

I. OUR VISION FOR ASYLUM HILL

Asylum Hill In The Year 2020 - A Neighborhood for All Seasons

Autumn 2020: Asylum Hill is the city's education neighborhood!!

It is with a great deal of excitement that the new school year begins for the family of Maria DelGado, whose middle child has enrolled in full-day Kindergarten, joining Maria's oldest son at West Middle School. Last evening Maria attended the first PTA meeting of the year. Over 300 parents were in attendance to plan the various fund-raising and support activities they will provide throughout the year. Through the effectiveness of the School to Work Consortium Ms. DelGado is about to begin her first full-time job in the Claims Department at Mass Mutual. Fortunately, Asylum Hill is blessed with an abundance of day care opportunities for her youngest son so she can go to her job. With more and more of West Middle parents working, the neighborhood is also fortunate to have a vital and active group of seniors who volunteer and enrich the lives of Asylum Hill children and residents overall.

The enrollment at West Middle and at its associated Charter School for the Performing Arts is booming. West Middle, with its state-of-the-art facilities and curriculum, has been a magnet for families from throughout the city and region. Its neighborhood appreciation curriculum, designed to develop responsible citizenship and cultural awareness among Asylum Hill children, is a model for the nation. After school programs also abound, including those at the YWCA, Hartford High, and especially those at the Hill Community and Recreation Center, another state-of-the-art facility.

For older children and adults, the School-to-Work Consortium of Hartford High, Capital Community Technical College, corporations such as Aetna, Mass Mutual, St. Francis and The Hartford, is a year-round job-training, work-readiness effort which directly correlates the needs of Hill employers to curriculum for high school students and unemployed residents of the Hill. Efforts have been so successful that at the next legislative session, a bill will be introduced to increase funding for the Hartford's proposal to expand its facilities on the Hill.

Winter 2020:

The Farmington Avenue Business District is revising its semi-annual marketing plan that focuses on promoting the numerous student-related businesses that now populate the Farmington Avenue Corridor. Capitalizing on the ready population of 15,000 area students within a 5-mile radius as well as the abundance of charming, very reasonably priced one bedroom and studio apartments, the Hill and the West End have become the "in" place for students of all ages to live and play.

The vital commercial activity on the Hill is due to the diversity of locally owned and operated businesses which serve the culturally and racially diverse population of the Hill. Commuters returning home delight in the variety of shops conveniently located along the Avenue such as: bakeries, butcher shops, dry cleaners, grocery stores, hardware stores, book stores, pharmacies, markets and gift shops specializing in Asian, European, African/Caribbean, and Latino merchandise. The "Twain Trolley", the area's light rail system which circuits the Hill frequently throughout the day, is enjoyed by visitors as

well as resident children and adults and allows the Hill's hundreds of seniors to take advantage of and enjoy the neighborhood's many amenities.

The Alliance of Asylum Hill Agencies is holding its quarterly meeting. The neighborhood has been recognized over and over again for its model support services at every level and for the cooperation network established by its social service agencies to ensure the availability and delivery of services such as affordable day care, transportation, senior programs and services, job training, and recreational activities.

Spring: 2021

Neighborhood block watches and increased policing at the turn of the century, helped return the streets to the residents who look forward to each spring when the Hill comes alive with pedestrian traffic and commerce.

With public safety restored to the area, the walking tradition has returned to Asylum Hill through its award-winning Historic District Initiative. Weekly Saturday tours which celebrate its Victorian housing stock, now 80% owner occupied, cultural and historic resources of the Mark Twain and Stowe-Day Houses, and the Antiquarian & Landmarks Society bring people back to the streets. Visitors enjoy the Victorian lighting, brick walkways, wrought iron fences, trash receptacles, historic signage at entrances and gateways announcing companies, institutions, homes on the National Register of Historic Places, gift shops, restaurants, and cafes.

Three new employees of Aetna meet after work at the coffee bar on the corner of Laurel Street. They have all just graduated from one of the numerous higher educational institutions in the area and have decided to continue living in the area where they loved attending school. They revel in the convenience of living in Asylum Hill, a truly great place to work, worship, shop and dine, and all within walking distance of their condos on Collins Street. As the evening progresses, Farmington and Asylum Avenues come alive as students, couples, families, teenagers, and seniors walk the Avenues in the tradition of all great cities greeting each other, window shopping, stopping for a drink, coffee, ice cream, resting on one of the many streetside benches or at one of the side-walk cafes.

These three students-turned-employees have been invited to a meeting at the expanded Hartford Public Library. It is such a beautiful evening, that the meeting is moved to patio tables in front of the library. The meeting is to recruit Asylum Hill residents to volunteer for the Hill beautification program which utilizes neighborhood residents to plant flowers in the redesigned and landscaped Sigourney Square Park as well as six smaller gardens throughout the neighborhood.

Summer 2021:

The neighborhood is abuzz with plans for the annual Ethnic Festival. It is the largest neighborhood festival in the city and most neighborhood streets are closed to traffic. Merchants, business owners, neighborhood groups, schools, cultural institutions, and corporations come together for the kickoff parade and day-long celebration of Asylum Hill's rich cultural and educational resources, racial and cultural diversity, beautiful residences, gardens, and park. The festival is planned by a committee of over 100 volunteers from throughout the neighborhood.