

## AHNA's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and the Events Worth Celebrating

On February 12<sup>th</sup> about 200 members, current and former, and friends of AHNA will gather at the Tower Suite of The Hartford to celebrate the past 20 years. If you are one of those but have not registered, please go to: <https://www.Eventbrite.com/e/ahnas-20th-anniversary-tickets-40109740313> and register for your free ticket. This is what we're Celebrating.

The Asylum Hill Problem Solving Committee **met for the first time on January 10<sup>th</sup> 1995**. It was an organizational meeting only and more than 50 people attended at Connecticut Mutual. They eventually agreed to meet monthly.

Later that year the City voted to adopt **the new State NRZ statute (chapter 118 sec 7-600)** for Hartford. Also the Committee, with the assistance of the Comprehensive Communities Partnership began the work of becoming a Neighborhood Revitalization Zone in which the zone was all of Asylum Hill.

On March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1998 the completed plan **was presented at a meeting and adopted**. It was later accepted by the State and approved by Hartford City Council.

The Asylum Hill Problem Solving Committee (AHPSC) became **The Asylum Hill Problem Solving Revitalization Association (AHPSRA)** and incorporated as such June 15<sup>th</sup> 2001.

Soon thereafter AHPSRA began to work on a revised strategic plan with more attention to housing in part brought about by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority granting low income tax credits to several properties in Asylum Hill. In 2001 with the assistance of the Connecticut Civil Liberties Union **AHPSRA joined in a suit against Gary E. King President and Executive Director of CHFA**. In 2006 the Connecticut Supreme Court found against AHPSRA et al but not on the merits of the case.

During that time, **Connecticut Public Broadcasting Network (CPBN)** purchased and renovated an office building at 1049 Asylum Ave; **The "Victorian Lady"**, a brick home residing on Aetna property was saved from demolition and moved from 43 Sigourney St to an empty lot at 21 Ashley St. to become the new home of Dulcie & Valerio Giadone; the **Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford** build a new Asylum Hill Clubhouse at 170 Sigourney St. The next attempt to create supportive housing was at 54 Huntington St with the proposed Ictineo Commons in 2008. This time

AHPSRA was successful. At about this time, with the assistance of Aetna and Robert Reichert an attorney at Reid & Reige we began a 15 month process to draft a new Strategic Plan. In the process our name was changed to Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association (AHNA) and later we began the process of applying for IRS 501c3 status, which we received October 31<sup>st</sup> 2011.



At about that time, Liam McGee came to Hartford as their new CEO and very quickly determined that The Hartford should focus more of their philanthropic efforts closer to home. As a result he pledged \$5,000,000. over a 5 year period to invest in Asylum Hill. That generosity has continued to this day, from the Harwood Study and Report in 2013 to the ongoing support of Leadership Greater Hartford, to this wonderful celebration. One of the other significant accomplishments of that period was the demolition of the Capitol West building in April 2012, led by the generous additional pledge of \$2,000,000. from The Hartford.

Also in 2012 the Urban Land Institute Provided a Technical Assistance Panel to look at the Farmington Ave Corridor; Habitat for Humanity, with the generous support of Aetna, constructed the first 16 homes on S. Marshall St and then just this year, completed the project with 6 more, bringing the total to 22 new homeowners on that one street alone, and 26 total in Asylum Hill.

Another important partnership for AHNA was the Hartford Public Library's Welcoming America grant that allowed us to welcome to America, Hartford and Asylum Hill the recent immigrants, many of whom were refugees from Asia and Africa. The partnership has been very fruitful and included such events as the *New Voices of Asylum Hill* event at CPBN, the month-long Arts event *We Are Asylum Hill*, and collaboration with The Town & County Club who hosted one of the performances as well as their Spring Forum about immigrant integration.

A more detailed list of AHNA accomplishments and partnerships is available on our website at <http://asylumhill.org/sample-page/ahna-at-20-years/> and in back issues of Asylum Hill News & Views.