

From the Executive Director

David MacDonald

Asylum Hill Strategic Planning continues

AHNA's Strategic Planning Task Forces are continuing with their work to develop recommendations and goals to guide the revitalization of Asylum Hill for the next ten (10) years. The Asylum Hill Strategic Planning Steering Committee met in June to review the draft recommendations of 6 of the 8 Task Forces.

The Public Safety Task Force met to discuss public safety concerns in Asylum Hill on July 21st. We had a good turnout of more than 16, including many residents and Directors of AHNA. We were very pleased to have Captain Ian Powell, Lt. Rebecca O'Shea and Asylum Hill's Community Service Officer Cid Palmieri. We are grateful for the Hartford Police Department's commitment to work with AHNA to develop strategies to improve public safety in Asylum Hill. Captain Powell provided some encouraging data about crime in Asylum Hill. Data for Asylum Hill shows that overall crime is down in Asylum Hill. Violent crime is down and we haven't seen the spike in violent crime that other neighborhoods and cities have seen recently. Gun violence has thankfully remained low in Asylum Hill. Captain Powell reported that larceny is up quite a bit including car theft and car break-ins. Several residents spoke about their concerns regarding trespassers, property crimes, larceny, speeding cars, panhandling, and unsafe conditions at Sigourney Square Park. The atmosphere of concern and collaboration was strong leading Officer Palmieri to say he would meet concerned parents in Sigourney Park the same week to address their feelings of safety and to connect them with others who appropriately frequent the park now. This exchange was illustrative of the idea that sometimes, public safety is often about perceptions of public safety rather than the actual level of crime occurring.

Initial ideas for addressing concerns included more cameras, more lighting, safer crosswalks, and more collaboration with the Hartford Police Department. Residents expressed strong support for Community Service Officers and asked that their hours in the community be increased. Captain Powell responded by saying Hartford is having difficulty recruiting and retaining officers right now and staffing for HPD is way down, causing CSOs to be assigned patrol duty to respond to ongoing crimes. It was suggested by some residents that AHNA could work with HPD to help recruit residents to apply to HPD.

The next Public Safety Task Force meeting will be in the second week of Aug. at 7pm to finalize recommendations and strategies to improve public safety in Asylum Hill. If you are interested in joining the discussion on public safety in Asylum Hill, please contact me at exdir@asylumhill.org or 860-805-8935. The AHNA Strategic Planning Steering Committee will meet toward the end of August to review the Youth and Public Safety Task Force recommendations.

In other news:

AHNA is pleased to be co-sponsoring the return of the Annual South Marshall Street Block Party, to be held toward the end of August. The theme is Back to School Safely and there will be lots of fun, music, food, and games for the kids.

AHNA also wants to thank State Representative Matt Ritter for obtaining more than \$7 million to complete the Farmington Avenue streetscape project. Revitalizing Farmington Avenue has been a priority for AHNA for many years and now we can complete the work with this funding.