

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Asylum Hill is a densely populated, ethnically and socioeconomically diverse neighborhood. Residents are largely working class and moderate income, but significant pockets of poverty persist. Potentially Asylum Hill could be a model mixed income neighborhood. There are many small businesses, large corporations, professional offices, and important institutions located here. The main commercial corridor, while busy, is characterized by aesthetically unpleasant facades, a lack of products and services useful to neighborhood residents, and heavy rush hour traffic.

A positive and relatively recent development involves Asylum Hill participation with adjoining neighborhoods in development initiatives. The most major of these projects, Veeder Place, involves rehabilitation of the historic Veeder Root factory into office space, and light manufacturing. This is a tri-neighborhood initiative that includes the Asylum Hill, Clay Arsenal, and Upper Albany communities. Also, the development of a regional flea market is being explored for a portion of the Hawthorn Building. More recently, Asylum Hill has been working with the West End on several projects. The Farmington Avenue Business District is a merchants' association spanning the two neighborhoods, while the Farmington Avenue Joint Committee is working on physical and economic rejuvenation of the Farmington Avenue commercial corridor from downtown to West Hartford. As a result, these two neighborhoods are in regular communication with one another.

With these realities in mind, the goals and strategies listed below will help the Asylum Hill Neighborhood work toward a more livable and vibrant community.

GOAL ONE: INCREASE ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS.

Strategy A: Conduct an asset survey to identify residents' skills, certifications, and interests as well as institutional and programmatic resources.

Time Frame: January to December 1998

Lead Group(s): NRZ Committee / Citizens' Research Education Network (CREN)

Actions:

1. Meet with the Citizens' Research Education Network - month 1
2. Meet with the Trinity Center for Neighborhoods - month 2
3. Review and revise the Sheldon/Charter Oak survey instrument - months 3 & 4
4. Implement the survey - months 5-7
5. Compile and analyze the data - months 8-10
6. Use the data to expand the Jobs Bank file (below) and possibly in conjunction with the Peer Lending Project - months 11-12.

Strategy B: Create, promote, and maintain a Jobs Bank file of neighborhood residents' skills, certifications, and interests to facilitate connection with employers and to help identify training needs.

Time Frame: January to December 1998

Lead Group(s): Parents Against Violent Environments (PAVE) / Asylum Hill Economic Development Committee (AHED) / Asylum Hill Organizing Project (AHOP)

- Actions:**
1. Meet with PAVE organizer to determine what has been done already - month 1
 2. Identify appropriate computer software for use at AHOP and the public library - month 2
 3. Devise a promotional method in conjunction with PAVE and AHOP - months 8-10
 4. Gather additional data on jobs - months 3-5
 5. Gather additional data on residents' skills - months 3-5
 6. Gather information on training programs - months 6-7
 7. Provide job-hunt skills training - months 1-12
 8. Request that staffing to support this project be included in AHOP fundraising proposals and NRZ submissions for funds - months 1-12
 9. Integrate affirmative action information and strategies to increase opportunities - months 3-5
 10. Promote a neighborhood workforce of contractors to rehabilitate and maintain buildings and parks - months 10-12

Strategy C: Promote work opportunities for youth.

Time Frame: To begin January 1998

Lead Group(s): AHED / AHOP

- Actions:**
1. Explore and promote entrepreneurial and job placement programs for youth such as "Our Piece of the Pie" - scheduled to begin 1/98
 2. Explore and promote youth internships and apprenticeships with major neighborhood corporations and institutions - months 1-12

Strategy D: Explore the health care arena as a growing employment sector.

Time Frame: Phase II / 1999

Lead Group(s): AHED / PAVE / AHOP

- Actions:**
1. Identify local health care provision agencies and training programs - months 1-2
 2. Meet with health care providers and trainers to discuss the market - months 3-4
 3. Develop a plan for increasing access to health care jobs by neighborhood residents - months 5-6
 4. Implement the plan - months 7-12

GOAL 2: CREATE JOBS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS.

Strategy A: Establish a cooperative network of licensed in-home child care providers.

Time Frame: June 1998 - June 1999

Lead Group(s): AHED / PAVE / Hartford Working Group on Community Economic Development (HWGCED)

- Actions:**
1. Meet with PAVE to clarify what has been done already - month 1
 2. Identify various technical assistance providers - months 2-3
 3. Meet with technical assistance providers - months 4-6
 4. Select a model and technical assistance provider - month 8
 5. Pursue funding and staffing to implement the program - months 9-12

Strategy B: Establish a neighborhood “doorman” enterprise that can provide security and grounds clean-up for multi-unit residences, businesses, and parks.

Time Frame: Phase II / 1999

Lead Group(s): Hill Housing, Inc. / NRZ / HWGCED / AHOP

- Actions:**
1. Organize Asylum Hill landlord association - month 1
 2. Meet with landlords to explain the concept and identify if there is need and interest - months 2-4
 3. Meet with ICA group representatives to explore a worker-ownership design - month 5
 4. Meet with local security companies to discuss the project - month 6
 5. Select a model and technical assistance provider - month 7
 6. Secure funding and staffing for the project - months 9-12

Strategy C: Explore uses for the Hawthorn Building.

Time Frame: on-going

Lead Group(s): AHED / Hill Housing, Inc. / CREN

- Actions:**
1. Meet with building owner, Bill Bellock. Tour the building.
 2. Determine what the environmental problems are and how to correct them.
 3. Meet with representatives of the Coalition to Strengthen the Sheldon/Charter Oak Neighborhood and CREN to discuss the process for reclaiming a whole building.
 4. Meet with people to discuss the viability of a small business incubator model.
 5. Meet with people to discuss ideas on light manufacturing.
 6. Pursue development plans for weekend flea market site.

Strategy D: Explore the possibility of setting up greenhouses at the south end of Laurel Street.

Time Frame: Phase II / 1999

Lead Group(s): AHED / Hill Housing / Knox Foundation

- Actions:**
1. Meet with Mike McGarry and representatives of the Knox Foundation - month 1
 2. Develop a plan for next steps - months 2 and 3
 3. Implement the plan - months 4-12

GOAL 3: ENCOURAGE LOCAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT.

Strategy A: Establish a neighborhood Business Resource Center that will provide (or make referrals to) technical assistance for businesses, information on availability of capital, an inventory of available commercial space, and support for the new merchant association.

Time Frame: on-going

Lead Group(s): AHED / Hartford Public Library / AHOP

- Actions:**
1. Determine what materials and equipment are needed.
 2. Explore the viability of placing the project at a newly-located Mark Twain Branch of the Hartford Public Library.
 3. Explore the possibility of locating the project at the Capital Community Technical College library.
 4. Determine funding sources for the project.
 5. Request that part-time staff to support this project be included in AHOP fundraising proposals and NRZ submissions for funds.
 6. Decide whether the project should eventually move to the new AHOP building.

Strategy B: Support efforts to identify desirable businesses for Asylum Hill.

Time Frame: January to December 1998

Lead Group(s): Farmington Avenue Business District (FABD) / City of Hartford

- Actions:**
1. Review City of Hartford documents that discuss what is missing - month 1
 2. Review the CREN/AHED Business Survey for ideas - month 1
 3. Refer possibilities for new businesses to FABD for outreach - months 1-12
 4. At meetings of the Asylum Hill Economic Committee, talk with FABD representatives about next steps - months 4, 8, 12
 5. Work with the West End Civic Association, Amadon and Associates, and local small businesses and major corporations to generate ideas - months 1-12

Strategy C: Support marketing and promotional efforts of Asylum Hill businesses.

Time Frame: January to April 1998 and Phase II / 1999

Lead Group(s): FABD

- Actions:**
1. Coupon promotions - Phase II / 1999
 2. Restaurant and recreational activities brochure - months 1-4

Strategy D: Set zoning and design standards for the neighborhood.

Time Frame: Phase II / 1999

Lead Group(s): NRZ / Farmington Avenue Joint Committee (FAJC) / FABD

- Actions**
1. Create an Asylum Hill / West End zoning committee.
 2. Analyze zoning designations that are detrimental to the neighborhood.
 3. Establish recommendations for zoning changes for the neighborhood.
 4. Determine standards for design regulation such as commercial architecture, signs, landscaping, parking, and pedestrian walkways.
 5. Meet with City Council members, Planning Commission members, and Zoning Board of Appeals members to promote recommendations.

Strategy E: Gather and disseminate information on and develop plans that are congruent with city, regional, and state efforts that address economic planning and development.

Time Frame: January to December 1998

Lead Group(s): NRZ / AHED / AHOP

- Actions:**
1. Identify which efforts we wish to monitor - month 1
 2. Designate contact person for each effort - months 2-4
 3. Designate which organizations will receive the information - months 5-6
 4. Arrange for in-kind copying and mailing of documents through neighborhood institutions and corporations - months 8 on

Strategy F: Endorse, advocate for, and help develop independent projects that contribute to neighborhood economic viability and development such as Veeder Place, local daycare centers, Capital Community Technical College, the Griffin Line, the Peer Lending Project, and the coffee importation project. Expand transportation alternatives especially to get neighborhood residents to suburban jobs. Improve overall transportation without highway expansion.

Strategy G: Actively market vacant office space in Asylum Hill.

Time Frame: Phase II / 1999

Lead Organization(s): AHED / Hill Housing / FABD / NRZ

- Actions:**
1. Compile a list of properties - months 1-2
 2. Determine what is currently being done to market these properties - months 2-3
 3. Determine what additional strategies could be helpful - months 6-8
 4. Develop a proposal to hire a “marketing coordinator” to promote all aspects of Asylum Hill