

**Ex Dir Column**  
**From the Executive Director**  
David MacDonald

Happy New Year to the residents of Asylum Hill and to everyone reading this. The Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association is looking forward to a very busy, active and successful 2019. AHNA is growing and getting stronger. With the funding for new staff, newly-elected Board members and leadership, we will be prepared to tackle some of the toughest issues confronting our residents and businesses.

Public Safety continues to be a primary concern of residents and businesses and the challenge of panhandling is one of the main issues our Public Safety Committee will be addressing. We will be holding a forum on panhandling, its causes and potential solutions, on January 16<sup>th</sup> at the YWCA on Broad Street from 5-7pm. Research indicates that substance abuse is a major contributor to people deciding to panhandle so we've invited several experts in the field of substance abuse treatment to join our discussion. If you are interested in participating, check our website for more information on this upcoming forum.

Another important issue AHNA will be tackling in 2019 is economic development and the revitalization of the Farmington Avenue business corridor. There have been some positive developments recently on Farmington Avenue corridor with the opening of a new restaurant. HFC Chicken at 271 Farmington Avenue opened last year in the old Dunkin Donuts building. They serve fried chicken and Indian cuisine. Also, the old Comet Diner is being restored by former Hartford Economic Development Director Wayne Benjamin who has committed to restoring the Diner to its original glory and place it on the national and state registry of historic properties to preserve its history in our neighborhood. We believe these two positive developments will be the spark for more economic revitalization on Farmington Avenue.

We will continue other successful endeavors that improve the quality of life in Asylum Hill, such as the Sigourney Square Park Family Day. Neighborhood parking is an emerging issue that AHNA will tackle with the help of city hall. 2019 will be a busy year for AHNA and we are looking forward to tackling these challenges on behalf of our residents and businesses. As always if you have any questions, would like to join us in our work or have suggestions please feel free to email me at [exdir@asylumhill.org](mailto:exdir@asylumhill.org).