

# Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD)

## *At a Glance*

**David Lehman, Commissioner**

**Glendowlyn Thames, Deputy Commissioner**

**Alexandra Daum, Deputy Commissioner**

***Established* - 1995**

***Statutory Authority* - Conn. Gen. Statutes Chapters 127b and 184b**

***Central Office*- 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 5 Hartford, CT 06103**

***Number of Employees* - 122**

***Recurring Operating Expenses* - \$18,754,998.30**

***Organizational Structure* - Office of the Commissioner, Office of Business Development, Office of Financial Review, Office of Finance and Administration, Office of Brownfield Remediation and Development, Office of Capital Projects, Office of the Arts, State Historic Preservation Office, Office of Tourism, Office of Workforce Strategy**

## **Mission**

***DECD develops and implements strategies to increase the state's economic competitiveness.***

## **Statutory Responsibility**

Under the provisions of Conn. Gen. Statutes Chapters 127b and 184b DECD administers programs and policies to promote business, community development, brownfield redevelopment, arts, culture and tourism and is the state agency responsible for promoting economic growth.

## **Public Service**

DECD promotes business and economic development with tax credits, financing, technical assistance, opportunity zones, and enterprise zones. Strategically, DECD supports comprehensive, industry-based economic development to strengthen the competitiveness of Connecticut's workers and industries. The department's international staff provides technical and financial support to Connecticut companies looking to grow in the global markets and, in partnership with AdvanceCT, is dedicated to attracting foreign direct investment to Connecticut and helping Connecticut companies take advantage of export opportunities in the global marketplace. The department's film, TV and Digital Media staff is dedicated to providing a full-service office for these industries facilitating location search, permits, workforce development programs and tax credits among other services.

DECD also provides planning, engineering, architectural and construction management services to oversee state-sponsored real estate development, including urban and downtown revitalization, industrial site development and brownfield redevelopment. DECD provides municipalities and non-profits with financial and technical assistance for community development activities. In addition, DECD assists customers with permitting and regulatory compliance with state or federal programs to allow for an expedited development process and manages the state Dry Cleaning Remediation Fund.

Economic and community vitality is a cornerstone of DECD's work and is evident throughout the grant programs and services administered by DECD's Office of the Arts (COA). DECD values the arts as a core asset of vibrant communities and views the arts as essential in attracting and retaining talent by offering a diverse palette of quality-of-life experiences. The creative workforce is strengthened when the arts participate as leaders in their communities across the state. As a result, DECD invests in Connecticut artists and arts organizations and encourages public participation in the arts and in creative endeavors.

DECD works to position the state as a prime location to start, expand or move a business. The department's marketing efforts, which target both in-state and out-of-state audiences, are focused on communicating the strengths of Connecticut, including its highly educated and productive workforce, prime Northeast location and abundance of support services. In addition, the department is actively working on attracting and retaining young talent, entrepreneurs and professionals by promoting the opportunities to live, work and play in Connecticut.

DECD works to make tourism a leading economic contributor and to position the state as a prime destination for leisure and business travelers. DECD collaborates with the Connecticut business community and tourism business across the state to present a unified positive image of the state and inspire greater visitation to every corner. Through its Office of Tourism (COT), DECD offers a broad range of services, including marketing, research, hospitality services, direct sales, industry education and business marketing assistance. COT operates the state's official tourism website [www.CTvisit.com](http://www.CTvisit.com) and popular social media channels.

Through the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), DECD administers a broad range of federal and state programs that identify, register, and protect the buildings, sites, structures, districts, and objects that comprise Connecticut's cultural heritage. DECD is the regulatory authority for the review of both federally and state funded projects to assist agencies with avoiding or minimizing the effects of their actions on historic resources. DECD currently administers seven grant programs for historic preservation, two state tax credit programs for the rehabilitation of historic structures, the federal historic rehabilitation tax credit program, as well as manage the Connecticut Freedom Trail and Washington-Rochambeau Trail programs. In addition, DECD owns and operates four state-owned museums: Henry Whitfield State Museum, Old New-Gate Prison and Copper Mine, Prudence Crandall Museum and the Eric Sloane Museum.

### **Improvements / Achievements for Fiscal Year 2020-2021**

DECD's investments, programs and services, and policy initiatives have made a significant impact on the economy of Connecticut and the quality of life of its citizens. What follows are some highlights from FY 2020-2021.

- As part of the State of Connecticut's COVID-19 response, DECD created a COVID-19 Business Emergency Response Unit call team dedicated to assisting businesses navigate financial, technical and programmatic resources and to develop new resources. To date the team has responded to 9,867 calls.
- In response to COVID-19 DECD implemented processes to identify Essential Business across the state and deployed guidance towards safe business operations. DECD staff managed guideline development, certification process, and business response. To date, over 20,000 Connecticut business have been certified.
- DECD launched the \$50,000,000 Connecticut Small Business Recovery Grant Program to provide emergency cash flow relief to small businesses and nonprofits negatively impacted by

the coronavirus. The program provided qualified organizations with \$5,000 grants to offset eligible expenses.

- DECD and DRS co-administered the \$35,000,000 Connecticut Business Recovery Grant. The grants ranged from \$10,000 to \$30,000 and were targeted to companies in industries hit hardest by the pandemic.
- In FY 2021 DECD entered into contracts with 6 companies for over \$18.7MM in Manufacturing Assistance Act funding. These recipients have pledged to create and retain over 600 jobs.
- The Connecticut Office of Film, Television & Digital Media (OFTDM) focuses on digital media sector growth and production in Connecticut and capitalizes on the state's strength as a major media center for television, animation, digital content and sports-related programming. The OFTDM is a full-service office which serves as liaison between production companies, state agencies, municipalities, production facilities, local crew and vendors.
  - The Office assisted 199 production companies producing various content on stages and locations across the state.
  - \$119 million in Digital Media & Film Production tax credits were issued to 25 production company applicants with cumulative qualified Connecticut expenditures of \$398 million.
- DECD's Economic Development Programs unit supports the department's strategic initiatives, partnerships and federal grants. It supports job creation by funding innovation, technical assistance/training, regional partnerships and new technological developments.
  - In September 2020, the State of Connecticut was one of six (6) grant awardees of the Department of Defense Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation's Defense Manufacturing Communities Support Program (DMCSP). The DECD was awarded \$1,400,000 to undertake a project to enhance in-state defense prime vertical supply chains and bring Model Based Definition technology, transform the supply chain from a 2-dimensional design and manufacturing platform to a 3-dimensional platform. The technology and processes developed through the CT Digital Model Initiative will provide a foundation for subsequent digital transformation initiatives in the defense manufacturing supply base.
- To complete the work of The Governor's Workforce Council (GWC) established by Governor Lamont's Executive Order in 2019, an Office of Workforce Strategy was created to help complete the work and serve as the staff to the GWC. The OWS was housed in DECD for its inaugural year, awaiting codification in statute. The GWC's mission, and therefore the mission of the OWS, is to serve as the Connecticut State Workforce Board, a federally mandated entity, and to provide support and policy influence on the workforce ecosystem in Connecticut.
- The OWS assisted in launching a comprehensive GWC Statewide Strategic Plan. Its pillars of focus include Business Leadership, Career & Education, Equity & Access, Data & Accountability, and more recently, the addition of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) & Community Outreach. The new committee will be reflected in upcoming changes to the GWC Strategic Plan in FY22. The GWC has engaged with over 400 stakeholders in Connecticut that represent regional workforce boards, businesses, community action agencies, state agencies and many other public and private entities.
- Following the initial onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the OWS, along with the Governor, the Department of Labor, and the Regional Workforce Boards, and other partners, launched a Skill-Up CT Campaign, offering online learning courses for displaced and out of work residents. Over

15,000 learner licenses were given out to CT residents to provide exposure and additional skills while residents were out of work, preparing them to re-enter the workforce in potentially a different field.

- Following the Skill-Up CT campaign, OWS was awarded \$15 million in federal Workforce Training CARES funding. This funding supported over 800 residents participating in short-term training programs around the state, primarily in Healthcare and Manufacturing. Many of these participants also received supportive service funding to help them participate in the training and get back to work. Supportive service dollars paid for laptops, hotspots, work clothes, car repairs, and many other items. Of the \$15 million, \$5,272,930 was provided to the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to deliver training programs and supportive services focused on childcare. With this funding, the OEC was also able to extend their funding to provide childcare slots to healthcare workers.
- From FY 2012-2021, the Office of Brownfield Remediation and Development (OBRD) has invested over \$219 million in approximately 250 brownfield development projects in cities and towns across the state.
- In this past fiscal year, OBRD conducted a competitive round for funding under the Targeted Brownfield Development Loan Program (C.G.S. Sec. 32-765). On April 16, 2021, DECD conditionally committed approximately \$2 million in loan funding to three developer-initiated projects.
- OBRD also conducted Funding Round 13 under the Brownfield Municipal Grant Program (C.G.S. Sec. 32-763) and on June 24, 2021 awarded over \$19 million in grant funding to 31 projects spanning 23 municipalities to help them assess and remediate brownfield sites so that they can be put back to productive use. Many of the remediation grant awards are for public-private partnerships that will significantly help leverage private investment in the state. The assessment funding provides seed money for the crucial initial steps in identifying the potential and obstacles for redevelopment of a brownfield site.
- On June 30, 2021, Governor Lamont signed Public Act No. 21-111 (House Bill No. 6690) that authorized \$25M each for the brownfield program for FY 2022 and 2023, for a total of \$50M. The State Bond Commission has to approve the allocation of the authorized funds so they can be released competitively for grants and loans as per the enabling statutes.
- During FY 2021, funds for the remediation of state-owned brownfield sites under PA 11-1 continued to support the remediation and redevelopment of the former Norwich State Hospital, former Mystic Oral School in Groton and the former DOT Maintenance Garage in Haddam.
- In the past fiscal year, OBRD approved three (3) and six (6) applications for liability relief under the Brownfield Remediation and Revitalization Program (Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 32-769) and the Abandoned Brownfield Cleanup Program (Conn. Gen. Statutes Section 32-768), respectively.
- The Small Business and Community Development Unit (Office of Brownfield and Capital Projects and Small Business/Community Development Office) manages large capital, infrastructure as well as smaller community development projects funded under the Urban Act (UA) Grant Program, Small-Town Economic Assistance (STEAP) Program, and Special Acts. The current portfolio of active projects including the funding approved by the State Bond Commission in this past fiscal year includes \$293M. Fifty-six projects totaling approximately \$27M were approved in FY 2021. A variety of projects are funded under these grant programs including, but not limited to, manufacturing facilities, educational facilities, roads, sidewalks,

utility, theaters and museums that further promote Connecticut's economy and enhance citizens' quality of life.

Highlighted projects include:

- 101 College Street Project, New Haven - \$6M UA funding in addition to CT DOT, City and Private funding for a project total of \$20,442,000 to design and construct driveways and tunnels for access to a new biotech building and existing parking structure as part of the redesign of Rt. 34.
  - Windham Intermodal Transportation Center - \$6M UA funding combined with \$6.8M in City funding for a total project cost of \$12.8M for the Intermodal Transportation Center that will provide public parking to support housing and community development in the Willimantic downtown area.
  - The Town of Simsbury's Simsbury Meadows Performing Arts Center Site Accessibility and Safety Improvements Project - \$128,000 in STEAP funding to support the construction of an ADA compliant parking lot and seating area at the Simsbury Meadows Performing Arts Center.
  - The Town of Trumbull's Veterans and First Responder Center Project - \$128,205 in STEAP funding to support Phase 1 demolition, design, and site preparation work for the new Veterans and First Responder Center.
- In FY 2021, DECD and Governor Lamont launched CTforMe, a new online hub focused on attracting and retaining young talent to the state. The initiative includes a website ([www.CTForMe.com](http://www.CTForMe.com)) and Instagram account (@CTForMe) that feature the organic, visual stories of young talent, entrepreneurs, and professionals who live and work in Connecticut. CTforMe serves as a resource for young professionals, who are considering making their lives in Connecticut, and businesses across the state looking to hire. To date, CTforMe.com has attracted over 78,000 page views from more than 52,000 new site users (primarily from New England, New York, California, and Florida). The @CTforMe Instagram account has already generated approximately 8 million impressions and more than 162,000 clicks to CTforMe.com.
  - From July 2019 to August 2021, COT continued its research and data-driven marketing campaign promoting travel to and within Connecticut. The year-round campaign integrated tactics such as out-of-home advertising, social media, email, content marketing, search engine marketing, influencer programs, public relations and digital marketing. The campaign was continuously optimized and measured using analytical tools including GPS tracking and algorithm-driven digital media placement. The campaign emphasized the rich mix of available experiences that are close together and close to the target audiences in New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts. Messages emphasized overnight stays, major attractions such as the casinos and aquariums, and over a thousand smaller attractions, restaurants and hotels in every corner of the state. Messages also focused on outdoor adventures, culinary experiences, relaxing retreats, family fun, and arts, culture and history attractions. COT promoted businesses in every town and city across the state.
  - Brand research following the summer and fall 2020 campaign showed that the marketing had a very positive influence on driving tourism. In comparing the responses of consumers in the target market who saw the campaign to those in the same target that did not, the study showed that among those who saw the campaign 90% more reported an increased interest in visiting Connecticut in the next 2 years, and 122% reported an increase in intent to visit in the next 12 months. In fact, 45% of respondents said that they actually already took immediate action in planning a trip within Connecticut due to seeing an ad.

- With the severe impact of COVID-19 on tourism in March 2020, COT completely retooled the marketing program and launched a Tourism Recovery Campaign aimed at mitigating the losses for this hardest hit industry. COT launched the “So Good to See You, Connecticut” campaign featured over 1,500 tourism industry businesses in every town and region of the state. Continuing that program with evolving messaging as the sentiments of the target audience morphed during the recovery phases, COT kept a continuous “evergreen” marketing program going—promoting relevant experiences for each moment. For Summer 2021, COT rolled out the “Say Yes to Connecticut” campaign, welcoming visitors to finally say yes to many of the activities they have had to say no to for so long. The campaign was well received, and traffic to CTvisit.com, the hub of the campaign, has reached all-time highs in visitation.
- COT’s tourism website, CTvisit.com, offers information on over 6,000 tourism attractions, accommodations and restaurants. Site visitors can find information about places to visit, stay and eat in Connecticut, as well as hundreds of inspirational travel stories, vacation deals and event listings, all in one place. In calendar year 2019, CTvisit.com received almost 7 million visits and drove nearly 3 million referrals (call, clicks, and emails) to tourism partners. 57% of the site visitors came to the site to read a content marketing article. 2020 naturally saw a dip in traffic, but 2021 is on track to substantially surpass the high-water mark of 2019.
- Due to COVID-19, the annual Connecticut Conference on Tourism in 2020 and 2021 were cancelled. COT, however, orchestrated a series of virtual Strategic Planning and Sharing meetings across the state, inviting hundreds of tourism professionals from hotels, restaurants, resort casinos, visitor attractions, entertainment venues, historic sites, and cultural and arts institutions to share best practices for adapting to the new tourism landscape, learn of the state’s marketing plans and opportunities, and collaborate on marketing efforts for the benefit of all.
- As the state’s attractions have slowly reopened, the 17th Annual Connecticut Open House Day event was able to continue in a hybrid form, with some offerings available on COT’s Virtual Open House Day website and featured offerings from many dozens of tourism attractions. The site also promoted the experiences that were possible to experience in person. The virtual event was promoted to consumers in-state, inviting them to engage with great attractions in whichever way they felt most comfortable.
- COT continued the Regional Marketing Program, which creates and enhances partnerships with organizations from every region of the state, in pursuit of increasing tourism. The program works closely with regional organizations, COGs and chambers of commerce to help more tourism-related businesses capitalize on the state’s existing broad array of marketing initiatives.
- SHPO reviewed or provided guidance on nearly 3,000 projects throughout the state to avoid or reduce development impacts on our state’s most important historic resources.
- Twenty-five new projects were accepted into the State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit program and \$21,984,392.46 in tax credits were reserved for 22 projects. The total project costs for the 22 projects is over \$99,935,116.03, which leverages the state’s investment by an over 4:1 ratio.
- SHPO reserved over \$800,000 in tax credits for 84 projects through the Historic Homes Rehabilitation Tax Credit program, generating over \$2.7 million in local rehabilitation expenditures. This direct assistance enhances stewardship of historic properties and pride in home ownership.

- As a testament to SHPO's strong belief in partnerships, last year SHPO awarded \$770,000 in Partners in Preservation grants.
- Historic Preservation is important to Connecticut's communities. In support of local initiatives, SHPO awarded \$765,000 to 42 communities for survey and planning projects, \$86,000 to municipalities in the Certified Local Government program, and \$326,904 for project-specific restoration, rehabilitation, and stabilization projects. In response to the economic difficulties many non-profits are facing as a result of the Corona Virus pandemic, SHPO implemented a Stewardship Relief Grant program and was able to award 42 grants to non-profits across the State by the end of the Fiscal Year.
- To recognize the important places in our state's history, SHPO assisted with the listing of 4 properties to the State Register of Historic Places. In addition, there were 14 actions under the National Register of Historic Places program in FY2021. These included 1 pre-move documentation, 1 new National Historic Landmark designation, 1 National Historic Landmark update, and 11 new listings for districts and individual properties.
- SHPO added one new site to the Connecticut Freedom Trail, the Martin Luther King in CT Memorial in Simsbury. SHPO also awarded a grant of \$248,906 to the Connecticut Public Affairs Network/Connecticut Democracy Center over two years to manage the Connecticut Freedom Trail by identifying and contracting with a Freedom Trail Community Outreach Coordinator and Freedom Trail Intern to fulfill the Freedom Trail Strategic Plan by creating a Freedom Trail narrative, brochure, website, and learning opportunities. The Connecticut Freedom Trail documents and designates sites that embody the struggle for freedom and human dignity, and celebrates African American communities.
- A 1.3 million dollar restoration of the Prudence Crandall Museum began in September 2020 and is currently ongoing.
- Through a combination of federal funding from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and state funding COA provides various grant programs and partnerships to support the arts sector across the state. COA supports a range of institutions, artists, and activities using the lenses of Relevance, Equity, Access, Diversity, and Inclusion (READI) to guide programmatic and investment decisions within the framework of artistic excellence.
  - In FY21 COA awarded 358 grants totaling \$1,880,536 to eligible arts organizations, municipal arts offices, and regional arts service organizations to support programming and to strengthen the operations and infrastructure of the state's nonprofit arts industry, and 20 grants totaling \$50,025 to assist arts venues in addressing ADA compliance standards.
  - COA invested \$211,250 in CT's creative workforce through 54 Artist Fellowships supporting the creation of new work by Connecticut artists of all creative disciplines, 3 Mahaffey Fellowships to support rising arts administrators, and 15 Arts Workforce apprenticeships providing college students/graduates, emerging creatives, military veterans and formerly incarcerated individuals an opportunity to gain hands-on and engaging creative industry workforce experience in arts and cultural organizations throughout the state.
  - COA invested \$56,250 in two pilot programs for FY21 that position arts leadership in community outreach, development, and connectivity:
    - As a State Affiliate of the AIR Institute – a training program for individuals who will serve as facilitators to advance creative community solutions - COA supports the development of CT AIR Facilitators. Facilitators will lead community-driven

workshops across the state focused on helping municipalities build their local creative economy using the AIR program strategy to achieve goals.

- COA's Bridge Builders Initiative is designed to strengthen equity work within the state-wide network of our partner Designated Regional Service Organizations by placing Arts Community Impact Coordinators within the organization to serve as engagement leads with a focus on cultural vibrancy and social and artistic justice.
  
- To support arts in education, COA awarded grants totaling \$190,000 to support teaching and learning for K-12 students and educators in, about, and through the arts with a focus on social emotional learning, developing culturally responsive curriculum and practices, and closing the opportunity gap for CT students. Other programming is geared toward developing and diversifying the professional field of teaching artists to teach in areas of social justice, creative aging, health & healing, community engagement as well as PK-12 schools.
  
- Weekly spotlights through CT Creative futures, a partnership with FOX61 CT, the CT Department of Education, and the Governor's Prevention Partnership highlight career pathways in the creative industry and provide engagement opportunities for parents and students.
  
- COVID 19 challenged the arts industry in myriad ways. Through Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding from the NEA, COA administered \$398,200 in the last quarter of FY20, and \$48,000 in FY21 in Emergency Relief Grants to retain jobs and support arts organizations enduring economic hardships caused by modified, cancelled, or forced closure of operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic.