

Fall 2025 Report

RESILIENT EAST HADDAM

Connecticut Institute for
Resilience and Climate
Adaptation (CIRCA)

Harvard Negotiation and
Mediation Clinical Program

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Executive Summary

During the 2025 fall semester, our clinical team from Harvard Negotiation & Mediation Clinical Program (HNMCP) worked with the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA) and members of the East Haddam, CT community. CIRCA asked us to help identify how to best support East Haddam in moving from study to implementation on flood mitigation along Succor Brook as part of its *Resilient Connecticut* program.

Over the course of the semester, we conducted interviews with key stakeholders, researched best practices, and reviewed meeting notes, public documents, and local media. Through this work, we have gained insight into the interests, values, and concerns that shape how certain East Haddam stakeholders understand the *Resilient East Haddam* project. Based on this assessment, we identified three dynamics that help explain the challenges East Haddam faces as it works to implement a flood mitigation strategy.

First, CIRCA and Kleinfelder's approach is understandably technical given the nature of the problem. However, this approach may exacerbate the adaptive challenges flooding poses to the community. Understanding this adaptive frame and addressing it through consensus-building efforts can help support efficient and effective implementation.

Second, as with all communities, stakeholders view CIRCA's efforts and Kleinfelder's recommendations through the lens of the preexisting narratives within the town. Supporting implementation requires understanding these narratives and, in some cases, assisting the community in building new ones.

Third, as is often the case, many stakeholders experience conflict around the project as zero-sum. Town-Goodspeed relations, upstream-downstream debates, and disagreements between residents and experts are often framed in terms of winners and losers. This makes it harder for parties to see opportunities for joint gains or to imagine approaches that leave everyone better off than the status quo. Sustainable consensus will require shifting some of the focus away from rigid positions and toward the underlying interests that multiple stakeholders share.

Drawing on these findings and on dispute systems design and negotiation theory, we offer three recommendations:

1. Apply and adaptive frame and adopt a consensus-building approach.

CIRCA can complement its strong technical work with an implementation process that supports iterative problem-solving, inclusive engagement, and shared decision-making over time.

2. Help stakeholders create new narratives that enhance collaboration.

CIRCA can work with town leaders and community members to surface existing stories and to craft forward-looking narratives that link flood mitigation, redevelopment, and community identity.

3. Offer a value-creating frame for conflict.

CIRCA can help stakeholders treat disputes about options, timing and cost sharing as opportunities to design creative, multi-issue solutions, rather than as battles over winners and losers.

Through these recommendations, we believe CIRCA can help guide the Town of East Haddam, and other communities it supports, toward building a more resilient, collaborative community.

Introduction

I. Project Background

CIRCA is a multi-disciplinary center of excellence that brings together experts in the natural sciences, engineering, economics, political science, finance and law to provide practical solutions to problems arising because of climate change. CIRCA's mission is to increase the resilience of sustainability of communities vulnerable to the growing impacts of climate change on the natural, built, and human environments. In 2018, CIRCA launched the *Resilient Connecticut* program to promote forward-looking planning that integrates community and economic development with transit-oriented development, critical infrastructure improvements, and conservation challenges.¹

As part of Phase III of *Resilient Connecticut*, CIRCA selected East Haddam as a focus site for a more detailed project and site plan to support implementation. CIRCA engaged Kleinfelder, an engineering firm, to prepare the *Resilient East Haddam* Final Report. The primary objectives of that report were to:

- identify interventions (such as floodplain creation or channel modifications) to reduce flood risks to Goodspeed facilities and the Town's wastewater treatment plant, and
- identify potential locations for Goodspeed rehearsal and administrative buildings that could be pursued using funding sources identified by the study.

Kleinfelder completed these objectives and delivered a final report in June 2025.² CIRCA then sought assistance from the Harvard Negotiation and Mediation Clinical Program (HNMCP)—specifically, from its Dispute Systems Design Clinic—to advise on best practices for proceeding towards implementation of these recommendations. HNMCP is an academic and practice-

¹ *Resilient Connecticut*, CONNECTICUT INSTITUTE FOR RESILIENCE & CLIMATE ADAPTATION, UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT, (last visited Nov 20, 2025), <https://resilientconnecticut.uconn.edu/>.

² KLEINFELDER, *RESILIENT EAST HADDAM FINAL REPORT: APPENDIX A*, (Resilient Connecticut Phase III, June 2025), https://resilientconnecticut.media.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/3830/2025/07/Resilient_East_Haddam_Final_Report_Appendix-A.pdf.

oriented program that enables students to develop skills in negotiation, dispute resolution, and systems design by working with clients on tailored, practical projects.³

Our clinical team's role was not to revisit or redo the technical analysis, but to assess the interaction among key stakeholders and to propose process designs and tools that could help East Haddam and CIRCA translate the existing technical work into implementable, broadly supported actions.

II. Question Presented

How can HMNCP's Dispute Systems Design Clinic best support CIRCA and key stakeholders in East Haddam to establish a path toward advancing flood mitigation along Succor Brook, with a clear order of operations and timeline?

III. Project Objectives

To answer this question, we pursued four main objectives:

- i. **Understand barriers to effective collaboration and implementation** of a flood mitigation plan.
- ii. **Identify a clear pathway forward for the Town and the Goodspeed** to work together on mutually agreed-upon next steps for advancing flood mitigation along Succor Brook.
- iii. **Identify what conversations need to happen with private residential property owners downstream**, and what the most productive way to have these conversations would be.
- iv. **Where appropriate, identify lessons that CIRCA can bring to other towns** with similar tensions between private property management decisions and broader flood vulnerability.

IV. Methodology

Our assessment relied primarily on interviews with stakeholders, supplemented by document review and secondary research.

We interviewed a total of 15 individuals over 13 video calls. These included:

- A. Three members of the CIRCA team
- B. One member of the Kleinfelder team
- C. Two East Haddam officials
- D. One downstream property owner
- E. Four members of the broader East Haddam community
- F. Three members of the Goodspeed organization

³ See *Our Work*, HARVARD NEGOTIATION & MEDIATION CLINICAL PROGRAM, (last visited Nov 20, 2025), <https://hnmcp.law.harvard.edu/our-work/>.

G. Two experts in consensus-building and collaborative public processes

We attempted to interview several additional individuals and organizations, including members of the East Haddam Redevelopment Agency. Despite multiple efforts, we were not able to schedule those conversations. Because redevelopment issues emerged as a recurring theme in many of our discussions, we sought to address this gap through additional research and by asking other interviewees about the Agency's work. Even with these efforts, our assessment does not capture all perspectives within East Haddam. We offer our findings and recommendations for consideration as informed hypotheses, grounded in the data we obtained, rather than as absolute prescriptions.

In addition to interviews, we reviewed:

- Town resources, including the East Haddam municipal website, official documents, public meeting minutes and videos, and local periodicals (such as East Haddam News and Events Magazine);
- The Resilient East Haddam Final Report and Appendices produced by Kleinfelder for CIRCA; and
- Academic and practice literature on dispute systems design, complex multi-party negotiation, and climate adaptation in small communities.

We cite directly used sources in footnotes and include them, along with additional guiding resources, in the bibliography section.

Key Findings

1. CIRCA's approach, while highly effective for technical problem-solving, may unintentionally impede adaptive problem-solving within communities.

2. Stakeholders understand CIRCA's recommendations in the context of their preexisting narratives about the town and its stakeholders.

3. Many stakeholders perceive conflict as zero-sum which reinforces an adversarial orientation and impedes progress toward implementation.

Finding One: CIRCA's current approach, while highly effective for technical problem-solving, may unintentionally exacerbate adaptive challenges within communities.

CIRCA designed *Resilient Connecticut* as a three-phase program. Phase I developed an overall planning framework, Phase II advanced a regional risk and vulnerability assessment that led to

the identification of 177 Resilience Opportunity Areas (ROARs). Phase III then developed location-specific projects and site plans “with detailed analysis for implementation.”⁴

In East Haddam, stakeholders expressed near-universal admiration for CIRCA and Kleinfelder for their technical expertise and for their roles in developing the Resilient East Haddam Final Report as part of Phase III. They consistently described the process and engineering alternatives as careful, sophisticated, and responsive within the agreed-upon scope.

At the same time, many stakeholders also told us that the technical recommendations represent only one part of what the community needs to move forward. By design, Phase III primarily framed the work as a technical challenge. CIRCA’s mandate was to “develop scientifically informed adaptation strategies and conceptual designs.”⁵ In that frame, the goal is to generate the best engineering strategies for a defined area, based on sound data and modeling. However, implementation in a small town like East Haddam does not follow automatically from a strong technical report.

Decision-making authority and practical influence are dispersed among a wide range of actors—elected officials, administrators, Goodspeed leadership, residents, and downstream property owners—who have different interests, histories, concerns, and levels of trust. These dimensions of community decision-making lie largely outside the scope of technical analysis. A plan that promotes efficient implementation requires an adaptive decision-making framework that actively helps the community work together to make better decisions.

Where We Are Now

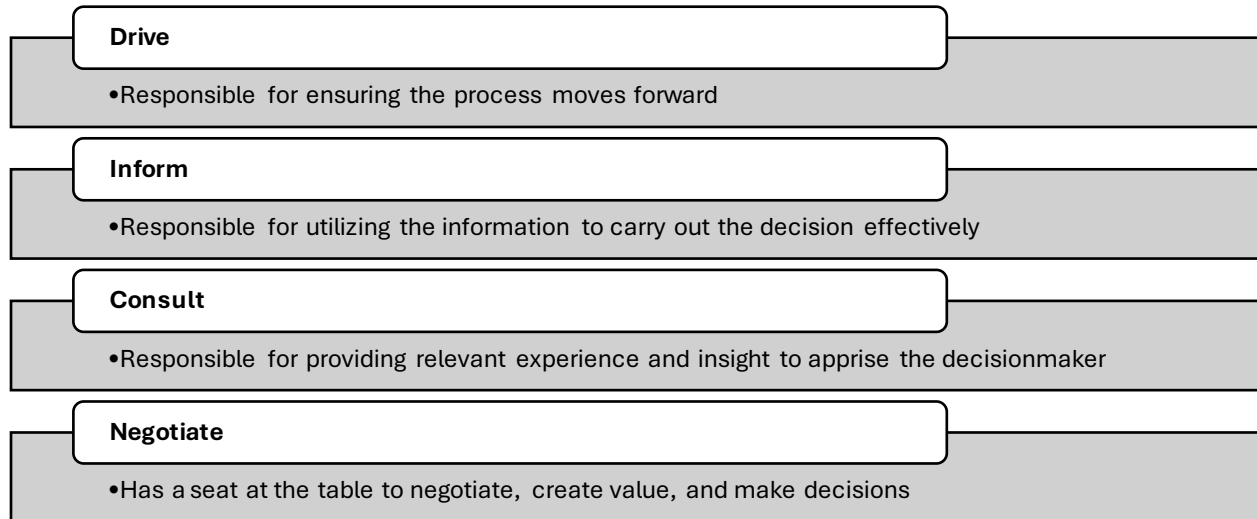


⁴ *Resilient Connecticut Planning Phases*, CONNECTICUT INSTITUTE FOR RESILIENCE & CLIMATE ADAPTATION, UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT https://resilientconnecticut.uconn.edu/planning_phases/ (last visited Nov. 16, 2025).

⁵ *Id.*

One way to think about this distinction is through Danny Ertel and Mark Gordon’s concept of the D-I-C-N framework.⁶ The model aims to clarify the roles and responsibilities of individuals in a decision-making process. The framework asks:

- (1) Who **drives** the project?
- (2) Who **needs information** to move the project forward?
- (3) Who should be **consulted** to make a better decision?
- (4) Who ultimately **negotiates** and decides the final outcome?



When we map the Succor Brook project onto this framework, two different logics emerge:

- In a **technical strategy**, experts drive the project. They consult local officials and affected stakeholders, apply their expertise, and produce a recommended set of measures. The primary objective is a scientifically sound plan.
- In an **adaptive strategy**, the objective shifts to jointly developing a plan that key stakeholders can and will carry out. Experts still provide critical information and options, but local officials, affected stakeholders, and institutional actors must share in driving, consulting on, and negotiating the path forward.

Our interviews suggest that CIRCA and Kleinfelder have operated almost entirely in the first mode, while the challenges East Haddam now faces sit squarely in the second.

Stakeholder reactions to the final report illustrate this gap.

⁶ ERTEL & GORDON, THE POINT OF THE DEAL: HOW TO NEGOTIATE WHEN YES IS NOT ENOUGH, 58-65 (Harv. Bus. Rev. Press, 2007).

While almost all stakeholders thought that the recommendations were well-founded and helpful, many also felt that the report only partially addressed their concerns about flooding in East Haddam.

We entered the project aware that some residents and officials felt the report's focus was too narrow.

After speaking with nine stakeholders outside of Kleinfelder and CIRCA, only one person both fully understood Kleinfelder's recommendations and felt that they were sufficient to address the problems that mattered most to them. Several interviewees felt that the study area was too limited or that, while the recommended measures were necessary, they were only one piece of a larger flooding puzzle. For example:

- Multiple interviewees highlighted that the study focused almost entirely on the lower reach of Succor Brook, even though "the vast part of the watershed is wooded" and offers opportunities for upstream storage and green infrastructure that were only lightly explored.
- While acknowledging that proceeding with Alternative 2 did not preclude addressing upstream options in the future, several people nonetheless expressed a desire for potential **dam or retention options upstream**, which they believe could reduce downstream flooding.
- Some stakeholders did not know that Kleinfelder had briefly modeled a storage/dam option at Daniels Road Pond in response to early public input and then removed it from further consideration, and thus assumed their suggestions about upstream solutions had simply been ignored.

These individuals are among the very people whose cooperation CIRCA will need to move from planning to implementation, yet they do not see the recommended strategy as something they co-created. The technical report gives them strong information, but it does not yet function as a shared solution they feel ownership over.

The technical emphasis may have fostered the view that the project empowers and benefits certain stakeholders more than others.

The technical emphasis has also shaped perceptions about who the project is designed to benefit. A recurring concern in community conversations is that the chosen study area and the recommended measures primarily benefit the Goodspeed. CIRCA and Kleinfelder staff emphasized to us that the goals of the project are broader: to reduce flood risk for the Town's wastewater treatment plant, Norwich and Creamery Roads, and residential properties along the

brook. Nonetheless, several residents still view the work as a “Goodspeed project,” and some interpreted engineers’ body language or meeting dynamics as evidence of divided loyalties.

In at least one public meeting, CIRCA, Kleinfelder, and town officials sat together on one side of the room, facing members of the public on the other. This physical arrangement, combined with the emphasis on expert presentations, reinforced a visible divide between “those with power over the project” and “those affected by it.” Although the format served the technical objective of explaining analysis and alternatives, it also left some participants feeling that their concerns about scope, benefits, and tradeoffs remained unaddressed.

The limited communication with the downstream property owners illustrates the technical focus of the project.

Limited engagement with downstream property owners further illustrates the gap between technical and adaptive objectives. Owners of properties along Creamery Road and beyond represent a key constituency: they stand to experience both the benefits and the residual risks of any chosen alternative, and their support or opposition could significantly affect implementation. To date, however, most of these owners have not been directly included in structured conversations about the project.

One homeowner we interviewed has attended nearly every public meeting and has experienced severe basement flooding—including five feet of water and multiple pumps running—but reported that many of their immediate neighbors were “not made aware” of the workshops and thus did not attend. From a technical standpoint, CTAC meetings and two public workshops satisfied the scope of work: Kleinfelder gathered the information it needed, modeled scenarios, and produced a well-founded set of recommendations. From an adaptive standpoint, however, the absence of downstream owners—and of a tailored process for engaging them—now poses a risk. Some likely have concerns about the project’s focus, their own flooding experience, and who the project really benefits. Their buy-in is critical to a workable implementation plan.

The end goal of the technical framework is also illustrated by the lack of an identifiable forum or process for stakeholders to achieve implementation.

Finally, the current process design does not yet provide a clear forum for stakeholders to work through these adaptive challenges together. CIRCA’s statement of work for Kleinfelder in East Haddam required formation of a CTAC, two public meetings, and preparation of outreach materials. The explicit goal of these meetings was “to present information, gather input, and develop consensus among community members and stakeholders on key milestones and deliverables.”⁷⁷ These requirements supported the production of a rigorous technical report, but they did not create a standing, shared forum for ongoing negotiation and decision-making after the report’s completion. Several interviewees told us they now feel uncertain about “where” and “with whom” to discuss next steps. In their view, Phase III has largely achieved its technical

goals, but no clearly mandated group or process has taken responsibility for shepherding the community through the implementation phase.

In short, CIRCA and Kleinfelder’s technical approach has produced exactly what it was designed to produce: a high-quality engineering analysis and set of options. However, because the project structure did not simultaneously build an adaptive decision-making framework—one that empowers local officials, institutional stakeholders, and residents to co-own the path forward—the same strengths that made the technical work successful now risk slowing or complicating implementation.

Finding Two: Stakeholders understand CIRCA’s recommendations in the context of their preexisting narratives about the town and its stakeholders.

Stakeholders in East Haddam consistently praised CIRCA’s and Kleinfelder’s work and professionalism. The Resilient East Haddam Final Report reflects extensive analysis, careful modeling, and clearly articulated alternatives. Yet, as our interviews and document review made clear, community members did not evaluate this work in a vacuum. They understood CIRCA’s recommendations through the lens of longstanding narratives about East Haddam’s governance, past redevelopment efforts, and the Goodspeed’s role in the village. These narratives strongly shape trust, willingness to participate, and the perceived legitimacy of project decisions.

Simultaneous Redevelopment Efforts Reinforce a Narrative of Fragmented, Choppy Planning

Residents rarely talk about the Succor Brook project on its own. Even when our questions were narrowly targeted, the answers we heard were broad and always sought to contextualize this project within a series of overlapping initiatives: the Redevelopment Agency’s work on the former Town Office and Garage property and other village parcels, long-running debates over the disposition of Goodspeed-owned buildings, and previous attempts at economic development initiatives that never fully materialized. During our interviews, several stakeholders described town planning as “piecemeal” or “choppy,” without a clear sense of how projects fit together.

For some residents, these parallel efforts confirm a story that East Haddam is hard to coordinate, and that no one is truly “holding the whole picture.” When they see the Phase III focus area, they do not just see a technically well-chosen segment of the watershed; they see a familiar pattern of projects that may or may not connect to a coherent village vision.

Multiple interviewees also pointed to upstream watershed issues as central to their understanding of flood risk and expressed frustration that, in their view, the project’s scope did not adequately

address these areas. This does not mean the technical choices were wrong; it does mean that longstanding experiences of fragmented planning and incomplete follow-through shape how people interpret the selection of the site and the sufficiency of the proposed measures.

Preservation and Rural Identity Shape Reactions to Change

Some East Haddam residents maintain a strong commitment to preserving the town's rural identity. Interviewees across perspectives emphasized the importance of open space, small-scale development, and maintaining a "village" feel. This preservation-first orientation creates skepticism toward interventions that are perceived to invite large-scale commercial development, change land use patterns, or otherwise alter the town's character.

For example, when the town previously explored a significant commercial redevelopment proposal for part of the village, opponents organized sustained resistance, ultimately blocking the proposal despite an extensive planning effort, grant support, and potential economic benefits. That experience remains salient for many stakeholders. Several of our interviewees referenced it as a cautionary tale: if people feel a project threatens the town's rural character or moves too fast without broad input, they will mobilize to stop it.

Our experts echoed this same warning: when stakeholders feel excluded or surprised by decisions, even well-designed, well-funded projects can stall. As a result, proposals that involve reconfiguring buildings, streetscapes, or land to accommodate rehearsal space or a multi-use building can become entangled with broader worries about "losing what makes East Haddam East Haddam." These concerns may not stem from the proposals themselves, but from preexisting narratives about how development decisions have been made and resisted in the past.

Historic Frustrations with Town Leadership Color Perceptions

Stakeholders interpret CIRCA's recommendations against a backdrop of uneven support, limited communication, and assumptions that decisions are made without meaningful input. Residents described repeated flooding and a long history of feeling that their concerns were not taken seriously until problems escalated. They noted a lack of consistent municipal support. One resident recounted having to escalate complaints personally to receive minimal assistance.

When residents offered their own technical suggestions—such as adding storm drains or reconsidering land-use choices near the brook—they often perceived that these ideas were quickly dismissed, sometimes with little explanation, especially when they were seen as inconvenient to Goodspeed or difficult to fit within existing scopes and budgets. Against this backdrop, the decision to focus Phase III on the Norwich/Creamery corridor, while technically justified, reinforced some stakeholders' belief that institutional actors' needs come first and

residents' needs come second. Even though CIRCA's mandate and funding structure largely dictated its role, many community members see the project through existing stories about opaque decision-making and uneven responsiveness.

The Goodspeed Occupies an Outsized—and Contested—Place in Local Narratives

The Goodspeed is both celebrated and contested. Stakeholders value its cultural and economic contributions, from theater productions to local scholarships and educational initiatives, yet concerns persist around land maintenance, property concentration, and perceived dominance in town affairs. With over 30 properties under its control—some unmaintained—some residents feel the town's charm and economic vitality are constrained.

These competing perspectives create tension over the Goodspeed's role in the project: should it lead, partner, or step back? Interviews revealed a nuanced landscape: while the theater is central to East Haddam's identity, stakeholders worry that disproportionate benefits to one entity may undermine broader trust and buy-in for flood mitigation strategies.

Interviewees described Goodspeed as both a “jewel in the crown” and a “golden goose” that dominates land and decision-making in the village. Longstanding expectations that Goodspeed would return or sell certain properties after building its current housing have, in some residents' view, not been met. Community members linked these perceptions directly to the Succor Brook project, arguing that the chosen site and many recommended measures are “for Goodspeed” and that the town and state are once again being asked to fix problems created by Goodspeed's past siting choices.

Goodspeed leaders, for their part, carry their own narratives. They emphasized to us their role as major contributors to the town's economy and civic life, noting scholarship support, educational programming, and efforts to provide low-cost tickets to residents. They also described a history in which Goodspeed felt it had to act on its own because town processes were slow or unreliable. These two stories—resentment of Goodspeed's perceived dominance on one side, and Goodspeed's sense of underappreciated contribution and institutional vulnerability on the other—strongly shape how each party hears CIRCA's recommendations. The same proposal to relocate the rehearsal studio, for instance, can sound like an overdue remedy to some residents, an existential operational risk to Goodspeed, and an essential precondition for implementation to CIRCA.

The Currently Perceived Choice Framework: Clarifying Divergent Perspectives

To better understand why stakeholders reading the same technical report arrive at different conclusions, we conducted a “Currently Perceived Choice (CPC)” analysis. The tool, part of Roger Fisher's Systematic Approach to Influence framework, is designed to clarify the decision the other side thinks you are asking them to make, and illustrate how they currently see the

consequences of saying “yes” or “no”?⁷ It is a way to infer interests by examining how a decisionmaker evaluates their options, rather than by asking only about their stated positions.

In East Haddam, the misalignment among stakeholders is not a reflection of unwillingness but of perspective: each stakeholder believes they are making the most responsible choice based on the information and pressures immediately in front of them. By mapping these perceived choices and the interests driving them, the CPC analysis clarifies the sources of divergence and reveals an important opportunity. CIRCA and all partners share responsibility for creating the conditions where priorities can realign around a common purpose and a coherent vision for resilience—conditions that allow each stakeholder to see a “yes” decision as both feasible and mutually beneficial.

Below we summarize, in simplified form, how each of three groups may currently perceive its choice about advancing the recommended flood mitigation strategy, particularly the removal and relocation of the Tenney Rehearsal Studio and associated channel and culvert work.

It is important to note that a CPC analysis is not intended to represent the full balance of benefits and downsides for the stakeholders, nor to capture the full detail of what was shared in interviews, but rather to highlight how certain consequences of a choice may *feel* more prominent to a decision-maker.

Decision maker: The Goodspeed Foundation	
Question: Shall we today prioritize the implementation of flood mitigation recommendations, including removing and relocating the Tenney Rehearsal Studio, over other pressing needs?	
If “Yes”	If “No”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Must raise or secure many millions of dollars for a new facility that meets Actors’ Equity and design requirements. - Other priorities are deferred. - Divert considerable leadership and staff bandwidth to a multi-year capital and design process. - Make extensive investment with little visible improvement for Opera House attendees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Avoid committing immediately to a costly, complex capital project. + Keep near-term resources available for other pressing needs. + Avoid committing immediately to a costly, complex capital project. + Preserve flexibility to wait for clearer funding sources or a better location. + Keep near-term resources (money, staff attention) available for other pressing needs.

⁷ FISHER, URY & PATTON, *Ask Why Not? Think about their Choice* in GETTING TO YES: NEGOTIATING AGREEMENT WITHOUT GIVING IN (3rd ed. 2011).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extend timeline for recovery from COVID-era losses. - Invite greater scrutiny of Goodspeed’s property holdings and financial decisions + Reduce flood risk to rehearsal operations and adjacent housing. + Strengthen relationship with town and East Haddam community by being seen as a proactive partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Can always revisit the decision later. - Risk of continued flooding disrupting rehearsal operations, requiring emergency workarounds - Community may view Goodspeed as uncooperative.
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This analysis suggests that proceeding with caution makes internal sense from the Goodspeed’s perspective. The current balance of interests demonstrates more perceived downsides to moving forward with the project than perceived benefits.

Decision maker: Town of East Haddam Leadership	
Question: Shall we today commit to prioritizing and investing in the recommended flood mitigation strategy, including studio relocation and culvert/channel upgrades?	
If “Yes”	If “No”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Must navigate pressures from residents who feel left out for fear of changed village character. – Face scrutiny about how fairly benefits and burdens are distributed, especially around Goodspeed. + Reduce flood risk to town roads, infrastructure, and some homes. + Demonstrate visible, proactive leadership on a long-standing community problem. + Leverage CIRCA’s support to achieve flood mitigation goals with smaller degree of effort and investment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Avoids short-term fiscal and administrative burden. + Preserve flexibility to allocate limited funds and staff time to other priorities. + Avoid political risk if parts of the community oppose aspects of the plan or perceive benefits as skewed. + Avoid potentially uncomfortable conversations with the Goodspeed about balance of benefits in current working relationship. - Ongoing risk of damaging floods, road closures, and emergency costs that erode public confidence. - Perception of inaction or inefficiency. - Miss or delay opportunities to leverage state and federal resilience funds tied to this study.

Unlike the analysis for The Goodspeed, the balance of interests for Town leadership seems to lean in favor of taking action, or at least, reflect greater balance.

Decision maker: Downstream Property Owners	
Question: Shall I today support and engage with this flood mitigation project?	
If “Yes”	If “No”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to devote time to meetings, feedback, and possibly property access or easements. - May disagree with approaches or priorities. - Accept short-term disruptions during construction or changes to familiar landscapes. + Have more say in design and risk mitigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Avoid investing time and hope in a process that may stall, as past projects have. + Avoid endorsing a project that feels designed to benefit Goodspeed. + Can always get involved later. - Flood risks persist in community - Decisions may be made without factoring in my concerns

The point of this tool is not to label any party’s reasoning as right or wrong. It is to make visible that:

- Each group hears a **different underlying question** when CIRCA and the town talk about “implementing the report.”
- Each group’s current stance has rational, interest-based reasons behind it, given their experiences and incentives.

For CIRCA and local leaders, the design challenge is to reshape these perceived choices so that a “yes” to implementation looks more attractive and less risky for all three groups. That work includes clarifying what is genuinely negotiable, expanding the set of options on the table, and addressing the narratives that make “no” feel safer or more principled than “yes.”

Finding Three: Many stakeholders perceive conflict as zero-sum, which reinforces an adversarial orientation and impedes progress toward implementation.

Across our interviews and observations, we saw broad agreement on the importance of addressing flood risk in East Haddam. At the same time, many stakeholders interpret conflicts around the Succor Brook project as **zero-sum**—that is, they experience tradeoffs as if any gain for one party must come at another’s expense. In negotiation terms, zero-sum or “distributive” thinking assumes a fixed pool of value: more for you means less for me.⁸ When parties see the situation this way, they naturally protect their own interests and become reluctant to explore options that might benefit others, even when there are opportunities to expand the overall value.

In East Haddam, these zero-sum perceptions are not simply rhetorical; they are rooted in the town’s history and current realities. They also make it harder for stakeholders to see where interests actually overlap and where joint gains are possible. Our interviews suggest three recurring patterns:

1. Stakeholders frame core implementation questions, such as rehearsal studio relocation, as “us vs. them” problems.
2. Distrust and incomplete information about others’ constraints fuel negative attributions and defensive behavior.
3. These dynamics slow or stall creative problem-solving, even when all parties share the goal of reducing flood risk.

Shared Interest in Flood Mitigation Framed as Competing Gains and Losses

Almost every stakeholder we interviewed expressed a clear interest in addressing flood risk. Residents described severe basement flooding and repeated rain-related emergencies. Goodspeed staff recounted more flood incidents in the last decade than in prior memory and shared their anxiety about rehearsal operations and housing during heavy storms. Town officials spoke about damage to roads and infrastructure and the unacceptable risk to the wastewater treatment plant. Despite this shared interest, key issues are often framed as win–lose questions:

- **Rehearsal studio relocation.** For many residents and town officials, removing the rehearsal studio from over the brook is the obvious first step in any serious mitigation

⁸ RICHARD LUECKE, HARVARD BUSINESS ESSENTIALS: NEGOTIATION 2-3 (2003).

effort. One town leader characterized it as “the first constriction” that must be addressed before other measures (such as culvert upgrades) can function fully. For Goodspeed, however, the same decision represents a multi-million-dollar capital commitment with strict Actors’ Equity and design constraints, and a 5–10 year time horizon.⁹ From Goodspeed’s perspective, it risks diverting scarce resources and attention away from their artistic mission and other needs; from some residents’ perspective, delaying studio removal looks like Goodspeed holding the town’s resilience needs hostage to its internal priorities.

- **Scope and sequencing of works.** Some residents favor upstream storage or dam-related solutions, while CIRCA and Kleinfelder have concluded that new dams are not viable under current policy and permitting frameworks and that the most effective immediate interventions lie in the lower reach. Some residents who strongly favor upstream solutions often see the decision to concentrate on lower-reach measures as a loss for their preferred approach, rather than as a partial victory that could still be combined with other efforts over time.

These differing perceptions mean that when one stakeholder hears “let’s move forward with Alternative 2,” another hears “we are being asked to bear disproportionate costs or risks.”

Distrust and Role Confusion Reinforce Adversarial Perceptions

Zero-sum thinking is reinforced by limited trust and incomplete understanding of others’ constraints. Nowhere is that more evident than in perceptions of the Goodspeed. As outlined above, stakeholders across the spectrum recognize it as a cultural and economic anchor that brings visitors, jobs, and a sense of identity to the village. At the same time, they voice ongoing concerns about the number of properties it owns, its limited property tax contributions, the condition of some of its buildings, and the perception that its decisions can overshadow broader community interests. They described the theater as “a blessing” that brings tourists and cultural life, but also as an institution that “monopolizes” the village and has not always followed through on informal commitments to return or sell certain properties. One community member told us, “They are the kings of the village,” and reported that many of her neighbors feel that ordinary residents “don’t matter” as much as institutional actors when decisions are made. One stakeholder noted that “local residents are experiencing the worst of [the flooding] and being completely overlooked.” This sense of unequal standing feeds the perception that any public investment in or around Goodspeed must come at residents’ expense.

Some town representatives also expressed frustration that Goodspeed holds a large share of valuable village property, pays comparatively little in taxes on many of those parcels, and has been slow to commit to a relocation plan for the rehearsal studio. Some worried that the town

⁹ Resilient East Haddam Meeting Notes, June 16, 2025.

might be seen as subsidizing a private institution if mitigation is framed as “for the Goodspeed,” even if the same measures would protect town infrastructure and homes.

Goodspeed leaders brought their own experience to the table. They described decades of providing economic and cultural benefits to the town, sometimes with limited recognition, and a history in which they felt they had to “take care of the Goodspeed” because town processes were slow or unreliable. This leads them to be cautious about making commitments that depend heavily on town action or funding. During one joint meeting, while town and CIRCA representatives pressed to move quickly on design and grant applications, Goodspeed representatives emphasized the financial, regulatory, and logistical hurdles they face and were reluctant to state clear timelines or commitments, which others interpreted as evasiveness.

These mutual perceptions—residents seeing Goodspeed as dominant and under-accountable, town leaders seeing Goodspeed as reluctant and non-transparent, and Goodspeed seeing the town as slow and politically volatile—create a feedback loop. Each party reads the others’ caution as bad faith or self-interest, which pushes them further into a protective, zero-sum stance.

Existing Interactions Reinforce Zero-Sum Patterns

The zero-sum frame is exacerbated by the absence of a forum where the main parties can regularly surface interests, test ideas, and design joint solutions.¹⁰

When CIRCA convened a recent meeting to discuss pursuing grants to move mitigation efforts forward, participants agreed on the importance of addressing flood risk but quickly ran into questions about Goodspeed’s readiness to relocate the rehearsal studio. Each time a proposal was offered to address constraints on moving the rehearsal studio, the Goodspeed explained why it would not work. A recurring propose-reject pattern quickly emerged and was repeated several times—a cycle of unilateral proposal met by rejection, rather than collaborative problem-solving. Once those constraints surfaced, the group lacked a structured way to explore contingent or phased agreements (for example, linking town design work to Goodspeed’s completion of a feasibility study, or connecting studio relocation to specific redevelopment opportunities).

Ideally a multi-stakeholder meeting enables attendees to align interests, correct misunderstandings, think flexibly, and develop creative options. That was not the case here. And in the absence of an ongoing forum, collaborative problem-solving is even less likely to occur. In that vacuum, conversations occur in parallel—within Goodspeed, within town government, among residents. This siloing makes it easier for each group to default to simple stories about

¹⁰ See Finding One, supra at 9-10.

others' motives and to treat difficult issues as zero-sum impasses rather than as design challenges that might admit value-creating solutions.

Agreement on Goals, Misalignment on Path and Incentives

Importantly, our interviews did not reveal a lack of consensus on **ends**. Almost everyone we spoke with wants to see flooding reduced, the village protected, and East Haddam remain a vibrant, livable community. Where stakeholders diverge is on **means, timing, and perceived fairness**. For example:

- A downstream homeowner who has endured multiple basement floods and felt dismissed by past town responses understandably prioritizes near-term relief and visible action, wary of any solution that appears to prioritize Goodspeed's needs or long-term redevelopment over immediate risk to their neighborhood.
- Goodspeed leaders responsible for operations and finances must steward a complex institution through demanding artistic schedules, union rules, and tight budgets. From that vantage point, committing now to a major capital project with uncertain funding and political support may feel risky and potentially destabilizing.
- Town officials must balance flood mitigation against other obligations, manage political risk, and consider the optics of any arrangement that appears to favor one stakeholder over others.

Each actor's stance makes sense given their vantage point, but when these positions remain unexamined and unlinked, they appear to be simple opposition: Goodspeed "refuses" to move, residents "block" redevelopment, the town "drags its feet," CIRCA "ignores" upstream concerns. This is the essence of the zero-sum frame.

As Fisher and Ury remind us, "behind opposed positions lie shared and compatible interests."¹¹ In East Haddam, the shared interest in a safer, more resilient village is clear. However, the current pattern of interaction and the absence of a dedicated, problem-solving forum make it hard for stakeholders to see and build on that common ground. Without an intentional shift toward value-creating approaches and structures that support them, these zero-sum perceptions will continue to slow or derail efforts to translate Resilient East Haddam's technical recommendations into on-the-ground change.

¹¹ FISHER, URY & PATTON, GETTING TO YES: NEGOTIATING AGREEMENT WITHOUT GIVING IN, 42 (3rd ed. 2011). Available at: <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=72f8d082-f788-3a15-9503-a4227d9d30b3> (Accessed: 25 November 2025).

Recommendations

1. Applying an adaptive frame and adopting a consensus-building approach may enhance CIRCA’s implementation efforts.

2. CIRCA can increase its effectiveness by helping communities create new narratives that enhance collaboration and support for long-term resilience initiatives

3. Offering stakeholders a value-creating frame on conflict could enhance CIRCA’s effectiveness.

Recommendation One: Applying an adaptive frame and adopting a consensus-building approach may enhance CIRCA’s implementation efforts.

Phase III of *Resilient Connecticut* has two goals: (1) developing scientifically informed adaptation strategies and designs, and (2) helping implement these strategies. In East Haddam, CIRCA and Kleinfelder have clearly achieved the first goal. Stakeholders consistently praised the quality of the analysis and the clarity of the engineering alternatives. The second goal—supporting implementation—has proved more difficult.

One way to understand this difficulty is through Ronald Heifetz’s distinction between **technical problems** and **adaptive challenges**.¹² Technical problems, even if complex, have known or knowable solutions that experts can address with their existing tools “with expertise, process, and control.”¹³ Adaptive challenges, by contrast, are “entangled with beliefs, loyalties, habits, and identities.”¹⁴ They require people to “change how they see, not just what they do.”¹⁵

¹² See generally, Ronald A. Heifetz & Marty Linsky, *A Survival Guide for Leaders*, Harvard Business Magazine (June 2002).

¹³ Sheril Matthews, *Technical Problems vs Adaptive Challenges*, Leading Sapiens (Aug. 2 2025), <https://www.leading-sapiens.com/technical-problems-vs-adaptive-challenges>.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.*

The following chart illustrates some of the differences between framing an issue as a technical problem versus an adaptive challenge:

Technical Problems	Adaptive Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear problem • Tangible and clear solution • Delegable to experts • Perception that problem is easy to fix and solution is desirable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disputed or ambiguous challenge • Opaque and uncertain solutions • Needs to be addressed by community • Perception that problem is complex and solution is uncomfortable.

Based off of materials created by Sheril Matthews, *Technical Problems vs Adaptive Challenges*, Leading Sapiens (Aug. 2 2025), <https://www.leadingapiens.com/technical-problems-vs-adaptive-challenges>.

In East Haddam, the flood problem along Succor Brook is partly technical (flows, channel capacity, culvert sizing), but implementation is largely adaptive: it involves long-standing narratives about town governance, Goodspeed’s role, redevelopment history, and fairness to downstream residents.

Our findings suggest that CIRCA now faces a strategic choice:

1. Continue to play a primarily **technical advisory role**, while supporting others to take on the adaptive work; or
2. **Explicitly adopt an adaptive, consensus-building frame** for Phase III, incorporating process design and facilitation into CIRCA’s implementation support.

A. Option One: Maintain a primarily technical advisory role, but help identify an implementation forum

Under option one, CIRCA’s role in facilitating implementation is more limited. It can address adaptive challenges by supporting community efforts at consensus-building or seeking help from third-party consultants. This allows CIRCA to focus on technical work and high-level guidance, while helping East Haddam identify a local body to take responsibility for the adaptive work. In this model, CIRCA could:

- Encourage the **Redevelopment Agency** or another town body to serve as the primary “home” for ongoing Succor Brook implementation discussions, given the significant overlap between flood mitigation solutions and village redevelopment conversations.
- Support that body by sharing the Kleinfelder report, flood modeling outputs, and funding insights, and by attending key meetings on request.

Several interviewees, including CIRCA staff, noted that moving forward with Succor Brook will require a broader conversation about the town’s development, not just a stand-alone engineering project. The Redevelopment Agency is already convening charrettes and public workshops on the future of the village center. However, we did not interview the Agency directly and cannot

know how willing or able it is to take on this added role. If the Agency is not the right fit, CIRCA can still encourage the creation of a **dedicated implementation council** or sub-committee that includes town officials, Goodspeed, downstream residents, and other key actors, with a clear charge to guide implementation using the existing technical work as a foundation.

In this option, CIRCA’s adaptive role is lighter: it primarily consists of helping the town name a forum, clarify roles, set agendas, and establish procedures to keep the project on a well-defined timeline, while connecting that forum with the technical information and funding pathways that CIRCA controls or understands best.

B. Option Two: Apply an adaptive, consensus-building framework within Phase III

Under option two, CIRCA would more explicitly integrate a **consensus-building approach** into its Phase III methodology. Although such an approach is often most powerful when introduced early, our experts emphasized that it can still be helpful at this stage in East Haddam. Even if CIRCA does not wish to lead the entire process, adopting this lens will allow it to better support local conveners.

We drew on conversations with experts Elizabeth Cooper¹⁶ of the Consensus Building Institute and Dr. Scott McCreary¹⁷ of CONCUR Inc. as well as on the Consensus Building Handbook to identify five phases that CIRCA can help operationalize in East Haddam to move stakeholders towards agreement:¹⁸

- (1) Convening**
- (2) Clarifying responsibilities,**
- (3) Deliberating,**
- (4) Deciding and**
- (5) Implementing.**¹⁹

Per the Consensus Building Handbook, “[t]he key problems for [diverse stakeholders] are organizational. Selecting the relevant stakeholders, finding individuals who can represent those interests effectively, getting agreement on ground rules and an agenda, and securing funding are particularly difficult when the participants have no shared history and may have few, if any,

¹⁶ See Elizabeth Cooper – Senior Mediator, Consensus Building Institute, <https://www.cbi.org/about/bio/elizabeth-cooper/>.

¹⁷ See Concur Team, Concur Inc., <https://www.concurinc.com/our-staff/>.

¹⁸ See generally The Consensus Building Institute, *THE CONSENSUS BUILDING HANDBOOK: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO REACHING AGREEMENT*, (Lawrence Susskind, Sarah McKearman, & Jennifer Thomas-Larmer eds., SAGE Publications, 1999).

¹⁹ Lawrence Susskind, *An Alternative to Robert’s Rules of Order for Groups, Organizations, and Ad Hoc Assemblies That Want to Operate By Consensus*, in *THE CONSENSUS BUILDING HANDBOOK: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO REACHING AGREEMENT* 20-35 (Lawrence Susskind, Sarah McKearman, & Jennifer Thomas-Larmer eds., SAGE Publications 1999).

interests in common.”²⁰ In the case of East Haddam, many parties do share a history and common interests, but the process has lacked a clear organizational framework to bring these stakeholders together effectively. These steps can offer a solution to the adaptive challenges communities face when implementing flood mitigation solutions.

Below we briefly describe each phase and connect it to what we observed in East Haddam.

Convening

A consensus-building effort begins when someone identifies a need and takes responsibility for bringing the right people together. In East Haddam, CIRCA acted as the initial convener by selecting the Succor Brook corridor as a Phase III project and establishing the Citizen Technical Advisory Committee (CTAC) and public workshops. That structure helped generate a strong technical product, but it left some important adaptive gaps.

Our experts emphasized that early convening should include a **conflict or situation assessment**: systematic interviews with all key stakeholder categories to understand interests, concerns, and perceived barriers *ideally before finalizing the scope or designing the engagement process*. In future projects, identifying essential and possible participants and interviewing them early about their interests and concerns can help CIRCA assess whether a project is suitable for consensus-based implementation.²¹

Another critical piece of convening is identifying the appropriate representatives for all stakeholders involved in the project.²² Again, the key is to ensure that every interested party is represented. Per Dr. McCreary, adequate and equal representation helps build consensus and correct for any power imbalances.²³ Dedicating time during the convening phase to identify missing actors and select representatives can pay dividends down the road when seeking implementation.

In East Haddam:

- The CTAC included town officials, community leaders and Goodspeed representatives, but **may have benefitted from greater representation** of downstream property owners, small business owners outside of Goodspeed, and less prominent community members who also experience flooding.
- Public meetings were well attended initially, but some of the most affected residents reported that they and their neighbors were “not made aware” of later sessions, and CIRCA staff noted that “most property/homeowners are unaware of the project.”

²⁰ *Id.* at 20

²¹ *See id.* at 21.

²² Susskind, *supra* note 19, at 22.

²³ McCreary et al., *Applying a Mediated Negotiation Framework to Integrated Coastal Zone Management*, 29 *Coastal Mgmt.* 189 (2001).

- While public meetings allowed Kleinfelder and CIRCA to hear some adaptive issues and partially address them, they did not facilitate a sense of **inclusion and ownership** necessary to streamline implementation after the technical process.²⁴

Going forward, whether CIRCA or a local entity leads the next phase, convening should:

- **Identify “all parties** with legal standing in, veto power over, or a significant opportunity to be affected by” any implemented solution,²⁵ including downstream owners and non-Goodspeed businesses.
- Invite them in ways that **reduce barriers to participation**—through personal outreach, flexible meeting times, accessible locations, and, where possible, modest supports such as childcare or refreshments. Our experts stressed that while virtual meetings can help with access, in-person sessions are especially important for building trust in small communities.

Clarifying Responsibilities

Many of the frustrations we heard in East Haddam stem from confusion over **who is responsible for what** in the implementation phase. Stakeholders described the East Haddam Phase III project positively. They appreciated CIRCA and Kleinfelder’s process and professionalism and credited engagement by prominent community leaders as a driving force behind engagement. However, as discussed above, there is uncertainty about who should lead future discussions, where they should take place, and when they should occur. Stakeholders told us they now do not know:

- **Who convenes** the next round of discussions about funding and design,
- **Where** those discussions will take place (e.g., in town boards, Redevelopment Agency meetings, ad hoc groups), or
- **When** they are expected to participate or make decisions.

Consensus-building guidance suggests creating an **executive or steering committee** early on, with a clear mandate to shepherd the project through to implementation.²⁶ In East Haddam, that role has been partially filled by individual champions and by CIRCA’s continued engagement rather than by a multi-party body.

CIRCA can help by:

- Working with the town to establish a small **implementation council** that includes: town leadership, Goodspeed, at least one downstream property owner, and potentially a representative from the Redevelopment Agency.

²⁴ *Id.* at 191.

²⁵ *Id.* at 189 (italics added).

²⁶ Susskind, *supra* note 19, at 24.

- Clarifying that this council, not CIRCA alone, is responsible for convening discussions about tradeoffs, sequencing, and funding, using the technical report as a starting point.

Deliberating

Deliberation is the heart of building consensus. It requires stakeholders to listen actively, explain their reasoning, and work together to invent options for mutual gain before committing to specific choices.²⁷ Stakeholders should place “a premium on reason-giving and explanation.”²⁸ In East Haddam, residents and officials praised CIRCA and Kleinfelder for clear presentations and technical responsiveness, but described some interactions—particularly around Goodspeed’s role and scope-of-study questions—as rushed or dismissive.

Consensus-building practice suggests several habits of effective deliberation that CIRCA can encourage in future meetings:

1. Active Listening

“The need for listening is obvious, yet it is difficult to listen well, especially under [stress].”²⁹ Active listening includes paraphrasing, asking questions, and acknowledging.³⁰ Interviewees praised CIRCA and Kleinfelder for their expert guidance and feedback. However, when it came to interactions with town officials, some interviewees felt that their viewpoints and concerns about the East Haddam project had not been acknowledged. According to Roger Fisher, “[u]nless you acknowledge what they are saying and demonstrate that you understand them, they may believe you have not heard them. When you then try to explain a different point of view, they will suppose that you still have not grasped what they mean.”³¹ Instead of quickly pushing back on adverse opinions, we recommend inviting all participants to build a practice of inquiring more and repeating concerns back to ensure understanding. This process allows those providing input to feel heard even if their viewpoints are not ultimately adopted. In the world of resilience planning, incorporating these techniques into the deliberation process can strengthen confidence in the process and collaboration.

2. Separating inventing from committing

A deliberative process seeks to invent options for mutual gain.³² Stakeholders should be encouraged to engage “in cooperative behaviors that ‘make the pie larger’ before giving in to competitive pressures ‘to get the most for one’s self.’”³³ In East Haddam, ideas such as dams or

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.* at 27.

²⁹ ROGER FISHER, WILLIAM URY & BRUCE PATTON, *GETTING TO YES: NEGOTIATING AGREEMENT WITHOUT GIVING IN*, 36 (3d ed. 2011).

³⁰ PON Staff, *Listening Skills for Maximum Success*, PROGRAM ON NEGOTIATION AT HARVARD LAW SCHOOL (Sept. 15, 2025), <https://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/negotiation-skills-daily/listening-skills-for-maximum-success/>.

³¹ Fisher, *supra* note 29, at 37.

³² Susskind, *supra* note 19, at 28.

³³ *Id.*

upstream measures were often quickly labeled non-viable. Doing the technical screening is necessary, but it can be sequenced after a round of broader option-generation that honors contributors' intent.

Both of our experts indicated that encouraging small wins for stakeholders could be beneficial in the East Haddam project when brainstorming. Ms. Cooper provided an example of a municipality that agreed to add long-requested garbage cans to a local park before they began a public project that would significantly impact the community. Providing small wins can offset narratives that a project is one-sided and encourage further brainstorming between stakeholders. To create more options and implement small wins, one must encourage value creation.

3. Consider a one-text procedure³⁴

For complex, multi-party settings, Roger Fisher's "one-text" method can simplify negotiations.³⁵ The Harvard Law School Negotiation Workshop teaches that the parties should select a neutral party to facilitate the process in six steps:

One-Text Procedure

1. The facilitator must be explicit about the process. The facilitator surveys the interests and generates a draft based on those interests. The facilitator must be clear that no one will be asked to commit to the draft or to make concessions.
2. The facilitator explores each party's interests and concerns. They ask, "Why is that good for you?" or "What do you like about that solution?"
3. The facilitator writes the first draft. The draft should outline the key issues and present one option that meets the interests of all parties.
4. The facilitator discusses the draft with each party. The facilitator should not seek commitments and should remind stakeholders that no one is required to agree to the draft. They ask, "What would be wrong with this?" and listen to the interests behind the criticisms.
5. The facilitator should write draft #2, repeat the process, and continue writing drafts.
6. Finally, once the facilitator believes they have written the best agreement possible, they freeze the text. Finally, they ask the parties to either accept or reject the draft. If rejected, the facilitator leaves the process.

Per Roger Fisher, the one-text process "is almost essential for large multilateral negotiations."³⁶ The process can allow "multiple parties...to simplify the process of decision-making without diminishing the quality of the outcome."³⁷ Utilizing the one-text process during the technical development phase may make sense for Phase III-type projects. CIRCA may also be well positioned to act as a facilitator. Alternatively, CIRCA can help towns and communities identify

³⁴ *Id.* at 27-32.

³⁵ Fisher, *supra* note 29, at 114-18.

³⁶ *Id.* at 118.

³⁷ *Id.*

a facilitator to take on the neutral role. The one-text process may be especially advisable in East Haddam to balance concerns about power imbalances and to resolve long-standing challenges of value creation within the community.

Deciding on and Implementing Agreements

In consensus-building, decision rules aim to maximize joint gains while ensuring that each party's core concerns are reasonably addressed. The goal is not automatic unanimity, but “overwhelming support” and thoughtful efforts to satisfy holdouts where possible.³⁸

For East Haddam, this could mean:

- Supporting the implementation council to negotiate a draft package of decisions (e.g., a sequenced plan for implementation, with contingencies linked to funding and Goodspeed's feasibility study).
- Reaching back to constituencies—town boards, Goodspeed's trustees, downstream owners—for feedback and ratification, rather than treating public sessions as one-off referenda.

CIRCA's role here can be to:

- Provide technical clarity about what different options mean in practice, and
- Support local facilitators in structuring decision-making so that stakeholders see where and how their input affects the outcome.

Finally, consensus-based agreements require **follow-through**. Representatives must secure ratification from their organizations, and the group must monitor progress, address new problems, and adapt as conditions change.³⁹

In East Haddam, stakeholders noted that previous cooperative efforts between the town and Goodspeed (for example, on youth programs and local hiring) began with enthusiasm but lost momentum over time.

To avoid similar drift, we recommend that:

- The implementation council continue to meet at regular intervals through at least the design and early construction phases.
- CIRCA support the town in developing simple, shared **tracking tools** (e.g., a public “implementation dashboard” or periodic joint updates) that show where commitments stand—feasibility studies, design funding, grant applications, construction milestones, and any homeowner-specific measures.

³⁸ Susskind et al., *supra* note 21, at 32-33.

³⁹ *Id.* at 34.

Even as CIRCA’s formal Phase III engagement winds down, adopting this adaptive, consensus-building frame—and helping East Haddam put basic elements of it in place—will increase the likelihood that the Resilient East Haddam technical work becomes an implemented, community-owned reality rather than another well-regarded plan that stalls at the starting line.

Recommendation Two: CIRCA can increase its effectiveness by helping communities create new narratives that enhance collaboration and support for long-term resilience initiatives.

Finding Two shows that stakeholders do not experience The Resilient East Haddam Final Report as a neutral, stand-alone technical exercise. They interpret CIRCA’s recommendations through decades of accumulated narratives about East Haddam’s history, governance patterns, preservation priorities, perceived influence of the Goodspeed, and fairness to residents. These narratives strongly influence trust, willingness to participate, and perceived legitimacy. Technical solutions alone cannot change those stories.

CIRCA can increase its effectiveness by supporting East Haddam in **developing new, shared narratives** rooted in transparent communication and collective leadership that:

- Connect flood mitigation to a broader, coherent vision for the village,
- Address past tensions and fairness concerns directly, and
- Clarify the roles and contributions of each major actor.

The goal is not to “spin” the project, but to help the town articulate a story about resilience is both true to its history and capable of attracting sustained, shared commitment.

Why a Shared Vision is Necessary

Our interviews revealed that many stakeholders see the town’s planning landscape as fragmented. At the same time that CIRCA and Kleinfelder have been working on Succor Brook, residents mentioned multiple other town initiatives in various stages of completion (including brownfield remediation, the swing bridge restoration, creation of a tax-increment financing district, and a 25-year master planning process for the village center). Some residents struggle to locate the Succor Brook project within a coherent town strategy.

Meanwhile, long-standing narratives described in Finding Two continue to shape reactions to flood mitigation proposals—regardless of scientific merit. Against this backdrop, even well-designed flood mitigation proposals are heard through questions such as: “Is this really for the whole town, or just for Goodspeed?”, “Will this change what our village feels like?”, and “Will this be another plan that doesn’t go anywhere?”

At the same time, there are important **counter-narratives of collaboration**. The 1998 East Haddam–Goodspeed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) acknowledged that the town’s economic health and Goodspeed’s success are closely linked and committed both parties to coordinated development.⁴⁰ Recent public communications from the Redevelopment Agency, such as an open letter thanking residents for their engagement and inviting ongoing input on village planning, show that town leaders are capable of the transparent, relationship-building outreach residents say they want.⁴¹

These mixed stories—frustration and appreciation, skepticism and hope—are the raw material for a new, more integrated narrative that can support long-term resilience.

Revisit the historic MOU as a touchstone for Renewed Collaboration

The 1998 MOU between the town and Goodspeed remains one of the few formal documents that explicitly memorializes a shared commitment to redevelopment and long-term partnership, with shared stakes in East Haddam’s success.

CIRCA can recommend the town and Goodspeed:

- Revisit the MOU together as a shared reference point for values, expectations, and partnership norms.
- Re-read what they agreed to in the past about joint development and mutual benefit,
- Discuss which elements still feel accurate and which need updating in light of climate risk and today’s economic and political realities, and
- Use it as a historical anchor for a new, more comprehensive partnership agreement that also reflects flood resilience and downstream impacts.
- Link any renewed agreement to the work of the shared forum described above, so that commitments around communication, property planning, and joint advocacy are not merely aspirational but tied to specific processes and timelines.

CIRCA can provide a short, neutral memo summarizing how the original MOU aligns with current resilience goals and where it leaves gaps, as a starting point for local discussions. values, expectations, and partnership norms. This may help reduce perceived power asymmetries, reconnect to previously agreed-upon commitments, and frame the current project as part of a longer collaborative effort.

⁴⁰ While the MOU has supported progress over time, very few stakeholders were aware of its existence. Most would likely agree that it no longer reflects current governance realities or community expectations. Still, it remains a strong foundation that can be revisited and operationalized to anchor a collective vision moving forward.

⁴¹ William DiCristofaro, *Thank You, East Haddam – Let’s Keep the Conversation Going*, EAST HADDAM NEWS, November 6, 2025

Facilitate the Development of a Shared Narrative That Integrates Technical Goals with Community Priorities

CIRCA’s expertise in resilience communication positions it well to support, not dictate, the articulation of a shared narrative. In line with Finding Two, technical data alone will not move stakeholders toward alignment if their underlying narratives about fairness, institutional history, and community identity remain unaddressed. CIRCA can help stakeholders co-develop a narrative that:

- connects flood mitigation to broader redevelopment aspirations;
- affirms commitments to rural character and historic preservation;
- clarifies that project benefits extend across the community;
- articulates how concerns of downstream residents and other stakeholders are being actively integrated; and
- creates coherence between technical objectives and community values.

Using the Five Core Concerns to Align Technical Goals with Community Narratives

Technical stories—about culvert capacity, return periods, and benefit–cost ratios—do not move people if they ignore the human concerns that drive trust and resistance. The **Five Core Concerns** framework (Appreciation, Affiliation, Autonomy, Status, and Role) offers a helpful lens for designing a shared narrative that speaks to those needs.⁴² These concerns—Appreciation, Affiliation, Autonomy, Status, and Role—capture the underlying human needs that influence how people make sense of information, assess trust, and respond to proposed changes.

In East Haddam, where histories of preservation, governance, and institutional influence shape how stakeholders hear and react to technical guidance, these concerns help explain persistent points of friction and skepticism. Applying this framework clarifies how each group’s responses are rooted not in opposition, but in deeply held needs for recognition, connection, agency, and clarity. This creates an opportunity for CIRCA to support a shared narrative that addresses these concerns directly and fosters more durable alignment across the community.

Core Concern	How It Shows Up in East Haddam (Based on Findings)	Implications for Shared-Narrative Work	Suggested CIRCA Approaches
Appreciation (People need their perspectives to be acknowledged and taken seriously.)	Stakeholders feel past decisions minimized their experiences— e.g., downstream residents’ flood risks,	Without explicit acknowledgment of historical tensions, fairness concerns, and uneven impacts,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate historical context and lived experience into the narrative. • Begin workshops by

⁴² ROGER FISHER & DANIEL SHAPIRO, BEYOND REASON: USING EMOTIONS AS YOU NEGOTIATE (2006).

	Town leaders' governance constraints, Goodspeed's operational realities, and community concerns about rural character. These unacknowledged histories shape skepticism toward new technical recommendations.	any technical narrative feels incomplete or dismissive.	surfacing and validating what each group values. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize that concerns (flooding, preservation, identity, equity) are recognized and built into the project.
Affiliation (People need to feel connected and on the same "team.")	Long-standing "Town vs. Goodspeed," upstream vs. downstream, and agency vs. community divides weaken trust and communication. Stakeholders feel they are operating in separate processes rather than a collective one.	A shared narrative must create a sense of belonging that bridges institutional and community divides, positioning stakeholders as partners—not adversaries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use cross-stakeholder workshops to co-author parts of the narrative. • Frame flood mitigation as a shared community good rather than a benefit to one party. • Highlight interdependence ("resilience works only if all parts of town work together").
Autonomy (People need to feel they have control and agency over outcomes.)	Residents and local officials are wary of external or top-down solutions. CIRCA is perceived by some as a powerful expert institution that could overshadow local decision-making.	If stakeholders perceive CIRCA as driving the narrative, efforts will be resisted. The narrative must affirm community agency and local leadership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present narrative options rather than a prescribed storyline. • Facilitate processes that let stakeholders define values, priorities, and language. • Make clear where local choice determines the path forward.
Status (People need their standing, expertise, and contributions to be respected.)	Town committees, the Redevelopment Agency, the Goodspeed, and long-time residents each believe they	Any narrative must demonstrate respect for each group's expertise, institutional knowledge, historic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight the unique leadership roles each group plays (e.g., preservation, economic development, flood

	<p>have legitimate authority and expertise—historical, cultural, technical, or operational.</p> <p>Perceived status threats fuel defensiveness or disengagement.</p>	<p>stewardship, and community leadership alongside analysis of technical data.</p>	<p>knowledge).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use narrative language that elevates local expertise and institutional memory. • Make clear that CIRCA’s role is supportive rather than authoritative.
<p>Role (People need to understand and feel good about their purpose in the process.)</p>	<p>Confusion about who is supposed to do what fuels mistrust and finger-pointing. Without clarity, stakeholders default to old narratives about influence or mistrust.</p>	<p>The shared narrative must explain—not just imply—the purpose and responsibilities of each actor in advancing resilience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-create a visual or short text defining each stakeholder’s role in both decision-making and implementation. (e.g., “An Implementation Council or Town Leadership convenes; Goodspeed brings building and operational expertise; residents bring local impact knowledge; CIRCA brings technical and funding support.”) • In workshops, ask groups to articulate the role they believe they should play. • Reinforce that resilience is a joint project requiring complementary contributions.

CIRCA can help operationalize this by:

- **Facilitating one or more narrative workshops** with representatives of the main groups, where participants:
 - Share short stories about what East Haddam means to them and what they fear and hope for,
 - Identify key phrases or images that feel true and motivating, and
 - Draft a short “story of our village’s resilient future” that can be used across projects and communications.
- **Providing framing language options** while allowing stakeholders to wordsmith and own the final narrative so it reflects their voice rather than CIRCA’s.

Support Predictable, Transparent Communication Processes

Finally, stakeholders repeatedly pointed to **unpredictable or opaque communication** as a central driver of mistrust. They praised recent efforts—such as the Redevelopment Agency chair’s public thank-you letter and explanatory articles about resilience and redevelopment—but emphasized that such communication is still sporadic.

While CIRCA cannot restructure municipal processes, it can recommend and help design predictable communication practices that the town and its partners could adopt, such as:

- A **regular communication cadence** (for example, a short monthly “Village Resilience & Redevelopment Update”) issued jointly by the town and Redevelopment Agency, highlighting:
 - Key decisions made,
 - What is being studied or designed now, and
 - How and when residents can give input.
- **Shared documentation tools**, to prevent knowledge loss (especially during staff turnover); and
- **Inclusive mechanisms** to ensure downstream residents and historically underrepresented voices are engaged early and consistently by receiving direct notices of relevant meetings and updates, not just relying on general postings.

CIRCA’s role here is to offer models and templates—for example, sample update formats or simple visual timelines of the implementation path—not to manage communication itself. By doing so, it can help East Haddam embed the emerging shared narrative in concrete, repeatable practices that, over time, replace older stories of “no one tells us anything” with a more constructive expectation of transparency and collaboration.

Integrating the Target Future Choice (TFC) Framework

To deepen this analysis, this section incorporates the Target Future Choice (TFC) Framework, which clarifies how each stakeholder’s decision-making can shift when supported by CIRCA’s recommended processes. Whereas the Currently Perceived Choice (CPC) reflects how stakeholders currently interpret the project based on history, mistrust, and narrative gaps, the TFC illustrates the reframed, longer-term, partnership-oriented decisions that become possible when transparent processes, shared narratives, and collaborative structures are in place. Importantly, the guiding question at the top of each TFC chart represents the core shift we recommend: the move from “How do we protect ourselves within a fragmented process?” to “How do we strengthen resilience through shared leadership, predictable communication, and aligned priorities?” By applying this framework to Goodspeed, the Town, and Other Members, CIRCA can articulate how its recommendations—not directives, but facilitative supports—help stakeholders move from short-term caution to long-term resilience, shared responsibility, and cross-stakeholder alignment.

Notably, the Target Future Choice tables below leave the precise contours of the plan itself (“the X-Plan”) undefined, as it is the definition of the plan that requires group engagement.⁴³ However, it seeks to articulate what factors would motivate each stakeholder to support a shared implementation effort with enthusiasm.

Decision maker: The Goodspeed Foundation	
Question: Should Goodspeed adopt the X-Plan, proactively committing to a shared flood mitigation strategy—including collaborating through the Redevelopment Agency, coordinating funding for the relocation of Tenney Studio, and aligning its property management decisions with a renewed MOU-based partnership?	
If “Yes”	If “No”

⁴³ ROGER FISHER, INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT FOR BEGINNERS (1969).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Protects the long-term operability and safety of key rehearsal and production assets. + Enhances profitability and sustainability. + Signals Goodspeed’s commitment to equitable partnership and responsible land stewardship, strengthening community trust. + Positions the organization favorably for future resilience grants, philanthropic partnerships, and state-level support. + Reduces conflict with residents and town leadership by aligning decisions within an agreed collaborative framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Exposure to repeated flood disruptions and rising long-term operational costs. - Reinforces existing narratives that Goodspeed operates independently of community needs. – May face reputational and relational setbacks that weaken future negotiating power or funding prospects. – Maintains status quo tensions, limiting opportunities for coordinated redevelopment.
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<p>Decision maker: Town of East Haddam Leadership</p>	
<p>Question: Should the Town actively champion the X-Plan, which creates a shared, transparent flood mitigation process, embodies effective coordination, reaffirms commitments in the MOU, and ensures consistent communication with residents and Goodspeed?</p>	
<p>If “Yes”</p>	<p>If “No”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Demonstrates strong, responsive governance that addresses long-standing communication and trust gaps. + Reduces long-term infrastructure and property risks, lowering future municipal costs and emergency obligations. + Strengthens the Town’s partnership with Goodspeed and residents through predictable, transparent processes. + Positions East Haddam as a leader in regional resilience planning, improving its standing for future funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Town leadership continues to face narratives of inconsistent communication and reactive decision-making. – Flood impacts persist, creating economic, safety, and political liabilities. –Missed opportunity to build trust and modernize a decades-old collaborative structure. – Town appears disengaged from long-term resilience planning and redevelopment strategy.
<p>Decision maker: Downstream Property Owners</p>	
<p>Question: Should we actively support the X-Plan—a coordinated, transparent flood mitigation effort—by engaging in planning sessions, providing input to the Redevelopment Agency, and aligning advocacy with the long-term resilience strategy?</p>	
<p>If “Yes”</p>	<p>If “No”</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Our input is valued and included. + Greater sense of community cohesion + Property values increase + strengthened relationships with both Town leadership and Goodspeed. + Ensures that preservation priorities and rural character concerns are embedded in long-term planning. + Contributes to shared accountability for resilience, reducing conflict and increasing project legitimacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Residents remain vulnerable to recurring flooding and limited influence over future decisions. – Perceived disconnect between residents, Town, and Goodspeed persists. – Decision-making may continue without their perspective, increasing dissatisfaction or resistance later. – Stakeholders lose leverage to shape outcomes aligned with their priorities.
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Together, these TFC tables demonstrate that when East Haddam adopts a shared-leadership structure, renews the MOU, and uses the Redevelopment Agency to coordinate communication, stakeholders gain access to better choices—ones that emphasize long-term resilience, reduced conflict, and more stable partnerships. The reframed decisions shift narratives away from fragmentation and mistrust toward collective action, predictable processes, and shared responsibility for the town’s future.

Recommendation Three: Offering stakeholders a value-creating frame on conflict could enhance CIRCA’s effectiveness.

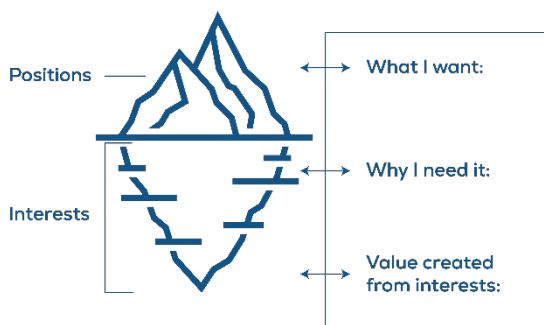
Finding Three suggests that zero-sum perceptions and distrust are not side issues in East Haddam; they sit at the heart of why an otherwise strong technical plan has not yet translated into implementation. As many stakeholders see it, if Goodspeed gains, residents lose; if the town helps Goodspeed, it will be criticized; if residents push for upstream solutions, the lower-reach work is seen as less legitimate. CIRCA can increase its effectiveness by helping stakeholders reframe conflict from “who gains and who loses” to “how do we design solutions that leave all of us better off than where we are now.” This requires both **how conflicts are framed** in joint conversations and **who is invited into those conversations, and when**.

We recommend that CIRCA support East Haddam in three concrete ways:

- A. **Introduce and apply an explicit value-creating negotiation frame.**
- B. **Use interest maps and the “accidental adversaries” model to reset the town–Goodspeed relationship.**
- C. **Engage downstream property owners as partners in defining what a “fair” solution looks like.**

A. Introduce and apply a value-creating negotiation frame

In the current dynamic, core choices—especially relocation of the Tenney Rehearsal Studio—are often cast as win–lose decisions. To move beyond this pattern, CIRCA can introduce a simple, interest-based framework in its next phase of support. As Roger Fisher and William Ury explain in *Getting to Yes* and as Mary Parker Follett observed decades earlier,⁴⁴ what parties say they want—their **positions**—is often just the visible tip of a much larger structure. Beneath the surface lie their **interests**: the needs, hopes, fears, and constraints that give rise to those positions.



In East Haddam, positions might sound like:

- “We can’t commit to moving the rehearsal studio until funding and a feasible site are guaranteed,”
- “The town cannot give up the municipal lot,” or
- “The project should focus upstream instead of downstream.”

If we focus only on these surface positions, conflict can appear intractable. While negotiations often get stuck at the level of positions, when the conversation shifts to interests, it becomes much easier to generate joint solutions. The iceberg visual is a reminder to look below the waterline: to ask “Why?” and “Why not?” and to identify the underlying interests, such as safety from flooding, operational continuity, preservation of village character, fiscal responsibility, and political legitimacy. As Follett emphasized, the task is not merely to split the difference between

⁴⁴ MARY PARKER FOLLETT, *DYNAMIC ADMINISTRATION: THE COLLECTED PAPERS OF MARY PARKER FOLLETT* (2013).

positions, but to “reintegrate” interests—to seek solutions that meet as many of the real needs as possible.⁴⁵

As outlined in Finding Three, stakeholders currently experience key issues—especially relocation of the Tenney Rehearsal Studio, the scope of mitigation efforts, and the sequencing of investments—as zero-sum choices. Residents worry that public money and disruption will primarily serve Goodspeed. Town leaders worry that supporting studio relocation will be seen as subsidizing a private institution. Goodspeed worries that committing to a major capital project with uncertain funding and political support could destabilize its operations.

CIRCA can help by explicitly naming these perceptions and then inviting parties to treat them as **joint design challenges**:

- In joint meetings and written materials, describe disputes not as “whether” the town should help Goodspeed or “whether” Goodspeed should sacrifice for the town, but as **“how to share costs, risks, and benefits fairly while reducing flood risk for everyone.”**
- Acknowledge, without defensiveness, that each party faces **real constraints**—Goodspeed’s capital and union requirements, the town’s fiscal and political limits, residents’ lived flooding impacts and distrust based on prior experiences.
- Use the **currently perceived choice** analysis (from Finding Two) as an internal planning tool: ask, “What choice does each party think they are being asked to make, and how do they understand the consequences of saying ‘yes’ and ‘no’?” Then design conversations that broaden each actor’s perceived options and make a “yes” look more attractive and less risky.

In practice, this means that in future multi-party meetings, CIRCA and the town should spend less time asking, “Will this option work for you?” and more time asking, “What would it take for Alternative 2 (or a variant) to work for you?” and “What would we need to add, remove, or sequence differently to make this package acceptable across the board?”

- **Capitalize on differences.**
Parties value different things and face different constraints. For example, Goodspeed values rehearsal quality and operational continuity, the town values tax base and infrastructure reliability, and residents value near-term flood relief and preservation of village character. These differences are not just obstacles; they are levers for “logrolling”—trading on issues that one party values more than another (e.g., sharing property or programming benefits in exchange for town support on design and funding).

⁴⁵ *Id.*

- **Ask “Why?” and “Why not?” explicitly.**
CIRCA and the town can model curiosity to dig underneath positions:
 - “Why is committing to studio relocation now difficult for Goodspeed?”
 - “Why have downstream owners not engaged so far?”
 - “Why not proceed with design work while Goodspeed completes its feasibility study?”

- **Use value-creating packages and contingencies**
CIRCA can also support a shift from zero-sum to value-creating negotiation by helping parties explore **packages** of linked decisions, rather than isolated yes/no choices. Discussing multiple issues simultaneously and packaging issues facilitates discussion of preferred outcomes rather than negotiating methodically through a process of identifying items (timelines, finances, and location) one at a time.⁴⁶

A few illustrative examples follow.

- **Linking design work to Goodspeed’s feasibility study.**
At the June 2025 implementation meeting, Goodspeed reported that a feasibility study for studio relocation would take about six months and that a new facility might cost around \$5 million and take 5–10 years to realize.⁴⁷ Town and CIRCA representatives, meanwhile, stressed the urgency of completing full design for the recommended alternatives so they can pursue grants.⁴⁸ Rather than viewing these timelines as incompatible, CIRCA could help broker a contingent package: for example, the town commits to seeking DEEP Climate Resilience Fund design money for Alternative 2, conditioned on Goodspeed committing to complete its feasibility study by a date certain and to jointly review siting options that align with both resilience and redevelopment plans.

- **Combining flood mitigation with redevelopment value for Goodspeed and the town.**
Goodspeed’s interest in new rehearsal and office space, and the Redevelopment Agency’s work on the 2.75-acre riverfront parcel and other village properties, create an opportunity for a multi-issue bargain. CIRCA can encourage discussions that consider: Can Goodspeed’s new facility also help achieve redevelopment goals (e.g., mixed use or shared space), while freeing up or repurposing existing properties in ways that align with town narratives about tax base and local shops? Packaging resilience, redevelopment, and

⁴⁶ Bazerman, Max, and Don A. Moore, *Judgment in Managerial Decision Making*, 8th. Wiley & Sons, 2012.

⁴⁷ Resilient East Haddam Meeting Notes, June 16, 2025.

⁴⁸ *Id.*

institutional needs together can create room for tradeoffs that are impossible if each issue is handled in isolation.

- **Using targeted support to reduce the number of “losers.”**

CIRCA noted that FEMA and other programs have sometimes funded buyouts or support for homeowners who may not directly benefit from infrastructure investments. CIRCA can encourage the town to explore whether any downstream owners who face residual risk under Alternatives 1 or 2 might qualify for such support, or for smaller-scale measures (e.g., property-specific drainage improvements, elevation assistance). Reducing the number of stakeholders who are clearly worse off under the chosen strategy is a classic value-creation move: it shifts the conversation from “who gets hurt” to “how can we minimize and share unavoidable burdens fairly.”

These kinds of packages require more time and careful facilitation than a simple up-or-down decision on a single alternative. However, they are often the only way to unlock agreement when parties see themselves as trapped in a zero-sum game.

B. Use interest maps and the “accidental adversaries” model to reset the town–Goodspeed relationship

The relationship between East Haddam and Goodspeed Musicals closely resembles what systems thinkers call an “accidental adversaries” dynamic: two parties that could benefit greatly from each other’s success inadvertently undermine one another through uncoordinated, self-protective decisions.⁴⁹

Historically, the town and Goodspeed collaborated on local hiring, youth programs, and joint promotion of the village as a cultural destination. The 1998 East Haddam–Goodspeed Memorandum of Understanding noted that “the economic health of the Town of East Haddam and the continued success of the Goodspeed Opera House are very closely linked.”⁵⁰ Over time, however, patterns such as stalled redevelopment plans, contested property expectations, property-tax debates, and uncoordinated planning have eroded trust. When Goodspeed pursues what it sees as prudent self-protection (e.g., delaying a major capital commitment), residents experience it as obstruction. When the town pursues what it sees as prudent risk management (e.g., focusing limited funds on certain corridors), Goodspeed may experience it as shifting costs onto the theater’s shoulders.

⁴⁹ STROH, DAVID PETER. SYSTEMS THINKING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO SOLVING COMPLEX PROBLEMS, AVOIDING UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES, AND ACHIEVING LASTING RESULTS 45-68 (2015).

⁵⁰ Memorandum of Understanding, dated September 29, 1998.

CIRCA can help parties see this pattern and re-orient around their **shared gains**. A simple **interest map** can make this visible. In broad strokes, the interviews suggest the following:

Interest / Goal	Town of East Haddam	Goodspeed	Downstream / Village Residents
Reduce flood risk along Succor Brook	Strong interest	Strong interest	Strong interest
Implement (or adapt) Alternative 2	Strong interest	Conditional interest (if relocation feasible)	Mixed (depends on local impacts)
Relocate rehearsal studio out of floodway	Strong interest	Strong interest if funding/location constraints met	Generally supportive if it reduces risk and does not worsen access/character
Maintain or enhance village character and small-town feel	Strong Interest, provided other interests also met	Interest (for brand and audience experience)	Strong interest
Strengthen long-term tax base and local business environment	Strong interest	Indirect interest (vibrant village supports theater)	Interest (jobs, amenities)
Protect Goodspeed's artistic/operational viability	Indirect interest (for economy/identity)	Vital interest	Indirect interest (tourism, identity)

This map highlights that the parties share far more interests than their current positions suggest. It also shows where differences lie: timing and affordability of studio relocation, control and use of village properties, specific forms of redevelopment, and perceptions of fairness.

CIRCA can facilitate a conversation between town and Goodspeed leaders that:

- **Surfaces and validates these shared interests** explicitly.
- Uses the “accidental adversaries” story to invite both sides to ask: “How have our separate efforts to solve our own problems unintentionally made things harder for the other, and for the town as a whole?”
 - Identifies early, low-stakes collaboration opportunities (for example, joint messaging on the shared benefits of the flood project, or small pilot programs that rebuild goodwill).

A renewed agreement, grounded in current realities, can help both sides move from blaming each other for past missteps to asking, “What do we need from each other to make this work now?”

C. Engage downstream property owners as full partners in designing fair solutions

CIRCA indicate that most downstream property owners have not yet been fully engaged in the process, despite experiencing some of the worst flooding impacts. One homeowner described multiple events with five feet of water in her basement and running several pumps, and yet she reported that many of her neighbors “weren’t made aware” of the public meetings. CIRCA staff and consultants acknowledged that “most property/homeowners are unaware of the project,” and asked for advice to remedy this lest it could cause issues later.

To move from a zero-sum frame to a value-creating one, CIRCA and the town need these residents not only as recipients of information but as **partners in design**. We recommend a three-phase outreach strategy that CIRCA could help the town implement:

Phase 1: Listening-first, high-touch outreach

- **Map the affected properties.**
Identify all properties along Creamery Road and downstream that experience, or are likely to experience, flooding under current and projected conditions.
- **Make personal contact.**
In collaboration with the town, CIRCA can encourage a small team (e.g., a town official, a CIRCA planner, and perhaps a trusted local champion such as a member of the Conservation Commission) to conduct door-to-door visits or personal phone calls. The goal is not to “sell a plan,” but to:
 - Acknowledge that these residents should have been more centrally involved earlier.
 - Listen to their experiences and concerns about flooding and about prior town responses.
 - Explain, in plain language, what the Kleinfelder study found and what Alternatives 1 and 2 would and would not change for them.
- **Offer small, early commitments.**
Where possible, identify at least one **low-cost, visible step** the town can take in the near term (e.g., improved maintenance of existing drains, temporary sandbag staging, better emergency communication) to show responsiveness. As Elizabeth Cooper emphasized, visible “low-hanging fruit” builds trust and shows that engagement leads to action.

Phase 2: Co-design conversations focused on impacts and tradeoffs

- **Host small-group kitchen-table meetings for downstream owners.**
Rather than inviting these residents only to large, multi-topic public meetings downtown, CIRCA could help facilitate targeted sessions—ideally in or near the affected neighborhood—where downstream owners can see flood maps, ask detailed questions, and discuss how each alternative would affect them specifically.

- **Discuss packages and mitigation options.**

In these settings, CIRCA and the town can explore:

- What benefits downstream owners would see under each alternative.
- What residual risks would remain (for example, under Alternative 2).
- What additional measures (property-level or neighborhood-level) might reduce those remaining risks, and what funding tools (FEMA, state programs) might support them.
- How residents want to be represented in any new working group or council.

- **Invite residents into the implementation forum.**

As you move toward a more formal multi-stakeholder “implementation council” or CTAC 2.0 (as contemplated in Recommendations 1 and 2), ensure that at least one or two downstream property owners have a seat and a clear role.

Phase 3: Ongoing two-way communication

- **Designate a point of contact.**

Work with the town to identify a named individual (e.g., in the Land Use Office or First Selectman’s office) who will serve as the primary contact for downstream owners regarding the project. CIRCA can support this person with technical information and talking points.

- **Provide clear, periodic updates.**

Use multiple channels—mailers, a town resilience web page, a Facebook group, and periodic neighborhood updates—to let downstream owners know:

- What decisions have been made.
- What funding applications are underway.
- What design work is happening and when they will next be asked for input.

- **Continue to ask “What would make this better for you?”**

Periodically revisit with downstream owners what concerns remain and what modest adjustments or additional supports might help them feel that the chosen path is as fair as possible.

Although this downstream outreach is closely related to Recommendation 1 (adaptive frame and consensus-building), we place it here because **downstream owners’ perceptions of fairness are a central driver of zero-sum conflict**. If they feel overlooked or harmed relative to Goodspeed or town infrastructure, their opposition will reinforce adversarial narratives and make it much harder to implement any alternative. Engaging them now, in a way that treats their concerns as integral to the design of a fair solution, is both a value-creating move and a necessary corrective to the current zero-sum loop.

Conclusion

Advancing the Resilient East Haddam project will require more than excellent engineering. CIRCA and Kleinfelder have already delivered what Phase III was designed to produce: a rigorous technical analysis and a set of well-founded options for reducing flood risk along Succor Brook. Our assessment suggests that the remaining barriers are primarily adaptive: they involve relationships, histories, roles, and narratives that shape how people understand and respond to those options.

We identified three dynamics that help explain the current pace of implementation. First, CIRCA's work in East Haddam has been framed largely as a technical project. That frame was essential to produce the Final Report, but it did not build an ongoing decision-making structure in which local officials, Goodspeed, and residents could co-own the path forward. Second, stakeholders interpret CIRCA's recommendations through preexisting stories about preservation, stalled or inefficient town planning and decision-making processes, town–Goodspeed relations, and fairness to residents and homeowners. Technical proposals that do not explicitly address these narratives are often met with hesitation or skepticism, regardless of their scientific merit. Third, many stakeholders experience conflict around the project as zero-sum: they worry that gains for one party will come at the expense of another. This perception slows creative problem-solving even when everyone agrees that flooding needs to be addressed.

In light of these findings, we offered three recommendations for how CIRCA can increase its effectiveness in East Haddam and in similar communities. Recommendation One proposes that CIRCA adopt an adaptive, consensus building frame for its Phase III work, moving beyond onetime advisory roles toward helping communities establish clear forums, roles, and processes for joint decision-making. Recommendation Two invites CIRCA to support East Haddam in developing and owning new narratives that connect flood mitigation, redevelopment, and preservation, and that respect the distinct contributions of town leaders, Goodspeed, residents, and regional experts. Recommendation Three calls on CIRCA to help stakeholders replace zero-sum framing with value creating approaches: designing linked packages of decisions, resetting the institutional relationships, and engaging downstream property owners as full partners in defining what a fair solution looks like.

The roadmap that follows illustrates how CIRCA could sequence these ideas over the next 12–24 months: helping the town convene an Implementation Council, supporting listening first outreach to downstream owners, facilitating narrative and partnership conversations, and assisting with design phase funding applications. None of these steps require CIRCA to take over local authority. Instead, they draw on CIRCA's unique position—combining technical credibility, regional perspective, and experience across multiple communities—to help East Haddam design the processes and relationships it needs to carry technical plans into practice.

If CIRCA and its partners can join strong engineering with thoughtful dispute systems design, East Haddam will be better positioned not only to implement the Resilient East Haddam recommendations, but also to strengthen its long-term capacity to address future climate and development challenges. That, in turn, can offer a model for how scientifically informed strategies and well-designed collaborative processes can work together to produce actionable, broadly supported outcomes in small communities across Connecticut.

Appendix I: Potential Roadmap for the Next 12–24 Months

This roadmap organizes our recommendations into three overlapping phases:

- **Phase 1 (0–6 months): Lay the adaptive foundation**
- **Phase 2 (6–18 months): Design and agree on a joint implementation path**
- **Phase 3 (18–24+ months): Support early implementation and learning**

Each phase includes concrete actions CIRCA could take, alongside actions that CIRCA can encourage the town and its partners to take.

Phase 1 (0–6 Months): Lay the Adaptive Foundation

Goals:

- Name and legitimize the adaptive challenges.
- Create a clear forum and minimal structure for implementation conversations.
- Support trust-building through structured listening and shared narrative work.

1.1. Convene an Implementation Kickoff Meeting

CIRCA actions:

- Invite key actors to a single, focused “**Implementation Kickoff**” meeting:
 - Town leadership (First Selectman, Land Use, DPW)
 - Redevelopment Agency representative(s)
 - Goodspeed leadership (e.g., Artistic Director, Managing Director, Facilities)
 - At least one downstream property owner
 - One or two community champions (e.g., from the Conservation Commission or Resilience Team)
- At the meeting, briefly:
 - Reaffirm what the technical study has already accomplished.
 - Share the three **Findings** and **Recommendations** at a high level.
 - Make explicit that the remaining barriers are primarily adaptive (relationships, roles, timing, narratives), not technical alone.

Local actions (with CIRCA support):

- Agree in principle to form a small **Implementation Council** (or similar) as the ongoing forum for Succor Brook decisions.
- Identify initial council members and set a **regular meeting cadence** (for example, every 6–8 weeks).

1.2. Establish the Implementation Council and Clarify Roles

CIRCA actions:

- Help the town draft a short **charter** for the Implementation Council that:
 - States its purpose (e.g., “to guide the design, funding, and implementation of flood mitigation along Succor Brook, in coordination with village redevelopment”).
 - Lists core participants and their roles (town, Redevelopment Agency, Goodspeed, downstream owners, others).
 - Clarifies CIRCA’s role as a **supporting technical and process adviser**, not the decisionmaker.
- Offer to attend the first two or three council meetings to model interest based discussion and help structure agendas around packages, not single issue debates.

Local actions:

- Formally constitute the Implementation Council (via selectmen or Agency acknowledgment).
- Confirm a **chair or co-chairs** (ideally one town rep and one resident rep).

1.3. Launch a Listening First Outreach to Downstream Owners

CIRCA actions:

- Work with town staff to **map affected downstream properties** (especially along Creamery Road).
- Codesign a simple **outreach plan**:
 - One or two council members (e.g., town staff + a community champion) conduct doortodoor visits or personal calls.
 - CIRCA supplies plain language visuals (e.g., a one page graphic from the Kleinfelder report showing flood risk and what Alternatives 1 and 2 would change) and a brief FAQ.
- Offer a short training on **active listening** and acknowledgment techniques for those doing the outreach.

Local actions:

- Implement the outreach round, focusing on listening and explanation, not immediate buy-in.
- Identify at least one **small, early commitment** (e.g., improved maintenance, simple interim measures) that can be delivered quickly to demonstrate responsiveness.

1.4. Begin Shared Narrative Work

CIRCA actions:

- Propose and, if invited, **facilitate a half-day narrative workshop** with members of the Implementation Council. In that session:
 - Ask participants to share short “stories of East Haddam”—what they value, what they fear losing, what they hope for in 10–25 years.
 - Use the **Five Core Concerns** (Appreciation, Affiliation, Autonomy, Status, Role) as a diagnostic lens.
 - Help the group draft a short, working “**Resilient Village Story**” that links flood mitigation, redevelopment, and preservation.
- Provide a short memo summarizing how the **1998 MOU** aligns with resilience goals and where it may need updating, as a starting point for town–Goodspeed discussion.

Local actions:

- Refine and adopt the working narrative as the tone and content for future public communications (e.g., on the town website, in Redevelopment newsletters, at public meetings).

Phase 2 (6–18 Months): Design and Agree on a Joint Implementation Path**Goals:**

- Turn technical alternatives into a concrete, sequenced package of actions that key stakeholders can support.
- Use value creating tools (packages, contingencies, one text drafting) to manage differences in timing, risk, and capacity.
- Embed narrative and communication practices into the emerging plan.

2.1. Co-Design a Succor Brook Implementation Package

CIRCA actions:

- Using the Implementation Council as the core forum, help parties examine:
 - What **Alternative 2 (or a variant)** means technically and financially.
 - How it interacts with Goodspeed’s rehearsal studio feasibility study, Redevelopment’s planning, and downstream owners’ interests.
- Encourage the council to develop a **package** of linked decisions, for example:
 - Town commits to seek DEEP Climate Resilience Fund design money for Alternatives 1–2.
 - Goodspeed commits to complete its feasibility study by a specific date and to explore site options that align with both resilience and redevelopment goals.
 - The council agrees on baseline commitments to downstream owners (e.g., targeted mitigation supports, regular check-ins, or exploring buyout/assistance options where appropriate).
- If asked, act as a **one text facilitator**:
 - Draft an initial Succor Brook Implementation Agreement.
 - Circulate it to each party for critique, not commitment.
 - Iteratively revise the draft until it reflects the “best possible” joint package the council can design.

Local actions:

- Review and refine the draft Agreement internally (within town government, Goodspeed’s board, residents’ networks).
- Work toward “overwhelming support,” making good faith efforts to address holdout concerns.

2.2. Revisit the MOU and Reset the Town–Goodspeed Partnership

CIRCA actions:

- Suggest a **town–Goodspeed session** (possibly a subset of the council) focused on:
 - Rereading the MOU,
 - Identifying which commitments remain relevant, and
 - Agreeing on principles for an updated partnership that explicitly includes resilience and downstream impacts.
- Offer framing questions such as:

- “How have our separate attempts to solve our own problems created unintended difficulties for the other?” (the **accidental adversaries** question).
- “What do we each need from the other to make our shared village vision real?”

Local actions:

- Decide whether to draft an updated MOU or a new partnership agreement that, for example:
 - Clarifies communication and consultation expectations on major property and infrastructure decisions.
 - Acknowledges shared stakes in resilience and redevelopment outcomes.
 - Commits to periodic joint review.

2.3. Institutionalize Predictable Communication

CIRCA actions:

- Provide templates and examples for:
 - A short monthly “**Village Resilience & Redevelopment Update**”,
 - A simple visual **implementation timeline**, and
 - A basic **online “project page”** that consolidates key documents and updates.
- Encourage the town to include **downstream owners and non-Goodspeed businesses** explicitly in the mailing lists or distribution.

Local actions:

- Adopt and adapt communication practices (cadence, content, channels) that the Implementation Council agrees to.
- Ensure that each major implementation decision (e.g., grant applications, design milestones) is accompanied by a short explanation of **how the decision reflects the shared narrative and the interests of different groups**.

Phase 3 (18–24+ Months): Support Early Implementation and Learning

Goals:

- Help stakeholders stay aligned as design and early efforts proceed.
- Reinforce value creating habits and structures.

- Capture learning for application in other CIRCA communities.

3.1. Support Grant Applications and Early Design

CIRCA actions:

- Assist the town in applying for key design and implementation grants (e.g., DEEP Climate Resilience Fund, FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program), drawing on the Succor Brook Implementation Agreement and shared narrative to strengthen applications.
- Provide **technical clarification** as needed to ensure that funded design work faithfully reflects the jointly agreed package.

Local actions:

- Use the Implementation Council as the primary space to track grant status, design deliverables, and any scope adjustments required by funders.

3.2. Maintain the Implementation Council as a Joint Problem Solving Forum

CIRCA actions:

- Attend select council meetings (e.g., quarterly) to:
 - Help the group revisit and adjust plans in light of new information,
 - Support value creating reframing when new conflicts emerge, and
 - Encourage continued attention to downstream impacts and fairness.
- Encourage the council to treat unexpected issues (e.g., design constraints, contractor feedback, political changes) as opportunities to use the consensus building tools it has learned, rather than as reasons to revert to zero-sum patterns.

Local actions:

- Keep the council active at least through completion of design and into early construction.
- Use the council to coordinate with parallel efforts (e.g., Redevelopment's master planning) so that narratives and decisions remain aligned.

3.3. Capture and Share Lessons

CIRCA actions:

- Work with East Haddam to document:
 - What aspects of the adaptive and consensus building approach worked well,
 - Where gaps remained, and

- Which tools (e.g., implementation council, one text drafting, narrative workshops, downstream outreach) were most helpful.
- Develop a brief “**East Haddam Case Note**” for internal use and, where appropriate, sharing with other *Resilient Connecticut* communities, highlighting how technical work and adaptive process design can reinforce each other.

This roadmap is not meant as a rigid schedule but as a **sequenced set of opportunities**. Even modest steps in each phase—naming an Implementation Council, conducting one narrative workshop, piloting improved communication, and doing a listening first round with downstream owners—can begin to shift East Haddam from fragmented, zero-sum interactions toward a more coherent, value creating approach to resilience. CIRCA’s unique contribution is to **bridge the technical and adaptive worlds**: using its scientific credibility and regional vantage point to help local actors see the bigger picture and design processes that make implementation possible.

Appendix II: Memorandum of Understanding

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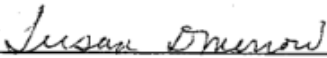
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

MAGUIRE GROUP

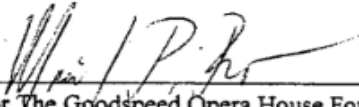
The economic health of the Town of East Haddam and the continued success of the Goodspeed Opera House are very closely linked. The Goodspeed attracts worldwide publicity which reflects on East Haddam, creates a positive image for our Town and region, and draws over one hundred thirty thousand visitors to the village of East Haddam each year. The Town of East Haddam provides the Goodspeed with rich Connecticut River history, New England village ambiance, and the kind of natural beauty that make our town an inviting destination for people from all over our region.

The Town of East Haddam and the Goodspeed Opera House are each at points in their respective evolutions where they need to work more closely together than ever before to reach their full potentials for both a thriving theater and a thriving local economy. It is in the interest of the Opera House and the Town to understand each other's needs and to identify convergences of interests. Toward this end, the Town and the Goodspeed will work together on issues of mutual benefit as follows:

- ⇒ To maximize the commercial, and thereby the financial viability of the Town
- ⇒ To preserve and enhance the Town's unique historic character
- ⇒ To make the village of East Haddam accessible by train, boat, pedestrians and bicycle as well as by car
- ⇒ To make East Haddam a "walkable" village - one which is inviting to pedestrians
- ⇒ To improve traffic and parking
- ⇒ To increase the accessibility of the Connecticut River to East Haddam's citizens and visitors
- ⇒ To maximize the benefits of an efficient and affordable sewage treatment operation
- ⇒ To site new housing for actors, thereby freeing up local structures for commercial purposes
- ⇒ To explore the feasibility of siting a new 600 plus seat theater
- ⇒ To seek grants and technical assistance to achieve the above
- ⇒ To maintain open communication between our respective institutions.



for The Town of East Haddam
Susan D. Merrow, First Selectman
September 29, 1998



for The Goodspeed Opera House Foundation, Inc.
Michael Price, Executive Director
September 29, 1998

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