

CONNECTICUT PLANNING

Winter 2025

A publication of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association



American Planning Association
Connecticut Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All

How and Why Municipalities Must Pick Up the State's Slack on Clean Energy

page 14



**Also: SNEAPA 2024 Conference Recap 4 Yale's Urban Climate Leadership 6 Building Flood Resilience 8
Engaging and Diversifying Planning in Connecticut 22 Legislative Update 22 PDO Corner 23
Membership Report 24 Program Committee Update 25**



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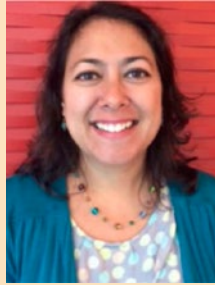
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Greetings fellow planners! Winter seems to be going out with gusto. As a traditional time of reflection, I wanted to share my thoughts on the great loss to the planning community with the recent death of UCLA professor emeritus and *The High Cost of Free Parking* author Donald Shoup aka Shoup Dogg. I, like many “Shoupistas,” mourn an intelligent, kind, and always funny gentleman who patiently and persistently — over the bulk of his academic career — brought to the forefront public dialogue about parking requirements, their financial cost, and the significant negative impacts the resulting sea of parking lots have had on the built and natural environment.

While a planning student at UCLA, I would often catch sight of Professor Shoup pedaling his way across campus, his face framed by his scraggly beard and bike helmet, always in jacket and tie — often tweed, and pant protectors circling his ankles. He practiced what he preached, rarely driving to campus from his home near the UCLA campus. I was not a Transportation Planning student so I had limited interactions with him in the classroom, but at larger graduate program gatherings, he was inquisitive and engaged with students and other faculty alike, wanting to hear stories in equal measure to telling them. His voice was distinctive and he laughed often and easily. Once UCLA Urban Planning alumni were settled and working in the greater Los Angeles area, he would often call to check in to see how new parking standards and initiatives were working in reality. His reach in life was long and his legacy will hopefully be even longer. Embedded in his plea to reduce parking requirements were the societal costs and the understanding that places built for cars and not people are not great places and, “a bummer.” As a former Los Angeles resident, I am reminded of Joni Mitchell’s famous lyric of “paving paradise to put up a parking lot.” It was Professor Shoup’s life’s work to make his argument resonate with planners, elected officials, and community members and it will now take planners’ long-term efforts to actively retrofit our commercial corridors to return them to more walkable mixed-use environments.

Although counterintuitive to what people would assume, my 15 years in Los Angeles were the most transit- and pedestrian-friendly of my life. During my time as both an undergraduate and graduate

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is published quarterly by the Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association. Contributions are encouraged. Submissions must include the name and contact information of the contributor. Material may be edited to conform to space or style requirements. Please address submissions to Executive Editor Jeanne Davies, AICP (contact information below).

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President's Message, cont'd

student, buses provided a lifeline for getting to jobs or to campus at affordable student-friendly pricing. In my first job as a young planner, I alternated taking the bus uphill to work in West Hollywood and walking the four miles downhill home to clear my head, enjoy the street life, and get some exercise. In cooler weather I would commute by bike, which was only slightly longer than the alternative of driving, finding a spot in the nearby parking garage, and then walking a block to City Hall. Grocery stores, restaurants, shops, and the beloved LaBrea Bakery were conveniently close to the “missing middle” apartments that I lived in. Leaving LA to come back home to Connecticut was a full immersion into suburban living — in a house that my family and I love. However, I will always think fondly about my apartments in LA and love them equally to the home I live in now. It is my hope, in what I know are challenging conversations in our local communities, that we as planners keep doing our part in consciously creating more diverse housing choices so that people can also find their own homes in the best ways that suit their needs. 🏠

— Emmeline Harrigan, AICP, CFM [in](#)

FROM THE EDITOR



It's February...two more months to springtime and increased activity with ongoing planning and the building season in Connecticut. This edition of our *Winter Connecticut Planning* magazine focuses on key topics at the forefront of discussion on many planners

desks, energy, flooding, climate change initiatives and continued work toward diversity, equity and inclusion for the planning profession.

Connecticut continues to remain a leader in new concepts and ideas in land management with a shout out to the Yale's Urban Climate Initiative and also Fuss & O'Neill for connecting us to flood management planning partnership with the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities. Thanks to our other contributors and committee chairs who bring insights on work on the Executive Committee, the Connecticut legislature, and the Councils of government.

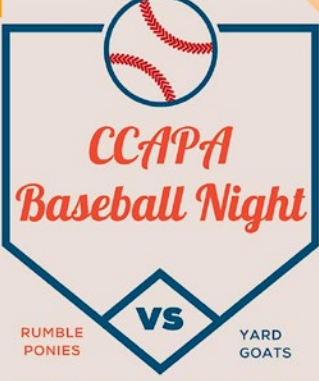
If you have content ideas or articles for future editions magazine, please contact me at ctriverplanner@gmail.com. — Jeanne Davies, AICP [in](#)



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SNEAPA 2024 Conference Recap

by Marek Kozikowski, AICP

The Conference Planning Committee introduced on-site badge printing at the SNEAPA 2024 Conference! This new practice replaced the 26-year ritual of spending long hours printing, cutting, sorting, and stuffing nametags into plastic sleeves and adding in various tickets for lunches, mobile workshops, and other conference “extras” only to spend the next morning helping conference attendees search the once sorted and carefully-laid nametags that became a disheveled heap for a tag that was probably missing anyways despite the best efforts the 15-20 professional planners who volunteer countless hours over the course of the year to organize and host the conference. Good riddance!

The Southern New England American Planning Association (“SNEAPA”) Conference is a two-day professional development conference organized by a collaborative effort between the Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island Chapters. The conference provides planners, engineers, architects, students, and other professionals an opportunity to collaborate, network, share experiences, promote their services, and earn maintenance credits for AICP certification in the tri-state area.



This annual conference is hosted in each state on a rotating basis. The Connecticut Chapter last hosted the conference in 2023, bringing it back to New Haven after a 16-year absence from the historic shoreline city.

The SNEAPA 2024 Conference was hosted by the Massachusetts Chapter on November 7th & 8th at the MassMutual Center, in the heart of downtown Springfield, Massachusetts. Conference Co-Chairs Alison LeFlore, AICP, Massachusetts Chapter President, and Senior Planner at Stantec and Alyssa Sandoval, AICP, Director of Community Development for the Town of Concord, MA, led the conference planning effort that resulted in a program that offered 40 high-quality breakout sessions, a keynote speaker, and six mobile workshops. This conference brought together nearly 700 attendees, speakers, and exhibitors from all across New England.

Breakout sessions covered a wide array of topics from diving deeply into the intricacies of zoning regulations that address housing development to exploring the benefits and challenges of working in a profession that now includes three generations of practicing planners. A variety of sessions were offered in the areas of sustainability

and resilience, ethics, law, and equity that provided certified planners the opportunity to obtain the required credits in these disciplines for certification.

(continued next page)



Socializing at break time.



Tyche crew ready for workshops.



Connecticut Chapter meeting.



The conference welcomed Charles “Chuck” Marohn, founder and president of Strong Town who provided the keynote address with a thought-provoking presentation on the unintended consequences of traditional traffic engineering and challenged planners and design professionals to think beyond convention to make our streets safer for everyone.

The mobile workshops provided a range of experiences from a walking tour to explore key redevelopment projects in downtown Springfield to a tour of the LEED-certified SATCo Fleet Maintenance Center which is essential for the charging of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority’s fleet of electric buses.

The conference featured numerous career development opportunities for young and emerging planners including a mentoring lunch, professional headshots, and resume review services.

The evening reception was held at the Armory at the MGM Springfield. The Armory is a national historic site and is celebrated as the nation’s first armory.

As mentioned earlier, the conference is organized by volunteer planners who come from various backgrounds

and hold professional planning jobs in the public sector, private sector and regional MPO/COGs. A special thanks to Georgie Driver, Megan Joufflas, Christine O’Neill, Meghan Sloan, and Savannah-Nicole Villalba who represented the Connecticut Chapter with me in the 2024 Conference Planning Committee.

Save the date for the SNEAPA 2025 Conference being held in Newport, Rhode Island on November 6-7, 2025. See you in Rhode Island! 🍷

— *Connecticut SNEAPA Chair Marek Kozikowski is the Director of Land Use for the City of Middletown. The SNEAPA Conference draws more than 500 planners, engineers, architects, students, and other professionals to share experiences, collaborate, network, and earn maintenance credits for AICP certification. Held in the fall, the conference is one of the best learning experiences for APA/AICP members in the region.*



Standing room only session.



Thank you to our vendors!

Massachusetts Chapter meeting.



To help prepare environmental and urban professionals for the challenges ahead, the Yale School of the Environment and the Hixon Center for Urban Sustainability has launched a new certificate program in Urban Climate Leadership.

Yale's Urban Climate Leadership Certificate Equips Professionals to Accelerate Climate Solutions

by Cameron Kritikos

“Urbanization is one of the mega-trends of the 21st century, and cities are at the front lines of climate change,” remarks Professor Karen Seto of the Yale School of the Environment. When Seto and fellow faculty and staff began conceiving of an online certificate program on urbanization, there was a fundamental belief that the school had a central role to play in training and support leaders to drive mitigation and adaptation to climate change in our cities. This vision aligned with an opportunity: a generous gift — the largest gift ever to focus entirely on the Yale School of the Environment — from the Three Cairns Group, the Yale School of the Environment announced it would establish a transformative program aimed at supporting the next generation of environmental leaders in the Global South. Thus, the dream of developing such a program to train leaders on urban environmental leaders — those in the Global South and across the world — had become a reality. **This certificate is designed for professionals — like planners in the state of Connecticut — who are eager to sharpen their skills, expand their network of global peers, and be better equipped to accelerate climate solutions in their cities.**

Cities are responsible for about 75% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and in the next 25 years the population of urban areas is expected to increase by 2.5 billion, straining infrastructure, energy systems, and ecosystems. As urban areas grow, they also are contending with the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels, flooding, and extreme heat. Yet, urbanization may offer opportunities to help solve climate change, as cities are often resource



and energy efficient and are sites of innovation and economic growth.

To help prepare environmental and urban professionals for the challenges ahead, the Yale School of the Environment and the Hixon Center for Urban Sustainability has launched a new **certificate program in Urban Climate Leadership**. Karen Seto, Frederick C. Hixon Professor of Geography and Urbanization Science, and Mark Ashton, senior associate dean of The Forest School and Morris K. Jesup Professor of Silviculture and Forest Ecology, are co-leading the nine-month program.

We are thrilled to note that the contributing lecturers include 6 IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) authors, including Karen Seto, Bill Solecki, Angel Hsu, Anu Ramaswami, Eric Masanet, and Siir Kilkis. Other key contributors include Anjali Mahendra, Director of Global Research at WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Cities; Franco Montalto, Director of the North American Hub of the Urban Climate Change Research Network (UCCRN); Eugenie Birch, Co-director, Secretariat, SDSN Global Commission on Urban SDG Finance; and Jessica Espey, Director of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network from 2014-2020.

This online certificate program consists of four eight-week courses and one four-week course. Each course has its own thematic focus with corresponding readings and assignments that complement the lectures by faculty. Additionally, online learners will participate in weekly online sessions with certificate faculty and staff to discuss relevant topics, engage in meaningful discussions, and answer questions.

Key Topics covered in the course include Urban Form and Transportation,
(continued next page)

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Yale's Climate Certificate, cont'd

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- Environmental leaders eager to grow in knowledge and skillset to make the greatest impact in their communities
- Champions of equitable land use planning, clean energy deployment,

low-carbon mobility, thriving greenspaces, and much more

Climate impacts will be felt locally here in the state of Connecticut, and thus we need leadership in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors — especially our planning professionals — who will boldly build the cities, economies, energy grids, and transportation systems we need for a climate-ready future.

The application cycle for the 2025-2026 cohort will remain open until Friday, March 28, 2025. Check out [our website](#) to learn more. Contact the Urban Climate Leadership certificate with any questions at urbanclimateleadership@yale.edu. 

— *Cameron Kritikos, Program Manager for the Yale School of the Environment Urban Climate Leadership Certificate, oversees the development and production of a new online certificate program with an ambitious and rigorous online curriculum focusing on cities and climate change partnerships. (See the advertisement below!)*

Climate impacts will be felt locally here in the state of Connecticut, and thus we need leadership in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors — especially our planning professionals — who will boldly build the cities, economies, energy grids, and transportation systems we need for a climate-ready future.



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The Yale School of the Environment's **Urban Climate Leadership** certificate is eager to welcome a new cohort of online learners for the 2025-2026 academic year.

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Applications open on January 25, 2025. Learn about our curriculum, faculty, and key program dates at <https://environment.yale.edu/certificates/urban>.

Intense precipitation such as the recent storm that impacted southwestern Connecticut in August 2024 have caused significant damage and disruption to communities in urban and rural areas, and in coastal and inland settings.



Communities throughout Connecticut are experiencing the devastating and costly impacts of flooding. Major flood events from coastal storms (e.g., Sandy, Irene, Isaias, Elsa, Fred, Henri, and Ida) and intense precipitation such as the recent storm that impacted southwestern Connecticut in August 2024 have caused significant damage and disruption to communities in urban and rural areas, and in coastal and



inland settings. This event resulted in the second flooding-related Federal disaster declaration in Connecticut in 2024, with the first being in January in New London County. These types of extreme events have increased in frequency and intensity and have the potential to occur year-round, in coastal and inland communities, making this issue a top priority for municipal officials and the public. Municipalities, state agencies, and regional organizations are involved in flood resilience planning and implementation efforts to address these issues.

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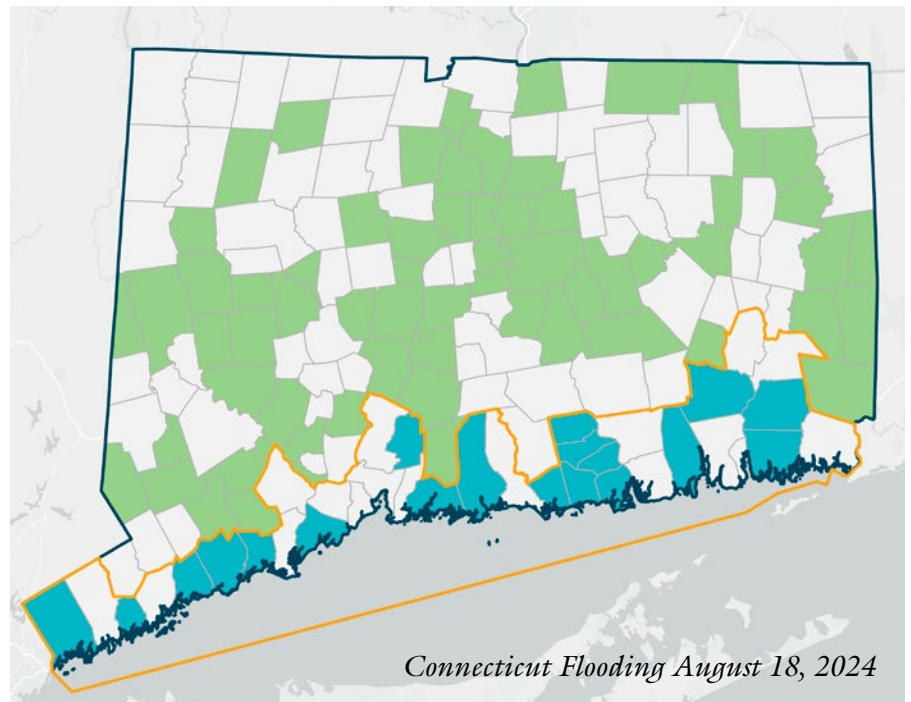
Flood Resilience, cont'd

Despite the long-standing flood management programs and policies at the local, state and federal levels, and recent new programs and funding sources available to Connecticut, municipalities are still faced with obstacles and challenges to effectively address flooding in their communities.

In response to this need, the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) conducted a study on behalf of their member communities to better understand the increased frequency and severity of flooding (coastal, riverine, and drainage related flooding) and the associated challenges faced by municipalities. For this study, CCM contracted with the consulting firm Fuss & O'Neill and its subconsultant partners Resilient Land And Water, LLC and Dewberry.

Study Elements and Process

In order to both qualitatively and quantitatively assess municipal concerns related to flooding and make data-informed recommendations to address these



concerns, the study framework consisted of four primary elements.

1. The first step in this study involved a **review of the existing flood risk** *(continued next page)*

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The survey results helped to inform recommended policy, programmatic, and funding-related actions that can help municipalities more effectively address the impacts of flooding on their communities.

Flood Resilience, cont'd

management policy framework in the State of Connecticut including federal, state, regional, and municipal flood risk reduction planning studies, policies, and programs. Additionally, flood resilience and adaptation funding sources and technical assistance programs were identified at the federal, state, and local level.

- Following the review of existing information, a survey was developed and issued to municipalities statewide to gather information on the types of flood-related issues faced by municipalities, challenges or obstacles to addressing local flooding problems, and financial and technical assistance needed by municipalities. The survey results helped to inform recommended policy, programmatic, and funding-related actions that can help municipalities more effectively address the impacts of flooding on their communities.



- After the survey responses were analyzed, a **Project Advisory Committee (PAC)** comprised of municipal stakeholders and partner organizations was formed to provide opportunity for discussion of flood risk reduction approaches, to help identify and screen potential recommendations, and ultimately refine and select final actionable, short-and long-term study recommendations. Additionally, a series of meetings were held with state agencies and organizations that have a role in shaping municipal flood management policy, regulations, funding programs, etc. in Connecticut.

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Flood Resilience, cont'd

These Partner Agencies & Organizations (PAO), both regional and statewide, who are already active in developing flood mitigation solutions for Connecticut municipalities, participated in a series of meetings to help inform the study recommendations and better align municipal and state/regional flood mitigation efforts.

4. Finally, through collaboration with the PAC and PAO, **municipal and state-level programmatic and policy-based recommendations were developed** for follow-up action by municipalities, state agencies, regional Councils of Government (COGs), and CCM. Recommendations include opportunities for leveraging flood resilience funding, increasing technical capacity for flood resilience projects, and removing policy/permitting barriers to implementing effective flood resilience projects. Importantly, the study recommendations are meant

to align with and build upon existing flood resilience efforts and initiatives across Connecticut.

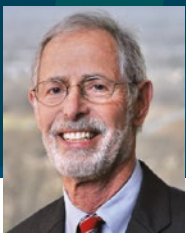
Survey Participation & Stakeholder Engagement

A total of 84 survey responses were received, representing about half the municipalities in Connecticut. All nine regional COGs were represented, with similar response rates in each COG region. Smaller municipalities (population under 20,000) represented 60% of responses and 40% of responses were from larger municipalities (over 20,000). Approximately one-quarter of the responses were from coastal municipalities and three-quarters were from inland municipalities, with similar response rates by both. Municipalities with Environmental Justice communities were well represented with a total of 84 census block groups and 16 designated distressed municipalities responding.

A meeting with the PAC was held in January 2024 to review the municipal
(continued next page)

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Flood Resilience, cont'd

survey findings. In addition, a series of meetings were held in May 2024 with state agencies and organizations that have a role in shaping municipal flood management policy, regulations, and funding programs in Connecticut. Discussion with the PAOs revolved around their takeaways from the survey results, what the PAOs are currently working on to address flood impacts, and the roadblocks and pathways PAOs face in planning for and implementing flood mitigation strategies. Eight COGs, five state agencies, the Connecticut Green Bank and the Connect Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA) participated in the PAO.

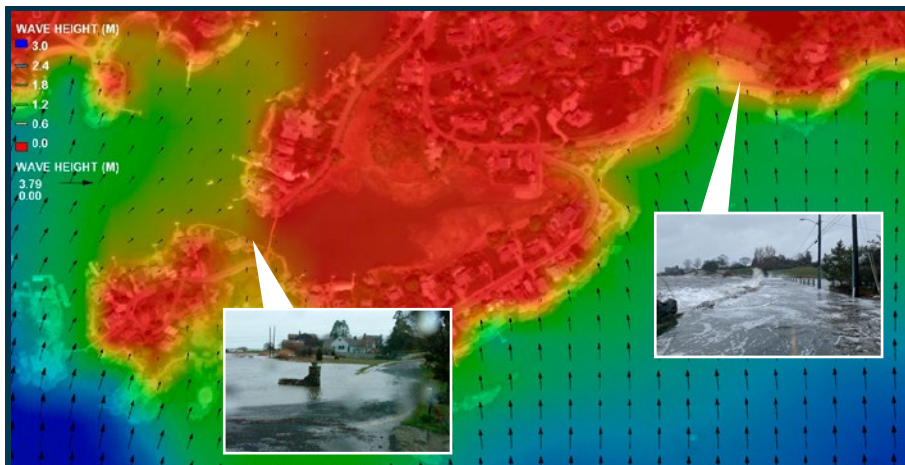
Key Findings

Common themes and takeaways from the municipal survey and stakeholder meetings included:

- **Drainage-related flooding** was cited as the most common type of flooding, with flood damage to transportation infrastructure services (i.e., flooded

roads) and residential areas as the most urgent or pressing flooding impacts.

- **Inadequate municipal funding** is overwhelmingly the top challenge or obstacle for the municipalities surveyed. Access to grant funding programs and a lack of staff specifically dedicated to flood risk management were also frequently cited as top concerns.
- Many municipalities don't have the **administrative infrastructure or capacity** to manage state and federal grants, especially multiple grants with significant reporting and administrative or management requirements.
- State agencies and municipalities consistently point to the **need for increased staff capacity** to effectively address flooding.
- The inability to meet minimum requirements for **local cost-share or "matching funds"** in accessing federal grant funding.
- **More sustainable approaches** are needed (beyond state and federal grant funding alone) for municipalities to generate ongoing revenue for flood resilience and mitigation efforts.
- The **need for continued and expanded inter-agency collaboration** across state agencies and between state agencies and the COGs, as well as regional approaches and strategies, to effectively address flooding problems.
- **Outreach and advocacy** are needed to inform legislators of the importance of funding and implementing a range of solutions to mitigate flooding.



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Recommendations

Programmatic and policy-based recommendations were developed based on the municipal flooding survey responses, stakeholder meetings, and existing flood resilience programs and initiatives. The recommendations, which can be found in the Final Report and Recommendations available on the CCM website (www.ccm-ct.org/Advocacy/Reports-Data/Flood-Study), are divided into ten categories:

(continued next page)

Flood Resilience, cont'd

- Statewide Policy and Planning – Flood Risk Estimation and Awareness
- Statewide Policy and Planning – Floodplain and Flood Resilience Design Standards
- Statewide Policy and Planning – Dam Safety and Flood Resilience
- Statewide Policy and Planning – Permitting and Regulatory
- Statewide Policy and Planning – SB 11 Climate Resilience Legislation
- Municipal Land Use Regulations and Policy
- Grant Funding and Grant Management Capacity
- Dedicated Funding Sources
- Inter-agency Collaboration and Regional Approaches
- Technology and Tools

These recommendations can be acted upon by CCM through advocacy and education/outreach as well as by Connecticut municipalities, state agencies, and state/regional organizations to more effectively address existing and future flood risk and flooding impacts on Connecticut communities. They also provide considerations for planners, engineers, architects, and designers working with municipalities on resilience and adaptation projects ranging from the site, neighborhood to municipal scale. Key planning-related recommendations from the study are highlighted in the adjacent text box.

The recommendations also include opportunities to better leverage flood resilience funding, increase technical capacity for flood resilience projects, strengthen municipal and regional land use policies, and remove permitting barriers. The recommendations are intended to align with and build upon ongoing work by the COGs, CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, CIRCA, and other state and regional organizations. ■■■

Key Study Recommendations

Flood Risk Estimation and Awareness

- Augment FEMA flood hazard maps to more accurately reflect actual flood risk
- Develop statewide pluvial flood hazard mapping
- Support more frequent updates to FEMA flood hazard maps
- Promote flood insurance coverage and other flood risk reduction strategies for properties outside FEMA Special Flood Hazard Areas

Municipal Land Use Regulations & Policy

- Amend local floodplain zoning regulations for consistency with the CT DEEP Model Floodplain Management Regulations
- Prohibit or limit new development within the 100-year floodplain
- Adopt climate resilient design standards and guidance for the design of municipal storm drainage infrastructure
- Increase elevation requirements for new or substantially improved structures beyond the minimum freeboard standards specified in the Connecticut State Building Code

Statewide Policy and Planning

- Develop and implement statewide climate resilience design standards and guidance
- Implement statewide riparian protection program to better regulate development in river corridors and floodplains.

Grant Funding and Grant Management Capacity

- Provide state funding to cover a portion of the required local match for federal resilience grants
- Increase funding levels for the CT DEEP Climate Resilient Fund grant program
- Create a state grant program for municipalities to replace undersized and degraded culverts

Dedicated Funding Sources

- Encourage and incentivize municipalities to develop local funding or financing mechanisms to generate ongoing revenue for flood resilience projects and to leverage state and federal grant funding
 - Stormwater Authorities
 - Coastal Resilience Reserve Funds
 - Municipal Flood Prevention, Climate Resilience, and Erosion Control Boards
 - CT Green Bank
 - Resilience Improvement Districts
- Provide ongoing outreach training and tools to municipalities on these local funding mechanisms

— *Diane Mas, PhD, REHS/RS, CC-P, Chief Resilience and Sustainability Officer for Fuss and O'Neill, Inc., developed and oversees the implementation of the company's Sustainability Policy. She has fostered an environment that makes resilience and sustainability integral natural parts of project planning and execution to create long-term, shared value for clients and communities by meeting the needs of the present while working towards an environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable future.*

No one is happy with the energy landscape in Connecticut. How do we begin to plan for a change that we all agree is necessary, but is bedeviled by a complicated, expensive, and politically thorny list of prerequisites?

Shocking Inaction:

How and Why Municipalities Must Pick Up the State's Slack on Clean Energy

by Christine O'Neill

2024 was a tumultuous year in Connecticut's energy space. Three distinct yet related dramas seemed to come to a head during the hottest days of the summer: electricity rates, utility regulation, and offshore wind procurement.

When customers received their June and July bills from Eversource, outcry over the "public benefits charge" echoed in nearly every Facebook community page, with elected officials scrambling to address constituent concerns. Over 70% of that charge comes from a bipartisan-endorsed power purchase agreement that props up our state's aging nuclear facility.¹ Meanwhile, electric utilities leaned into the narrative they had been pushing for the last year that the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) was creating an unfriendly regulatory environment, sparking a loss of investors and leaving them ill-prepared to respond to storms or fund upgrades.² And finally, the State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) failed to respond along with Massachusetts and Rhode Island to proposals all



three had solicited for one of the largest offshore wind farms contemplated in our state's history.³ Months later, CT DEEP confirmed — as quietly as possible⁴ — that it would not be

participating at all, souring the relationship with the other two states and killing the projects they had already bid on.

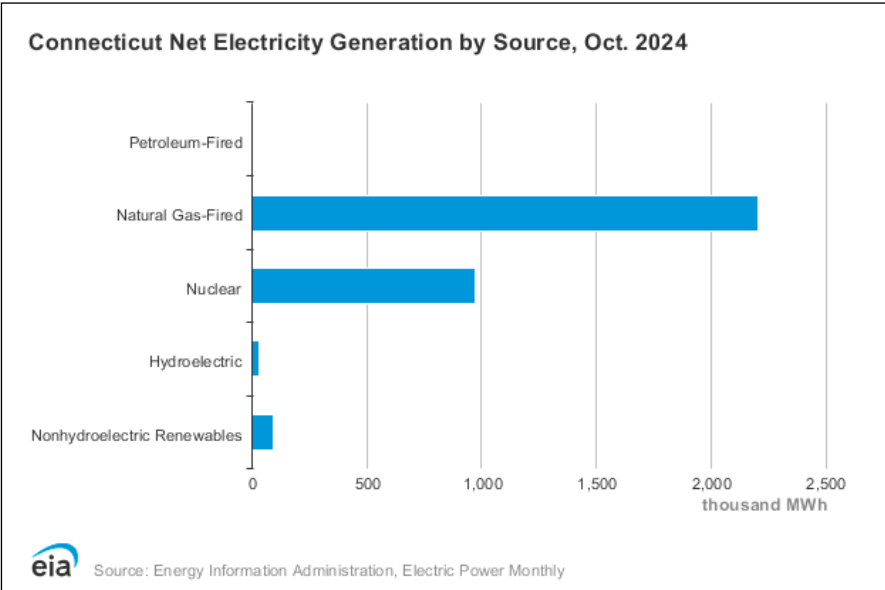
In addition to this, Connecticut has gotten itself into a pickle trying to achieve the clean energy goals it set for itself. The State's 2008 Global Warming Solutions Act committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 10% below the 1990 level by 2020, and 80% below 2001 levels by 2050.⁵ A Malloy-era law set an interim goal of 45% below 2001 levels by 2030.⁶ We barely hit our 2020 goal, thanks to pandemic-related shutdowns, but are badly off track for the other two.⁷ The lion's share of our non-carbon electricity is generated at the aforementioned nuclear plant, which comes with its own set of environmental concerns.

Yet, Massachusetts gets 24% of its in-state electricity from solar while Connecticut only gets 4%.⁸ This speaks volumes about where we *could* be if we had the right carrots and sticks in place.

No one is happy with the energy landscape in Connecticut. Ratepayers are outraged at high costs, legislators are gridlocked, climate advocates have seen virtually no progress towards environmental goals, and utilities continue to cry foul over PURA's tightening reins. How do we begin to plan for a change that we all agree is necessary, but is bedeviled by a complicated, expensive, and politically thorny list of prerequisites?

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Renewable energy makes up a negligible fraction of Connecticut's current electricity portfolio.



Shocking Inaction, cont'd

Local Energy Planning? Haven't Heard of It.

Energy planning tends to occur on the federal and state levels, often leaving municipalities with “advocacy” as their only recourse to effect change. Plans of Conservation and Development (POCDs), the 10-year guiding documents for municipalities, are typically silent on energy altogether or mention a few platitudes like encouraging renewables. But as we witness stagnation and missed opportunities in Hartford, perhaps it is time for local planners to position their own communities for a clean energy transition that is rapidly leaving Connecticut in the dust.

Let's start by reviewing what municipal governments can directly control when it comes to energy. Foremost, they can decide how to power their own operations, which includes everything from the lights in town hall to the air conditioning in the senior center to the equipment at the water control plant. For small communities like Eastford or Morris, this may not amount to much

— but Bridgeport and New Haven draw considerable amounts of energy to power municipal functions. Next, most residential, commercial, and industrial development is subject to municipal zoning and ordinances. Although there are limitations to this authority, as outlined in the CT General Statutes, it is within the rights of a municipality to “Require or promote energy-efficient patterns of development; the use of distributed generation or free-standing solar, wind and other renewable forms of energy; combined heat and power; and energy conservation” (C.G.S. 8-2(c)(3))⁹ through zoning regulations. Finally, municipalities can direct resources to encourage clean energy. Just as a town may have an economic development department to create a business-friendly environment, staff can also engage in awareness-raising campaigns, offer technical assistance, and reduce soft costs (more on that later) to make solar or other renewables more palatable.

What municipal governments *don't* have control over is utility-scale energy

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Melvin from Bridgeport, CT accessed a solar lease through a “Solar for All” campaign.

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Municipalities can set themselves up as bastions of clean energy by empowering small projects that create power at the same location it is being used.

Shocking Inaction, cont'd

installations. Those fall within the ambit of the Connecticut Siting Council.¹⁰ Examples of utility-scale projects include solar arrays over 1 MW, a nuclear plant like Millstone in Waterford, or offshore wind.

Thus, municipalities alone cannot fuel the clean energy transition in the absence of a state-level policy (and priority) shift. But this issue is too important to spend time pointing fingers when we should be rolling up our sleeves. Municipalities can set themselves up as bastions of clean energy by empowering small projects that create power at the same location it is being used — called *distributed generation* — rather than relying on the fraught regional grid. Below we explore specific actions a municipality can take to this end.

Rolling Up Our Sleeves

The recommendations herein do not constitute legal advice. Be sure to check with your municipal attorney before taking action.

- **Lower soft costs for distributed generation.** Soft costs refer to the non-equipment and -construction expenses associated with energy installations, such as research, permitting, site surveys, attending meetings, etc. Municipalities can directly or indirectly impact certain of these items, such as offering online permitting or providing interested landowners with a list of vetted solar installers. The Capitol Region Council of Governments, for instance, maintains a joint online permitting center (we love a good economy of scale!) for 39 municipalities,¹¹ while the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments hosts an online solar info hub for its 19 communities.¹² Even little Pomfret created a nifty cheat sheet to ease the solar permitting process, reducing soft costs for potential homeowners or developers.¹³

- **Offer incentives for renewables in local development.** Municipalities may structure taxes, permitting, and zoning regulations to favor renewable energy

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and distributed generation. One excellent example is Bristol's BT zone,¹⁴ which requires developments to include a given number of "site amenities" depending on the density. Applicants may choose from a list including "energy-efficient site lighting on building exteriors," "at least one Level 2 electric vehicle charging station," or "at least one on-site source of renewable energy." This scheme provides developers with flexibility, while ensuring that new construction trends towards electrification and renewable energy. Similarly, Watertown's Subdivision Regulations¹⁵ require that streets, lot lines, and buildings be oriented for maximum solar access, and that public areas should be laid out as not to preclude "future use of community energy systems."

- **Power municipal operations with renewables (and maximize energy efficiency).** Solar panels on the roofs of every city hall and library would put a significant dent in fossil fuel demand. Many



communities have already taken up the torch, like Darien, which in 2019 installed solar panels atop its Town Hall, Public Works Garage, and Police Headquarters.¹⁶ Energy efficiency also helps reduce demand and generally requires a smaller upfront investment. Benchmarking and tracking energy use is a simple exercise that empowers municipalities to cut back on waste and save money in the process

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Darien Town Hall installed solar panels on three municipal buildings in 2019, "expected to save Darien taxpayers roughly \$40,000 in reduced electricity bills in the first year."

(Source: <https://darienite.com/new-solar-panels-at-town-hall-public-works-garage-police-headquarters-celebrated-on-earth-day-44728>)



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Shocking Inaction, cont'd

— like the City of West Hartford, which slashed energy usage across municipal buildings by a staggering 20% over two years.¹⁷

- **Pursue energy-smart grants.**

Although the outlook for federal renewable energy grants is bleak given the priorities of the new administration, opportunities exist to access state funding for these projects. CT DEEP has maintained a microgrid grant and loan program which has awarded nearly 20 million dollars over four rounds to municipalities, universities, and healthcare facilities.¹⁸

Connecticut Green Bank, created by the legislature in 2011, offers “low-cost, long-term sustainable financing” for clean energy projects by marrying public funds with private investment.¹⁹ Energy efficiency projects should seek to take advantage of Eversource or UI incentives, like Manchester did when they accessed half a million dollars to upgrade three schools to net zero buildings.²⁰



CT DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes at a press conference announcing the offshore wind RFP.

(Source: <https://ctclimateandjobs.org/ct-deep-releases-draft-rfp-for-offshore-wind-development-in-connecticut>)

- **Create campaigns to help landowners transition to solar.** Although Connecticut greatly benefits from the activism of nonprofits like People’s Action for Clean Energy, these groups do not always have the resources or connections for sustained outreach campaigns around energy. Public sector education directed at private landowners — both residential

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Shocking Inaction, cont'd

and commercial — can amplify clean energy throughout a community. For instance, Solarize Coventry resulted in 75 households adopting solar equipment.²¹ Other communities, like Bridgeport and Stratford, engaged in a Solar For All campaign that has reached over 2,800 families throughout the state.²² While there is a big difference between the size and resources of Coventry and Bridgeport, both were able to find the right size program that created positive results.

Advocacy Has Its Place

Make no mistake: the State's inaction on clean energy is inexcusable, and the call for municipalities to step up should not be seen as a pardoning of guilt. Specifically, we need far bolder leadership from CT DEEP in pursuing clean energy projects (or at minimum, following through on their commitments) and we need legislators to put down the shovels and stop digging our fossil fuel hole deeper. If you have ever attended a public hearing at the Capitol, you know that municipal elected officials have a stronger and more impactful voice than a member of the public: they are invited to speak before everyone else and are given more leeway with their three-minute time limit. If municipalities speak up, legislators will listen. Therefore, municipal efforts must be coupled with clear and consistent advocacy directed at the State.

The inaction has been shocking — but perhaps a lot of little, local sparks can start the clean energy fire we desperately need. ■

— *Christine O'Neill is an Environmental Planner with the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments, where she works on climate planning, sustainable waste management, and a variety of other projects. She earned her Master's of Energy & Environmental Management from UConn with a graduate certificate in Sustainable Environmental Planning. The opinions expressed above are her own and do not represent the position of any group.*

Endnotes

- ¹ <https://insideinvestigator.org/unplugged-the-7-billion-tax-in-your-electric-bill/>
- ² <https://ctmirror.org/2024/05/02/ct-eversource-pura-investments/>
- ³ <https://ctmirror.org/2024/09/15/connecticut-misses-offshore-wind-solicitation/>
- ⁴ <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/25466850-deep-pressrelease-cleanenergyprocurements-december2024-1/>
- ⁵ <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2008/ACT/PA/2008PA-00098-R00HB-05600-PA.htm>
- ⁶ <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2018/ACT/pa/pdf/2018PA-00082-R00SB-00007-PA.pdf>
- ⁷ <https://ctmirror.org/2023/12/07/ct-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2030-limit/>
- ⁸ <https://www.eia.gov/state/?sid=MA#tabs-4> v. <https://www.eia.gov/state/analysis.php?sid=CT>
- ⁹ <https://law.justia.com/codes/connecticut/title-8/chapter-124/section-8-2/>
- ¹⁰ <https://portal.ct.gov/csc>
- ¹¹ <https://www.viewmypermitct.org/>
- ¹² <http://nvcogct.gov/solar>
- ¹³ https://www.pomfretct.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf3701/f/uploads/2.ct_standardized_instruction_template_for_solar_-_pomfret.pdf
- ¹⁴ [https://ct-bristol2.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/19065/Zoning-Regulations---effective-51324?bidId= Sec. 9.3.5 \(pg 47\)](https://ct-bristol2.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/19065/Zoning-Regulations---effective-51324?bidId= Sec. 9.3.5 (pg 47))
- ¹⁵ [https://cms7files.revize.com/watertownct/Departments/Planning%20&%20Zoning/Regulations%20&%20Plan/Subdivision%20Regulations.pdf Sec. 5.15 \(pg 55\)](https://cms7files.revize.com/watertownct/Departments/Planning%20&%20Zoning/Regulations%20&%20Plan/Subdivision%20Regulations.pdf Sec. 5.15 (pg 55))
- ¹⁶ <https://darienite.com/new-solar-panels-at-town-hall-public-works-garage-police-headquarters-celebrated-on-earth-day-44728>
- ¹⁷ <https://tinyurl.com/4hn23u3t>
- ¹⁸ <https://portal.ct.gov/deep/energy/microgrid-grant-and-loan/microgrid-grant-and-loan-program>
- ¹⁹ <https://www.ctgreenbank.com/about-us/>
- ²⁰ <https://energizect.com/media/10521/download?inline>
- ²¹ <https://businessviewmagazine.com/coventry-connecticut-quietly-sustainable/>
- ²² <https://ctgreenbank.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/PosiGen-Case-Study-v4-Blue.pdf>

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Request for Comments & Ideas — Engaging and Diversifying Planning in Connecticut

by Devin Clarke

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is not just a popular term in today's social and political climate. This concept has become laden with rhetoric that is increasingly divisive and contentious. DEI as a concept and its initiatives are built on principles that promote and foster environments that support and value all individuals regardless of one's background. While the term garners a wide range of thoughts and perspectives, as Planners we cannot lose sight of the true meaning and purpose of the initiative.



Representation, the feeling of belonging, and ensuring fairness should not be a debated, tumultuous, nor a partisan discussion. As DEI Chair, I look to gather perspectives and ideas from Connecticut's planning community (and adjacent planning partners) on how CCAPA and the larger CT planning industry can advance the goals and objectives of our [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan](#). CCAPA will continue to support the recruitment and retention of talented planning professionals across all agencies and organizations. Developing and maintaining a robust network of planning professionals throughout the state is an important goal for CCAPA. CCAPA and I hope through program development we are able to provide and leverage initiatives that support current planners that holistically improve our work, our organizations, and our communities.

Below is a brief brainstorm of potential strategies agencies/organizations around Connecticut may utilize to extend the tentacles of planning to new, emerging, and perspective future planners. We are open to ideas and would love your feedback — please email Devin Clarke at CTChapterDEI@outlook.com with perspectives on the below or other ideas!

Direct School Education & Engagement Program Days/Sessions

- Planners may provide engagement and education sessions to school aged children via interactive classroom learning sessions.
- Planners may utilize school curriculum and/or affiliated after school programs and the like via clubs, enrichments hours, and other school sponsored programs to engage youth and increase knowledge and interest in the planning field.

- ☞ Example: <https://littlebigthinktank.com/#playmat>
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Request for Comments, cont'd

Experiential Learning Opportunities

- Planners may consistently promote and provide internships and/or shadowing opportunities through public agencies and private consulting firms to high school, college, and emerging professionals.
 - ☞ Agencies may have flexibility with budgets to set aside or direct funds that can be utilized for temporary internship, work, and shadowing opportunities that increase capacity in their workplace
 - ☞ Example: <https://ct.planning.org/community-outreach/diana-donald-scholarship-internship-award>
- Planners may collaborate with schools and their administrators to develop and promote work-based learning programs for the exchange of high school or college course credit for internship/work opportunities

Media & Technology Campaigns

- Planners may utilize various social media and technology platforms like Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, and YouTube to showcase the planning field and highlight career pathways through ongoing work, completed projects, competitions, and other creative activities.

☞ This may leverage and promote interest to young people, emerging professionals, and others via new/existing platforms by those unaware or unfamiliar to the planning field.

☞ Example: Capitol Region Council of Governments
☞ YouTube POCD Illustration: www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmcs-GSRXaE

Youth & Community Engagement

- Planners may consider outreach to well-known community leaders, political figures, and celebrities to daylight, support, boost engagement and representation of planning projects, programs, and initiatives.
 - ☞ Example: www.oregonlive.com/trending/2025/01/justin-timberlake-joins-portland-bike-bus-as-special-guest.html
- Planners may expand Community Advisory Committees or Public Advisory Committees to include youth advocacy allies for specific project/programs.
 - ☞ Bike Buses, Planners Day of Service, Demonstration Project Installations, Street Art/Murals, Bike to Work Days, etc.

— Devin Clarke, CCAPA's Diversity Equity and Inclusion Chair, is Senior Transportation Planner for MetroCOG.

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Make No Little Plans

by John Guskowski, AICP, LEED AP, ENV-SP,
CCAPA Government Relations Co-Chair

The Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association (CCAPA) has over 400 members who are governmental and consulting planners, land use attorneys, citizen planners, and other professionals engaged in planning and managing land use, economic development, housing, transportation, and conservation for local, regional, and State governments, private businesses and other entities. CCAPA has long been committed to assisting the legislature and State agencies with developing and furthering responsible growth management principles. The APA is an independent, not-for-profit, national educational organization that provides leadership in the development of vital communities. Through testimony and advocacy to the Connecticut General Assembly, CCAPA will continue to provide non-partisan guidance and expertise for the good of Connecticut's residents and environment, creating great communities for all.



CCAPA Priorities for 2025 Legislative Session

1) Allow for Town Website Posting of Legal Notices in Lieu of Newspapers

We strongly urge amendments to CGS Section 8-7 regarding public notification of meetings, hearings, and decisions, allowing municipal website notification in lieu of newspaper publication. The CT Supreme Court decision in the recent "Fenwick" case demonstrates that the current newspaper notification system is broken and needs a legislative fix. This reform would not only save municipalities money, but more importantly, provide residents relevant and timely information in more widely accessible platforms.

2) Continued Reform of Zoning Regulations for Housing Development

We support continued work on combinations of incentives and requirements to generate more housing supply, including market rate and affordable/workforce housing, especially (but not exclusively) in high-opportunity and Transit-Oriented areas. It is time to move beyond the development of local Affordable Housing Plans and towards the actual construction of units. Communities must find ways, with the State's help, to see results and actual expansion of housing opportunity. Proposals including Work/Live/Ride,

Light-Touch Density, and Fair Share deserve full discussion and consideration.

3) Provide State Funds to Aid Municipalities with "Local" Match for Federal Infrastructure Grants

Following the passage of significant federal funding legislation in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act, municipalities are able to address necessary improvements to community infrastructure and facilities. These funds may often include a local matching requirement for eligibility, which can tax a local capital investment budget. State participation and financial support would go a long way to advancing these federally-funded projects in Connecticut.

4) Clarify Municipal Authority to Require Fee-In-Lieu of Sidewalks

Similar to other authorized fee-in-lieu provisions, we support legislative language that allows municipalities to demand and receive payments in lieu of requiring installation of sidewalks for projects where they may not be needed or appropriate. Legislation should stipulate that FILO funds be used to bolster the community's sidewalk network in more suitable locations.

Additional Legislative Issues for Support in 2025

1) Clarify or eliminate the provisions of Section 21 of Public Act 24-143 that allow pre-existing, vacant lots to potentially be exempt from all zoning regulations adopted following their creation. This provision, as currently written, lacks clarity and has the potential to create significant confusion and disorder at a local land-use level, undermining the orderly and managed development of our communities.

2) Provide Support to Municipalities on Managing and Tracking Affordable Housing Proposed via CGS Section 8-30g. As the number and complexity of affordable housing proposals increase across Connecticut, the State should: a) provide a model affordability plan; and b) provide support in tracking and reporting of projects, post-construction, to ensure continued compliance.

3) Reform the Process of Granting of Variances by ZBA. CCAPA acknowledges the current variance procedure in Connecticut needs reform. We are committed to working with our partners from the Connecticut Bar Association, Connecticut Association of Zoning Enforcement Officials and others to clarify definitions and criteria for the consideration and granting of variances by Zoning Boards of Appeals.

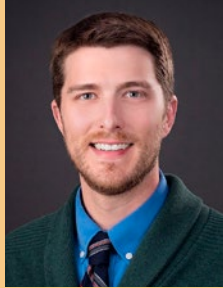
4) Require all Municipal Wetlands Commissioners to Undergo Regular Training. Building from the success

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PDO Corner

A Message from CCAPA's Professional Development Officer

by Jeremy DeCarli, AICP, CZEO



Congratulations to the two CCAPA members who passed the November exam, **Anthony Lagana** and **Taylor Daigle**!

The May exam window is right around the corner. CCAPA will host its annual AICP Exam Classroom Session in March. At the time of writing this article, the

date is not yet confirmed but stay tuned for details if you are looking to begin preparing to take the exam. The classroom session will have a number of speakers discussing various subjects which will be covered in the exam. It will also discuss the process of taking the exam itself. In addition to the CCAPA session, the Massachusetts Chapter has made their prep sessions free of charge and opened them up to CT Chapter members. Please contact me if you are interested.

APA National is debuting new study material on the website for those that are for the exam. Make sure to check that out, we'll provide a link to it from the ct.planning.org website.

For those that are already certified, please remember that 2025 is the second year of the two-year certification cycle. While it feels like there is plenty of time, the year will go by quickly, so please remember to log your credits! This is an odd number year, which means the CT Bar Association will be holding their bi-annual *Connecticut Land Use Law for Municipal Land Use Agencies, Boards, and Commissions* session. This will be eligible for CM credits.

As always, if you have questions about CM credits, are looking to get certified, or anything else certification related, please feel free to reach out to me at pdoccapa@gmail.com. 📧

— *Jeremy DeCarli, AICP, CZEO, is a planner at Tyche Planning & Policy. As PDO, Jeremy facilitates the exam certification process and continuing education efforts of the Chapter. Jeremy is a critical information source, whether you're looking for information on upcoming training opportunities in your area or seeking additional help as you prepare for the AICP exam.*

Legislative Update, cont'd

of PA 21-29 that required mandatory legal and procedural training by Planning, Zoning, and Zoning Board of Appeals members, the CGA should expand the training requirements for local Inland Wetlands & Watercourses commissioners to complete the DEEP training program. The current statutes only require a single commissioner to be trained at any given time.

5) Rescind PA 22-40 that Froze Funding for Transit Districts and Support Better Transit Funding. This act froze funding for Transit Districts at FY2024 levels and provided no consideration for inflation without expanding funding for a newly created grant program. This freeze will have the effect of forcing fare increases, reductions in current transit services, and burdensome increases on local funding support. 📌

— *Government Relations Comm. Co-Chair John Guskowski, AICP, LEED AP, ENV-SP, is Co-Founder and Principal of Tyche Planning & Policy Group, LLC. The Government Relations Committee is responsible for monitoring and initiating legislation related to planning, developing policy positions, and communicating with federal and state agents on behalf of the Chapter.*



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Membership Report

by Drew Thomas, Membership Chair



CCAPA finished out 2024 with 330 members. Of the membership, 54 percent of chapter members hold the AICP or FAICP certification and 9 percent (31 members) are students. One of the chapter's goals is to grow our membership as well as recruit more young professionals and students into the chapter and profession. To help achieve this goal, CCAPA is hosting a student event in partnership with UConn on Monday, February 24th from 12:00 to 1:15 pm. The event features planners throughout the state of Connecticut and will provide insight and information for students interested in a career in planning. This event is open to students throughout the state and is not limited to UConn or any specific major.

For 2025, in addition to our goal of improving the relationship with CT universities and students to help educate young professionals about planning careers, the CCAPA membership committee and chair are dedicated year to grow the chapter membership through outreach and offerings for members through partnership with the Program chair and committee.

Finally, the membership committee is seeking individuals looking to be involved. If you have interest in joining the committee, please contact Drew Thomas at athomas@scrcog.org for more information. Additionally, if you have an idea for how we can grow our membership and strengthen the benefits of CCAPA membership, please feel free to send us suggestions. 📧

— Membership Chair Drew Thomas is GIS/Data Manager for the South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG). The Member Services Committee is responsible for promoting membership in CCAPA and APA, recruiting new members, and retaining existing members. The Member Services Committee keeps an accurate roster of our membership and helps gather information on the nature of our membership and the desires of our members.



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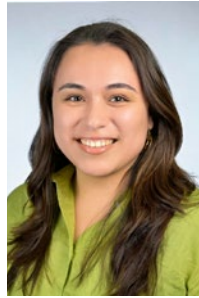


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Program Committee Update

by Stephanie Camp, AICP

Over the course of 2024, CCAPA's Program Committee continued to host or co-host CM-related programming for members and planning professionals, with a large focus on state led-planning efforts, including the State Historic Preservation Office's historic tax credit program, The Office of Responsible Growth's Plan of Conservation and Development update, and housing technical assistance and finance programs offered both by the Department of Housing and the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority.



For the first time, CCAPA hosted a Housing Forum at Hotel Marcel in New Haven to bring planners, commissioners, and other key partners together to discuss Connecticut's housing affordability needs, as the Chapter's Planners recognize the need to work together on a larger scale to make meaningful progress. The day-long event featured several panels that covered projects that provide best practice examples and ways to continue moving the housing reform conversations forward. Attendees also had an opportunity to meet in small groups with colleagues across the state to information share and ask different panelists questions.

Our year of programs also included our annual Hot Topics in Land Use event, featuring an Annual Legal Update and Q&A Session, a session on Issues and Topics from the 2024 Connecticut General Assembly and Looking Ahead, a panel discussion on How Zoning Can Improve Planning, and Planning Ethics in the Real World. CCAPA also partnered with professionals in planning-adjacent fields across the state to bring the chapter information about a variety of information and tools, such as the CT FarmLink, an online program that helps farmers get connected with available land; climate justice in Connecticut; and accessibility in site planning.

At the end of the summer, we gathered in Hartford at a Yard Goats game to enjoy a warm summer night watching Connecticut's favorite Minor League Baseball team play while networking with other planning professionals from around the state.

In 2025, we're looking forward to continuing some of our most popular annual events, as well as creating and co-hosting new ones. CCAPA's Membership Chair Drew Thomas and Student Representative Anthony Lagana are co-hosting a [virtual career panel](#) with UConn on Monday, February 24th. This event is open to students from all universities and colleges. This panel of Connecticut planning professionals will share their experiences working in the planning field and then the floor will open

to the audience to ask any questions about the panels' career paths, and more. On March 8th, CCAPA will host a full day online AICP preparation, coordinated by the Chapter's Professional Development Officer Jeremy Decarli. In this session multiple topics which will be found on the exam will be reviewed. Additionally, our Hot Topics in Land Use event, coordinated by CCAPA's Government Relations Co-Chairs, John Guskowski and Kyle Shiel, will be held this year on June 13 at the Lyceum in Hartford (see [page 23](#) for more details). We will also be returning to Dunkin Donuts Park for another Yard Goats outing on May 15, 2025! Join CCAPA members for an evening of baseball and networking with new and old colleagues. Tickets for this game will include food, soft drinks, and a CCAPA T-shirt (see [page 3](#) for more info).

If you have an idea for programs and events you would like to see and attend, please let us know. Or if you'd like to get involved with planning programs and events, you can also join the Program Committee. Please email me at smcamp@scrcog.org with any questions, ideas, or inquiries about joining the Committee. Happy New Year!

— Program Committee Co-chair Stephanie Camp, AICP, is Director of Regional Planning at SCRCOG. The Program Committee is responsible for providing continuing education for members, and promoting ethical planning practices. The Committee selects topics for programs and provides logistical support for programmed activities, Certification Maintenance and credit approvals.



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