



## AFFORDABLE HOUSING – AGRICULTURE & DAIRY – HISTORIC PRESERVATION – OPEN SPACE

February 7, 2023

*Sent via email*

To: Members of the Connecticut General Assembly  
From: Supporters of the Community Investment Act  
Re: Congratulations and (Re)Introduction to the Community Investment Act

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Dear Senators and Representatives:

Congratulations on your election as a member of the Connecticut General Assembly. Whether you are newly elected to office or are returning to represent your respective districts, we wish you a productive and exciting legislative session.

As you begin your work together with the administration to craft a new biennial state budget, the undersigned organizations, and the thousands of members across the state that we represent, are writing to respectfully ask for your support for the protection and continued funding of the Community Investment Act (CIA).

Enacted in 2005 (Public Act 05-228), the CIA established what has become Connecticut's primary source of dedicated funding to support state programs for open space, agriculture/dairy, historic properties, and affordable housing. Each sector represents a critical component of our statewide quality of life and economy.

Through a \$40 surcharge on local land recordings the CIA has funded more than 1,400 projects with over \$152 million invested, benefiting every community in the state. This investment has leveraged millions more in private and public dollars, all while preserving and reinvesting in Connecticut's rich character.

The CIA is a proven economic driver – providing a higher quality of life, attracting skilled workers, and leveraging private investment for Connecticut's towns. Investments in land protection support a robust outdoor recreation industry which adds \$3.9 billion to the state's gross domestic product and supports 44,065 jobs. Local farm businesses have

contributed to the viability of the \$5.2 billion agricultural industry, generating over 29,000 jobs. The CIA has generated over 3,000 jobs in the affordable housing and historic preservation sector. CIA support is directly responsible for saving 157 dairy farm businesses. The fact that these numbers continue to increase is a testament to the success and importance of this program.

Find below brief testimonials from each sector that benefits from the CIA:

### **Farmland Preservation and Dairy Production**

CT's farms and farmland are at the heart of our food systems. CIA funding ensures that our working lands and agricultural producers remain in business and continue to provide healthy, local agricultural products for all of Connecticut's residents. While bond funds are generally used to purchase the actual development rights, CIA funds have been effectively used to make the process of protecting farmland faster and more efficient.

Our dairy farmers serve as the backbone of Connecticut's agricultural sector. Connecticut's dairy farmers and the working lands they maintain support agricultural viability; promote climate change resiliency, adaptation, and mitigation; and help create the beautiful, rural farm landscapes that make Connecticut special. According to the 2017 National Agriculture Statistic Service Census, Connecticut's dairy farmers operate on 63,609 acres, which represents 15% of Connecticut's land in farms and 42% of total cropland.

Since the inception of CIA 18-years ago, this important funding has:

- Permanently protected 347 farms. In the 12-year period prior to CIA's inception, only 61 farms were permanently protected.
- Provided a safety net to our dairy farmers through the Dairy Sustainability Account.
- Supported the Farm Transition Grant Program as well as the Farm Viability Grant Program, together awarding more than \$14 million in grants to over 550 farmers and non-profits and municipalities that support agriculture.

### **Affordable Housing**

CIA dollars have funded affordable housing directly by providing "gap" financing not otherwise available and by supporting important services such as repairing the roof on a homeless shelter, replacing a boiler in a group home, or providing support services for veterans. CIA funding is critical to the state's ability to meet the housing needs of its middle- and low income residents.

Specific programs that have been funded through CIA include:

- The Coordinated Access Network (CAN) infrastructure which assists individuals in a coordinated and streamlined way to help them exit homelessness

to housing funded at \$850,000 for the last two years. DOH also supports 2-1-1 funded at \$350,000 annually.

- A technical assistance program to help Connecticut's suburban and rural towns develop hundreds of units of affordable housing for seniors and those who work in the community.
- Transit-oriented housing to ensure that affordable rents are located along Connecticut's growing transit corridors.
- Hosting affordable and supportive housing trainings funding two contracts for \$400,000.
- System redesign and rebid asset mapping RFP funded at \$150,000.
- Shelter efficiency work was funded at \$46,000.

Programs previously funded through CIA that are being funded by different resources recently include:

- Rapid rehousing efforts to prevent and end homelessness by getting families quickly out of shelters and into apartments.
- A statewide cold weather homelessness response plan to ensure shelter for all persons during our coldest winters.

### **Open Space Conservation**

The CIA is the only consistent source of funding for the state's Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program (OSWA) – the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's matching grant program for land trusts, municipalities, and water companies seeking to conserve open space. Since its inception in 1998, the OSWA program has invested \$137+ million to protect 38,000+ acres through 600+ land conservation partner projects across the state.

The CIA funds OSWA's Urban Green and Community Garden (UGCG) Program, which has provided over \$2.5 million in grants to targeted investment and/or distressed cities and towns across Connecticut, including Bridgeport, Hartford, Enfield, New Haven, Putnam, Norwalk, and New London. These grants have helped to renovate municipally-owned properties into new or enhanced community gardens and green spaces for recreation and local food production in urban neighborhoods.

CIA funding is critical to the viability of these programs, which are essential to the state's efforts in meeting its land conservation goals, addressing the impacts of the changing climate, providing local food security, and ensuring that all people have access to opportunities to connect with nature, and the physical and mental health benefits it provides.

Looking ahead, full funding of the CIA:

- Ensures there are sufficient funds for the pending 2022 OSWA and UGCG awards.

- Supports the upcoming 2023 grant round, with the number of applications expected to increase with the availability of an influx of federal matching funds.
- Impacts DEEP's ability to pay for two land acquisition department staff positions.

### **Historic Preservation**

The Community Investment Act provides necessary and reliable funding to every community in Connecticut to protect and invest in its cultural heritage and revitalize downtowns. Preservation is not just a feel-good exercise. Tourism, rehabilitation, maintenance, and related activities have added more than 6,000 jobs and nearly half a billion dollars to the economy in the last decade. For every \$100 invested in the rehabilitation of a historic structure, some \$83 ends up in the pockets of Connecticut workers.

The CIA provides direct investment through grant programs administered by the State Historic Preservation Office. To date, almost \$26 million has been awarded in matching grants for bricks-and-mortar projects and pre-development planning leveraging more than \$52 million investment in communities. Annually approximately \$1.5 million in smaller grants is awarded to nonprofits and municipalities, activities include planning for rehabilitation, inventories, State and National Register nominations, and COVID-19 Stewardship Relief.

Of note in recent years, \$1 million was invested to survey and make grants to historic industrial complexes across Connecticut, documenting more than 1,400 properties and launching the connecticutmills.org website, a tool widely used by developers, municipal leaders, and citizens for thoughtful planning and investment.

This past year marked the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Hartford native Frederick Law Olmsted, the father of American landscape architecture. Joining national celebrations, the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office and Preservation Connecticut invested \$175,000 to document the Olmsted heritage in Connecticut, which included 139 sites of parks, estates, subdivisions, campuses, burial plots, grounds for public and institutional buildings, and city planning.

During this time, we cannot afford to miss opportunities to reinvest in Connecticut's downtowns. Connecticut Main Street Center recent analysis shows there is 187 million square foot of vacant and underutilized space in our historic downtowns. Fully developed, these can produce 88,000 units of housing of which 17,600 or more could be affordable, 20,000 new businesses and over \$1 billion in new annual sales and income tax to the state.

The initiatives supported by the CIA bolster our infrastructure of place – pristine open spaces, vibrant historic town centers, working farms, and housing choices for everyone. With these assets, working together, we can continue to invest in communities across the state and build a nationally competitive, sustainable economy in Connecticut for the benefit of all residents.

We the undersigned sincerely appreciate your consideration of our request to fully fund the Community Investment Act in the biennial budget. We would be happy to discuss the benefits of the program in more detail and look forward to working with you this year.

Sincerely,

Major Supporters of the Community Investment Act (in alphabetical order):

Audubon Connecticut	Connecticut Main Street Center
Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions	Connecticut Nursery and Landscape Association
Connecticut Audubon Society	Connecticut Preservation Action
Connecticut Council of Small Towns	Connecticut State Grange
Connecticut Conference of Municipalities	Housatonic Valley Association
Connecticut Farm Bureau Association	Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Connecticut
Connecticut Farmland Trust	Partnership for Strong Communities
Connecticut Forest & Park Association	Preservation Connecticut
Connecticut Housing Coalition	The Nature Conservancy
Connecticut Land Conservation Council	Trust for Public Land
Connecticut League of Conservation Voters	United Way of Connecticut
	Working Lands Alliance, a project of the American Farmland Trust

cc:

Brian Hurlburt, Commissioner, CT Department of Agriculture  
Alexandra Daum, Commissioner, CT Department of Economic and Community Development  
Katie Dykes, Commissioner, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection  
Seila Mosquera-Bruno, Commissioner, CT Department of Housing  
Mary Dunne, State Historic Preservation Officer