

## Volunteer of the Month – The Asylum Hill Strategic Plan Task Forces

For everyone who has read David MacDonald's monthly columns this year, you are well aware of the important effort underway to create a Strategic Plan for Asylum Hill. For those who have not, this is for you. It's your opportunity to share your perspective, wisdom and knowledge to make Asylum Hill the best it can be over the next 10 years. Eight task forces have been established, each to focus on areas identified as critical to the wellbeing of Asylum Hill. All are meeting on Zoom, and they include the following.

The **Arts and Culture** taskforce is being led by Jackie McKinney the chair of AHNA who has lived at ArtSpace for more than 20 years and has created art objects in many media. The first meeting of the this taskforce will be Thursday, May 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm.

The **Economic Development** taskforce is being led by Wayne Benjamin, principal at Triumph Venture Capital. His current project is the restoration of the Aetna Diner on the corner of Farmington and Laurel. Their first meeting was 4/20 and the next one will be May 13<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm;

The **Youth Enrichment & Education** taskforce is being led by Michelle McFarland representing the Hartford Public Library. Their first meeting will be May 5<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm ;

The **Workforce Development** taskforce is being led by Yvonne Matthews Job Developer and Workforce Counselor at the Urban League of Greater Hartford and former AHNA chair. Their first meeting was 4/26, and they continue to meet each Monday at 1:00pm.

The **Environmental & Green Initiatives** taskforce is led by Lynn Johnson, AHNA's newest board member, and a long time environmental activist. Their first meeting was 4/14 and they are looking to sponsor several Green projects. Their next meeting will be May 26<sup>th</sup> at 5:00pm.

The **Housing, Historic Preservation & Blight Remediation** taskforce is led by Ken Johnson the Exec. Dir. of NINA who have been advancing the cause of homeowners in Asylum Hill by converting blighted buildings into homeownership opportunities for nearly 20 years. Their first meeting will be May 4<sup>th</sup> at 1:30pm

The **Human Services** taskforce is being led by Esther Gonzalez-Torres, Exec. Dir. of Youth Challenge. They have been helping those with substance addiction issues for more than 50 years. Their first meeting will be May 1<sup>st</sup> at 10:00am.

The **Public Safety** taskforce will be led by Janine McMahon, an Asylum Hill homeowner and Leadership Coordinator at the Asylum Hill Family Center Their first meeting will be scheduled soon.

Each of these focus areas identifies a need where improvement could greatly add to the overall quality of life in Asylum Hill. All of them are meeting remotely via Zoom during the COVID pandemic. If you would like to get more information about any or all of these taskforces or if you have contributions to make, contact [staffadmin@asylumhill.org](mailto:staffadmin@asylumhill.org) or [exdir@asylumhill.org](mailto:exdir@asylumhill.org)

Taskforce meeting will continue through the summer and then The AHNA board will create an Asylum Hill Strategic Plan, which will be presented to the membership at a General meeting in September or October and presented to the City for incorporation into the Plan of Conservation and Development, Hartford 2035.

All of this will be accomplished with 100s of hours of volunteer time, and there's room for more. To join the effort, contact [Staffadmin@asylumhill.org](mailto:Staffadmin@asylumhill.org) or [exdir@asylumhill.org](mailto:exdir@asylumhill.org)