

# KEYS TO THE CITY

WHAT IS — OR SHOULD BE — HAPPENING IN HARTFORD'S NEIGHBORHOODS

## Blue Hills

Historic district approved for 30 houses on Ridgefield Street. At University of Hartford, dorm construction to begin this summer; new field allows baseball team to play real home games. University High School of Science and Engineering struggles through regulatory hoops but hopes for groundbreaking soon on Mark Twain Drive. Arts center at Cadillac site is \$3 million from start of \$20 million first phase.

## Upper Albany

Work finally beginning on \$25 million sewer project to address backups and overflows. Nonprofit Chrysalis Center to begin renovations of huge Sealtest building on Homestead Avenue next month. Black bunting on Artists Collective recalls recent death of Jackie McLean, who founded organization with his wife, Dollie, 35 years ago. Today, the collective is a cultural force, hosting first-class performances and shaping young dreams.

## Clay-Arsenal

Building continues despite gang skirmishes. A new house sits on lot near where 7-year-old Takira Gaston was caught in gunfight in 2001. A new Philips Metropolitan CME church is rising on Main Street near where Jashon Bryant was shot by officer a year ago. Biggest news: Groundbreaking soon on Main Street gateway to North End — 57 units of housing in pretty village square with 20,000 square feet of retail.

## Northeast

Housing Authority submitting new proposal to HUD for redeveloping Nelton Court. Agency plans to start by tearing down two vacant buildings on Acton Street. Meanwhile, ill-conceived proposal to build 20 homes on what is now Brackett Park is moving forward. Neighborhood also produces design for streetscape project along Main Street between Terry Square and the Windsor line. City commits \$800,000 in seed money toward project, but state legislature takes a pass on funding the full \$6 million.

## North Meadows

Neighborhood becoming a car-buying mecca. Bright and shiny Car Max dealership has opened on the former Hartford Jai Alai site, with a new Subaru dealership on the way. By year's end, all of the former fronton land will be back in use. Car dealers say a concentration of dealerships (and advertising) helps everyone. New Quiznos a hit.

## West End

West Enders watch debate over confluence of Broad Street, Asylum and Farmington avenues. Road work affects effort to improve traffic on Farmington. Interrelationship of neighborhood byways a key to a connected, pleasant city. Meeting at Mark Twain House at 7 p.m. June 14 to show off design for street improvements on Farmington. Festival on Farmington Avenue June 10.

## Asylum Hill

Connecticut Culinary Institute's move to the former Hastings Hotel is tremendous. It will grow from 250 students to 500, a home run for the Hill. With Classical Magnet School opening on Woodland Street and the renovation/expansion of Hartford Public High, neighborhood becoming education central. Three beautifully renovated houses on Ashley and Garden streets garnered 11 offers in a week.

## Parkville

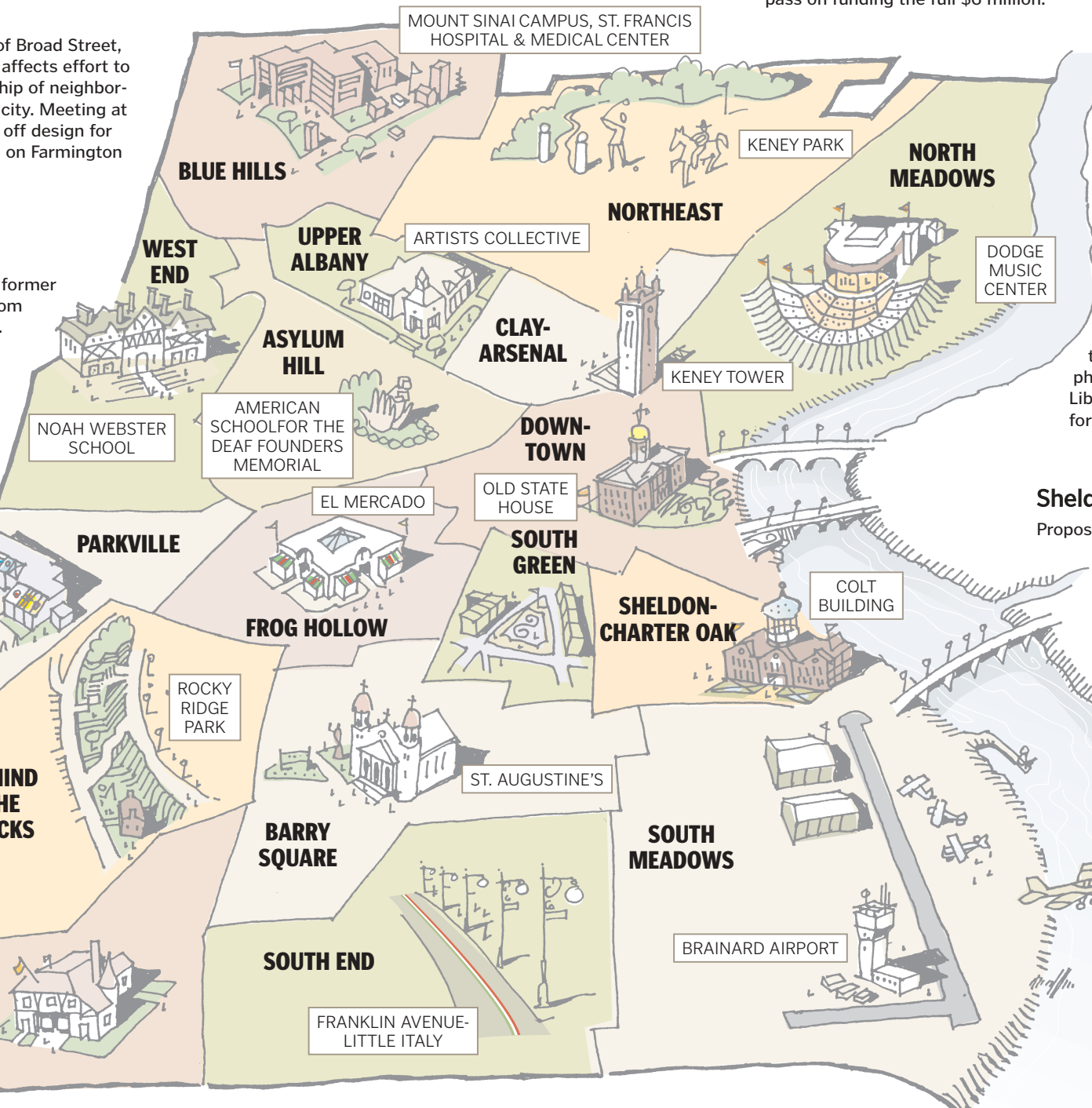
Carlos Mouta, local entrepreneur extraordinaire, has another big idea, purchases Bradlees building. Won't settle for any old tenant. Envisions Latin/European indoor mall of specialty shops, restaurants to appeal to middle-income customers from throughout region. Brazilian, Peruvian, Portuguese flavor should be a big draw. Approvals in hand for 56 loft apartments in renovated rubber factory.

## Frog Hollow

Park Street streetscape project 60 percent complete. Better slow than never. Last phase, Washington to Main Street, done by fall. New streetlights sparkle. Latino food warehouse ready by fall. Exciting plans for Lyric Theater include library, cafe, bookstore, performance space, culture galore.

## Behind the Rocks

Goodwin branch of Hartford Public Library reopens to much glee. Branch, closed since 2002, is now twice its former size, offers classes, author readings, community meeting space. Now, how about slowing down speeding cars on Zion? The neighborhood mourns the passing of Gladys Moore, a fixture at Timothy's Restaurant.



## South Downtown

Immanuel House proposing to build housing for low-income seniors on Hudson Street. Devil's in the details: Design of the 40-unit building must be appropriate for an urban setting. With more people living downtown, small businesses opening along Main Street. Much construction activity on first floor of The Linden. Across the street, Cate's has morphed in the Corner Bistro. Library expansion a major plus for the neighborhood.

## Sheldon-Charter Oak

Proposed master plan takes shape for 18-acre botanical garden at Colt Park's western end. At eastern end, groundbreaking expected in July on new home for Sports Science Academy, a magnet school for sports-related careers. Former Dutch Point housing project site sprouts several nice-looking apartment buildings at Wylys and Norwich streets; two three-story apartment buildings near completion at Lisbon and Stonington streets. Renovation of Colt Armory's southern and eastern facades underway.

Hartford's Neighborhoods And Their Landmarks

ILLUSTRATION BY PHIL LOHMAN / SPECIAL TO THE COURANT • TEXT BY COURANT EDITORIAL STAFF WRITERS

## Southwest

Flowering trees, newly mown lawns and evidence of spring fix-up work dot the neighborhood streets. City workers have ground down asphalt on parts of Freeman, Forster and Carmel streets, among others. Paving to come, hopefully soon — especially on Monroe Street next to Kennelly School, where cars line up to collect students. Neighbors enjoy the quiet, well-kept streets, would like to see police cruisers a little more often.

## South End

Metzner Center expansion finally underway; will add a computer room, library and conference areas, among other things. A new "boundless playground" at Goodwin Park will have something for every child, regardless of disability. A dome over park's Olympic-size pool would make for a great year-round facility. After July 1, shuttle buses will link convention center patrons with South Hartford's many offerings. South Hartford Guides program gets underway.

## Barry Square

Spring blossoms with fulfilled promises. Catering business opens in former bakery. Zoning OK for Dunkin' Donuts at Otis and Maple. Streetscape work begins. Forty volunteers at annual cleanup, a fine show of pride. Want to be part of it? Neighborhood leaders selling personalized bricks for triangle where community Christmas tree will stand.

## South Green

Finally, action to spruce up Barnard Park. Gov. Rell plants 10 trees. Spanish American Merchants Association to provide two security cameras as plans to pipe classical music into the park proceed. Couldn't happen a moment too soon for homeowners. All that's needed now is for the city to relocate the nearby homeless shelters and the methadone clinic.

## South Meadows

New state law that increases penalties for drag racing is already having a dampening effect on weekend mayhem at Murphy Road. City is expected to follow with an ordinance of its own. Businesses in this booming neighborhood are concerned that their interests be protected should the MDC's idea for a residential/commercial/retail development gain traction.