

10/31/2025: First Selectman Vicki Tesoro's Address at the ECDC Annual Business Appreciation Breakfast

Good morning and thank you for coming to our annual Business Appreciation Breakfast.

It is wonderful to see so many of you this morning that have joined us again for this event and thank you to all those who are attending for the first time.

Thank you to State Senator Sujata Gadcar-Wilcox, State Representative Sarah Keitt, and State Representative Dave Rutigliano for being with us today. And I also want to recognize former First Selectmen of Trumbull, Paul Timpanelli and Raymond Baldwin, Chief of Police Michael Lombardo, Superintendent of Schools Martin Semmel, Lucinda Timpanelli, Chairman of the Board of Education, Lainie McHugh, Chairman of the Board of Finance, and Fred Garrity, Chairman of the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Also, I would like to recognize the Barnum Festival's 2026 Ringmaster, Bridgeport's own and the town of Trumbull's Director of Human Resources and Labor Relations, Tom McCarthy!

Thank you to all our elected officials, and our Board and Commission members for being here this morning. Your dedication to our great community makes our town even better!

I want to thank our Town staff that are here and those who couldn't be here for doing the great job they do every day for our residents and businesses.

I also want to thank our police, EMS, and volunteer Fire departments for their selfless dedication to keeping our residents and businesses safe. Trumbull remains a safe community in which to live and do business because of everything you do. Let's give them a round of applause.

A special word of thanks to Rina Bakalar, our Economic and Community Development Director, Gia Mentillo, our Economic & Community Development Administrator, and our Economic and Community Development Commission, chaired by Beryl Kaufman, for working so hard to make our Town a welcoming one for our businesses and for your efforts in making this breakfast a success. I can't think of a better team for Trumbull. Let's give them a round of applause.

We welcome today's Keynote Speaker, John Traynor of Cambridge Trust Wealth Management Connecticut. We are so pleased to have you in Trumbull, and we look forward to your remarks today.

Again, thank you to all our businesses for being here this morning. You are essential partners with our town and your investment and confidence in Trumbull strengthens our entire community.

As I complete my eighth year as First Selectman, I am proud of the progress we have made. Our schools continue to be outstanding, currently ranked 6th in the State of CT. And just this week

it was announced that Daniels Farm Elementary School was named the 6th best public elementary school in CT by US News and World Report. All our schools are excellent! Our park system and recreation facilities are second to none. Our neighborhoods and business districts are safe and thriving.

Trumbull continues to be a community of choice, receiving these noteworthy distinctions for its schools, quality of life, and business relocation appeal.

The Town continues to see some of the highest “move in” rates in Connecticut. The housing market in Trumbull is not experiencing a slowdown in market value. The median home sale price in June 2025 was up 8.4% over last year.

Last year I reported to you that Realtor.com named Trumbull the 16th hottest ZIP Code in the nation for people looking to purchase a home. This designation is based on market demand data, including the number of unique viewers seeking property and the days property remains on the market.

In even better news, Realtor.com recently updated this information for this year, and Trumbull is now the 7th hottest town in the nation for people looking to purchase a home.

When you have a balanced community that offers a solid value and high quality of life like Trumbull, this is no surprise.

We also have many infrastructure improvements ongoing throughout the town that provide both pedestrian and vehicular safety. These include new sidewalks, crosswalks, safety signage, and traffic signals.

Other upgrades include sewer and culvert repairs, improvements to our schools and Town properties, and more. Many of these projects are grant funded, providing tax relief to our residents and businesses.

The traffic light, crosswalks, road signage and trail improvements at the Fitness Edge Plaza were completed a couple years ago. Infrastructure work continues in the Long Hill Green area initiated by the 2018 Long Hill Green planning study.

The traffic light at Main and Whitney was installed last December and additional sidewalks have been added in this area. Also, the Long Hill Green itself has been redesigned and landscaped for the enjoyment of our residents and to attract customers for our businesses.

If you traveled on Main Street in the last few weeks, you may have seen new sidewalks being installed in front of the new PHA medical building near Ecco Plaza.

A new grant has been awarded to the Town in the amount of \$852,000, which will allow us to construct the sidewalk/trail connection from Dunellen Road down Whitney Avenue to the Pequonnock River Trail.

Not only is this an important safety improvement, but it also connects our commercial center with the trail system, which will benefit businesses, residents, and visitors in the area. This project will be completed next summer to avoid congestion in that area from school traffic.

Our town's strong financial position makes all this possible. Strong finances are hallmark of a healthy community.

Independent third-party ratings agencies SMP Global and Fitch have been consistent in their praise of my administration for our stable and conservative approach to town finances.

We recently completed another round of credit ratings meetings and even though we are in a difficult economic period we have maintained our AA+ bond rating.

For our business community and for our citizens alike, it is imperative that we not only keep spending in check but that we strategically invest in those things that matter to our community and act as a catalyst for growth.

Besides our great schools, and quality of life, our businesses and our corporate footprint are other reasons why Trumbull is a thriving and desirable community!

We continue to experience strong development and business location interest. As a town that is 98% developed, most of the development activity occurring is redevelopment or infill development. At the same time, the Town has greatly decreased its office vacancy rate since 2017 from 44% to 13% due to redevelopment and reoccupation of underperforming properties.

In November of 2017 as I was entering office, I knew we had many challenges to confront to turn our business environment around in Trumbull. We had lost several major corporations in Trumbull from 2013- 2016. Among these losses were United Healthcare, Affinion, Cannon, Pilot Pen and others. These losses left large buildings vacant and underperforming, which left a significant impact on our business community.

We have come a long way as you will hear today.

In our Trumbull Corporate Park, we had over 400,000 square feet of vacant space. We have under 100,000 square feet of space remaining to reoccupy.

In the Lindeman/Oakview and Cambridge Drive area, we had 60% of properties vacant in 2017. I am proud to say today that we have turned this around with only minor vacancies remaining.

We attracted almost \$180,000,000 in new investment in this area. A mixed-use neighborhood was created. This brought 12 new businesses to this part of town. And Connecticut Educational Services (CES) last year expanded its footprint to 40 Oakview Drive, opening the Oakview School servicing 150 children from 40 towns.

Last year there were 452 new business registrations in Trumbull. In comparison, in 2017 new business registrations were under 300 annually.

We have a diverse base of almost 4,000 businesses from major corporations like Lockheed Martin/Sikorsky, Cooper Surgical, Henkel, Amazon, Transpak, Yale New Haven Health, and others, to small locally owned and operated businesses in our village districts and commercial areas. Our business community continues to grow every year!

Some new businesses openings over the last year include

- Antonio's Italian Kitchen
- Izumi Japanese
- Ruby Thai Kitchen
- T-swirl
- Ross Dress For Less
- RUHE Fertility and Prenatal
- Intrinsic Wellness
- Take Part Theater Company
- Benjamin Franklin Plumbing
- Brian Kelly Carpentry
- The DUBE Collective
- We Do Life Together
- LivFree, which will be locating in the former Nichols Library
- Kubtec will be moving from Stratford to the Trumbull Corporate Park. They will be purchasing the long vacant 110,000 square ft 75 Merritt Boulevard property, a building that has been largely vacant since 2014. They will bring additional high wage jobs and help grow Trumbull's innovation eco system.

And the following businesses expansions are underway or planned:

- Orthodontic Boutique in Trumbull Center
- Pediatric Healthcare Associates (PHA/ new 12,000sf medical building in the LHG area)
- The Trumbull Marriott will undergo a total renovation in 2026. The renovation will be phased in and the hotel will remain open during this time.

- We will be announcing a major corporate expansion very soon, unfortunately I can't comment yet with the specifics.

And we have several ongoing projects:

We have completed the Trumbull Mall Area Market Feasibility and Land Use Study which has identified an additional 1 million square feet of commercial development on the site and \$10 million dollars in new tax revenue overtime.

As I discussed last year, the vision that has been shared with the community, is to convert the area from a mall to a vibrant neighborhood/district.

On March 1, of this year, the mall owner defaulted on the debt associated with the portion of the mall property they own. The mall property is in receivership and Centennial has taken over day to day management, including leasing at the Mall.

The Trumbull Planning and Zoning Commission approved revised zoning regulations in August to lay the groundwork for investment. Although this is private property, we continue to work with the management company to make needed updates to the mall, including adding additional security. We see this transformation of the mall area as a very real opportunity for Trumbull.

As we all know Trumbull Center needs redevelopment. The buildings to the front of the Center were finally torn down. You also probably have noticed that a section of the property has been relandscaped and a pocket park was created at the front of the center.

Other infrastructure work has been completed as well. We are encouraged by these developments, and we view these as important first steps.

Even though Trumbull Center is also private property the town continues to work with the landlord to improve and revitalize the Center.

The commercial development at 1 Trefoil has been approved. The development will replace an old commercial building that is underperforming and obsolete. I'm excited to say that the Trumbull Planning & Zoning Commission has approved a grocery store for this site.

The Nathaniel Hawley property on Daniels Farm Road was completed under our adaptive reuse regulation.

The new Gas Station/Convenience Store on Main Street and Lake Avenue has been approved. The demolition of the former auto repair structure has been completed. Additional environmental testing has also been completed. Construction will begin soon.

Trumbull's community gardens in Abraham Nichols Park have been completely redesigned and expanded. This was funded through the state of CT American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding allocation. The expanded area includes raised beds, is fenced and is friendly for seniors and

individuals with disabilities. The grant funded all necessary materials and labor related to the installation of these gardens. This same grant will also establish a new community garden at the Trumbull Senior Center on Pricilla Place. We are grateful to State Representative Sarah Keitt who spear-headed this funding for Trumbull. Also thank you to Dmitri Paris, our Parks Superintendent for all his work in the redesign and expansion of these gardens.

A 2,584 SF one-story professional office building is under construction for law offices on White Plains Road, which will be occupied by Atty Anthony Monelli.

A 124-unit Senior Housing Project at 12 Cambridge Dr., with 10% designated as affordable, was approved by the Trumbull Planning & Zoning Commission in June of this year.

6 Cambridge Drive is under contract for purchase, which should close by the end of the year. This is the long-abandoned property located at the corner of Cambridge and Oakview Dr. that has been approved for a 110,000 square foot storage facility. This new development will greatly improve that corner of Cambridge Dr.

I'm also very excited to announce that St. Joseph's property on Main Street is under contract for purchase by a reputable/quality senior serving company. I am not at liberty to say more at this time except this will be a major investment and upgrade to what is in place there currently and will bring significant benefit to our grand list.

CogNOVUM is the new operator for the data center at 80 Merritt Boulevard formerly owned by Digital. They will invest \$200 million dollars in construction and technology upgrades over the next five years.

This investment will add jobs and significantly increase the value of the property which is very positive for Trumbull's Grand List. We thank them for investing in Trumbull.

We are actively working with the developers of Gateway Commons and 48 Monroe Turnpike to resource and cost engineer these projects so they can be under redevelopment.

We are also working to fully fund the new Trumbull Veterans and First Responders Center. With the assistance of Rina Bakalar, our State Senator Sujata Gadcar-Wilcox, and our state legislative delegation including State Representatives Sarah Keitt and Dave Rutigliano, we believe the additional funding will be secured shortly allowing construction to continue next Spring.

I would like to give another shout out to former First Selectman Raymond Baldwin who is the Chairman of the Building Committee for this great project. As we all know Tuesday, November 11th is Veteran's Day. I would ask any veterans that are in the audience today to stand so that we can recognize and thank you for your service!

Trumbull's economic success is a collective success. Everyone here today is a part of that success. We appreciate all your investment in Trumbull.

I want to recognize Rina Bakalar again for all her efforts and successes in making Trumbull a place where people want to live, work, and play and businesses want to do business!

Thank you again to everyone for being so enthusiastic about Trumbull and for your business and investment here.

I look forward to more great things ahead working with all of you.