

From the Executive Director
David MacDonald
Asylum Hill Draft Neighborhood Strategic Plan
to be presented at Oct 4th General Meeting

AHNA's Strategic Planning Steering committee has received draft plans from each of the 8 Task Forces and they will be presented to AHNA's membership at our October 4th General Meeting. Plans for Economic Development, Employment, Housing and Historic Preservation, Human Services, Arts and Culture, Youth, Public Safety, and Environmental and Green Initiatives have been drafted and will be presented on Oct. 4th. There will be breakout sessions to collect feedback from the people attending. A short summary is provided here:

Economic Development: Vision: To revitalize the Farmington Avenue commercial corridor, transform empty buildings and brownfield sites, and support several "cornerstone" projects that will enhance the economic health of Asylum Hill's businesses and residents.

To retain businesses and attract visitors and new residents, Asylum Hill must eliminate blighted, vacant and abandoned properties and transform them into productive and aesthetically pleasing assets. 4 Goals have been recommended to accomplish this vision.

- Goal 1: Encourage and support "Cornerstone" development projects - 2021 and beyond
- Goal 2: Remediate and redevelop the neighborhood's "Brownfields" - 2021 and beyond
- Goal 3: Support the growth of new and existing businesses - 2021 and beyond
- Goal 4: Promote and support Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to spur large-scale development, Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), and innovation

Employment: Vision: Residents of Asylum Hill will have ready access to resources that will lead to meaningful and sustainable employment. Their recommended goals are:

- Goal 1: Publicize job opportunities in Asylum Hill and elsewhere in the city.
- Goal 2: Increase effective marketing and coordination of existing resources that can address transportation, affordable childcare, mental health and other barriers to employment.
- Goal 3: Ensure the availability of additional services needed by residents to overcome barriers to training and employment opportunities.
- Goal 4: Create more internships, particularly ones that offer stipends, for youth 18 and under.
- Goal 5: Expand the number of case managers and volunteer mentors who can guide those seeking training and employment opportunities.

Housing and Historic Preservation: Vision: To transform Asylum Hill into an affordable and attractive neighborhood of choice to a diverse population seeking either ownership or rental opportunities. Their recommended goals are:

- Goal 1: Increase homeownership opportunities
- Goal 2: Remediate and eliminate blight
- Goal 3: Encourage transit-oriented development
- Goal 4: Promote historic preservation and discourage demolition

Human Services: Vision: Residents of Asylum Hill will have access to the services needed to help themselves and their families become all they can be. Their goals are:

- Goal 1: Ensure that existing services are well coordinated, better known and more accessible
- Goal 2: Ensure the availability of additional services needed by residents to address their social, economic and health needs.

Arts and Culture: Vision: To create more vitality in Asylum Hill by supporting its artists and by celebrating the neighborhood's diverse cultures and rich history. Their recommended goals are:

- Goal 1: Promote Asylum Hill as a destination for those who enjoy art, culture and history.
- Goal 2: Provide opportunities to showcase the neighborhood's art and artists.
- Goal 3: Celebrate the history of Asylum Hill.

Youth: Vision: Asylum Hill will be known as a place where diverse youth residents are leaders in improving the quality of life in their neighborhood and are empowered to organize their own neighborhood improvement projects. Their recommended goals are:

Goal 1: Facilitate additional collaboration and coordination between AHNA and groups serving Asylum Hill youth and their parent advocates.

Goal 2: Ensure a safe-haven for children and families in Sigourney Square Park.

Goal 3: Encourage, train and support volunteers who can support West Middle, Hartford Public and Classical Magnet Schools.

Goal 4: Encourage teens to have access to technology (video, audio, and print resources).

Goal 5: Work with Leadership Greater Hartford and other groups to provide opportunities for youth advocacy, leadership, and employment. Asylum Hill youth identify the issues that they wish to advocate for, culminating in the election of at least one youth leader to the AHNA Board of Directors.

Goal 6: Work with Compass Youth Collaborative to teach youth on how to use peaceful approaches for responding to conflict.

Goal 7: Work with Our Piece of the Pie (OPP) to identify youth and mentors for Youth Service Corps.

Goal 8: Encouraging youth to join Police Explorers and/or to join the PAL to create a pool of future law enforcement candidates.

Public Safety: Vision: To create, in reality, and in perception, a safe, pedestrian-friendly, and inviting neighborhood for all who live, work and visit the Asylum Hill neighborhood. Their recommended goals are:

- Goal 1: Create a safer haven for families and children at Sigourney Square Park.
- Goal 2: Address speeding, noise and other quality of life issues.
- Goal 3: Reduce automobile break-ins and other larcenies.
- Goal 4: Reduce gun violence.
- Goal 5: Identify, prepare and recruit more Hartford residents to become candidates for the police department.

Environmental and Green Initiatives: Vision: That Asylum Hill be known as a model urban green community and become a more beautifully sustainable place to live, work and visit.

Their recommended goals are:

- Goal 1: Expand our native tree canopy to 30% of Asylum Hill.
- Goal 2: Develop Asylum Hill Pollinator Gardens.
- Goal 3: Conserve the north branch of the Park River.
- Goal 4: Plan and implement bike paths and traffic calming areas in Asylum Hill.
- Goal 5: Develop a program to collect residents' food scraps and turn them into compost.
- Goal 6: Encourage energy efficiency and solarization in Asylum Hill homes, schools, businesses and places of worship.

I want to thank all the volunteers, residents and stakeholders, and especially the chairs of each Task Force for their hard work and thoughtful responses to the challenges in Asylum Hill. We welcome all feedback and comments. If you have ideas you believe we should consider, I urge you to attend our General Meeting on October 4th and join a breakout session to share your thoughts.