

From the Executive Director

David MacDonald

AHNA Strategic Planning Task Forces begin their work

AHNA's Strategic Planning Task Forces are forming and beginning their work to develop plans and priorities to guide the revitalization of Asylum Hill for the next ten (10) years. AHNA has recent survey data to guide our work, thanks to the Hartford's neighborhood survey of more than 300 members of the Asylum Hill community. This survey identified more employment opportunities as the top issue affecting Asylum Hill residents. Given the great importance of addressing this need, the AHNA Board of Directors created two task forces to look at the issues of employment and economic development.

AHNA's **Economic Development Task Force** is chaired by AHNA Director Wayne Benjamin. The Task Force has met once and reviewed the suggested areas for development. The Task Force is focusing on strengthening Farmington Avenue by ensuring the streetscape project is completed, supporting the Farmington Avenue Alliance, focus on the block starting at the corner of Farmington and Laurel St. including the newly historic property of the Comet Diner and 285 South Marshall Street, leverage neighborhood arts and culture to spur economic activity, and work with the Business Improvement District to enhance, cleaning, security and marketing for the Avenue. Additional areas of focus include supporting small businesses, transportation issues to make improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists, and address blight, brownfields and other re-development opportunities, especially 85 Sigourney Street (the old Hastings Hotel/Aetna Training center). Their next meeting is scheduled for May 13th at 5:30pm. If you'd like to participate please email me at exdir@asylumhill.org to be connected.

The **Workforce Development Task Force**, chaired by AHNA Director and Urban League Workforce manager Yvonne Matthews has met once and reviewed ideas on how to help Asylum Hill residents gain access to more and better employment opportunities. They met with representatives from the United Way about expanding the Working Cities model into Asylum Hill and the creation of an Asylum Hill Employment Resource Navigator to connect residents to employment. Other ideas include creating a smartphone app for asylum hill residents looking for employment or other employment services and how AHNA can connect residents to other employment services. They also plan to collaborate with Capital Workforce Partners to identify more resources for Asylum Hill residents. The Task Force is looking for more volunteers so if you're interested in helping increase employment opportunities for Asylum Hill residents, please email me at exdir@asylumhill.org to join the Workforce Development Task Force. The Task Force meets every Monday at 1pm.

Other Task Forces looking for volunteers includes the Public Safety, Arts and Culture, Environment and Green Initiatives, Housing, Historic Preservation and Blight Remediation, Human Services, and Youth Enrichment/Education. Please email me at

exdir@asylumhill.org to join any of the Task Forces. Please join now if you're interested, the Task Forces will complete their work by June.