

Town & County Club Spring Forum



On June 20th the Town & County Club's Community Relations Committee hosted their 4th annual Spring Forum. Titled *Envisioning the Future Through the Doors of the Past*, it was a fascinating exploration of Hartford's story, past present and future through its architecture.

The panelists were some of the best of Hartford including Jared Edwards, founding architect of Smith Edwards McCoy Architects and Mary Donahue, historic preservationist and architectural historian representing the Past; Frank Hagaman, Executive Director of Hartford Preservation Alliance and Jackie Gorsky Mandyck, Director of the iQuilt Project representing the present; and Laura Settemyer, Director of Blight Remediation, City of Hartford representing the future.

The panel presentation and Q&A were moderated by Toni Gold, President of Urban Edge Associates.

But before the panel began, Janet Castricum, the Community Relations Committee Chair introduced Susan Aller, a longtime member of the Town & County Club and a member of the Lyman Heritage Preservation Foundation who spoke about the history of the magnificent home that began as the private residence of the Theodore Lyman family before becoming the home of the Town & County Club. This could be seen as a best-case scenario, in that the 27-room mansion, built in 1895 was purchased directly from the original owners in 1925, and all subsequent modifications and restorations have been done in keeping with its original architecture.

The panelists were each given 5 minutes to speak, (with Toni Gold keeping time) mostly as a way to prompt questions afterward. Jared Edwards had the most difficult task of summing up the history of Hartford from its founding to the 1860's followed by Mary Donohue who continued Hartford to the present.

They were followed by Frank Hagaman laying out the challenges of preserving what is left of Hartford's historic buildings both for cultural and economic reasons and Jackie Mandyck summarizing the recent effort that is the iQuilt Project. Finally Laura Settemyer, newly appointed Director of Blight Remediation for the City of Hartford summarized her efforts over the past several months and her plans going forward.

Many of the questions that followed were directed to Laura and focused on blight remediation as well as to Frank regarding the HPA's efforts currently, but everyone had an opportunity to add to the conversation and everyone present came away better informed.

The desire of the women of the Town & County Club to be part of the neighborhood's efforts toward solutions is both welcomed and encouraging. For photos of the event as well as the house tour that was offered before hand, go to <http://tinyurl.com/yadunoyq>