



**Ridgefield
Economic &
Community
Development
Commission**

400 Main Street • Ridgefield, CT 0687 • 203.546.2547 • ridgefieldct.com

Geoffrey Morris, Chairman
Amanda Duff, Secretary
Cameron Cole Carcelén
Dee Dee Colabella
Bob Knight
Glori Norwitt
Steve Spivak

Rudy Marconi, First Selectman

Lisa Scails
Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut
287 Main St.
Danbury, CT 06810

August ____, 2020

Dear Ms. Scails,

Re: Cultural District Application

The Town of Ridgefield is very excited to apply for a section of our Town to be designated as a “Cultural District” by the State, per the “Act Concerning the Establishment of Municipal Cultural Districts” which was effective October 2019. Please reference our previous Letter of Intent to you dated February 24, 2020.

We strongly believe that an enlarged area of our downtown perfectly fits the cultural district definition per the Standards & Criteria laid out by the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development.

The Town, including our Board of Selectmen, are very excited about the possibility of establishing a Cultural District here. Accordingly, we have met all of the Standards & Criteria:

-- The Cultural District (“CD”) meets the requirements of the CD definition.

- The CD has defined boundaries.
- The CD is walkable and accessible.
- The CD has a multitude of cultural facilities and assets.
- The CD has ample public infrastructure and amenities.
- In December 2019, the Ridgefield Board of Selectmen (“BOS”) assigned and allowed the existing Town Economic & Community Development Commission to create an Advisory Council Subcommittee which reports to the ECDC, in accordance with the Town’s governance structure. This created a non-voting advisory council which is an informal working group.
 - The Subcommittee met and communicated numerous times. All members actively support this Application.
 - The ECDC held Public Hearing to meet the requirements of a “community input meeting” on August 12, 2020 during the BOS hearing, where the community learned about the proposed CD and goals.
 - The BOS passed a resolution immediately following this Public Hearing, and unanimously voted to support the ECDC’s Application to the State.

Attached please find all materials for the Town of Ridgefield’s application:

Page ___: Map with inventory of cultural assets

Page __: Map with inventory of cultural assets, with addition of Central Business District zone and Historic District zone.

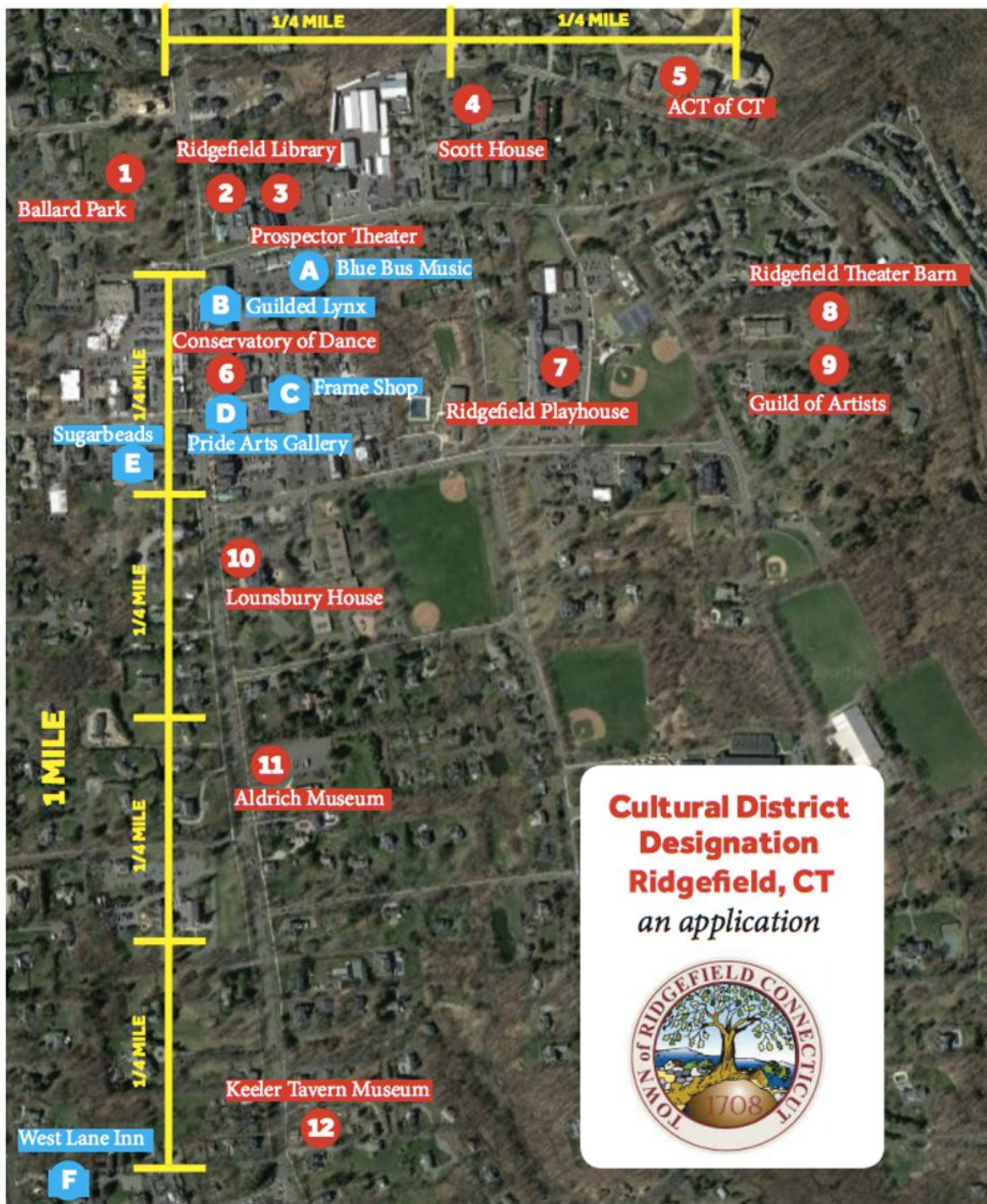
- Inventory of Cultural Assets and Facilities within CD
- Inventory of Public Infrastructure and Amenities within CD
- Inventory of Other Notables within CD, including Cultural Activities
-
- List of Subcommittee Members
- Ridgefield Press news article from July 7, 2020 discussing the ECDC’s plans to apply for the CD designation.
- Notice of Formal Public Hearing scheduled for August 12, 2020
- Minutes from Board of Selectmen meeting on August 12, 2020

Thank you so much for your time and effort on our Application. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Best regards,

Glori Norwitt

Commissioner, Economic & Community
Development Commission
203-482-3792



Advisory Council Subcommittee

Our CD Advisory Council Subcommittee members represent a diverse mix of nonprofit and for-profit organizations and businesses. They represent the shared interests of the CD. All members live and/or work in the CD. Due to the large number of assets in the CD, we have included additional representatives beyond the minimum required six members.

Subcommittee Members

Glori Norwitt, ECDC

Christine Carnicelli, Innkeeper, West Lane Inn

Emily Devoe, Head of Marketing & Communications, The Aldrich Contemporary Art
Museum

Alison Greeley, Vice Chair, Ridgefield Library

Hilde Grob, Executive Director, Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center

Barbara Manners, Board of Selectmen; Producer, CHIRP

Jennifer DiLaura, Chair, Ridgefield Arts Council

Geoffrey Morris, President, TownVibe Media; Executive Director, Ridgefield
Independent Film Festival; ECDC

Gary Singer, Board member and former President, Ridgefield Historical Society

Allison Stockel, Executive Director, Ridgefield Playhouse

Pam Stoddart, Executive Director, Ridgefield Guild of Artists

Briggs Tobin, Vice Chair, Ridgefield Historic District Commission; CFO, Ridgefield
Academy

Jonathan Winn, Founder and Co-Artistic Director, Thrown Stone

Inventory of Cultural Assets and Facilities within Cultural District

1714 historic Scott House

ACT of CT

Battle of Ridgefield location & plaque from the Revolutionary War

Ridgefield Theatre Barn

Ridgefield Guild of Artists

Ridgefield Playhouse

BassamFellows Modern Furniture headquarters, in 1951 Philip Johnson home

Ridgefield Library

Ridgefield Historical Society

Prospector Theater

CHIRP

Ridgefield Conservatory of Dance

RPAC Art Gallery

RPAC Art Center and Academy

Frame Shop of Ridgefield

Thrown Stone Theater

Guided Lynx Jewelry Making

Zoe & Co Sugarbeads

Lounsbury House

Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum

Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center

West Lane Inn

Town-wide "Museum-in-the-Streets" Plaques

Assets nearby but not within Cultural District:

Weir Farm Art Center (National Historic Site)

Little Red Schoolhouse: historic 19th century one-room schoolhouse

Public Infrastructure and Amenities within Cultural District

Downtown Ridgefield: Central Business District

Historic District

Parking: at each venue, and spillover at 2 schools in the Cultural District and

Municipal lots

4 EV chargers

Restaurants and Bars

Boutiques for clothing, gifts, jewelry

2 Pharmacies

Police/Fire centrally located

Post Office

Real Estate Offices

Ballard Park with lots of open space, gazebo, and children's playground

Tennis courts and Skate Park

Fields and Playgrounds

Sidewalks throughout

Lightpost Banners signaling cultural activities

OTOCast app provides visitors with Calendar of Events

3 Churches

Other Notables within Cultural District, including Cultural Activities (indoor and outdoor, such as festivals, etc)

Quarterly Downtown Festivals (Summerfest, Fall in Love with Ridgefield, Holiday Stroll, And Spring Stroll)

Annual Halloween Walk

Battle of Ridgefield Reenactment

<https://www.ridgefieldct.org/economic-community-development-commission/events/25333>

CHIRP (Concert Happenings in Ridgefield's Parks) - free outdoor summer concerts at least once weekly

RIFF - Ridgefield Independent Film Festival

Jazz, Funk & Blues Weekend

BBQ Fest

Carnival at East Ridge Middle School

ROAR (Dog & Cat Shelter) Paws for a Cause event

Pride in the Park (celebrating LGBTQ+ Community)

ArtWalk - 3 weeks in August/Sept

Folk Series at the Ridgefield Library

Fountain Music Concert Series at First Congregational Church

Acoustic Celebration at St. Stephens Church

Michael Chekhov Theatre Festival

Annual Athletic Events:

Run Like a Mother 5k

Turkey Trot 5k

Ridgefield Half Marathon

Cops & Robbers Fun Run

Other Notables nearby but not within Cultural District

Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra <https://ridgefieldsymphony.org/>

Western CT Youth Orchestra <https://wctyo.org/>

Ridgefield Chorale <http://ridgefieldchorale.org/>

Ridgefield Music Matters - 501(c)3 supporting the instrumental music program at

Ridgefield High School <https://www.ridgefieldmusicmatters.org/>

Annual Athletic Events:

Ridgefield Triathlon and Duathlon

Where the Pavement Ends

Southwest Cafe 5k

SOME KEY ORGANIZATIONS AND BUSINESSES WITHIN CULTURAL DISTRICT

Lounsbury House

Lounsbury House, a National Historic Site, was built in 1896 by former Connecticut Governor Phineas C. Lounsbury. All original architectural details have been preserved including unique moldings, massive doors and grand staircase. As Ridgefield's historic community center, Lounsbury House hosts 300+ events annually including weddings, fundraisers, community events, local business gatherings, non-profit meetings, workshops and more. A combined total of both private and community event guests is near 20,000 annually. Lounsbury House is owned by the town of Ridgefield as a non-profit 501(c)3 with a Board of Directors and small staff who assume financial responsibility for its operation and preservation. <https://lounsburyhouse.org/>

The Ridgefield Independent Film Festival

Founded in 2016, the Ridgefield Independent Film Festival (RIFF) celebrates independent films from around the world that enlighten, entertain, and inspire moviegoers through compelling visual storytelling. RIFF brings innovative films and filmmakers to five venues in Ridgefield for an annual four-day October festival that includes screenings, panel discussions, special events, and nightly parties attended by some 4,000 people. RIFF awards some \$10,000 in award money to filmmakers. <https://www.riffct.org/events>

Thrown Stone Theatre Company

Thrown Stone Theatre Company's mission is "to engage our region with new and reimagined theatre in intimate settings, creating a body of work that moves, connects, and challenges all who join the conversation." In three summer seasons at Ridgefield Conservatory of Dance, we've served nearly 3,000 patrons. We've provided professional work for dozens of artists and partnered with businesses and other nonprofits throughout the region. thrownstone.org

ACT

ACT (A Contemporary Theatre) of Connecticut is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) Equity theatre. Founded and led by Katie Diamond, Daniel C. Levine, and Bryan Perri, ACT of CT presents runs of well-known Broadway musicals, as well as world-premiere productions by the next generation of writers and composers. The theatre company produces four shows per season. All shows feature both Broadway stars and local Fairfield and Westchester County talent. In addition to fully produced main stage productions, ACT of CT hosts a New Works Series, The Broadway Unplugged Series, and has a thriving education and conservatory

program including masterclasses and camps. In just two seasons, ACT has welcomed 23,304 ticketholders to the theater. <https://www.actofct.org/>

Ridgefield Library

For nearly 120 years, the Ridgefield Library has served as a vital community resource and destination for all ages with over 266,000 visits in FY2019. Our friendly, knowledgeable staff, strong collections, diverse programming, and welcoming space are the result of our commitment to serve as the place people go to discover, question, learn and connect. The Library presents nearly 1,400 programs each year. Signature offerings include book discussions; early literacy programs; business, nonprofit and parenting support; author talks; ARTalks; Ridgefield Folk concerts; health and wellness programs; scholarly series; RidgeCon - a pop culture celebration; and Maker & STEAM educational programs.

<https://ridgefieldlibrary.org/>

Ridgefield Historical Society

The Ridgefield Historical Society's mission is to preserve, interpret, and foster public knowledge of the town's historical, cultural, and architectural heritage. We are headquartered at the 1714 Scott House, which houses a state-of-the art archive with over 10,000 documents and ephemera spanning hundreds of years of Ridgefield's history. In addition, the Society operates and maintains the 1756 Peter Parley Schoolhouse.

We bring history to life for all ages, serving 2,500 visitors annually, through intriguing exhibits, topical lectures, walking tours, historic home research, genealogy services, partner programming, and more. ridgefieldhistoricalsociety.org

West Lane Inn

The West Lane Inn is the only boutique hotel located in the Historic District of Ridgefield. Established in 1849, the Inn was originally built as a summer home for wealthy New Yorkers. Today the Inn boasts 17 Rooms graciously appointed with unique furnishings and private baths. A continental breakfast is served on the front porch or cozy breakfast room. The inviting porch often draws outside patrons for breakfast during the warm summer months. The Inn served approximately 5,000 overnight guests in 2019. Under new ownership since October 2019, the Innkeepers are dedicated to promoting the property and increasing visitors to Ridgefield. <http://www.westlaneinn.com/>

Ridgefield Guild of Artists

The Ridgefield Guild of Artists is a regional and community-based art organization that promotes the visual arts and arts education by providing:

High quality gallery space for exhibition

Art classes for children and adults

Opportunities for special curated exhibitions

Art lectures on-site

Collaborations with other cultural organizations in and around Ridgefield

Located in an over 100-year-old barn on Halpin Lane, the Guild contains three large gallery spaces, a gift gallery and two studio lofts. RGA presents a full calendar of exhibitions yearly, including: two juried exhibitions, a holiday art and gift show, an in-town ArtWalk event and several all-member shows, and has thousands of visitors annually. <https://rgoa.org/>

Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center

Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center (KTM&HC) is situated on a 4-acre campus on picturesque Main Street. As the town's most historic site, we invite visitors to explore 300 years of American history by connecting the stories of the people who lived here to contemporary life, including citizenship and civic culture. We are open for visitors Fridays and Saturdays, 12 - 4, and Sundays, 10 - 4. Over 10,000 people set foot on our campus annually to take a museum tour, visit an exhibition, stroll the gardens, attend a family fun day, or gather for a social event. Educational offerings have grown to 44 programs offered to some 2,000 students from seven towns throughout our region. keelertavernmuseum.org

The Prospector Theatre

The Prospector is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to providing meaningful employment to people with disabilities through the operation of a first-run movie theater in Ridgefield, CT. Employees of the Theater are known as Prospects, and we are encouraged to sparkle, shine, and transform our passions into professions. Approximately 75% of our workforce self-identifies with a disability, and we are committed to competitive and integrated employment. Through the operation of our movie theater, Prospects are paired with jobs that highlight their strengths and passions - or as we call it, "sparkle". Each new release generates dozens of opportunities to use our sparkle as we transform ordinary moviegoing into memorable experiences. We offer products that people want – good movies, fresh popcorn, entertaining pre-show content, clean facilities, and unparalleled customer service! When you see movies with us, you create the thousands of business operations and interactions that fuel the Prospector's mission of meaningful employment for adults with disabilities!

Prospects use education, engagement, and employment to showcase their incredible talents, adding extraordinary value and sparkle to our business. Prospects are involved at

every level of the Prospector's mission – selling tickets, popping popcorn, filming, hosting events, editing, programming, landscaping, service learning, marketing, information technology, strategic planning, graphic design, game design, writing grants, baking, costume-making, and so much more!

Almost 80% of Americans with disabilities are unemployed. The Prospector Theater was built as a solution to this problem. Meaningful employment is vital to a person's mental, social, financial, and emotional health. The Prospector is open every day of the year, improving the quality of life for hundreds of adults with disabilities, their families, and the community at large. <https://www.prospectorthheater.org/>

The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum

Founded in Ridgefield in 1964, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum is one of the oldest contemporary art museums in the United States. A non-collecting institution, the Museum is known for risk-taking programming and for presenting the work of seminal artists like Frank Stella, Robert Smithson, Eva Hesse, Jean-Michel Basquiat, and Cindy Sherman at critical, early junctures in their careers. The Museum's exhibitions are complemented by an active education program that connects adults, families, and school children from around the region with exciting opportunities to engage with art and artists. The Aldrich is visited by approximately 25,000 people each year. <http://aldrichart.org/>

CHIRP: Concert Happenings in Ridgefield's Parks

CHIRP's mission is to present to residents with free music and professional musicians who would not normally otherwise have a venue in the Ridgefield/Danbury area. It's goals are to build community through shared experience, to help preserve the town's "small town" community feel and to help make Ridgefield a destination.

Concerts are underwritten or co-underwritten by community-minded businesses and individuals and has always been co-sponsored by the Town of Ridgefield through its Parks and Recreation Department and The Ridgefield Press.

In 2019 CHIRP presented 28 concerts throughout the summer with approximately 20,000 attendees overall, and is currently scheduled for the same number in 2020.

<https://chirpct.org/>

The Ridgefield Playhouse

Ridgefield Theater Barn

Ridgefield Conservatory of Dance

RPAC Art Gallery

RPAC Art Gallery features works by the Resident Artists, and all are available for purchase. The online home, RPACgallery.com, offers cutting-edge technology that allows potential buyers to view gallery pieces as they'd appear on your wall. Purchases can be delivered, or curbside pick-up is available. RPAC Gallery is located at 410 Main Street, Ridgefield and enjoyed 2,000 guests in the first 6 months of business.

RPAC Art Center & Academy

RPAC Art Center's mission is to create, promote and exhibit the working artist, emerging artist, and student while providing a supportive and creative environment. RPAC Art Center and Academy offers Studio Space, Art Education in Fine Arts and Digital Design, Portfolio Development and guidance for higher education and career. Located at 424R Main Street, RPAC Art Center and Academy provides studio space for 14 emerging artists and 5 classes per week in fine arts and digital design.