

# CONTEXT

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Clay Arsenal neighborhood lies just north of Downtown, and centers around the major arteries of Main Street, Albany Avenue, and Garden Street. The section west of Main Street lies on a slope slowly rising above Downtown traditionally known as Clay Hill. The area east of Main Street has been known as the Arsenal area since 1812, when a State Arsenal (now demolished) was first constructed at the corner of present-day Main and Pavilion Streets.

Clay Arsenal is a neighborhood bursting with potential. We have a great location and a long proud history. We are one of the few parts of the City growing in population. Our population is young and ethnically diverse, with seniors (age 65 and over) a growing segment of the population.

We recognize that there is a flip side to some of our strengths. An old densely developed neighborhood that has mostly been home to working class people inevitably shows wear and tear. The density of development and the size of residential units may no longer match residents' needs. In renovating and rehabilitating our housing stock, we should seek to lower the density and reconfigure interiors. Our type of residential development yields more rental than homeownership scenarios, raising the concern of absentee landlords. Educational attainment and employment can be issues for immigrant and poor populations, leaving them to deal with social distress. The age and scale of our commercial and industrial development may not match current and future needs without help to determine appropriate uses and partners for redevelopment.

But through the NRZ process we have found that the energy and commitment to make Clay Arsenal a better place are right here in the neighborhood – in our residents, in our institutions and in our non-profit and service organizations.

Our strengths and assets need to be directly focused on issues and challenges that are affecting our daily lives and diminishing our ability to truly function as a neighborhood. To do so will require us to commit to change and to sustain resident involvement. This is why the NRZ process is so important to us right now. It will formalize our mission as advocates for change through a united voice. After all, it is through advocacy and advocacy only, that we have achieved our notable success. Beginning with our efforts to push drug activity out of Bellevue Square and then support its transformation to Mary Shepherd Place, followed by increasing City services for rodent control and trash pick-up, and now monitoring the clean up of 76-80 Pliny Street. Every step of the way, the strength of our voices has led the way.

Clay Arsenal is at a pivotal location, serving as a gateway to/from the downtown for the north end of the city and adjacent communities. In 1997, 14,000 to 16,000 cars per day traveled Albany Avenue through the Clay Arsenal neighborhood. Because it is a transition point between the downtown and the neighborhoods, it sets the tone and the expectation for the quality of life in the entire north end. If people see blight, boarded buildings and other symptoms of distress, the many positive aspects of the neighborhood and its residents will be overshadowed. Negative perceptions will persist and become self-fulfilling. Attacking the physical conditions in the neighborhood will give Clay Arsenal a sense of pride that can be translated into a sense of community. This will also help to reduce crime

in the neighborhood which in the last several years has been overwhelmingly (75% to 80%) in the category of crimes against property.

In spite of being a gateway to downtown and having two major thoroughfares running through it, Clay Arsenal's land development pattern is predominately residential. The development that has occurred along the major roadways (Albany Avenue and Main Street) has been primarily neighborhood level commercial (Albany Avenue) and institutional (Main Street). There is also a small neighborhood business area located at Garden and Mather Streets. Commercial district zones are concentrated in the railroad, Walnut Street and Windsor Street corridors where the proximity of rail service lead to small-scale factory development. Windsor Street is also the location of the only industrial district zoning in the neighborhood. The entire area between the east side of Main Street and the railroad is included in the City's State-designated Enterprise Zone.

## C.A.R.A. VISION STATEMENT

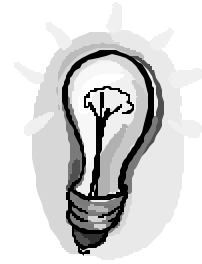
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- ❖ Thriving commercial corridors provide residents with basic goods and services.
- ❖ Our neighborhood is safe, clean, and inviting to both residents and visitors alike and there are ample pedestrian linkages.
- ❖ Residential streets and properties are clean, well maintained, and beautifully landscaped.
- ❖ There are many inviting public spaces including Tunnel Park/Keney Tower gateway and SAND parquet and there are pocket parks throughout the residential areas.
- ❖ Residents fully accept their social responsibility and contribute time and effort to their family and the community.
- ❖ Windsor Street is an employment hub for the City, contributing to our tax base while providing training and employment for our residents.
- ❖ Architectural significant buildings are being preserved to the greatest extent is feasible.
- ❖ There is a full range of housing opportunities, from subsidized to market rate rentals, homeownership initiatives, and rehabilitation programs to housing for the elderly.
- ❖ The SAND complex (SAND Elementary School/Ropkins Branch Library & SAND Family Resource Center) is the focal point of our neighborhood, offering cultural, educational, and community opportunities.

## CLAY ARSENAL'S ASSETS

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Well established block watch clubs  
Gateways via Main Street, Albany Ave. and Windsor Street  
Historic areas and period architecture  
Housing stock (2 and 3 family) suitable for home ownership opportunities  
In-fill opportunities within existing commercial corridors  
Visibility and accessibility of commercial corridors (high traffic)  
Cultural diversity (African American, Hispanic, West Indian, Vietnamese and more)  
Available commercial buildings  
Excellent institutional support: SAND, Community Renewal Team, ONE/CHANE, Women's League Child Development Center, My Sister's Place, Hartford Housing Authority, Hartford Tenants Rights Federation, House of Bread, Community Health Seniors, Inc., Community Partners in Action, Hartford Public Library-SAND/Ropkins Branch, SAND Family Resource Center Library  
"Walkable" neighborhoods with appropriately scaled commercial development  
Willie Ware Community Center  
Mary Shepard Place  
Residents committed to the neighborhood to make a difference



## CLAY ARSENAL'S MAJOR CHALLENGES

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Negative image (litter, abandoned cars, deteriorated housing, criminal activity)  
Personal safety perceptions by non-residents  
Lack of neighborhood – scale commercial/retail  
Low rate of home ownership  
Blighted or abandoned homes  
Environmental threats  
Code compliance (zoning, health, etc.)  
Land uses are often not appropriate for the site or structure  
Lack of cohesive or visually unified commercial development – lack of critical mass

