

## BLUE HILLS NRZ CONTEXT



The Blue Hills Neighborhood, situated in the northwest corner of the City, boasts a stable residential population supported by a high level of homeownership and complemented by a strong institutional presence. The north-south orientation of Blue Hills Avenue, providing spectacular views to the western ridge, gave rise to the neighborhood's name. Blue Hills occupies a strategic position between the older central city to the east and suburban development to the north and west.

The neighborhood is comprised of primarily single-family and two-family residences, some 700 public housing units within Westbrook Village and Bowles Park, and a commercial corridor along Blue Hills Avenue. Oak Hill School (Connecticut School for the Blind), Saint Francis Medical Center/Mount Sinai Hospital Campus, The Village for Families & Children, and part of the University of Hartford are prominent institutions in Blue Hills.

Blue Hill's Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) boundaries are consistent with the City's long-established neighborhood boundaries, with the exclusion of those residential properties on the east side of Bloomfield Avenue, whose owners have expressed a preference for joining residential owners on the west side of Bloomfield Avenue in the West End NRZ.

Specifically, as shown on the Context Map, the NRZ's boundaries are from Keney Park north along Coventry Street, west along the Bloomfield municipal boundary, and then south along Bloomfield Avenue, excluding the residential properties on the east side, continuing along Albany Avenue and then northeast along the Westbourne Parkway to Ridgefield Street.

These boundaries include two major institutions that have indicated a preference for being included in the Blue Hills NRZ – the University of Hartford and the Village for Families and Children, both of which have a long history of cooperation with Blue Hills; and includes the University of Hartford housing complex, which the U.S. Census includes with other parts of Blue Hills in Census Tract 5038.

The Blue Hills Civic Association, which serves as the Blue Hills Problem-Solving Committee, and which initiated formation of the Blue Hills NRZ, concurs in these boundary definitions.

As one of the last neighborhoods in the City to be developed, the character of Blue Hills reflects the suburban scale that flourished as the area was transformed from a predominantly rural

farming area to a low density white collar neighborhood. This transformation was spurred by a growing insurance and banking industry.

Residential growth was accompanied by an increasing institutional presence. The Hebrew Home for the Aged and Mount Sinai Hospital, now part of Saint Francis Medical Center, were brought into the neighborhood by the Jewish community which predominated up through the 1960s. Oak Hill School and the Children's Village (now the Village for Children & Families) followed. The University of Hartford's campus now occupies part of the neighborhood's western border along with the private Watkinson School. A magnet elementary school is under construction on the University's campus. Presently, Annie Fisher, Sarah Rawson and Mark Twain Elementary Schools and Weaver High School are within the neighborhood. Two other public institutions, the Blue Hills branch of Hartford Public Library and Fire Station 16, are located within the Blue Hills business district.

Although vacant or commercially developable property is scarce, Blue Hills will soon benefit from a newly constructed CVS at the corner of Blue Hills Avenue and Manchester Street/Tower Avenue.

The quality of life afforded residents of Blue Hills has historically attracted upwardly-mobile people from a range of ethnic backgrounds and cultures. The neighborhood is now home to predominantly African-American and Caribbean-American people. Increasingly, perceptions of inferior schools drug trafficking, and taxes are eroding the neighborhood's confidence in its ability to sustain its standard for living. As a Neighborhood Revitalization Zone, Blue Hills is intent on pro-actively meeting this challenge.