

## INTRODUCTION

*Asylum Hill is an anomaly in terms of successful neighborhoods today: tree-lined streets and avenues with historic buildings that could provide for plenty of potential housing, numerous community serving institutions, schools within walking distance, a park with imminent renovation plans, a library with future expansion plans, an existing commercial strip with great potential, and easily accessed public transportation. It is a neighborhood in which the description "live, work, play and worship" can actually be realized given its numerous attributes. Sadly, our experience as residents of recent years is that this potential has not been realized.*

*Rather, our neighborhood is plagued with numerous vacant or abandoned historic structures and a population that is extremely transient, or, unnecessarily overcrowded in some buildings. We are crippled by the national attention of the status of our school system, and literally branded by a public perception of being "crime-ridden". Our commercial strip does not serve its population correctly, and our residents have a fundamental need to obtain non-existent jobs within the neighborhood. Herein lies the enigma of Asylum Hill -- so much history, so many attributes, but so many barriers to the elements of basic living and a population that is growing impatient in its effort to overcome these barriers.*

*Our well-documented Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) plan seeks to overcome these problems and provide one last burst of energy to those who have been searching for the means by which to re-orient and stimulate healthy growth and safer environs in our neighborhood. The asset profiles and action and implementation plans contained in the following pages should reveal the care and planning that went into our efforts. This effort will also enhance the long range plans currently taking shape in the Farmington Avenue business corridor. The Asylum Hill NRZ will embrace this plan and utilize it as a blueprint on which we can build further success, particularly on streets such as Woodland, Laurel, Huntington, Sigourney, etc... These streets will link the "new" Farmington Avenue corridor to neighborhoods that abut Asylum Avenue and Sigourney Park.*

*The NRZ process has provided a much-needed vehicle to come together collectively as a neighborhood and examine the problem, then put our vision and solutions together in short and long term plans that will finally make this vision a reality. Ultimately, we will work to free our neighborhood from becoming reliant upon additional federal programs, crime-related grants, building subsidies, or large-scale corporate giving on a cyclical basis. We must look to attract, maintain, and be permanently self-sustaining -- continually rejuvenated by the social-economic success factors represented within a successful academic/corporate/working class community that is largely recession proof by design. To do so, we will refocus our efforts towards harnessing the spending patterns of a large commuter population that "lives in our neighborhood campus daily" as well as better meet the residential needs of students, smaller family units, professionals, young and old. Our problems are solvable as long as we work through our vision together, alongside those efforts of neighboring institutions, city government, and adjacent neighborhoods.*