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*Backgrounder*

**HARTFORD'S NEIGHBORHOODS**

While Hartford is quickly reinventing itself as an urban center full of activity, with new and exciting developments, and increasingly more places to live, work, play and visit, the city's great diversity cannot be fully understood without looking at the neighborhoods that flank the downtown district.

The 17 neighborhoods that comprise the city of Hartford each have a distinct voice and feel. They represent an eclectic mix of cultures, architecture, business and history.

**NEIGHBORHOODS SOUTH**

**Barry Square**

New businesses, awnings and façade improvements along Maple Avenue have helped to revive the Barry Square neighborhood. Trinity College, one of the country's top liberal arts schools, is also located in Barry Square.

Points of interest:

- In keeping with the SINA/Trinity Neighborhood Initiative, the Community Sports Complex provides opportunities for faculty, students and staff to develop relationships with children in the community through academic and athletic mentoring programs. More than \$7 million has been raised toward the \$8-million funding goal.
- Apartments on Webster Street have been renovated and turned into mutual housing (similar to cooperative housing).
- A new supermarket recently opened on Maple Avenue.
- The new Great Harvest Bakery moved into a former telephone company switching station.
- First and Last Tavern, a local Italian restaurant, is expanding into a nearby building.
- Barry Square is home to Alchemy, a fast growing organic food café.
- Goodwin Park plays host to several sponsored events on a regular basis, and features a pool, golf course, driving range and playground.

**Behind the Rocks**

The Charter Oak Terrace site, a former public housing complex, has become the new home of Wal-Mart, Marshalls, Payless Shoes, Radio Shack and others, and provides

approximately 800 jobs in the Behind the Rocks neighborhood. The center opened in November 2004. A federal Job Corps training center, located behind the shopping center, is complete; light industrial development also is planned.

Points of interest:

- Demolition of more than 350 units of high-density public housing has been completed on the former site of the Fred L. Rice Heights Housing Development. In its place are 120 single-family owner-occupied housing units in the southwest neighborhood. Total project cost is \$20 million.
- New restaurants, including Peruvian and Mexican establishments, have opened along New Britain Avenue.
- Thomas Hyland Memorial Park provides a playground and sports fields for area families.

### **South End**

South End's main artery is Franklin Avenue, home to Hartford's Little Italy, replete with restaurants, bakeries, markets and social clubs. In recent years, the neighborhood population has become increasingly diverse with the arrival of Bosnians, Albanians, Latinos and African-Americans. New dining venues have been opening, most recently Polish and South American restaurants.

Points of Interest:

- The neighborhood is considering a proposed housing development to add more residential units.
- New bike lanes were recently added to Franklin and Wethersfield Avenues.

### **South Downtown (SoDo)**

SoDo is located across Bushnell Park, south of the Hartford downtown area. The neighborhood is mostly residential and draws people who enjoy the qualities of "downtown living," the special beauty of Bushnell Park, and the historical character of the area.

There is a rich diversity of housing in SoDo, ranging from high-rise condos to historic row houses, and the neighborhood includes the Buckingham Square National Register Historic District. In addition to the residential buildings, SoDo includes several churches, the Bushnell Auditorium, several state of Connecticut office buildings, restaurants and a wine shop. Bordering SoDo are major attractions, among them The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art and the Hartford Public Library.

Points of interest:

- A \$45-million, 90,000-square-foot facility, built adjacent to the original Mortensen Hall, opened in November 2001, and includes a 907-seat theater.
- The Hartford Public Library expansion will add 44,000 square feet of space, including a 9,000-square-foot children's library and a glass bridge to a new three-story wing.
- There are several efforts underway to develop housing on the vacant land available in the neighborhood.
- Historic street lights, decorative fencing and landscaping are ongoing.

### **South Meadows**

South Meadows is Hartford's major industrial and commercial area. The area houses Hartford's Regional Market; Connecticut Resource & Recovery Authority; Metropolitan District Commission Yard; Water Pollution Control Plant and Brainard Airport. There is also the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority Visitors Center, a 6,500-square-foot museum, which includes the life-size, walk-in Temple of Trash.

#### Points of Interest:

- Holiday Inn Express has undergone a \$3.5-million renovation and will continue with the addition of a pool in summer 2005.
- Days Inn has gone through a \$2-million renovation.
- Hartford's Regional Market, a 32-acre facility with over 185,000 square feet of warehouse space, is the largest perishable-food distribution facility between New York and Boston.
- Stone Depot opened an 80,000-square-foot warehouse, showroom and retail center on Murphy Road.
- Golfers' Warehouse relocated to Brainard Road and expanded 60,000 square feet.
- Dal Tile recently opened a 20,000-square-foot warehouse on Brainard Road.
- Dunkin' Donuts recently expanded its manufacturing facility on Airport Road.
- Johnstone Supply opened a new hardware and supply store on Locust Street.
- Sardilli Foods recently underwent an expansion of its facilities.

### **South West**

The South West neighborhood is mainly a low-density middle-class residential area inhabited by middle-income families who own their own homes.

#### Points of interest:

- The neighborhood is home to the 270-acre Cedar Hill Cemetery, an exemplary landscaped park-style open space that is featured on the National Registry of Historic Places. Several notables are buried at Cedar Hill, among them J.P. Morgan, Samuel Colt, the Galludets and poet Wallace Stevens.
- The Goodwin Branch of the Hartford Public Library is undergoing expansion and renovation.
- The St. George Russian Orthodox Church is giving its copper dome a facelift.

## **NEIGHBORHOODS NORTH**

### **Blue Hills**

Along with the South West neighborhood, Blue Hills contains the largest concentration of moderate-size single-family homes in Hartford.

#### Points of Interest:

- Blue Hills is home to the University of Hartford, where a new \$32-million science, engineering and technology center is being built.
- The \$25-million University of Hartford Performing Arts Center will provide new performance spaces, rehearsal halls, teaching rooms and studios for the internationally renowned 84-year-old Hartt School.

- The North Hartford Senior Center and the St. Francis Center for Public Health both recently opened in the Blue Hills neighborhood.

### **Clay Arsenal**

The mainly residential neighborhood is bordered on the east by the Amtrak rail line.

Points of Interest:

- Renovations were completed on the \$29-million Mary Shepherd Place apartments, which included new housing units and beautifully landscaped grounds.
- The \$17-million Sand Elementary School was completed in 2001.
- The Main & Pavilion shopping center, containing a greatly needed grocery store, clothing store, laundromat, hair supply store, Chinese restaurant, cell phone store and a police field office is set to open in spring 2005.
- New residences are being constructed along lower Main Street.
- The new House of Restoration Pentecostal Church is being built on Main Street.

### **North East/Uptown**

Along with neighboring Upper Albany, the area was recently renamed Uptown to reflect its new vitality. Thirty new businesses have opened within the past 12 months. Consisting of both public and private funds, a \$2.6-million investment has been revitalizing the neighborhood. This ethnically diverse neighborhood is home to new restaurants, a significant amount of nightlife and new housing options that include several dozen new Habitat for Humanity homes. Additional developments include the construction of new single-family homes off north Main Street and the facelift of the Tower Business Center.

The diverse community in Uptown includes West Indians and African-Americans, many of whom are active in the community and in local social clubs.

The North East neighborhood is home to Hartford's largest municipal park that consists of 700 acres. Keney Park covers approximately one third of Hartford's largest neighborhood. Designed by the Olmsted Brothers, Keney Park contains horse trails, a golf course, a new swimming pool, playgrounds, sports fields (including cricket fields and basketball courts), ponds and a community center operated by the Friends of Keney Park, who have raised a substantial amount of funding to improve the park.

At the edge of the park, the Ebony Horsewomen operate an equestrian center. The stable was developed and is directed by African-American female equestrians whose mission is to encourage and empower inner city youth toward positive and successful lives.

Current and recent developments:

- Following the demolition of Stowe Village, which contained 650 high-density public housing units, reconstruction of 150 single-family owner-occupied housing units is underway in the North East neighborhood at a cost of \$25 million. This project is pivotal to the Mayor's homeownership initiative.
- Community leaders are spearheading an effort to improve North Main Street's streetscape and landscape.
- Several new restaurants have opened recently, including Rajun Cajun and Uptown Flava.

- A new chic club, Vibz Uptown, also opened recently.
- The neighborhood's American Legion hall was recently renovated.

### **North Meadows**

Two decades ago the North Meadows was still mostly vacant land and today has developed into a center for businesses and industries that require large amounts of acreage, such as automobile dealerships and the Meadows Music Theater. The Meadows Music Theater plays host to dozens of regional and national concert tours and events. Part of the Riverfront Recapture project, Riverside Park is a 61-acre municipal park that includes a playground, picnic facilities, boat launch and Victorian boathouse.

#### Points of Interest:

- CarMax, a national used-car retailer, is moving into the neighborhood, helping to create a robust commercial corridor.

### **Upper Albany/Uptown**

The businesses on Albany Avenue are working together to improve the appearance and functionality of the commercial strip. Colorful banners proclaiming Upper Albany a "Neighborhood of Choice" have been installed, vacant buildings are being renovated and other façade improvements have been completed. Together with the North East neighborhood, the area has been re-branded Uptown to reflect its new vitality.

#### Developments and Points of Interest:

- Founded in 1970 by world-renowned alto saxophonist Jackie McLean and his wife, actress/dancer Dollie McLean, The Artists' Collective is one of 13 organizations in the country recently selected by the National Endowment for the Arts for its Jazz Masters Program. Ray Charles, Roberta Flack, Dizzy Gillespie, B.B. King and Wynton Marsalis have performed here.
- The Upper Albany Development Corp. is currently working to develop a Town Center on the abandoned former Mobil site at the corner of Woodland and Albany.
- The Micro Business Incubator is entering its third year. It is a program designed to build the capacity of Upper Albany neighborhood entrepreneurs by providing assistance from business school students at the University of Hartford. Students and business owners learn from each other in areas such as business planning, technology and marketing, while providing a first-hand experience with diversity. The incubator is currently working with 10 area businesses.
- The Upper Albany Branch of Hartford Public Library is slated to be fully renovated and expanded.
- Generation of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Database is accurately analyzing the neighborhood's marketing mix and determining gaps in service.
- Comprehensive streetscaping and traffic-calming physical changes to the Albany Ave./Rte. 44 plan fast-tracked is under construction. This will include new pedestrian walkways, street furniture, landscaping and light fixtures.

## **NEIGHBORHOODS CENTRAL AND WEST**

### **Asylum Hill**

Asylum Hill is one of Hartford's most historic and architecturally striking areas. The American School for the Deaf, originally known as the Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, was founded on the former "Lords Hill" and gave the neighborhood its name.

The neighborhood contains a large concentration of Victorian homes and apartment houses, many of which are still used as private homes. Creating a rich residential landscape, such notable personalities as Mark Twain, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Calvin Day, James Goodwin and U.S. Senator James Dixon have all called the Hill home. Conversely, in addition to Hartford Fire Services, the first major corporation to move to Asylum Hill, Aetna, ING and several re-insurance companies are among the neighborhood's corporate residents.

Developments and Points of Interest:

- The Boys & Girls Club of Hartford built a new \$6-million club and relocated its headquarters to Asylum Hill. The club opened in late 2004.
- The house at 95 Niles Street is currently being renovated into the new home of the Mutual Housing Association of Greater Hartford, a non-profit developer and operator of housing.
- Connecticut Public Television has moved its facilities to Asylum Hill and is interested in neighborhood involvement.
- Asylum Hill is a nationally recognized Historic Neighborhood
- The neighborhood successfully petitioned Habitat for Humanity, which is building homes in the neighborhood, to redesign its houses to fit within the historical context of the surrounding homes. Changes were made to the trim, roofline and porches.
- The Mark Twain House and the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center have both gone through recent renovations. The Mark Twain House Museum opened in 2003 and became the first museum in the nation, and the first building of any kind in Connecticut to attain LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.
- A rare, red Victorian house was recently moved to an intact Victorian street.
- Adding to the growing number of options for restaurants and nightlife, the Mississippi Bar and Grille recently opened on Farmington Avenue.

### **Frog Hollow**

Park Street is home to much of the state's Hispanic business community, and a large part of Hartford's Hispanic residents. The neighborhood has seen the recent opening of several new housing and retail developments.

The Learning Corridor – a \$175-million neighborhood revitalization initiative that began in 1996 by a coalition of Trinity College, Hartford Hospital, Connecticut Public Television, the Institute of Living, the Connecticut Children's Medical Center, and the neighborhood residents and stakeholders – calls Frog Hollow home. The Learning Corridor is a nationally recognized campus for public education that consists of a 16-acre campus, which encompasses a full square block of new construction. It houses a Montessori Magnet School, Hartford Magnet Middle School, the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts, the Greater Hartford Academy of Math and Science, the Theater of the Performing Arts, the Commons Building, the Aetna Center for Families and the Boys & Girls Club.

Points of Interest:

- Park Street is New England's Latino Main Street and does approximately \$72 million in business a year. The neighborhood is currently installing new sidewalks, lights and benches.
- Mortson/Putnam Heights features homeownership opportunities for renovated and newly constructed "perfect sixes," which support Mayor Eddie Perez's homeownership initiative.
- The Cityscape Homes Program has provided homeownership opportunities in new and renovated duplexes.
- New mutual housing apartments opened on Park Terrace, and rental units are under renovation on Broad Street.
- Frog Hollow is a nationally recognized Historic Neighborhood.
- The Keller Historic District is located in Frog Hollow; one of its houses was recently featured on HGTV.
- Pope Park was made possible by a land donation from the Alexander Pope family, manufacturers of bicycles at the turn of the century.

**Parkville**

Large Portuguese and Hispanic populations in Parkville drive the neighborhood in having one of the healthiest retail areas in the city. Small businesses that cater to locals create a bustling environment in which these cultural communities flourish.

Parkville contains one of the few active industrial areas in Hartford. As some of the older buildings have become vacant, local developer Carlos Mouta has been buying, renovating and renting out buildings in the neighborhood.

Points of Interest:

- Real Art Ways is one of the nation's leading contemporary art organizations. Like many of the industrial buildings in Hartford's Parkville neighborhood, 56 Arbor Street was formerly a factory. Since 1995 renovations have totaled \$1.8 million. Resources include: a 155-seat cinema/theater; 5,000 square feet of renovated exhibition space; and the Real Room, a 900-square-foot exhibition and performance space
- The neighborhood is currently creating a plan to make New Park Avenue, which contains several auto-related businesses, safer and more attractive to pedestrians.
- "Welcome to Parkville" signs hung above the Amtrak railroad tracks that go through town.
- A new restaurant, Casa Lisboa, has opened on Park Street.

**Sheldon/Charter Oak**

This neighborhood, located along the Connecticut River, is where Dutch mariner Adriaen Block first landed in 1614 – giving Adriaen's Landing its name. It is also home to much of Samuel and Elizabeth Colt's legacy – Armsmear (the Colt family home) Colt Park, the Church of the Good Shepherd and its Parish House. (Elizabeth Colt commissioned renowned architect Edward Tuckerman Potter to design the church and parish house in memory of her husband Sam and her son Caldwell). The Colt manufacturing complex is being restored and renovated. Its gold-starred, blue "onion dome" towers over planned luxury apartments, lofts, retail, commercial and possibly park space. Its "sawtooth" building is renovated and occupied by a software developer supporting the insurance

industry. Efforts are underway to gain National Historic Landmark designation for many of these buildings.

Points of Interest:

- The Charter Oak Cultural Center was built in 1876 by the Congregational Beth Israel as the first synagogue constructed in Connecticut. The building's history includes 60 years as a synagogue, its rescue from demolition and its restoration and transformation into a multi-cultural arts center. It is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places.
- Demolition of the Dutch Point housing project will clear space for new homes built in the "Victorian rowhouse" and the "perfect six" styles. The newly built Dutch Point will provide affordable and market-rate housing for homeowners and renters, and will have a superior view of the Edward Tuckerman Potter buildings.
- The Capewell Horse Nail Co. factory is being renovated into 91 market-rate condominiums, while adhering to national historic renovation standards.
- Other historical aspects of the neighborhood include the Charter Oak Monument Park (commemorating the hiding from the British of Connecticut's Charter in an old oak tree); Colt Estates and Potsdam Village – housing built by Samuel Colt for his employees.
- Charter Oak Landing, the anchor of Riverfront Recapture's park system, provides a boat launch, gazebo, promenade and a commanding view of downtown.

**South Green**

The city's smallest, densest and most diverse neighborhood is named for the small triangle of land now also known as Barnard Park. The park, originally a public grazing ground, was re-named in the 19th century to memorialize the "Father of American Public Education," Henry Barnard, and is the oldest public green space in the country.

Recent developments in the neighborhood are proof of the commitment to its future. New restaurants, housing units and businesses in the area are working to improve the overall attitude.

Points of Interest:

- Walter Wick, illustrator of the "I Spy" series of children's books, and his wife, Linda, recently bought and converted a long-vacant fire truck repair garage into studio space on John Street.
- Hispanavision, a tier of 13 Spanish-language channels on digital cable, has moved into a building on the corner of Park and John Streets.
- Construction is being completed on a 100-unit assisted living facility on Retreat Avenue.
- Valvoline Instant Oil Change has moved its franchise headquarters to Main Street.
- New housing has been built and vacant homes have been renovated on Benton Street.
- A new restaurant is opening in the Flatiron Building.

**West End**

The West End is a neighborhood with residents of diverse nationalities, socio-economic status and political affiliations. Farmington Avenue is blossoming with renovated buildings and restaurants. The neighborhood also contains Elizabeth Park, UCONN Law School and the Governor's Mansion. Energetic residents have been working with

their Asylum Hill neighbors to develop a plan to make Farmington Avenue a great place to shop, stroll and socialize.

Points of Interest:

- A \$5-million state grant is being used to demolish blighted buildings and create new commercial space, including a new Brazilian steakhouse, Braza.
- Most of the West End is on the national register of historic districts. Architecturally, most of the houses were built between 1870 and 1930. They range in size from cottage-size houses to mansions and are considered the gems of the neighborhood.
- The historic Goodwin Estate, a mansion built in 1909, is being redeveloped at a cost of \$23 million into a new development of market-rate condos on a long neglected piece of property. The new development has attracted interest from both suburban and urban individuals looking for a different living experience.
- Hartford Seminary, whose building was designed by famed architect Richard Meier, is based in the West End.

### **Neighborhood Revitalization Zones (NRZs)**

In response to the state authorizing legislation passed in 1995, residents of Hartford established 14 neighborhood revitalization zones. The NRZ designation enables neighborhoods to use various governmental tools (e.g. expanded use of eminent domain, waiver of state and municipal codes and regulations) to revitalize neighborhoods that had large numbers of vacant properties.

Each NRZ has created a strategic plan for its neighborhood and the plans have all been adopted as ordinances by the Hartford Court of Common Council. The plans encompass housing, infrastructure, economic development, public safety, education and other components of a healthy neighborhood. Each of the NRZs has a board of directors that includes all neighborhood “stakeholders,” e.g. homeowners, tenants, property owners, business owners, schools, institutions, city government, non-profits and any other relevant groups. The board and other interested parties are charged with implementation of the strategic plan.

Hartford’s NRZs and the city of Hartford formed a coalition called Hartford 2000 whose mission is to strengthen the individual and collective capabilities of the NRZs. Hartford 2000 holds monthly presentations on issues or projects of general interest to neighborhoods; does regular informational mailings; presents workshops on understanding city government; hosts forums on citywide issues such as property tax reform, civic participation and elections; and runs an annual 10-week neighborhood leadership training course. Hartford 2000 also assists the NRZs in implementing their strategic plans.

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