

2. Background and History

The South End of Hartford grew rapidly after World War I with expanded subdivision of land and the development of two commercial strips along Franklin Avenue and Wethersfield Avenue. The area attracted immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe. Families found a comfortable lifestyle, supported by labor jobs, factory work and office employment in the insurance industry.

The signs of European influence on the neighborhood are evident, particularly with “Little Italy” Franklin Avenue. However, in more recent times, employment location has shifted. The industrial areas no longer provide an abundance of manufacturing jobs. Suburban office parks have relocated higher paying employment to areas outside of Hartford’s borders. The result has been a movement of middle class residents to outlying areas of the City, with less financially-able residents remaining or entering the neighborhood.

South End Neighborhood Plan

In 1986, the City’s Planning Department assisted the neighborhood with a plan to address specific South End needs. The neighborhood boundaries at the time did not include parts of the South Meadows area, but encompassed Goodwin Park and the abutting residential areas.

The specific goals of the neighborhood plan called for:

1. Maintaining housing stock in good condition for a variety of income groups
2. Monitoring and report code violations
3. Relieving parking problems
4. Improving the Franklin Avenue neighborhood strip
5. Maintaining recreation facilities
6. Promoting citizen participation



Many of the objectives to implement the goals remain relevant today. Among the methods to improve the South End were to:

- Support home maintenance programs
- Provide affordable housing for the elderly
- Utilize financing mechanisms for first time homebuyers
- Educate residents concerning the Zoning Code
- Develop code inspections
- Provide additional short term parking on Franklin Avenue
- Meet with Police Department to enforce existing parking regulations
- Redesign portions of Franklin Avenue which maintain residential uses, maintain pedestrian environment, increase short term parking, provide overnight parking for apartment units, allow for outdoor cafes and facilitate traffic flow.
- Improve facilities at Goodwin Park
- Oversee future development with a citizen task force to monitor neighborhood projects
- Encourage block watches in residential areas

NRZ Program

The Neighborhood Revitalization Zone legislation established by the Connecticut Legislature in 1995 allows municipalities to establish NRZ boundaries and allow for the designation of a local committee, composed of tenants, business owners, property owners and a municipal official. The Committee is charged with preparation of a strategic plan including “mechanisms for self-reliance, home ownership, property management, sustainable economic development, coordinated and comprehensive delivery of services, creative leveraging of financial resources, and the capacity of self empowerment”.