

From the Executive Director
David MacDonald
Happy New Year from everyone at AHNA

AHNA wishes you and your family a happy and healthy New Year. Our first General neighborhood meeting of 2022 will take place on Monday, January 10th at 6:15pm via Zoom. The agenda for January includes the public hearing starting at 7pm on the recently completed Asylum Hill Strategic Plan (the last opportunity for residents and stakeholders to request changes or additions to the Plan prior to approval by the membership), a presentation on the Traffic Calming proposal for Ashley Street, and introduction of Asylum Hill resident Tiana Hercules, the soon to be appointed Working Families party member to the Court of Common Council, who will replace Asylum Hill resident Councilor Wildaliz Bermudez, who is resigning from the Council in early 2022.

Last year's column announced the kick-off of the neighborhood Strategic Planning process for Asylum Hill. We were successful in completing the new plan for Asylum Hill in 2021. We had more than 74 residents and stakeholders participate in its development. The Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association's mission statement is that AHNA empowers and connects residents and stakeholders to improve the quality of life in Asylum Hill. One of the many ways we brought together residents and stakeholders in 2021 was through the Neighborhood Strategic Planning process. The Strategic Plan guides the revitalization of Asylum Hill and it was last completed in 2009 so it needed updating. It is a comprehensive plan that identifies priorities and goals in the focus areas of: Economic Development, Employment/jobs, Environmental and Green Initiatives, Housing and Historic Preservation, Arts & Culture, Public Safety, Youth, and Human Services in Asylum Hill. We will begin 2022 by identifying the priorities for action and implementing these action items.

The Hartford conducted a survey of Asylum Hill in 2020 that identified 3 top priorities of the neighborhood as employment/jobs, housing/homelessness, and public safety. AHNA looks forward to partnering with the Hartford to implement action that will address these priorities and continue the improvements we have recently seen in Asylum Hill.

After convening the Strategic Planning Steering Committee in January 2021, we established eight (8) Task Forces to focus on the priority areas listed above. The Task Forces brought together stakeholders and residents to work together on finding solutions to the challenges confronting Asylum Hill. AHNA Committees will be tasked with overseeing implementation of the Plan. Despite the tremendous amount of volunteer hours put into the Plan, Asylum Hill volunteers went above and beyond to continue working to improve Asylum Hill throughout the year. A new pollinator garden was installed on the corner of Hawthorn and Sigourney Streets, an energy fair was held in Sigourney Square Park, and neighborhood cleanups were organized. A new mural of bees and flowers was painted on the 224 EcoSpace, called "Bee the Change." The South Marshall Block Party returned after a year off due to Covid. And with Speaker Ritter's help, we secured \$7 million to complete the Farmington Avenue streetscape project.

We invite all our partners, stakeholders and residents to attend the General Meeting on January 10th for the Public Hearing on our Strategic Plan. This will be the last time to suggest changes before the membership votes on the Plan.