October 1, 2026: First Selectman's Annual Address to the Business Community

Good morning and thank you for joining us for the First Selectman's Annual Address to the Business Community. Thank you as well for your continued support of and commitment to our community.

A special thank you this morning to Dan Onofrio, the BRBC, and the Trumbull Chamber of Commerce for hosting today's event.

Thank you to Aquarion Water Company, Santa Energy Corporation, M&T Bank, Avangrid, and Zayo for sponsoring this program. Dan, thank you for your kind introduction, and thank you to Tashua Knolls and its entire staff for hosting us this morning.

Before I begin my formal remarks, I would like us to recognize some of the people who serve this community every day: our first responders, our healthcare professionals, and our teachers. Please join me in thanking all of them.

I also want to recognize former First Selectman Paul Timpanelli and thank him for being here today. I also want to thank Mayor Chess from Stratford for joining us today.

Thank you to State Senator Sujata Gadkar-Wilcox and State Representative Sarah Keitt for joining us this morning and

I'm sorry the State Representatives David Rutigliano, Ben McGorty, and Tony Scott could not be here with us.

And thank you to all our elected Town officials and members of our Boards and Commissions who are here today. Your dedication to this community, and the countless hours you give to it, make Trumbull a better place.

It is an honor to be here today with members of our business community, civic leaders, residents, and so many people who contribute every day to making Trumbull such a vibrant community.

I especially want to thank our businesses for your investment and your trust in Trumbull.

You create opportunities through the jobs you provide. You enrich our town through the goods and services you offer. And you strengthen our community through your generosity and involvement.

Your commitment makes Trumbull a better place to live, work, raise a family, and do business.

Trumbull is a vibrant, financially strong community, offering residents strong schools, abundant recreational options, accessible amenities, in a safe, engaged community.

The town's careful fiscal management, active community participation, and long-term investment in infrastructure and education make it a highly desirable place to live.

Our residents benefit from outstanding parks and trails, strong public services, attractive and walkable village centers and convenient access to commercial areas. We are also continuing to diversify our housing stock, including creating additional opportunities for senior housing.

Our public schools continue to be recognized for their high academic performance, reflecting both Trumbull's values and its ability to deliver results through local efforts.

All these factors continue to support Trumbull as a community of choice in Connecticut.

Trumbull's robust property values and thriving housing market are directly tied to its overall desirability as a community. The town's combination of quality of life, excellent schools, and economic stability has kept demand high, preventing any slowdown in market value.

This is evident as the median sales price in Trumbull rose 10.5% over last year.

Last year realtor.com ranked Trumbull's 06611 ZIP Code as the seventh hottest ZIP Code in the nation for homebuyers. And in its 2026 rankings Niche also ranked Trumbull among Connecticut's best places to live and 13th among Connecticut's best suburbs to buy a home.

Accolades like these are not surprising when you have a balanced community that offers a solid value and high quality of life like Trumbull.

Let me discuss our continued strong emphasis on economic development.

Economic Development

The mission of our Economic and Community Development Office is straightforward: encourage investment that is consistent with Trumbull's Plan of Conservation and Development, strengthen our economic well-being, create opportunities and conveniences for residents, and preserve the excellent quality of life that defines our town.

Trumbull's Grand List continues to grow, although recent growth was moderated somewhat by a small number of significant tax appeals.

Economic development remains an important priority because commercial, industrial, and residential investment strengthens our tax base and helps support the services our residents depend upon.

During my tenure as First Selectman, more than one million square feet of commercial space in Trumbull has been redeveloped or reoccupied, generating significant tax revenue and returning underperforming properties to productive use.

Trumbull is home to thousands of businesses across a remarkably diverse range of industries, including healthcare and medicine, technology, manufacturing, environmental

services, construction, recreation, restaurants, education, professional services, and consumer services.

That diversity strengthens our economic base and reduces our dependence on any single commercial sector.

In 2026, Trumbull continues to see strong interest from businesses and developers.

Trumbull is approximately 98% developed, so we are not exactly working with an abundance of empty land.

That means much of our present development and future growth will come through redevelopment and infill development.

Our Economic Development Department has identified 44 properties that are currently under development, involved in discussions about potential development, or have future development potential.

And we have made significant progress with properties that once presented major challenges.

Since 2017, Trumbull's office vacancy rate has declined from 44% to approximately 13%, largely through the redevelopment and reoccupation of underperforming properties.

On the Trumbull/Monroe line, the Crossing at the Pequonnock mixed-use development is fully approved by both the Trumbull and Monroe land use boards. The project

will be comprised of 28,000 square feet of commercial development and 52 apartments between Trumbull and Monroe.

The long vacant 250,000-square-foot former United Healthcare building at 48 Monroe Turnpike is fully approved for a continuum of housing and related services for 55 and older residents. The project was stalled due to multiple land use appeals, which have all been cleared. You may have gone by the property recently and noticed some activity on site. Due to the sensitive nature of this property additional updates cannot be provided at this time.

6 Cambridge Drive, a long vacant and blighted property, is finally under redevelopment for a 110,000-square-foot storage facility. The project is scheduled to be completed in 2027.

Next door at 12 Cambridge Drive, a 124-unit senior housing development has been fully approved.

Nearby on Reservoir Avenue, the Planning and Zoning Commission has approved a 48-unit apartment development, with 15% of the units designated as affordable housing.

At 1 Trefoil Drive, a new 39,000-square-foot grocery store will be built. The project is also under land use appeal, which should be resolved by the end of this year. If you were

in the vicinity of this property recently you may have noticed activity including clearing of the site.

Next door, Henkel corporation is making a $70 million investment in Trumbull to expand their campus. Construction is currently underway.

In the Long Hill Green Village District, Pediatric Healthcare Associates opened their new 12,000-square-foot medical building last year.

Along Main Street, we continue to work with property owners to explore opportunities to improve and redevelop several nonconforming commercial properties. One of those properties is already under construction, where a new service station and convenience store is being built.

Along the White Plains Road corridor, a 16,000-square-foot mixed-use commercial building has also been approved. Assuming there are no appeals, we expect construction to begin in 2027.

The Trumbull Data Center

I also want to address the data center at 80 Merritt Boulevard.

Trumbull has been the home to a data center at this location since the 1960s. The facility has been updated several times over the decades, most recently in 2012, and was purchased by a new owner two years ago. I have issued several public statements about the renovation currently

underway, and I want to summarize the most important points this morning.

This is an existing data center that has operated in Trumbull for more than 50 years. The center hosts computing infrastructure for multiple customers, primarily financial institutions and telecommunications carriers, reflecting its proximity to New York City. The facility supports the reliable internet, banking and communication services residents rely on every day.

What is being proposed is not the construction of a new hyperscale AI facility. It is the renovation of an existing data center that is already zoned, powered, operational, and part of Trumbull's tax base.

The project will update the facility so it can continue operating in the 21st century.

The renovation reduces the site's overall building footprint, remains within the property's existing utility power allocation, and is expected to reduce water use and wastewater discharge compared with its current operations.

The data center is Trumbull's largest taxpayer.

On September 9th, the Trumbull Town Council adopted a two-year moratorium on the establishment and development of any new data centers within the Town of Trumbull.

That moratorium does not affect data centers already existing within the Town.

I know there continues to be public interest in this issue, and I will be happy to answer questions following today's program.

Businesses Are Choosing Trumbull

Trumbull continues to welcome new businesses and business expansions.

In addition to Henkel's investment, Baco Enterprises is relocating from the Bronx to Trumbull. This manufacturing company produces fasteners for the construction industry.

Kubtec, a technology manufacturing, research, and development company, is relocating from a neighboring community to Trumbull. The company will occupy approximately 110,000 square feet in Trumbull's Corporate Park, representing a significant expansion from its previous location.

Carbon Capture Machine, a clean-tech startup specializing in equipment designed to capture industrial carbon dioxide emissions, has opened at 60 Commerce Drive, occupying approximately 8,300 square feet.

These are just several examples of manufacturing and technology companies choosing to invest in Trumbull.

And our small-business community continues to grow as well.

So far this year, 27 new small businesses have opened brick-and-mortar locations in Trumbull.

We have also seen a significant increase in annual business registrations. In 2019, there were 303 new registrations. In 2025, there were more than 541.

Today, Trumbull has 3,837 active businesses.

I have a long list of businesses that opened in the last year. I'm going to share a few of them with you.

We Do Life Together (101 Merritt Blvd)

Oggi Gelato (51 Monroe Turnpike)

Amber Dermatology (35 Corporate Drive #130)

Studio 203 (5893 Main Street)

BACO Enterprises (205 Spring Hill Road)

Arthur Ave Deli (6528 Main Street)

Wonder (965 White Plains Road)

Mi Scuzi (7146 Main Street)

KUBTEC (75 Merritt Blvd)

Dube Dance Collective (55 Merritt Blvd)

Qwik Pack & Ship (938 White Plains Road)

Trumbull Fitness (35 Nutmeg Drive, Suite 105)

Pediatric Healthcare Associates (6600 Main Street)

Benjamin Franklin Plumbing (100 Corporate Drive Suite A206-1)

Vontell Insurance (6528 Main Street - Suite 7)

Dube Dance Collective (55 Merritt Blvd)

Trumbull Fitness (35 Nutmeg Drive)

Saltbox Provisions (5565 Main Street)

Essencia Jiu Jitsu Academy (55 Merritt Blvd)

In Bloom Autism (101 Merritt Blvd)

Barber School (35 Nutmeg Drive)

Bead Jewelries (100 Hawley Lane)

Intrinsic Wellness Studio (105 Technology Drive)

Heavenly Nature Juice Bar (5065 Main Street)

Trumbull Mall and Trumbull Center

We also recognize that several important commercial areas require continued attention.

The Trumbull Mall remains a major regional asset. The town completed the Trumbull Mall Area Market Feasibility and Land Use Study last year to establish a long-term vision for the mall property and surrounding area.

This study identifies an additional one million + square feet of commercial development potential on the site. New zoning to support transformation of the area was passed in August 2025, which provides flexibility for senior housing and other uses outlined in the study.

The vision in this study is to convert the area from a mall to a vibrant neighborhood district. This study has already generated significant interest from major developers and positions the town to respond strategically as the retail marketplace continues to evolve.

In January 2026, the mall was listed for sale and the sale process is underway. The town and interested parties are working collaboratively to support the transformation of the entire area including the mall property. More information will be forthcoming.

We also continue to work with the owner of Trumbull Center to encourage redevelopment of this important commercial property.

An approved development project is already in place. Progress has been slowed by FEMA's delay in approving updated flood maps for the area.

I want to recognize Rina Bakalar, our Director of Economic and Community Development, for her efforts and continued success in making Trumbull a place where people want to live, work, play, invest, and do business.

Public Safety

Public safety remains one of my highest priorities.

We continue to fully fund our Police Department and Emergency Medical Services, as we have every year since I was elected First Selectman in 2017.

Trumbull is a community of choice in large part because it is a safe community, and that is due to the outstanding work of our police officers, emergency medical professionals, emergency management personnel, and volunteer firefighters.

I want to recognize Chief of Police Michael Lombardo for his outstanding leadership of the Trumbull Police Department, as well as the officers who are here with us today.

I also want to recognize Dawn Cantafio, Chair of our Police Commission; Chief Colin Bassett, our Chief of Emergency Medical Services; and Megan Murphy, our Director of Emergency Management and Town Fire Marshal.

Thank you for everything you and your teams do for Trumbull.

Infrastructure

As I report every year, infrastructure improvements continue throughout town.

They include new sidewalks, crosswalks, safety signage, sewer and culvert repairs, roadwork, and improvements to our schools and Town properties.

Importantly, many of these projects are supported by grant funding, reducing the burden on Trumbull taxpayers.

Infrastructure work continues in the Long Hill Green area following recommendations from the 2018 Long Hill Green planning study.

As many of you have probably noticed, Long Hill Green itself has been redesigned and landscaped.

This summer, we also added a new, prominent flagpole to the Green, making the American flag visible from both directions along Main Street.

Several other major infrastructure projects are underway or have been completed.

The Connecticut Department of Transportation recently began the long-awaited resignalization of traffic lights and other improvements at three major intersections along

White Plains Road. Work began in September and will continue into the new year.

As most of you know these improvements are necessary, and when completed they will improve both safety and traffic flow.

This summer, major parking lot and drainage projects were completed at Daniels Farm School and Trumbull High School.

The Daniels Farm School parking lot was also reconfigured so that most vehicles will no longer need to park along Daniels Farm Road during drop-off and pickup, addressing a significant safety concern.

Last year, I spoke about an $852,000 State of Connecticut grant awarded to Trumbull to construct a sidewalk and trail connection from Dunellen Road down Whitney Avenue to the Pequonnock River Trail.

Construction is expected to begin shortly. This is not only an important safety improvement; it will connect one of our commercial centers directly to our trail system, benefiting businesses, residents, and visitors.

Recreation and Community Investment

Trumbull's recreational assets continue to be one of our great community strengths.

We have extensive recreational facilities and open space, and we continue to make substantial investments in both.

In recent years, we have refurbished parks, repaired bridges along the Rails-to-Trails pathway, renovated basketball courts, constructed new tennis courts and expanded our pickleball facilities, and made major improvements to athletic fields.

Tashua Pool was completely renovated and reopened last summer with a new splash pad.

New splash pads were also completed at Beach Pool and Indian Ledge Park.

Construction continues on the new Trumbull Veterans and First Responders Center, a project funded primarily through state and federal grants.

I want to thank Rina Bakalar, State Senator Sujata Gadkar-Wilcox, and members of our state delegation for helping make this project a reality.

The Center is expected to open to the public early next year.

Hillcrest Middle School

Another major investment in Trumbull's future is now underway.

Construction began on the new Hillcrest Middle School in August. The project is expected to be completed in 2028, with occupancy scheduled for August of that year.

As a reminder, Trumbull secured a 44% state reimbursement rate for eligible construction costs.

I want to again thank State Representative Sarah Keitt for her leadership in securing the increased reimbursement rate, which represents approximately $27 million in additional savings for Trumbull taxpayers.

Unfortunately, the referendum for a new senior community center did not pass last November, by a very narrow margin.

The Town continues to assess the best path forward to meet the needs of Trumbull's seniors.

Over the past several years, Trumbull has also completed numerous projects and programs supported by federal grant funding.

These include our road preservation program, police equipment, library improvements, emergency assistance funds, improvements to the Nature and Arts Center, Health Department initiatives, improvements to Trumbull's Community Gardens, grants to nonprofit organizations, the Town's lightning detection system, and many other important initiatives.

And, as we do every year, we continue paving and completing drainage improvements on miles of Town roads, including our major arteries.

I want to thank Public Works Director George Estrada and Town Engineer Bill Maurer for everything they do to maintain and improve Trumbull's buildings, roads, and infrastructure.

Our Public Works and Parks employees routinely demonstrate their skill and dedication in every kind of situation, from snowstorms to this past weekend's Nor'easter.

We are fortunate to have an outstanding team.

Trumbull's Financial Position

Trumbull remains in excellent financial condition.

Independent rating agencies S&P Global and Fitch continue to recognize the Town's stable and conservative approach to financial management.

We recently completed another round of credit-rating meetings, and despite a challenging economic environment, Trumbull has maintained its AA+ bond rating.

That strong rating matters. It helps reduce borrowing costs and protects taxpayers as we make long-term investments in our schools, roads, public buildings, and infrastructure.

At the same time, like municipalities across Connecticut, Trumbull faces substantial expenditure pressures.

Inflation, utility and energy costs, healthcare expenses, contractual obligations, debt service, and required pension

contributions all continue to place pressure on our operating budget.

Despite those pressures, we must continue providing the essential services our residents rely upon, particularly public safety and education.

Our responsibility is to maintain those services while carefully managing the impact on taxpayers.

Education remains the largest component of Trumbull's budget, accounting for approximately 67 cents of every local tax dollar.

One of our continuing challenges is the comparatively low level of Education Cost Sharing funding Trumbull receives from the State of Connecticut.

For example, Glastonbury receives approximately $6.7 million in ECS funding compared with approximately $3.4 million for Trumbull, despite similarities between the two communities.

Monroe receives more than $5.2 million despite having approximately half of Trumbull's population.

We continue to advocate in Hartford for a more equitable distribution of state education funding.

Until that occurs, Trumbull taxpayers will continue to shoulder a significant share of the cost of maintaining our high-performing school system.

Despite these challenges, Trumbull Public Schools continue to rank among Connecticut's strongest school systems.

For fiscal year 2026-2027, the Town's allocation to the Board of Education increased by 4.39%.

That funding supports educational programs and staffing while balancing affordability and the Town's overall fiscal sustainability.

That balance is important.

I believe strongly in investing in education while recognizing the needs of all our residents and taxpayers.

That investment continues to produce outstanding results.

But the real credit belongs to our teachers, administrators, staff, students, and parents.

I want to recognize Superintendent of Schools Dr. Martin Semmel, who is with us this morning.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to Trumbull's students.

The 2026-2027 Budget

Despite external pressures, Trumbull's underlying financial position remains strong.

Our General Fund remains healthy.

And we continue to fund both the Town and Police pension systems at their actuarially determined contributions.

Following months of careful review, the Board of Finance approved the fiscal year 2026-2027 mill rate on June 4 on a bipartisan basis.

The adopted mill rate is 37.42, representing a 4.85% tax-rate increase.

The motor vehicle mill rate is capped by state law at 32.46 mills.

No tax increase is taken lightly.

The budget was developed during a period of significant cost escalation affecting municipalities throughout Connecticut.

It reflects cautious planning, disciplined spending, and our commitment to maintaining Trumbull's essential services while protecting the Town's long-term financial stability.

I want to thank our Finance Department, led by Maria Pires, for their hard work throughout a particularly challenging budget cycle.

Looking Ahead

As we look ahead, Trumbull continues to move forward with significant public and private investment.

We enter the coming year from a position of strength.

Our financial fundamentals are sound.

Our tax collection rate remains exceptionally high at approximately 99%.

Our tax base continues to grow and diversify.

Our schools remain among the strongest in Connecticut.

Our community continues to attract families, businesses, and private investment.

At the same time, we recognize the challenges ahead. Increasing operating costs, disparities in state education funding, pension obligations, the October 1, 2026 state-mandated revaluation, and a changing commercial real estate environment will all require careful management.

We are addressing these challenges deliberately, responsibly, and proactively.

Because maintaining a successful community is not about reacting to the next crisis.

It is about planning for what comes next.

It is about investing wisely.

It is about maintaining the services our residents expect while respecting the taxpayers who pay for them.

And it is about making decisions today that will keep Trumbull strong for the next generation.

Trumbull remains a safe, vibrant, economically strong, and highly desirable community.

I remain committed to the responsible financial management and thoughtful investment necessary to

protect everything we have built together and to continue moving Trumbull forward.

It is truly an honor to serve as First Selectman of this great community.

Before I close, I would like to recognize the people who make so much of what I have talked about this morning possible. I ask all our Trumbull Town employees who are here today, including our Director of Human Resources, Tom McCarthy, to please stand and be recognized.

Thank you for your hard work, your professionalism, and your commitment to the people of Trumbull.

And thank you to everyone here this morning for your continued investment and commitment to our town.

Thank you and have a wonderful day!