



# TOWN OF THOMPSON

## Planning & Development

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### PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### ECONOMIC GARDENING IN THOMPSON –65 MAIN ST PLANNING PROJECT LAUNCHES IN OCTOBER

The Town of Thompson Department of Planning and Development has been awarded funding from the USDA Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (UAIP) grant program to develop a Small Business Support Center with a focus on food system and agriculture start-ups at the Town-owned building located at 65 Main Street in the North Grosvenordale neighborhood. Public input is a critical component of the planning process for the planned facility and the adjacent 3.2-acre parcel. Thompson will be holding 12 monthly public workshops, the first being held on October 4, 2023. The planning grant project will be underway as the building is renovated under a separate grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration. All activities related to the 65 Main St project are fully grant-funded, with no matching requirement from local tax dollars.

For some time, Thompson has been poised at the threshold of opportunity. As with many comparable communities in Northeastern Connecticut, recovery in Thompson from the collapse of the mill-based economy has been slower than in more tech-oriented regions; and the economic drain was exacerbated when construction of I-395 diverted much of the traffic away from the traditional village center. Despite these challenges, Thompson is not without its assets. The community has an agricultural history that has always run parallel to the boom-times of the mill era and has since outlived those industrial giants. Several family farms persist within the town, which is designated by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture as a Farm-Friendly Community. At the same time, the bones of the mill area remain and are ripe for redevelopment to meet 21<sup>st</sup> Century needs. The UAIP planning project will capitalize on these traditions and local resources.

A key component of the planning process is a year-long public workshop series, meeting monthly, to determine the specific needs of Thompson's small business community, identify deficits in local food security and imagine ways in which the future facility at 65 Main Street can show the highest community utility. The workshop sessions will present all aspects of the project and solicit input from residents and stakeholders to be considered as part of the final master plan for the facility.

Four of the project partners will appear on the WINY Talk Show on Friday, 15 September at 9 a.m. to discuss their roles in the project. Joining the host in-studio that morning will be Tyra Penn, Director of Planning & Development for the Town of Thompson; Anne Miller, Executive Director of TEEG; Jocelyn Leahy, Executive Director of CT Resource Conservation and Development; and John Guskowski, Co-Founder and Principal of Tyche Planning and Policy Group.

The public workshop will launch on Wednesday, October 4, 2023 from 6-8PM at the Thompson Public Library/Louis P. Community Center, 934 Riverside Drive, North Grosvenordale, CT 06255. Project partners will discuss all elements of the project, answer questions, outline the schedule for the workshop series and solicit participants for the year-long process. All are invited to attend. Registration is encouraged but not required: <https://tinyurl.com/65Main-Meeting1>

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