

June 2024 Update

# Strategic Playbook

***CRCOG***



THIS IS OUR MISSION.

The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) leads as a catalyst to enhance the quality of life, vibrancy, and vitality of the Greater Hartford region. CRCOG provides planning, programs, and services to its member municipalities and is the region's designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). CRCOG is a strong advocate for the region and regional solutions.

PUBLISHED IN SEPTEMBER 2023 FOLLOWING AN ITERATIVE PROCESS WITH  
STAFF AND POLICY BOARD

8 strategic priorities with various action steps

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Governance and Communication

GOAL: Create a forum for substantive policy discussions related to key issues, challenges, and opportunities facing our members and the region.

## ACTION

STEP Schedule periodic in-person Policy Board meetings to discuss a substantive policy topic, such as housing, workforce development, or Complete Streets

## STATUS

RP&D staff conducted a hybrid meeting on 05/22/24 to discuss the draft Regional POCD. Attendance was light but the conversation was productive.

We will continue to experiment with this idea to provide a useful forum for Policy Board members.

## ACTION

STEP Schedule substantive policy discussions with CRCOG's Legislative Committee at key points throughout the legislative session to track and respond to relevant legislation.

## STATUS

We conducted 2 Legislative Committee meetings during the session. The meetings were productive and we will continue this practice in the future.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Governance and Communication

GOAL: Refine CRCOG's communications strategy to promote awareness of CRCOG's work and services, build our professional network, and elevate issues of critical regional importance to the attention of elected officials, municipal staff, and other key stakeholders.

## ACTION

### STEP

Build a network of local public information officers and communications staff to share information across the region.

## STATUS

Aaliyah meets with public information officers (PIOs) and other staff that support communications efforts from our member municipalities. These touch points throughout the year are aimed at sharing best practices, highlighting members success stories, and amplify marketing efforts on social media and digital channels.

We will continue to experiment with this idea to provide a useful forum for Policy Board members.

## ACTION

### STEP

Continue CRCOGWho, CRCOGWhat, CRCOGWhy campaign to promote awareness with our members and the general public.

## STATUS

Number of followers on various social media channels:

- Facebook: 338
- X (formerly Twitter): 440
- LinkedIn: 1289 | CRCOG Connection newsletter: 847
- YouTube: 16 (Most viewed video: 492 views - CRCOGWho - Meet some of our staff.)

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Governance and Communication

GOAL: Refine CRCOG's communications strategy to promote awareness of CRCOG's work and services, build our professional network, and elevate issues of critical regional importance to the attention of elected officials, municipal staff, and other key stakeholders.

### ACTION STEP

Continue CRCOG staff visitation program with member municipalities.

### STATUS

We have met with the communities of Andover, Bloomfield, Bolton, Columbia, Coventry, East Granby, East Hartford, Enfield, Farmington, Granby, Hebron, Mansfield, New Britain, Newington, Simsbury, South Windsor, West Hartford, Wethersfield, Willington, and Windsor. It is helpful to have shared conversation between various disciplines (planning, transportation, economic development) and understand local challenges shared by various towns and identify potential opportunities where CRCOG assistance could be helpful.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Federal Infrastructure Funding

GOAL: Assist our members with leveraging maximum funding from Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and related infrastructure grant programs.

## ACTION STEP

Continue to assist CRCOG members with preparing competitive applications for funding under the BIL and screen local infrastructure projects for potential funding sources.

## STATUS

BIL Coordinator has worked with eighteen municipalities, reviewing priority projects and seeking potential funding sources. CRCOG Municipalities have been awarded 21 discretionary grants, set to bring over \$56M in Federal funding to the region. View CRCOG's [Interactive online map of discretionary grants](#).

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Federal Infrastructure Funding

GOAL: Assist our members with leveraging maximum funding from Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and related infrastructure grant programs.

## ACTION

### STEP

Build relationships with funding agencies and host workshops and seminars to feature best practices and new technologies.

## STATUS

BIL Coordinator has established a good working relationship with federal and state officials, including USDOT and CT BILT. She has coordinated workshops on EV and stormwater infrastructure and is planning sessions on micromobility and transit-oriented development (in collaboration with CT Mainstreet).

## ACTION

### STEP

Add services to assist members with the application process, such as a grant newsletter and resources to conduct a benefit-cost analysis (BCA).

## STATUS

BIL Coordinator began publishing a monthly grant newsletter in August 2023. Staff also conducted a procurement to develop a list of consultants with expertise to conduct a BCA.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Federal Infrastructure Funding

GOAL: Assist our members with leveraging maximum funding from Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and related infrastructure grant programs.

## ACTION STEP

Advocate for concerns expressed by member municipalities to assist them with overcoming barriers that hinder their participation in federal funding opportunities.

## STATUS

Limited progress. Executive Director and staff continue to discuss issues with relevant state & federal officials.

## ACTION STEP

Apply for planning grants and implementation grants for regionally significant projects and to accomplish CRCOG's strategic priorities.

## STATUS

CRCOG collaborated with CTDOT and the towns of Berlin, Newington, and Wethersfield to submit a RAISE grant application to USDOT seeking funds to conduct a Transportation Study of the Berlin Turnpike to improve road safety and connectivity. The project cost is estimated at \$2-\$2.5 million, with a \$400,000 to \$500,000 (20%) non-Federal cost share (local match). CTDOT has agreed to cover 50% of the local match.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Economic Vitality

GOAL: Implement key recommendations in the CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy).

## ACTION

### STEP

Add resources to coordinate implementation of the CEDS and promote equity.

## STATUS

CRCOG has recent hired Kim Bishop as CRCOG's first Economic Development Coordinator (EDC). Kim will focus on providing staff support for our Economic Development District and coordinating the implementation of our regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

## ACTION

### STEP

Continue to develop CRCOG's Brownfields Remediation Program.

## STATUS

DECD awarded CRCOG an assessment grant for Moxi on the Rocks in East Hartford and for 169 Bartholomew Avenue in Hartford. EPA awarded CRCOG \$1M in supplemental funding for the Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Economic Vitality

GOAL: Implement key recommendations in the CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy).

## ACTION

### STEP

Establish an implementation committee and core CRCOG team that meets regularly to pursue priority CEDS goals as well as identify and apply for funding or other opportunities that enable implementation of the CEDS.

## STATUS

Staff will shortly begin recruiting key members of CEDS oversight committee, with a goal of convening its first meeting by 09/30/2024. CRCOG, Capitol Workforce Partners, and the MetroHartford Alliance will serve as convenors.

## ACTION

### STEP

Build and support a network of local government economic development professionals and other regional stakeholders, including arts and cultural institutions.

## STATUS

CRCOG's EDC will begin this outreach this summer, in conjunction with our work to establish a CEDS oversight committee.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Regional Housing Strategy

GOAL: Assist member municipalities across the region with increasing access to quality housing for people of varying income levels.

## ACTION STEP

Develop a comprehensive housing strategy for our region in partnership with housing-based organizations and other stakeholders.

## STATUS

Staff is currently preparing a Request for Proposals (RFP) and anticipates releasing it mid-summer. The goal is to have a consulting team on-board by end of September.

## ACTION STEP

Develop a housing toolkit, including model regulations and policies, based on recommendations outlined in the strategy.

## STATUS

CRCOG's regional housing strategy will include toolkit(s), model regulations, and policies for member municipalities and CRCOG to utilize.

## ACTION STEP

Seek support and funding to implement strategy recommendations and related initiatives.

## STATUS

CRCOG's housing strategy will include proposed funding options to implement the strategy's recommendations.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Regional Housing Strategy

GOAL: Assist member municipalities across the region with increasing access to quality housing for people of varying income levels.

## ACTION

### STEP

Implement the HUD-funded grant assistance program for Low to Moderate Income (LMI) homeowners with crumbling foundations.

## STATUS

Staff successfully implemented this program in spring 2024. We have reviewed 43 applications and made 7 awards.

## ACTION

### STEP

Increase housing supply by continuing to implement CRCOG's Brownfields Remediation Program, prioritizing brownfields redevelopment within transit-oriented corridors.

## STATUS

CRCOG issued a commitment letter for the Arrowhead Gateway Development Loan from CRCOG's MetroHartford Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund. Loan underwriting and final loan agreement is in progress.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Regional Environmental Services

GOAL: Implement key recommendations in CRCOG's waste management study to develop a more sustainable waste management system for the region.

GOAL: Develop a long-term plan to significantly improve stormwater infrastructure across the region, implementing nature-based solutions where appropriate.

## ACTION

### STEP

Re-establish the Central CT Solid Waste Authority (CCSWA) to help implement the recommendations outlined in CRCOG's recent waste management study.

## STATUS

CRCOG re-convened CCSWA in Sep 2023. CCSWA has updated its bylaws and ordinance to streamline its operations and is presently working on an organics diversion project that will be open to all CRCOG members. CCSWA will also conduct a membership campaign in the coming months.

## ACTION

### STEP

Conduct a grant-funded stormwater management study to analyze the condition of existing infrastructure and to identify needed improvements and regional solutions, including the potential for stormwater authorities and utilities.

## STATUS

Staff worked with CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) to finalize scope of work and budget for CRF grant. DEEP is preparing the final contract and anticipates a 2 to 4-month time-frame before a contract is executed. CRCOG expects to issue a Request for Qualifications later this fall.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Regional Environmental Services

GOAL: Work to meet goals set by state and federal governments to address climate change.

## ACTION

**STEP** Utilize the Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan and CPRG to prepare climate action plans for the region and seek funds to implement key recommendations.

## STATUS

The Hazards Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan (HMCAP) is with FEMA for final approval. Local endorsements by towns will follow and Policy Board approval is expected later this year.

CRCOG as the lead agency for the MSA completed the first phase of the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) program with EPA's approval of our Priority Climate Action Plan. CRCOG also submitted a \$17.7 million implementation grant as lead applicant for a coalition of COGs across the state.

## ACTION

**STEP** Continue to implement the brownfields program and proactively seek projects that abate pollution, particularly in our disadvantaged communities which are often disproportionately impacted from pollution and heat island effects.

## STATUS

CRCOG submitted a DECD application for brownfields remediation in Hartford, CT which was awarded contingent upon obtaining other funding outlined in the application. Staff will continue to pursue this objective under future rounds of Brownfields funding.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Coordinated Approach to Road Safety, Complete Streets, and Multi-use Trail Projects

GOAL: Work to dramatically improve safety for all road users in an equitable way and to promote micromobility and Complete Streets.

## ACTION

### STEP

Incorporate a Vision Zero approach into the Regional Transportation Safety Plan update.

### STATUS

CRCOG has appointed a 15-member Vision Zero task force to assist with the RTSP update. The task force identified preliminary safety goals at its 06/18/2024 meeting.

## ACTION

### STEP

Complete the Roundabout Screening Study, the East Coast Greenway Gap Closure Study, and various corridor studies.

### STATUS

Anticipated completion dates are as follows:

- Roundabout Screening Study – July 2024
- Farmington Connectivity Study– July 2024
- East Coast Greenway Study – September 2024
- Route 20 Study, Windsor Locks - Complete
- Route 44 Study, Canton – December 2024

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Coordinated Approach to Road Safety, Complete Streets, and Multi-use Trail Projects

GOAL: Work to dramatically improve safety for all road users in an equitable way and to promote micromobility and Complete Streets.

## ACTION

### STEP

Take on new initiatives such as the Regional Bicycle/Pedestrian Priority Network Plan, offering bike/ped count and walk audit as additional services.

## STATUS

CRCOG released an RFQ for the Regional Bike and Pedestrian Priority Network Plan and is working with the top-rated consultant to finalize scope and fee proposals.

Staff has conducted two walk audits with the towns of Andover and Canton and has an additional audit planned with the Town of Vernon in July.

## ACTION

### STEP

Continue to help member municipalities seek funds for Complete Streets and related implementation projects.

## STATUS

Provide administrative support to CTDOT for their Active Transportation Micro Grant for CRCOG municipalities. We have advertised, disbursed funds, and collected applications from nearly 10 communities totaling over \$56,000.



## STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Enhanced Bus and Rail Service.

GOAL: Collaborate with CTDOT, member municipalities, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), and other stakeholders to improve passenger service on the Hartford Line.

GOAL: Help shape the GHMS and advocate for the implementation of recommended projects.

### ACTION

#### STEP

Re-establish the Central CT Solid Waste Authority (CCSWA) to help implement the recommendations outlined in CRCOG's recent waste management study.

### STATUS

CRCOG re-convened CCSWA in Sep 2023. CCSWA has updated its bylaws and ordinance to streamline its operations and is presently working on an organics diversion project that will be open to all CRCOG members. CCSWA will also conduct a membership campaign in the coming months.

### ACTION

#### STEP

Continue to participate in the development and implementation of the GHMS.

### STATUS

CRCOG's Transportation Planning staff has carefully reviewed the Planning & Environmental Linkages Study (PEL) for the project and continues to meet regularly with the CTDOT project team. At staff's recommendation, CRCOG's Transportation Committee has endorsed the PEL. The Policy Board will review the PEL at its 06/26/2024 meeting.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Public Sector Workforce Development, Shared Services, and Direct Services

GOAL: Work with member municipalities and other key stakeholders to develop a talent pipeline for key municipal occupations.

GOAL: Help member municipalities share services to capture economies of scale and improve service quality.

## ACTION

### STEP

Continue to coordinate the work of the Public Sector Workforce Task Force to develop a talent pipeline for key municipal occupations.

## STATUS

CRCOG and Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) convened a Municipal Work Group to discuss workforce development issues facing local governments across CT. Initial focus has been on developing a career pathway for the building code officials, with emerging efforts in Public Health and Tax Assessment. The State Department of Administrative Services (DAS) is partnering with CRCOG and CCM to offer an on-the-job training program for the building code official profession. DAS applied for Federal funding from FEMA's BRIC program to initiate the program.

## ACTION

### STEP

Successfully implement the three RPIP-funded projects.

## STATUS

CRCOG has been unable to secure commitments from member municipalities or recruit personnel that are willing to work under the RPIP framework in CRCOG's original application. We are reassessing our original plan and seeking feedback from our Municipal Services Committee.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Public Sector Workforce Development, Shared Services, and Direct Services

GOAL: Provide direct services through CRCOG where desired and feasible.

## ACTION STEP

Refine and build out CRCOG's GIS & Data Center to serve our members and CRCOG staff.

## STATUS

CRCOG's Regional Data Portal in addition to the regional parcel viewer, now provides multiple dashboards, StoryMaps, a data download page and study results.

## ACTION STEP

In collaboration with State agencies and other key stakeholders, assess workforce recruitment and retention within the region's public safety services, with initial focus on EMS systems, and develop an action plan to implement desired improvements.

## STATUS

Future project in collaboration with Municipal Services Committee (MSC) and Capitol Region Emergency Planning Committee (CREPC).

## ACTION STEP

Develop a municipal resource library with toolkits, model regulations and policies, best practices, and other information to serve member municipalities.

## STATUS

Ongoing. Staff most recently added a toolkit for Automated Traffic Enforcement Safety Devices (ATESD).

Questions?

***CRCOG***