

From the Executive Director
David MacDonald
AHNA Begins Neighborhood Strategic Planning

Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association has begun a process that will update our NRZ Strategic Plan to guide the revitalization of Asylum Hill for the next ten (10) years. To guide this process and insure it's an inclusive and holistic Planning Process, the AHNA BOD has created a Steering Committee to engage our institutional partners in Neighborhood Strategic Planning. AHNA as the Neighborhood Revitalization Group for Asylum Hill has the statutory authority to set development and all other priorities for the neighborhood. Ted Carroll is the volunteer chairman of the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee purpose is:

To support and guide the development of the Asylum Hill neighborhood's strategic plan so that a diverse array of residents and stakeholders can work collaboratively to:

- Determine where we want to go as a neighborhood
- Identify key goals and priority projects for 2021 – 2031
- Participate in and support more deeply the work of AHNA
- Map organizational changes and new partnerships to oversee/implement the plan.

To begin this work, the Steering Committee met in March and will likely meet 2 – 3 additional times over the next 6- 7 months. The next meeting of the Steering Committee will be in June. In April and May, the 8 Issue Task Forces (TF) will meet to review data and research potential solutions to the neighborhood's revitalization challenges. The SC intends to present the Strategic Plan to the AHNA BOD in the September-October timeframe with adoption by November by AHNA members, when the SC and TFs would conclude.

Members of the Steering Committee include: Chairman Ted Carroll (AHNA member, resident), Lynn Johnson, (AHNA Director, resident), Esther Gonzales-Torres, (AHNA Director, resident), Jackie McKinney, (AHNA Chairwoman, resident), Janine McMahon, (AHNA Director, resident), Paul O'Mara, (AHNA Director, resident), Louisa Barton-Duguay, (AHNA Treasurer, resident), Vijayalakshmi Sivasankar, (AHNA member, resident), Michael Barr (AHNA Director, resident), Wayne Benjamin, (AHNA Director, local business rep.), Yvonne Mathews, (AHNA Director, Urban League rep.), Michelle McFarland, (AHNA Director, HPL rep.), Ken Johnson, (AHNA Director, NINA rep.), Sarah Morin, (the Hartford rep.), Autumn Florek, (City of Hartford Planning Dept. rep.)

The Task Forces are as follows and are open for any interested person to join:

1) Economic Development – Chaired by Wayne Benjamin, first meeting tentative for Tuesday April 20th at 5:30pm. Initial ideas to explore include Transit-oriented development (TOD) at Union Station and at CT Fast Track Hawthorne site; Continue traffic calming efforts; Work with FAA to complete Farmington Ave. streetscape project, including storefront signage, and street lighting; Key development opportunities: Comet Diner restoration, 85 Sigourney (former Hastings Hotel/Aetna training center) Hawthorn Street North (to work with Housing TF and NINA)

2) Employment – Chaired by Yvonne Matthews

Initial ideas to explore include connecting employer needs with resident skills (to work with Econ. Dev. TF, NINA and Chamber); connect residents with job-training/adult education programs; and connecting employer needs with resident skills (work with local institutional employers, NINA and Hartford Chamber of Commerce).

3) Public Safety – chaired by Janine McMahon

Initial ideas to explore include increase police visibility i.e. reinstate CSO, reactivate police sub-station, etc.); Deploy more cameras and other crime-fighting technology; Build stronger police-community relations through establishment of block watches, community events, etc.

4) Environment – chaired by Lynn Johnson, first meeting scheduled April 14th at 7pm

Initial ideas to explore include increase tree canopy using native species; restoration of the Park River North Watershed; and Work with City to ensure use of environmentally friendly materials/processes in new construction and renovation projects.

5) Youth Enrichment & Education – Chaired by Michelle McFarland

Initial ideas to explore include working with local employers, churches, and colleges to Identify and help recruit volunteers for well-established mentoring and tutoring programs; and develop strategies to connect AH residents to library services.

6) Housing, Historic Preservation and Blight Remediation – chaired by Ken Johnson

Initial ideas to explore include increasing supply of market-rate and affordable housing; prevent creation of any additional restricted-deed housing; and assist landlords committed to taking care of their rental properties.

7) Arts & Culture – Chaired by Jackie McKinney

Initial ideas to explore include promoting AH as an Arts & Cultural Hub with an emphasis on the Farmington Ave. corridor (Art Space, the Stowe Center, Twain House, and HartBeat Ensemble); establish outreach efforts to connect residents to art and music opportunities; reclaim Sigourney Park as a venue for performances and cultural celebrations.

8) Human Services - Chaired by Esther Gonzalez-Torres

Initial ideas to explore include strengthening collaborations among non-profit service providers; Ensure residents are well informed of available services; and support new programs aimed at addressing food insecurity, substance abuse, and health care for residents.

If you are interested in signing up for any of the Task Forces, please visit: www.asylumhill.org or email me at exdir@asylumhill.org.