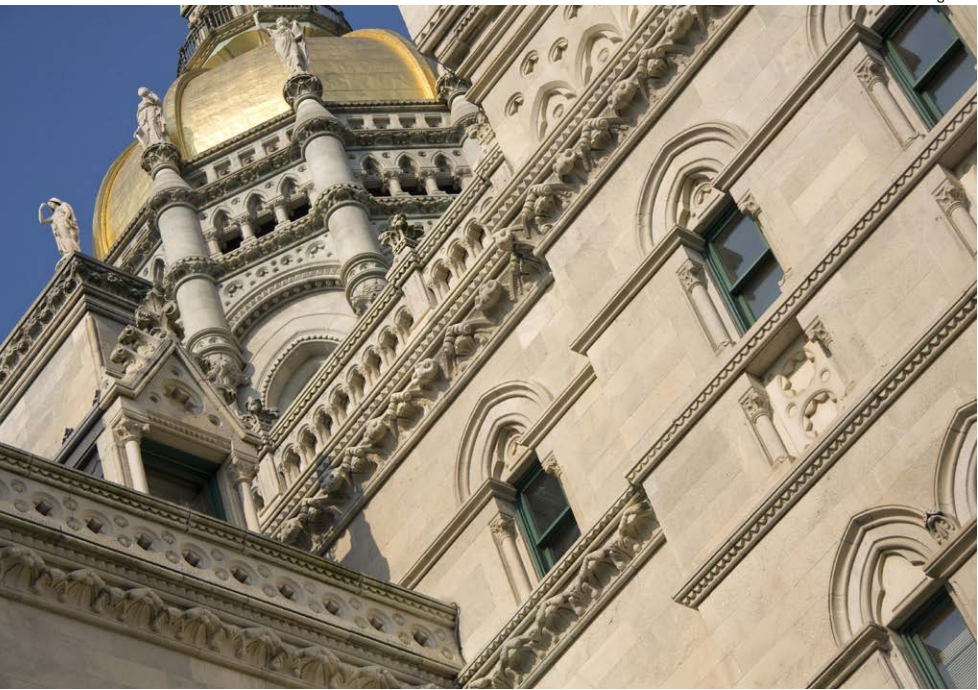
Connecticut has longstanding state policies to protect and enhance its historic resources. As far back as 1955, the General Assembly created the Connecticut Historical Commission (predecessor to today's State Historic Preservation Office) for preservation of historic sites and structures and other historical resources. Since then, the State has created funding mechanisms for preservation such as historic rehabilitation tax credits and includes preservation among the programs funded through the Community Investment Act.

In addition to these preservation programs, the state wants to be sure that projects funded through other programs, such as housing or transportation, do not unnecessarily harm historic places. It does this by reviewing all projects that receive state funding or permits for their effect on any historic resources. This is done through the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA). CEPA review represents an important way in which the State fulfills its commitment to preserve and enhance historic resources.

In many but not all cases, this review for historic resources is done by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). SHPO does not have the power to require that historic resources be preserved, but its recommendations can be important in shaping projects.

Now, that process is under scrutiny. Last year, the General Assembly established a working group to consider ways of improving the SHPO's reviews. The legislation apparently grew out of projects in Waterbury and other towns where developers or municipal officials objected to SHPO's advice against demolishing historic industrial buildings. The group's legislative charge was to examine:

1. "the historic preservation consultation process;
2. timelines for historic preservation reviews;



3. definitions of the roles of parties involved in the historic preservation review process;
4. an outline of the steps in the historic preservation review process;
5. specific goals and outcomes of the historic preservation review process; and
6. an appeals process for municipalities to appeal determinations made by the State Historic Preservation Officer pursuant to sections 22a-1 to 22a-1h [i.e., CEPA], inclusive, of the general statutes and the regulations adopted thereunder, concerning the renovation or rehabilitation of historic buildings or properties."

The working group included legislators, state officials, developers, and representatives from preservation and municipal economic development groups. The group produced no written report. Instead, members of the group reported their findings and recommendations to the Commerce Committee on February 8.

Reviewing state projects

The Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (Connecticut General Statutes 22a-1 to 22a-1h) requires review of projects that receive State funding or are subject to State permitting. This parallels a similar requirement for review of projects that receive federal funding. CEPA also requires evalua-

tion of effects on natural resources—in fact, the law was originally written to cover environmental resources only. Historic resources were added some years later. This is why the process is called "environmental review."

In the February presentation, State Historic Preservation Officer Jonathan Kinney described CEPA as a requirement for agencies to "stop, look, and listen" before making decisions that impact historic resources. He outlined a four-step review process:

1. Initiate consultation: does the project have the potential to harm historic resources (e.g., road repaving vs. roof replacement)?
2. Identify resources: are historic resources present at the project site?
3. Assess project effects: will this project adversely affect historic resources?
4. Resolve adverse effects: determine appropriate mitigation for historic loss.

A No answer to any of the first three questions completes the process. If a project goes to the fourth stage, SHPO staff works with the funding agency and the recipient of state funds (typically, a developer) to try to avoid adverse effects or reduce their scope. If adverse effects cannot reasonably be avoided SHPO works with the funding agency and developer to provide some mitigation for the adverse effects.

Mitigation varies according to the degree



of harm that will be caused to historic resources. It might range from photographic documentation of the historic resource to creation of a marker recounting the site's history, to funding for other preservation efforts. SHPO aims for mitigation to be related to the historic resource being lost, provide a public benefit, and occur within the community in which the resource is lost.

Mitigation also should be in proportion to the loss: in cases where that is substantial—such as demolition of several buildings in an historic factory complex—mitigation efforts might cost as much as \$100,000 to \$250,000.

Mr. Kinney pointed out that about 85 percent of projects reach a No at the first question, and only about five percent of projects make it to step four. However, many of the five percent are large, prominent projects, ones that have highly visible impact on the community; consequently they receive the most attention.

The issues

David Kooris, President of Stamford Downtown and a member of the working group, presented the working group's findings and recommendations to the Commerce Committee. The principal issues, as he described them, were the amount of time required to reach agreements about mitigation, differences of opinion between SHPO and developers about project objectives, and the difficulties of weighing impacts

on historic resources against presumably beneficial economic impacts of projects. In addition, many developers consider implementing mitigation efforts to be a distraction from their project.

Another issue, Mr. Kooris noted, is that CEPA only provides for project reviews to be undertaken between SHPO and the sponsoring agency; there is no mechanism for an applicant to deal directly with SHPO.

Finally, he observed that CEPA applies to *any* project that receives funding or a permit from the State. Some sponsoring agencies handle environmental review internally and may have different procedures and guidelines than SHPO. However, the role of other agencies lay outside the working group's mandate.

Overall, the issues could be summarized as developers' basic trinity of need: time, money, and certainty. In other words, they want approvals to progress quickly, costs of dealing with historic resources to be limited, and the whole process to be predictable.

Some of the difficulties with SHPO's process seem to result from developers' misconceptions. David Kooris noted that some developers seem to believe that granting of state funding equals final approval of a project. Consequently, the historic review process comes as an additional step, made all the more unpleasant

because it was unexpected.

Adequate preparation by the sponsor agency can make the process smoother. To this point, Elizabeth Shapiro, Director of Arts, Preservation and Museums in the Department of Economic and Community Development, reported that applicants to the Community Investment Fund receive thorough guidance from that program's staff. As a result, she said, there have not been any difficulties in the CEPA reviews for CIF projects. Again, the role of other agencies was outside the working group's mandate.

The recommendations

The working group presented two recommendations to the Commerce Committee. The first recommendation would give developers the option of paying a set mitigation amount in lieu of going through the consultation process. The group spent some time trying to determine an amount high enough that there still would be an incentive for developers to work with SHPO, but low enough to be a viable alternative. The group's recommendation is 15 percent of the amount of state funding, with a maximum of \$750,000—an amount considerably higher than the cost of the typical negotiated mitigation.

This money would be transferred to a third party which would be responsible for implementing the mitigation activity, freeing the developer from the responsibility of managing it. Commitment of funding would constitute a satisfactory resolution of the adverse effect.

When asked why funds should be taken away from the project to carry out mitigation, Mr. Kooris pointed out that but for the state-sponsored project, the historic resource would not be harmed. "Because state money creates the loss, the state helps to fund an offset," he said.

The working group's second recommendation was to create a process to appeal SHPO recommendations for mitigation to the Commissioner of the Department of Economic Development. Because CEPA channels discussions

continued on next page

between the sponsoring agency and SHPO, the request for a change in SHPO's recommendations must come from the sponsoring agency, not the developer.

Another way to address differences over treatment of historic resources would be to broaden the conversation. The working group recommended that it may be helpful to bring in community comments on alternatives and mitigation measures, to hear how the community weighs historic resource impact versus other objectives such as housing or economic development. Public comment could be provided through the existing CEPA scoping process. The working group's Power Point presentation noted that "The results of public scoping can be used to counter SHPO's recommendations," but it is also possible that public comments might support SHPO's recommendations, revealing public sentiment for preserving an important local resource.

Members of the working group stressed that their recommendations only addressed environmental review by the State Historic Preservation Office, as charged in last year's act. They did not look at how other agencies carry out environmental reviews. Doing so might help standardize procedures across all state agencies, including setting timelines for agencies to determine CEPA compliance, or resolving conflicting recommendations by different agencies on a single project. These changes would require a broader legislative mandate.

Senator Joan Hartley, co-chair of the Commerce Committee, closed the meeting with the announcement that the committee would be preparing legislation based on the working group's recommendations. Once a bill is drafted, there will be a hearing on it. Since the session is a short one this year (lasting until May 8), this could happen quickly—perhaps before this newsletter comes out. Preservation Connecticut will post updates on its website and social media accounts.

Thinking about the working group

As of PCN's deadline, no bill has yet come out of the Commerce Committee. That leaves time to think about points the preservation community can make in testimony when a bill is presented.

The first is to stress that the issue is

not one of historic preservation *versus* economic development. SHPO's position within the Department of Economic Development should make that clear, as do the myriad projects within historic resources that create housing, offer places of employment, and support construction jobs. (For more evidence, see "Preservation incentives produce results" on the next page.)

A nuance missed in the working group presentation was the nature of the 85 percent of projects that do not require mitigation. These are not just projects that don't touch historic resources. Many projects actually have *beneficial* impacts—buildings renovated, put back into use, tax rolls increased—without losses requiring mitigation.

Most important is the context in which SHPO works: the state policy to protect and enhance historic resources. Simply put, it is not the State of Connecticut's policy or intention to fund the destruction of historic resources unnecessarily. CEPA review represents an important way in which that overall commitment to preserve

and enhance historic resources is carried out. Unfortunately, this broader policy context was not adequately expressed in the working groups' presentation to the Commerce Committee. But it is the core of SHPO's mission to protect and enhance Connecticut's historic places—as places to live, work, and play, and places that give Connecticut its unique character and richness.

What's next

On March 7, the Commerce Committee introduced HB 5433, *An Act Establishing a Procedure for the State Historic Preservation Officer to Make Determinations Concerning Certain Environmental Effects*, incorporating the working group's two recommendations. The bill also requires sponsoring agencies to consult with SHPO prior to conducting a public scoping process for any project. Preservation Connecticut will post updates on its social media accounts and its website at preservationct.org/advocacy-2024.

—Christopher Wigren



To watch the working group presentation visit <https://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=22600>.

Celebrate with us!

Thursday, March 28, 2024 (5:30-7:00pm)
Keeney Memorial Cultural Center, Old Wethersfield

Audrey Beck Award for Historic Preservation

presented to
Charles Janson



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Preservation incentives produce results

Every year, the National Park Service's (NPS) Technical Preservation Services division works with the Rutgers University Center for Urban Policy and Research to create a national economic impact report for the federal historic tax incentives program. For the NPS's fiscal year 2022 report, the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was fortunate to be one of three states chosen for a special analysis of the impact of the state's projects in that year.

Using the Preservation Economic Impact Model (PEIM), an economic model developed specifically for the purpose of measuring the economic impact of historic



Mutual Housing Association of Greater Hartford renovated 89 affordable apartments at Ribbon Row in Frog Hollow using federal and state historic tax credits.

tax credits, the Center for Urban Policy and Research can quantify data such as jobs created (part time and full time), income, wealth, output, and taxes. The model measures direct as well as multiplier, or secondary, economic effects during construction.

The data shows that during federal fiscal year 2022, federal historic tax incentive projects in Connecticut:

- generated \$150.5 million in total rehabilitation costs;
- created 2,155 full- and part-time jobs of which 1,317 were located in Connecticut. Due to the interconnectedness of the national economy, sectors not immediately associated with historic rehabilitation, such as agriculture, mining, transportation, and public utilities, benefit as well;
- generated \$104,800,000 in income from jobs created nationally, \$66,900,000 in Connecticut; and
- recouped \$21,754,600 in federal, state, and local taxes

During the same time period (October 1, 2021-September 30, 2022), Connecticut's State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit program (CGS Section 10-416c) issued \$25,235,773 in state tax credit vouchers. The report estimates that the state earned back \$21,754,600 in local, state, and federal taxes during that same period, which does not account for future tax revenue from personal property tax, sales tax, and income tax from new residents and businesses within the newly rehabbed property. For all intents and purposes, the state tax credit program is revenue neutral or revenue positive for the state. 🌿

To review the federal historic tax incentives economic impact report, visit <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/upload/report-2022-economic-impact.pdf>.

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Legislative priorities:

Connecticut Preservation Action

Connecticut Preservation Action (CPA)—Connecticut’s 501c4 lobby organization for historic preservation—in conjunction with Capitol Consulting and our historic preservation partners continue to monitor potential legislation this 2024 short session. One of the most critical issues comes from the Working Group to Study State Historic Preservation Office Processes established in the 2023 session.

In the 2023 session, HB 6756, *An Act Concerning Certain Appeals of Determinations Made by the State Historic Preservation Officer*, was raised. The bill would have created provisions for municipalities to appeal decisions made by the SHPO. This bill raised significant concerns about the impacts on SHPO’s review powers and processes. With testimony by CPA and partners, the bill was changed to create the working group to study SHPO processes.

The working group met over the fall and early winter and consisted of State Legislators, representatives from state agencies including DECD and SHPO, representatives from the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities and the Connecticut Council of Small Towns, municipal economic development officers and representatives of business and industry, amongst others. Voices representing historic preservation and CPA were Tod Bryant of Norwalk Preservation Trust and Michelle McCabe

from Connecticut Main Street Center. The working group released its report in February (see page 4).

The working group is recommending a process be put in place should the sponsoring state agency, SHPO, and the project sponsor not agree on the mitigation measures. Draft legislation to further this recommendation has not been published as of the date of this writing. SHPO was very involved in the deliberations of the working group. CPA will alert the historic preservation community should there be any troubling aspects of the proposed legislation and is poised to act with information and meetings.

Additionally, CPA continues to have a long list of projects and priorities that the organization monitors. This includes funding for the Community Investment Act (proposed this year to be increased) and potential funding for America 250. Furthermore, CPA has been working with legislators to develop and implement a “Historic Preservation Caucus” which would help carry to good word about historic preservation to all the legislators.

If you would like to get involved in direct advocacy with the legislature, please don’t hesitate to reach out to learn more about CPA’s work. We need the support of the wider historic preservation community to get the work done. You can reach our current president Aaron Marcavitch at marcavitch@gmail.com.



For updates from CPA, follow www.facebook.com/CTPreservationAction/

Connecticut Humanities

Along with other history and cultural organizations, Connecticut Humanities (CTH) has announced its legislative priorities and outlook for the 2024 legislative session.

Connecticut Humanities, the Connecticut Arts Alliance, and the Connecticut Tourism Coalition continue to work together to seek support of the **Arts, Culture, and Tourism Roadmap** to secure funding that is consistent over time to minimize operational disruption, improves long-term planning and sustainability, and maximizes the return on the state’s investment.

To accomplish this, CTH is encouraging State legislators to join the legislative Arts, Culture, and Tourism Caucus if they have not already done so. In addition, the Arts, Culture, and Tourism Coalition continues to seek support for reliable, meaningful, and equitable State investment in our state’s arts, culture, and tourism sectors through the re-funding of the Connecticut Cultural Fund.

Connecticut Humanities also is working to secure increased State funding to support the upcoming commemoration of **the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence** in 2026. Funding will allow the America 250 | CT Commission to provide tools and resources that organizations around Connecticut can use to tell inclusive, place-based stories and engage in civic dialogue.

In an effort to increase grants and other support available for Connecticut’s historic and cultural organizations, CTH is also working to secure increased funding for the **Connecticut Office of the Arts, Connecticut Department of Tourism**, and itself.

Finally, CTH offers **advocacy resources**, including checklists and templates, through its website at www.cthumanities.org/advocacy.



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Connecticut Main Street Center

By Michelle McCabe and Christine Schilke, Connecticut Main Street Center

As another legislative session begins, it's worth taking a moment to reflect on the achievements made towards protecting and celebrating Connecticut's historic buildings. It's perhaps preaching to the choir to note how these treasures add to Connecticut's sense of place, lending their majestic aura to our downtowns and main streets, infusing them with a regal pride and individuality nearly impossible to replicate. Thanks to adaptive reuse and an infusion of state and federal resources from the State Historic Preservation Office, the Office of Brownfield Remediation and Development and others, many of our historic churches, theaters, mill buildings and more are finding continued purpose and rejuvenated vitality as the source of new housing, innovative businesses, arts and culture, and creative recreation.

While we have much to celebrate, there is also much to be done to continue supporting Connecticut's historic assets and shepherd them into a new era of usefulness. Here's a quick preview of what we at Connecticut Main Street Center (CMSC) will be focusing on during the 2024 legislative session.

Blight and vacancy

The issues of blight and vacancy affect towns and cities across the state regardless of a community's size or prominence. Empty storefronts and neglected properties weigh heavily on our downtowns and village

centers, undermining economic vitality and community pride. Often our older buildings suffer from deferred maintenance and neglect as the cost of updates hinders necessary repairs and modernization. We recently spoke with Jonathan Kinney at the State Historic Preservation Office about the resources that are available for historic downtown buildings, and our summit, *Addressing Blight & Vacancy on Main Street*, on March 14th highlighted both the incentives and deterrents currently available to tackle this vexing issue. Importantly, we will also discuss what other states are doing and brainstorm what more can be done to turn blighted and vacant Connecticut properties into bright new opportunities. CMSC is also working with some of our municipal members to propose legislation that will tax vacant commercial properties. You can learn more about this effort and how you can support it by visiting our website or signing up for our news and alerts.

Arts, culture and tourism (ACT) funding

As we know, arts, culture, and tourism contribute both economically and socially to our communities, inspiring creative insights, fueling spontaneous and heartfelt interactions, and supporting local organizations and entrepreneurs. Last year, a proposal to provide more state funding to this sector failed to pass the legislature. It is expected the proposal will be put forth again this year. When it does, CMSC will again proudly support it. We invite you to join us in recognizing the value arts, culture and tourism add to our communities by reaching out to your legislators to share your support.

Affordable housing

Governor Lamont has spoken often of Connecticut's need to create more affordable housing, even suggesting at the Connecticut Council of Small Towns' recent Town Meeting that this would be a great use for former brownfields sites. Indeed, there are many wonderful examples of towns across Connecticut converting former mill buildings into housing and other uses. CMSC has recognized several of them with our Awards of Excellence, including Montgomery Mill in Windsor Locks, Upson Market Place in Farmington, and Capewell Lofts in Hartford. CMSC is once again supporting Desegregate CT's Work Live Ride platform encouraging and enabling more affordable housing throughout the state, with a focus on developing housing near transit, as this type of development naturally aligns with our historic building inventory, lending itself to an investment in both.

There is no shortage of good ideas on how we can preserve our past and enable a robust future through the careful management of our historic assets. With your help, we can make sure there's also no shortage of support for the funding and policy needed to implement those good ideas. 🌿

Michelle McCabe is Executive Director and Christine Schilke is Communications & Strategy Director at Connecticut Main Street Center, the expert resource for developing and sustaining vibrant downtowns that fuel our state's prosperity. For more information, visit ctmainstreet.org/



Briefly noted

Bozrah. ►

Amid January's heavy rains, flood waters began flowing around the edges of the Fitchville Pond dam, prompting officials to evacuate houses, businesses, and an electric substation downstream on the Yantic River in Bozrah and Norwich. The dam, built in 1871 and reinforced with concrete in 1914, originally provided water power for textile mills in Fitchville and is a contributing resource in the Fitchville National Register district. Today, the dam has no industrial use, but the pond is a recreational feature for boaters, fishing, and a campground. The private owner, Seymour Adelman, told WFSB radio that he had engineers inspect the dam in 2022, and they found nothing wrong. However, the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) lists a series of enforcement actions at the dam going back to 2012, including an inspection in 2022 which reported "major cracks" and a history of seepage. The Fitchville dam is one of more than 3,000 older dams across Connecticut, most of them constructed to power the state's 19th-century mills and factories. Private owners are required to inspect dams every two years and report the findings to DEEP. In addition to public safety, the dams are significant elements of Connecticut's history and environment. As waters receded, state officials moved forward with a plan to build a cofferdam to allow closer inspection and repairs to the dam.

Branford and Guilford. ►

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) is developing a Corridor Management Plan (CMP) for Connecticut Route 146 in Branford and Guilford. The purpose of creating a CMP is to review the Route 146 corridor and how to protect its many historic, cultural, and environmental resources. The CMP will balance caring for these important resources with providing a safe roadway for all travelers and respecting the desires of the community, residents, and local businesses. It will also look at ways to make the corridor more prepared for climate risks like flooding. In 1991, almost all of the route was designated a State Scenic Road. Visitors can see historic homes, wildlife habitats, and scenic views by walking, biking, or

driving. Many places along the road are listed on the State and National Registers. The Route 146 National Register district runs between Flat Rock Road in Branford and Water Street in Guilford, and the corridor runs through three other NR districts: Branford Center, Stony Creek-Thimble Islands, and Guilford Town Center, as well as by individually listed sites. To follow the CMP process, visit route146cmp.com.

Preservation Connecticut



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◀ Bridgeport and Fairfield.

On February 15, the Connecticut Siting Council granted a certificate for a revised version of United Illuminating's relocation and rebuild project located along approximately 7.3 miles of the Metro-North Railroad corridor. This new alternative would move the monopoles from the south side of the railroad tracks to the north side along a section of track in Fairfield. To the knowledge of PCT, plans or design for this route have not been studied by experts in the field or approved by relevant state agencies. Despite a request for the subject to be tabled, four Council members voted in favor, one opposed, and two abstained.

This concession did little to placate the residents of Fairfield where many of the concerns have increased rather than diminished. The effects in Bridgeport, where the corridor will remain relatively unchanged and monopoles will loom over the historic Freeman houses (pictured), are also unclear. It appears that the Siting Council made its decision with less information about this project than when it began, and property owners on the north side of the tracks in Fairfield are completely in the dark as to what will happen as a result. Many of the affected parties, along with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, continue to believe that undergrounding is the best option. An appeal against the decision is expected.

Preservation Connecticut



Ledyard. ▲

In early February, Gales Ferry Intermodal LLC (GFI) withdrew its application to create a quarry at Mount Decatur, the rare undisturbed site of a fortification from the War of 1812 (pictured, the southern bastion). The proposal would have left the immediate fort site undisturbed but would have destroyed much of its context

as well as potential outlying archaeological remains. GFI withdrew its application to address concerns raised by the public about the project such as historical impact, noise, dust, and quality of life issues; the company is expected to apply again in the near future, so Mount Decatur's long-term future remains uncertain.

Digital resources identify historic places

Identifying historic places is the first step to recognizing, preserving, and commemorating them. That step has become easier with the launch of three new online resources for Connecticut.

Last year Preservation Connecticut documented sites listed in *The Negro Traveler's Green Book*, a series of travel guides published from 1938 to 1966 to help African American travelers locate safe and welcoming lodgings, restaurants, and services in a society characterized by legal or de facto segregation. Historian Alyssa Lozupone and student interns Daniella Occhineri and Cecelia Puckhaber compiled a list of 124 Connecticut businesses listed in the guides and documented those that survive—fewer than half. That information has now been posted to a nationwide website, **The Architecture of the Negro Traveler's Green Book**, hosted by the University of Virginia to study Green Book sites and support their preservation. Information is continuously added and updated, so keep the site bookmarked.

Hartford's Ancient Burying Ground is the first Connecticut landscape featured in **What's Out There Guide to African American Cultural Landscapes**, a new online resource from The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF). Part of TCLF's broader Race and Space initiative, the guide explores more than 140 sites associated with African American cultural lifeways—organized under nine themes—and offers nearly 30 biographical profiles of designers and shapers. Established in 1640, the Ancient Burying Ground was Hartford's first burial place. The Ancient Burying Ground Association created an online database of more than 500 individuals of African, African American, and Native American heritage who may be buried here. It currently is the only Connecticut site included in the

Connecticut sites have been added to The Architecture of the Negro Traveler's Green Book, a website that identifies listings from the Green Book travel guides for African Americans.

The Cultural Landscape Foundation has launched the What's Out There Guide to African American Cultural Landscapes, including the Ancient Burying Ground in Hartford.

ConnCRIS, the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office's statewide geospatial database, now provides links to nominations and documentation for historic sites for one-stop consultation.

new guide, but TCLF invites the public to submit information about additional places and people.

Since the debut of **ConnCRIS**, the State Historic Preservation Office's statewide geospatial database, last spring, the office has been busy adding features. A full version of the application is now available and allows for log-in access to view and download the files associated with more than 96,543 location points. Information includes PDFs of surveys, documentation reports, and designation forms linked to each data point. Access to sensitive data will also be available to qualified individuals through the log-in. To request access, visit conncris.ct.gov.

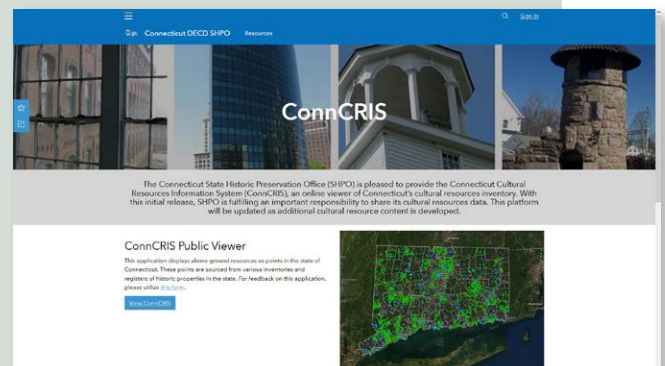
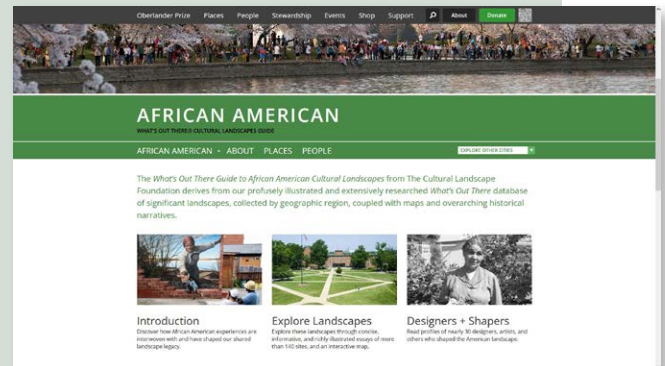
The State Historic Preservation Office will contact you once your request is processed. The public viewer will remain online and does not require a log-in. All versions of ConnCRIS are free. 🌿

Visit the sites:

The Architecture of the Negro Traveler's Green Book: community.village.virginia.edu/greenbooks

What's Out There Guide to African American Cultural Landscapes: www.tclf.org/places/city-and-regional-guides/african-american

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HISTORIC PROPERTIES EXCHANGE

Threatened Buildings and Easement Properties Available — March/April 2024

Preservation easements protect the historic character of old buildings, structures and landscapes and require approval of proposed changes. When one of the many properties throughout the state on which Preservation Connecticut holds easements is on the market, we may list it here. To learn how to safeguard your property for future generations through an easement, explore Stewardship on our website, preservationct.org/steward, or contact Christopher Wigren, Deputy Director.

24 Newington Road, West Hartford (1926) \$1,100,000

Colonial Revival church available in West Hartford. Current occupant, Elmwood Community Church, will continue using the building until June, but is selling the property due to declining membership and rising expenses. Space also includes offices, kitchen, and reception space. May be eligible for listing on the State Register of Historic Places and therefore could qualify for historic rehabilitation tax credits. 13,060 sq. ft.; 0.89 acres. In Opportunity Zone.

Contact: Lyle Rotondo, Berkshire Hathaway, 860-992-7761, lylerotondo@bhhsne.com

Samuel Ferris House (c.1760, c.1800) 1 Cary Road, Riverside \$895,000

Oldest house in Riverside and one of few remaining 18th-century buildings on Boston Post Road in Greenwich. Original Cape built c.1760 with west bay added c.1800. Remained in Ferris family for nearly 200 years. 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, 1,284 sq. ft. 0.25-acres. Listed on National Register of Historic Places and therefore eligible for historic rehabilitation tax credits. Attained Local Historic Property designation under stewardship of nonprofit Historic Properties of Greenwich.

Contact: Martha Z. Jeffrey, Sothebys, 203-964-7800, martha.jeffrey@sothebys.realty





34 Main Street, New Milford (1774)

\$649,000

A rare chance to own the last residential property on the New Milford Green. Built in 1774 for Colonel Nathaniel Taylor, this 4-bedroom, 4-bath Colonial sits on over a quarter acre in the New Milford Center National Register District. The house is 2,911 sq. ft and eligible for historic rehabilitation tax credits. The property also includes a 1,764 sq. ft. accessory building. The New Milford Trust for Historic Preservation is the current steward and looking for that special owner who can truly appreciate and preserve all this unique home has to offer.

Contact: Michelle Gentile, William Raveis Real Estate, 203-994-2938



1055 Broad Street, Hartford (c.1913)

\$1,400,000

Redevelopment opportunity of historic industrial building with eye-catching white marble façade. Constructed in 1913 for the George O. Kolb Bakery and its mass production of "Pan-Dandy bread." Later additions were made in 1916, c. 1922, c.1926, and c. 1945. The company remained in operation until 1923 when it was acquired by General Baking Company, who streamlined their output to a single product, a loaf of white bread known as "Bond Bread." Profits declined in the 1950s and 1960s due to competition from supermarkets' in-house bakeries producing a fresher, less expensive alternative. In 1971 the Hartford facility was closed and sold to the Max Sanders Trucking Company, a firm established in Hartford in 1923. The complex is currently occupied by Thomas W. Rafferty Inc, a manufacturer of curtains and draperies. This property is listed in Preservation Connecticut's Mills: Making Places of Connecticut industrial survey and located in the Frog Hollow National Register district, which makes it eligible for both State and Federal historic rehabilitation tax credits. Building area is 64,561 sq. ft.; 1.24 acres. In Opportunity Zone.

Contact: John McCormick, CBRE, 860-987-4736, john.mccormick@cbre.com

Deadline for the next issue is April 20, 2024

Historic Properties Exchange is published to advertise endangered properties in Connecticut by Preservation Connecticut, a statewide nonprofit organization located at 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, Connecticut 06517. Real estate advertised in this publication is subject to the Federal Housing Act of 1968.

Neither advertisers nor Preservation Connecticut are responsible or liable for any misinformation, misprints, or typographical errors contained in Historic Properties Exchange. To list a property or learn about properties listed, contact Kristen Hopewood, at khopewood@preservationct.org, or call (203) 562-6312.



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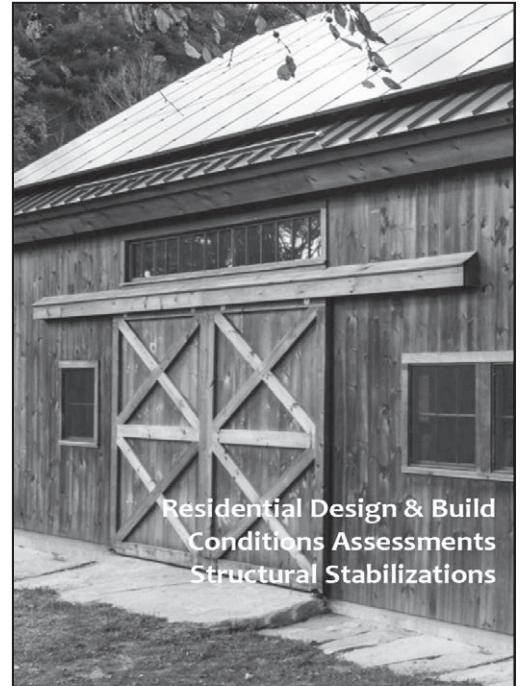
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caused the collapse. City officials said it was not an explosion and that they had no information about structural problems.

News coverage following the collapse included a letter from the church's architect, Leopold Eidlitz, in 1851, in which he warned of structural concerns about the tower. After consulting with his former employer Richard Upjohn—the architect of Trinity Church in New York and Saint James Episcopal Church in New London—Eidlitz recommended that the tower be taken down and rebuilt. Instead, church records indicate that the walls were bolted together and filled with cement in 1857. A conditions assessment done more than twelve years ago, in 2011, noted that the steel tie rods appeared effective.

Like many historic urban churches, the building was home to ministries serving the local community, most notably a breakfast program which provides meals to about 70 people every weekday. After the collapse, church members and community groups scrambled to see that this service was not interrupted.

This community role lies behind Preservation Connecticut's application for funding to provide repairs to several historic churches around Bridgeport's Washington Park (see Preservation Connecticut News, September/October 2023). Our most recent application, submitted in December,

included a call for statewide action to prevent "...decay, abandonment, even catastrophic structural failure" of historic church buildings across the state.

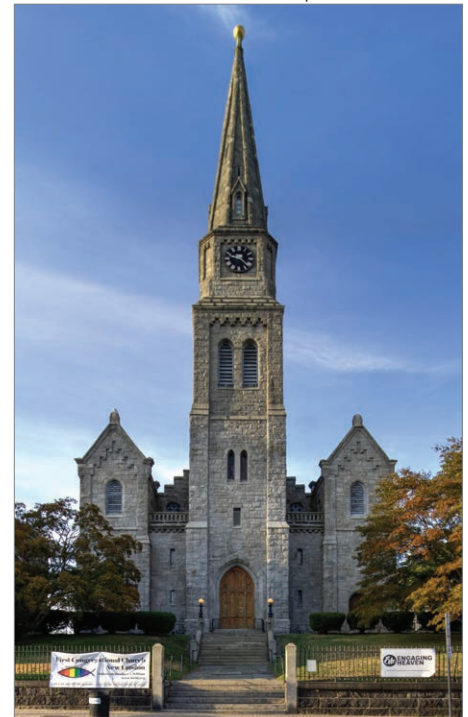
With the loss of the New London church, what might have seemed to be hyperbole is now reality. Other historic churches are sure to suffer similar catastrophic structural failure if we do not collectively find a solution. The sudden loss of the First Congregational Church gives us a small glimpse into how devastating another failure might be. It is not just human life and safety on the line. The church was an irreplaceable part of the city's history, landscape, and culture. It cannot be replicated.

Moreover, like many churches across our state, the physical structure was a refuge from the social and cultural ills of our world. In that historic space, congregants of the Engaging Heaven Church, along with their predecessors, fed, clothed, and counseled people who were vulnerable and had nowhere else to turn. Where do they turn now?

Preservation Connecticut's application for the Bridgeport churches, even when paired with our Maintenance and Repair grants plus Historic Restoration Fund grants from the State Historic Preservation Office, only scratch the surface. There are hundreds of historic churches in our state

that provide essential social services to their communities. These buildings need to be preserved as a part of our shared history, but they also need to be made safe for the people who occupy them. The answer to at least some of these problems is simple: much more public and private attention and investment must be spent on our historic houses of worship. 🌿

Wikipedia, Kenneth C. Zirkel



The church in 2020

What's happening in preservation legislation, cont'd from page 2

comes following continued budget cuts and tuition hikes. Advocates are seeking an additional \$160 million in the budget for the upcoming session. Beyond CSCU, many other programs and institutions throughout the state are requesting additional funding. This comes at a time when the legislature is increasingly at odds regarding fiscal guardrails, leading us to wonder how this will impact conversations this session.

Now that the initial session days have passed, the legislature is hard at work pushing out bills and having important conversations. We saw both chambers unanimously pass emergency heating legislation, proving the Connecticut General Assembly can work together. As nothing is truly dead

until midnight on the last day of session, but with committee deadlines at the end of February, legislators are trying to accomplish their priorities before time runs out. The next few weeks are sure to yield interesting debates on every topic presented in the legislature.

Bills that we're tracking:

- HB 5190, *An Act Concerning the Historic Homes Rehabilitation Tax Credit*: to allow the historic homes rehabilitation tax credit to be applied against additional taxes.
- SB 69, *An Act Authorizing Bonds of the State to Prepare Sites in Advance of the Two Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary*

of the Formation of the United States of America: to provide funding to rehabilitate, upgrade and prepare sites.

- SB 105, *An Act Concerning Funding for the Community Investment Account*: to raise the land recording fee from \$40 to \$46.
- HB 5743, to require a study of the potential elimination of municipal design review processes in connection with the development of affordable housing.



For more information, visit Connecticut General Assembly: www.cga.ct.gov/.

2024 LEGISLATIVE ISSUE

Church collapse highlights needs for historic houses of worship

Residents, workers, and passersby in downtown New London looked on in horror on January 25 as the former First Congregational Church's central tower swayed and collapsed, a scene that seemed to have been taken from a disaster movie.

One witness told the Connecticut Examiner, "I was in the car on the phone, talking. And then all of a sudden I heard this thunderous sound, like a boom, like thunder. So I looked to my left, and I was like, what was that? And I just saw the church as a whole in a split second, it just collapsed. Everything down the middle just came down like a waterfall."

In an unbelievable stroke of luck no one was injured (one person was inside the building, but far from the end that collapsed), and there was no damage to neighboring buildings, which include New London's city hall and the Manwaring building, recently renovated as student housing for Connecticut College.



New London's Engaging Heaven Church (the former First Congregational Church) collapsed on January 25

In just an instant New London had lost one of its most prominent landmarks and a link to its beginnings as a community. The church was built between 1849 and 1851 for the oldest congregation in New London, established in the 1640s, and was a contributing resource in the Downtown New London National Register district.

Like many urban mainline churches, First Congregational Church's membership dwindled in the second half of the 20th century, and in 2015 it sold the building to

the Engaging Heaven Church, a nondenominational congregation, while remaining as a tenant in its historic home.

Emergency personnel from New London and surrounding towns closed streets and evacuated nearby buildings. Officials determined that the remaining portions of the building were unsafe and ordered that the building be razed. By February 1, demolition was completed.

With the building gone, it probably will never be possible to know for sure what

continued on page 19