

CONNECT CAPITOL REGION



BIG IDEAS OFTEN START WITH SMALL CONVERSATIONS.

CRCOG is Updating its Plan of Conservation and Development

The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) serves as the regional planning agency for the 38 member communities in the greater Hartford region encompassing a population of nearly 1 million people. As a council of government, we are required to update and adopt a regional Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) at least once every 10 years. The POCD serves as a vision for the future of the Capitol Region and helps guide municipalities with tools and strategies to accomplish that vision.

We believe this vision should broadly reflect the diversity of people and places across the Capitol Region. This update is an opportunity for everyone across our region to think deeply about the type of communities we want to live in and how to make them better places to live, work, play, learn, grow, and thrive.

CRCOG wants to ensure everyone is represented in this plan to help us identify equitable policies that best serve our communities, address the challenges facing us today, encourage and empower those who have been left behind in the past to shape their future, and strive for a vision that creates a better future for the following generations. We want everyone to feel welcome to participate and are introducing Table Talk as an exciting new opportunity to get your feedback on your time.

The logo for the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) is displayed in a bold, white, italicized sans-serif font. The letters are closely spaced and have a slight slant to the right. The background behind the logo is a dark teal color, which is part of the overall page design.



What is Table Talk?

Big ideas often begin with small conversations.

Table Talk is based on the simple idea that smaller, intimate conversations often generate more candid discussion of important issues. The Table Talk format is intended to bring together friends, colleagues, neighbors and fellow community members in a comfortable setting (whatever that means for your group) to discuss the issues most important to them.

Why?

We believe the format of traditional public meetings or more recent platforms such as social media do not always encourage thoughtful discussion or allow everyone to participate. CRCOG wants the POCD update to reflect the diversity of voices and experiences across our region. The Table Talk format is intended to help create a respectful and comfortable environment for people to share experiences and ideas with one another. The goal of these sessions is to generate meaningful and candid conversation about how we can all create a more thriving and inclusive region.



Compensation For Your Help

CRCOG will provide each Table Talk Host \$200 for taking on this community organization task. This \$200 is intended to compensate you as the Host for your time in organizing, identifying participants, scheduling, and reporting back to CRCOG on your discussion. We are also aware of how food can be a powerful and meaningful way to bring people together for conversation. Therefore, this money is intended to fund food and refreshments for your Table Talk group as you discuss the important topics to your community. (\$100 initially to help cover event costs and an additional \$100 upon submittal of report after your event)



How It Works

When?

Table Talk responses must be submitted back to CRCOG by November 1st. Other than this deadline, you have complete control when you host your Table Talk event. The great thing about Table Talk is that it gives you and your guests the flexibility to find a time that works for you.

Time Commitment

This is an opportunity to have meaningful and thorough conversations about what your communities need most, so allocate enough time for however long you feel is necessary to generate good conversation. The entire process of inviting your guests, hosting the event and submitting the notes can be as simple or involved as you prefer. If you have questions, reach out to us for suggestions.

Where?

Table Talk can be hosted anywhere, you don't even need a table! These events can be hosted in homes, schools, libraries, restaurants, parks, places of worship, and or any other community locations where you and your group are most comfortable.



Who?

Table Talk is an opportunity to bring together people with different ideas and experiences to, collaborate and learn from each other. The people who you invite to your table can be friends, family, neighbors, community advocates, your barber, barista or local bar tender. Table Talk hosts have the agency to convene your own groups with anyone you feel would be a respectful and engaged participant.

How?

We want to ensure the Plan reflects the concerns and aspirations of residents in the region. Producing good summary notes from your Table Talk gatherings is the single most effective way to help us with this important task. Consider designating someone to be a note taker for your group. Notes can be in any form, whether detailed meeting minutes or a broad summary of general conversational themes – whatever approach is appropriate for your group. The point is communication. Share with CRCOG what you think was important out of your conversation and communicate in a way that seems appropriate and effective for you.

Getting Started

1

REGISTER

Anyone interested in hosting an event should email Jacob Knowlton at jknowlton@crcog.org with the subject line: "Table Talk" to begin the process. CRCOG will fund up to 25 hosts for our Table Talk opportunities.

2

PLAN YOUR CONVERSATION

We are open to all topics of conversation and information related to regional POCD elements like community support, mental and physical health, transportation and accessibility, housing, economy and jobs, public services, green/open space, the environment, zoning and land use, etc. You may consider having a particular theme for your group, depending on participants.

3

INVITE GUESTS & COLLABORATORS

Invite people who feel comfortable with each other such as friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, etc. but also consider asking your guests to bring a friend to introduce new voices into the conversation so we can learn from each other. Groups of five to ten people tends to be a manageable size for substantive conversation and gives everyone a chance to speak and be heard. However, feel free to host however many people you see fit – this is your event! For larger groups, consider breaking into smaller groups for more intimate conversations to be facilitated. Request your guests to RSVP so you know what you'll need to host them. Prior to your event, we suggest sending reminder email(s) with question prompts to get your guests in the mindset of coming together as a community and thinking about solutions.

4

REPORT BACK TO US

As Host, you are committing to report back to CRCOG with what your group discussed! This should be in the format of summary notes, but you can accompany these notes in any other way that is effective for you whether that be drawings, short video clips, a series or pictures of post-it notes etc. Please try to take at least a few photos of your group, so we may document your participation in our plan! Share your experience by taking pictures and posting on any social media platform with the hashtag #CRCOGwhat





DO

Engage the Conversation

Encourage your guests to participate and think creatively! Acknowledging previous failures and challenges is important, but also emphasize potential possibilities for the future. How can we create the type of communities and places we all deserve? How do we get there? Think big!

Create a Respectful Space

Everyone has different experiences, stories and perspectives. Encourage everyone to participate by both sharing and listening.



DON'T

Micromanage

Encourage a relaxed, informal environment and be open to unexpected topics of conversation. The best discussions will emerge when everyone feels comfortable and open to new ideas.

Debate

Disagreement is natural and often productive but try to avoid creating a forum for extensive debate or argument. Instead, try encouraging everyone to share how their individual experiences inform their point of view and consider why it differs.

Hesitate to Ask Questions

Don't be afraid to reach out if you are unsure or have questions. CRCOG is here to help.



Some Conversation Starters

- What brought you here today?
- What does the Region mean to you?
- What does community mean to you?
- What communities are you a part of?
- Who is not at the table that should be?
- What problems do you face where we work, live and explore?
- What are some of your favorite things about where you live?

Topics & Conversation Ideas

Below are just a few gaps CRCOG would like to try to help bridge

Transportation & Mobility

Can you get where you need to go without a car? After housing, transportation is the largest expense for Americans. The average citizen spends thousands of dollars a year on maintaining motor vehicles with demands of gas, maintenance and the purchase or leasing costs. Are your towns and cities providing the infrastructure to opt-out of these expenses? Within the Greater Hartford Area, a disproportionate number of Black and Hispanic/LatinX populations do not have access to a vehicle (17 and 18% respectively). (Source: 2015-2022 DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey).

Housing

Does your community have the type of housing you and your friends need at a reasonable cost? From 2020 to 2022 Home Prices within Hartford County have increased by 31% and rent has seen an increase at a rate of 20%. (Source: 2015-2022 DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey).

Social Spaces

Does your community support public spaces that allow you to socialize and, have the opportunity to meet new people? “36% of all Americans—including 61% of young adults and 51% of mothers with young children—feel “serious loneliness.” (Source: Loneliness in America – Harvard.edu) “The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) points out that more than one-third of adults aged 45 and older feel lonely, and nearly one-fourth of adults aged 65 and older are considered to be socially isolated.” (Source: Loneliness and Social Isolation Linked to Serious Health Conditions – CDC.gov)

Topics & Conversation Ideas (Continued)

Food

Do you have easy access to your preferred food options? Having nutritious and culturally relevant foods available for everyone is essential for a healthy and livable future. Are your towns and cities using adequate resources to provide access to nutrition? 17% of Connecticut is Food Insecure with 34% of the Hispanic/LatinX population reporting food insecurity and 25% of the Black population reporting food insecurity. (Source: 2015-2022 DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey).

Environment

Has your community dealt with climate change impacts such as extreme heat, intense storms or more frequent flooding? What local adaptations in response to climate change would you like to see your community undertake? Do you have access to adequate green or open space?





Wrapping Up

We have put together a survey to ask you what our priorities should be as the regional land-use policy organization and what is needed to support your sense of community. We encourage you to take the time to fill this survey out so that you and your community are represented in CRCOG's regional POCD. Please share the survey with your community so that they may have the opportunity to have their voices heard.

Take the
Survey!



If you are interested in the latest updates on our regional POCD, please join our Interested Parties List [here](#). For more information, please visit our page at [Regional Plan of Conservation and Development \(POCD\) - CRCOG | Capitol Region Council of Governments](#) or email Kyle Shiel.