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56 CT projects are vying for part of \$950M. Major housing projects and an arts venue made the list.



This rendering shows a major addition, at right, to Real Art Ways in Hartford's Parkville neighborhood. (DBVW Architects)

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There are 56 projects in Connecticut seeking a share in [nearly \\$950 million](#). [And an ambitious expansion plan](#) for Hartford's [Real Art Ways](#) that has been percolating for years could break ground later this year, with a key piece of financing all but assured to fall into place Friday when the commission that oversees state borrowing is expected to approve \$4.5 million for the project.

The [State Bond Commission](#) will convene Friday to consider funding RAW's expansion, which is one of a half-dozen projects in Hartford backed by the [Capital Region Development Authority](#).

Once projects make it onto the bond commission agenda, they are virtually assured of approval.

The projects represent about one-third of the \$3.4 billion that will be considered by the bond commission, including state Department of Transportation projects adding up to \$1.5 billion, and \$125 million to offset the public benefits charge on electric bills.

RAW — the contemporary arts center that has been a fixture in Hartford's Parkville neighborhood for three decades — plans the expansion as part of a larger, \$24 million vision for its building on Arbor Street.

The expansion calls for a major addition that will increase the size of the arts venue by 50%. The project also includes the addition of three movie screens, bringing the organization's total to four. The project also will add a dedicated area for the performing arts, a new café, and more space for educational programs.

Will K. Wilkins, RAW's executive director, said Wednesday the arts organization is in the final stages of raising the last \$2 million for the project, which could start construction in the fall.



In a file photo, Will K. Wilkins, executive director of Real Art Ways in Hartford shows the plans for the new addition that will be added on at the contemporary arts organization. (Aaron Flaum/Hartford Courant)

"It is on a forward trajectory, and we've been doing great with it," Wilkins said. "And that's why we're getting some of this support from CRDA. They can see this, and, 'Yup, this thing is happening, and we can help.' " We still have some work to do, and that's happening."

CRDA's \$4.5 million loan is what is known as a "bridge loan" that will allow the project to move ahead and lock in costs, rather than waiting to assemble all the funding sources and risk construction cost inflation and loss of previously-approved grants that could expire. The loan would bridge financing such as historic credits, federal funds and capital pledges that will come in within the next few years, according to CRDA.

RAW's \$24 million plan also includes the \$4.25 million purchase of 56 Arbor St. — a former typewriter factory built in 1917 — where the nonprofit arts organization had leased space for more than 30 years. The purchase took place in 2021.

The idea behind buying the 4-story, brick building was grounded in diversifying the sources of the nonprofit organization's revenue to include rental income from tenants, many of whom have a focus of arts and creativity that dovetail with RAW. The overall budget also includes a new roof and elevator for the former factory.

The state's investment in the project has been considerable: \$1 million for the purchase; another \$3 million in 2022 for the expansion; and \$9.1 million from the [Community Investment Fund](#) in 2023 for a total of \$13.1 million.

In addition to the RAW project, other CRDA projects on Friday's agenda are:

◆ a \$4 million, low-cost loan for [the conversion of a 5-story building at 150 Trumbull St.](#) in the heart of downtown Hartford into 46 apartments over retail space now occupied by Max's Trumbull Kitchen. The \$16 million plans call for the restaurant to remain in the building with improvements to its space. The building is owned by Brooklyn, N.Y.-based [Shelbourne Global Solutions LLC](#), downtown Hartford's largest commercial landlord.



The former office building at 150 Trumbull St. in Hartford is slated for conversion to apartments. (Aaron Flaum/Hartford Courant)

◆ a \$7 million, low-cost loan to finance [the construction of an 84-unit apartment building on Wells Street](#), opposite Bushnell Park. The new, \$21 million apartment building would essentially be an addition to the rear of 525 Main St. The Main Street building — former

municipal offices — is being converted into 42 apartments and is across from city hall with two longtime, storefront tenants: Cornerstone Deli and Felix Shoe Repair.

The two structures — being developed by [Spectra Construction & Development Corp.](#) — would be connected, allowing residents to enter from Main Street or around the corner at 17 Wells St. and share amenities.

◆ a \$1.5 million, low-cost loan to New Haven-based [VASE Construction LLC](#) to construct a new building with 20 apartments on Edwards Street, with eight units designated as “affordable” with the balance, market-rate. The project’s expected cost is \$8.5 million.

◆ a \$3 million grant to the [Metropolitan District Commission](#) to pay for a portion of a storm water separation project considered vital to the future development of the [Bushnell South](#) area, just south Bushnell Park.



This parking lot to the rear of 525 Main Street is proposed for a new apartment building bordering on Pulaski Circle and Bushnell Park. (Aaron Flaum/Hartford Courant)

◆ \$5 million in funding for repairs and safety improvements to garages operated by CRDA at Church Street and Adriaen’s Landing in downtown Hartford.

◆ a \$4 million grant to the Housing Authority in Hartford to finance critical infrastructure, including storm water management, at the [Village at Park River](#) housing complex.