

SOUTH END NRZ REVITALIZATION PLAN

Submitted to:

South End NRZ Committee

Submitted by:

Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc.

In Association with

David Mann Associates

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Preface

The South End Neighborhood Revitalization Association will encourage the City of Hartford to implement the recommendations contained herein, and while approval of the Plan by the City of Hartford signifies an agreement in principal to the concepts presented, the City is not committed to any course of action

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SOUTH END NEIGHBORHOOD NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION ZONE REVITALIZATION PLAN

1. Introduction

The South End Neighborhood, extending from the Wethersfield town border to the edge of Hartford's downtown, remains one of the most stable residential and commercial districts. The area is a distinctive mix of single family homes, two-to-six story multi-family residences, restaurants, independent retailers, automotive-oriented commercial establishments and various industrial uses. Its position in close proximity to major highways, the Hartford Downtown and suburban areas is well suited to retain property owners and attract external economic benefit.

In an effort to retain and improve the neighborhood's quality of life, the South End NRZ (Neighborhood Revitalization Zone) Committee has prepared a report to address particular issues. The Committee asked BFJ, Inc. to supplement the draft report prepared by Urban Strategies entitled "Principal Directions for South NRZ Revitalization Plan". This report focuses on specific issues that the NRZ Committee, in partnership with the City, can address.

The Principal Directions for South NRZ Revitalization Plan contained a number of strategies to strengthen the neighborhood. A summary of the report is supplied within this document. We have used a number of images from the Plan to highlight specific issues. We credit Urban Strategies for preparing the document and appreciate the use of the information.

The process to determine the priority issues began with a review of the existing accomplishments of the Committee. A workshop to revisit the issues determined previously was conducted on October 3, 2000.



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”.

3. Land Use and Zoning

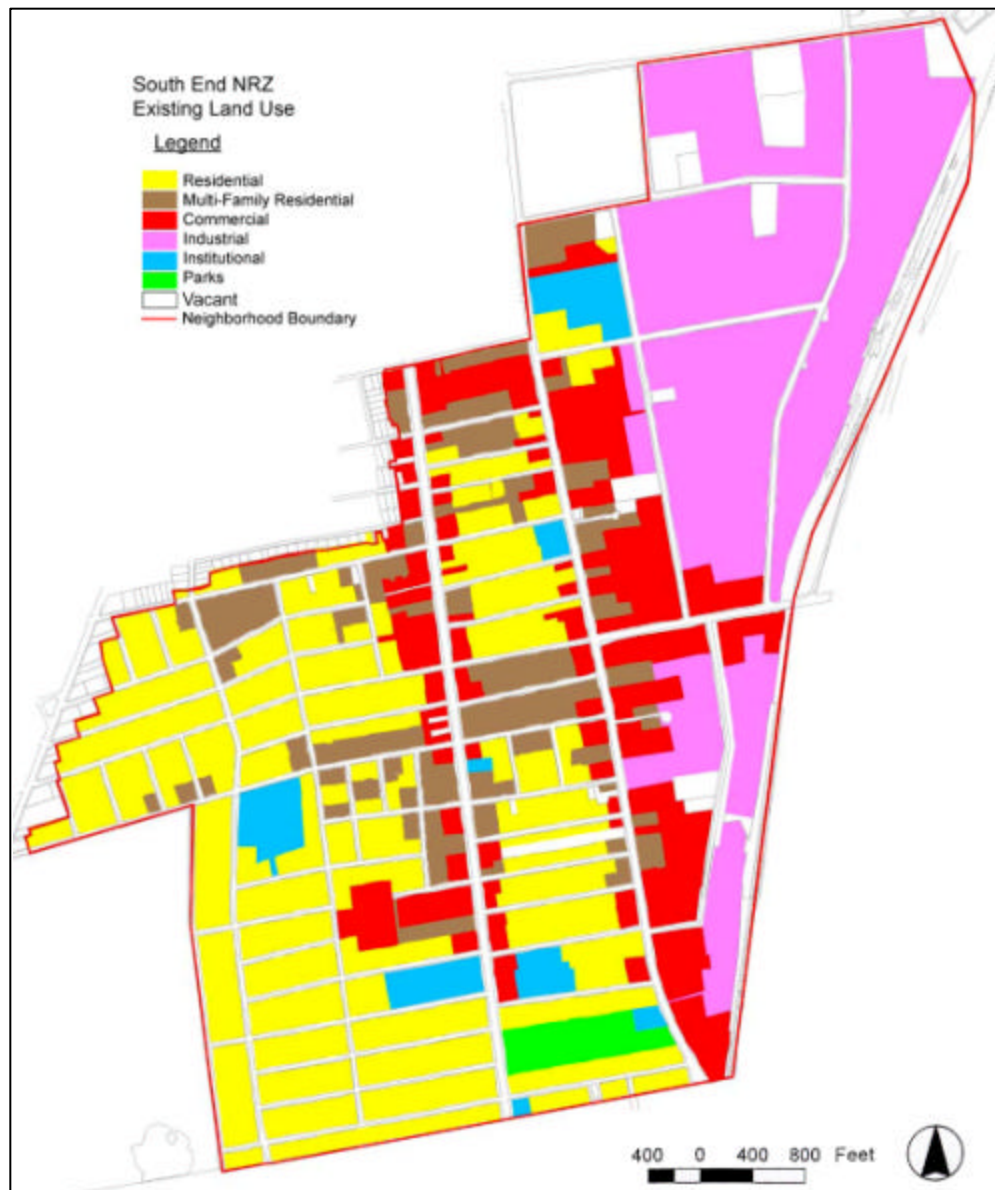
Existing Land Use

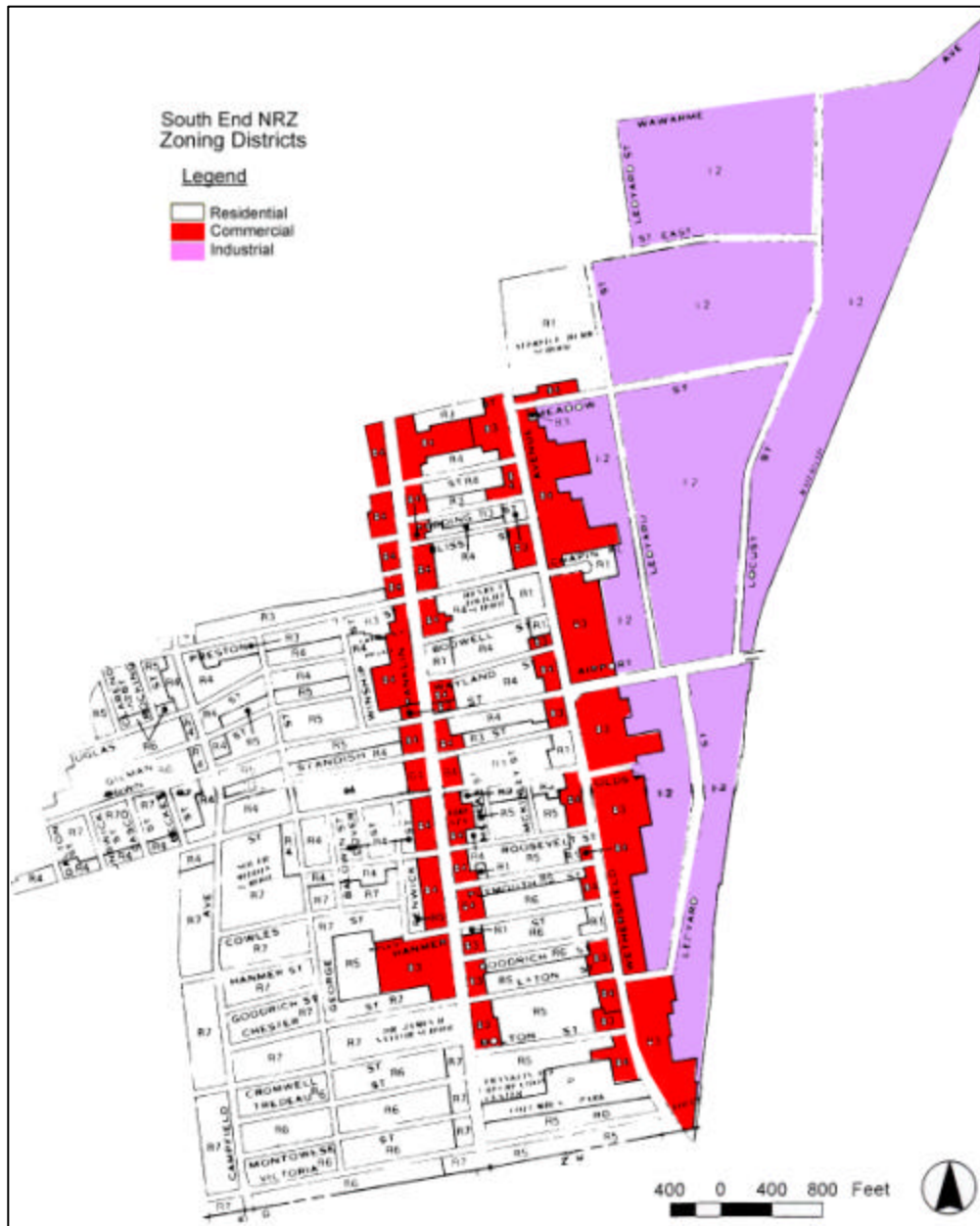
As mentioned, the South End is one of the most stable areas within the City. The housing stock is in relatively good condition and commercial buildings are, for the most part, fully occupied.

Most housing in the neighborhood dates back to the period after World War I. There are numerous multi-family buildings, many of which are constructed with brick. The quality appears to have withstood years of weathering, better than the typical wood facade “triple-deckers” found in parts of the Northeastern U.S.

Single family homes can be found on many side streets, but predominantly in the western and southern portion of the neighborhood. The location of the single family homes has been well planned, shielding incompatible uses and highway traffic to the east.

The extension of street cars in the 1880's allowed for commercial uses along the two main corridors, Franklin Avenue and Wethersfield Avenue. Restaurant and food stores line much of Franklin Avenue. Wethersfield Avenue has become recognized as an auto-oriented commercial strip with auto parts stores, gas stations, and car wash establishments.





Only one sizable park, Columbus Park, is entirely within the neighborhood. Colt Park to the northeast and Goodwin Park to the southwest abut the neighborhood. Both of these facilities have multiple use capabilities.

Zoning

In the north and east sections of the neighborhood, land is zoned entirely for industrial purposes. These lands are close to Interstate 91 and the industrial lands further to the east. All industrial lands in the neighborhood are zoned I-2, allowing for a variety of industrial uses.

The commercial designations are predominantly B-4 along Franklin and Wethersfield Avenues. This zone provides for neighborhood business uses generally associated with restaurants and retail businesses. There are a small number of B-3 zones in the southern part of the neighborhood. These zones provide for, among other uses, auto-related businesses.

The remaining areas are residentially zoned, allowing for medium and low density residential uses. The R-3 and R-4 medium density areas are predominantly in close proximity to Franklin and Wethersfield Avenues. The one-family R-6 and R-7 zones can be found in the southern portion of the neighborhood.

4. Neighborhood Profile

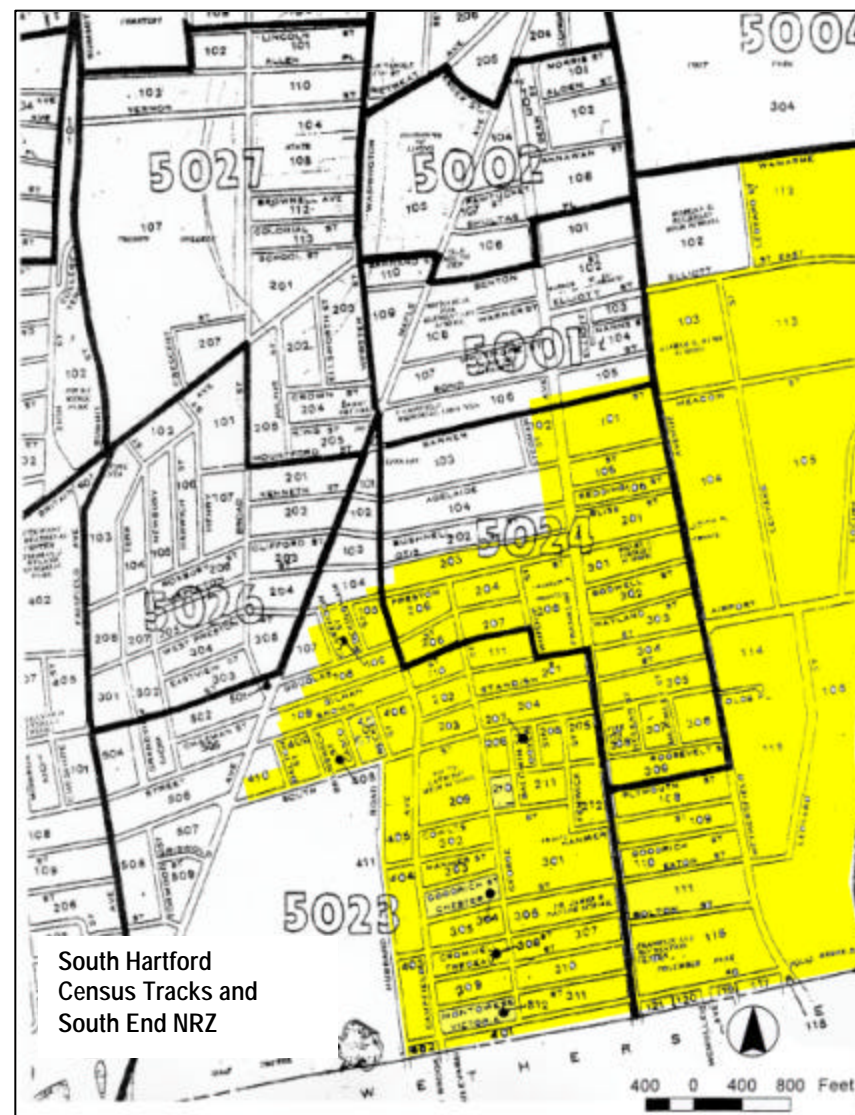
While the neighborhood has witnessed many changes, its vitality remains. The number of people and households has declined in recent years. For example, in the 1980 to 1990 time period, the population declined from 11,480 to 10,618 people, representing a -7.5 percent change. The City as a whole added 2.5 percent to the population in the same time period.

The neighborhood, in 1990, contained 2,730 families with 2.96 persons per family. The median age of the residents was 34 years of age, significantly higher than the City's median age of 28 years, but similar to the State's median age of 34 years.

There is a high proportion of individuals 65 years and older living in the South End. The latest available figures from the 1990 Census show that the population 65 years and older totals 1,998, or 18.8 percent of the South End neighborhood's population. By Comparison, only 9.8 percent of the city-wide population is 65 years and older. In the South End, those 65 years and older living in housing units total 1,223, or 26.9 percent of all occupied housing units. This compares to 18.6 percent of the households city-wide.

The 1990 Census data shows that the majority of households, 62 percent, rent the dwellings they occupy. The neighborhood contains 4,848 housing units, equating to more than 3,000 rental units in the area. Few buildings, relative to other areas of the city, are boarded up.

Population 65 and older in South End, 1990



	Hartford	South End
Total Pop.	139,739	10,618
Pop. 65+ Yrs	13,700 (9.8%)	1,998 (18.8%)
Total Hholds	51,464	4,541
Hholders 65+ yrs	9,576 (18.6%)	1,223 (26.9%)

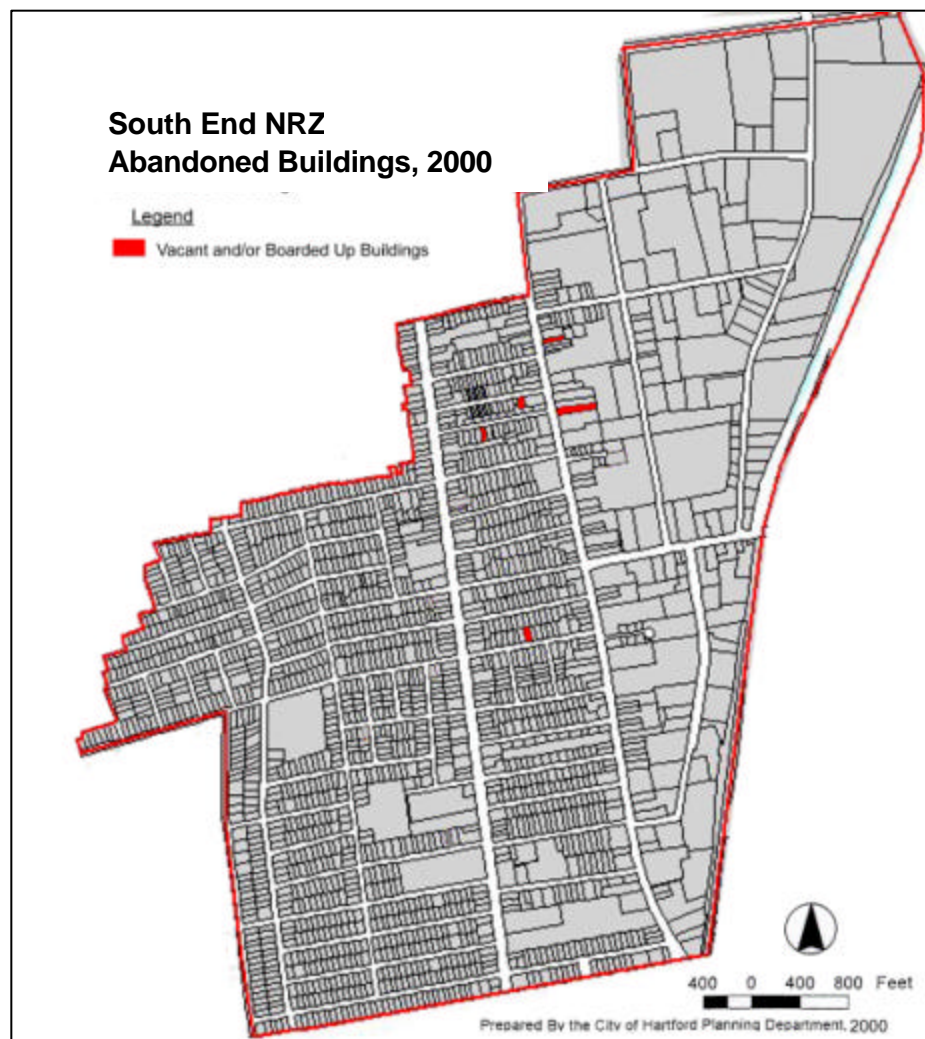
The median household income for the neighborhood in 1990 was \$30,893, above the City's median of \$22,140. The neighborhoods' relatively low unemployment rate of 7.2 percent, compared to the City's 10.7 percent, helps to explain the higher income levels in 1990.

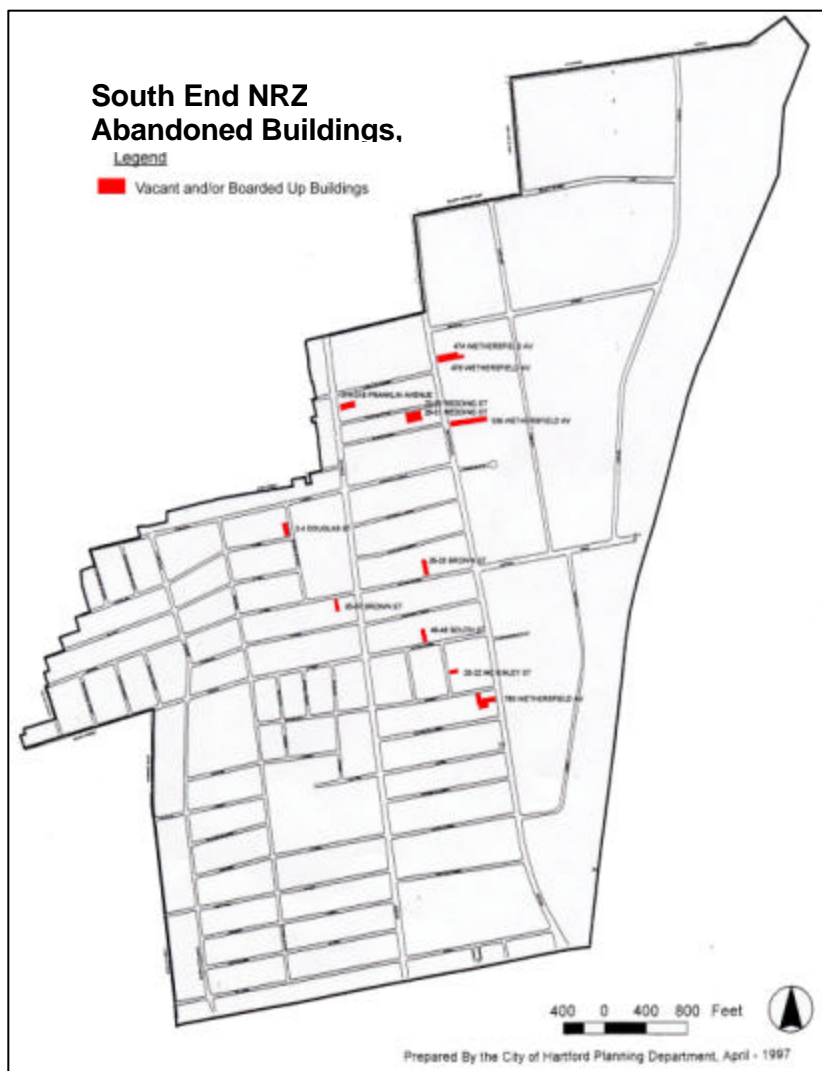
Precise data for the Neighborhood Revitalization Zone cannot be compiled because the NRZ does not correspond to census tracts or neighborhood boundaries.

Population Projections:

Since none of the 2000 Census data had been released before this document was prepared, the plan relied on a review of available data projections for the southeastern area of the City. The projections were compared to the City as a whole, with the following results:

In 1998, population projections were made for the southeast area of the City, based on citywide population estimates available at the time. Those projections indicated that the southeast area would experience a more significant population decline than the rest of the City. Those projections showed that the City would lose approximately 9% of its population from 1990 to 2003, the southeastern area would lose approximately 20%. Household losses were expected to be similar to population losses. It was projected that the City would lose approximately 10% of its households from 1990 to 2003; the southeast area would lose approximately 22% household during the same time period.





2000 Census:

In March 2001, the U.S. Census Bureau released the Redistricting Data for the City of Hartford. This is the first data set that was released by the Census which includes 2000 population totals by census tract. 2000 Census data indicates that the City as a whole lost 18,161 or 12.9% of its population between 1990 and 2000.

In contrast to the citywide population loss, the Census data indicates that the tracts that include the Southend NRZ have experienced significant population gains. The projections made in 1998 for the southeast area were not born out by the actual Census count; but rather the opposite occurred.

Census Tract 5023 and 5024 comprise the overwhelming majority of the residential population found within the Southend NRZ (see map attached). A review of this data indicates that in those two tracts combined, the population has increased by 18.6% from 1990 to 2000. The Census data shows the following population totals for those tracts:

Population Change in Area 2000 Census

Census Tract	1990 Population	2000 Population	Change
5023	4,675	5,349	674 (14.4%)
5024	4,770	5,856	1,086 (228%)
Total	9,445	11,205	1,760 (18.6%)

The Census data indicates a noticeable shift in the racial composition of the area and in the Hispanic population. In 1990, the South End neighborhood was comprised of 78.6% white, not Hispanic; 4.2% black, not Hispanic; .86% other, not Hispanic; and 16% Hispanic population. The 2000 Census data shows

that the white, not Hispanic population has decreased while the Hispanic and the Black, not Hispanic populations have increased significantly. The following table illustrates the racial and Hispanic composition of the area based on the latest Census data.

**Race and Hispanic Population in Area
2000 Census**

Census Tract	White, N.H.	Black, N.H.	Other, N.H.	Two or more races, N.H.	Hispanic of any race	Total
5023	2,323 (43.4%)	631 (11.7%)	96 (1.7%)	192 (3.5%)	2,107 (39.4%)	5,349 (100%)
5024	1,553 (26.5%)	672 (11.4%)	156 (2.6%)	378 (6.4%)	3,097 (52.9%)	5,856 (100%)

In 2000, the neighborhood had fewer abandoned buildings than in 1997, as depicted in the abandoned buildings maps. Only five properties in 2000, versus ten properties in 1997, had derelict buildings. Of the hundreds of buildings within the South End, abandoned buildings represent a very small proportion, and in this respect, the neighborhood compares favorably to other parts of the City. The south and west portions of the neighborhood have been saved from building abandonment. The north-central portion of the neighborhood, in the Wethersfield Avenue and Franklin Avenue corridors, appear to have the majority of the abandoned buildings.

Recent Neighborhood Observations:

Members of the NRZ have observed that in recent years, the South End has experienced an influx of population from other areas of the City. Neighborhood residents have witnessed an increase in the immigrant and refugee population as well as fewer residential vacancies. Residential real estate has also stabilized in recent years. The observed evidence of the strengthening of the neighborhood is the greater elementary school enrollment, said to be approaching overcrowding conditions, a reduction in the number of residential home sales and rental availability compared to four years ago.

5. Market Conditions

The recession of the 1990s was a tremendous drag on the Hartford market and the City in general. Loss of value in all segments of the real estate market had a crippling effect upon what was a growing momentum toward a more vibrant and livable city. Market shifts resulted in a lop-sided revaluation, an increasing number of vacant residential structures, and a weakened office market. To make matters worse, crime and street gang violence increased during this period, heightening fears of residents and non-residents alike.

In an effort to revive city spirit, leaders brought public and private resources to bear, proposing Adriaen's Landing, a \$350 million dollar, urban, mixed use development for the Hartford riverfront. While this project is still in the planning stages, it has raised new levels of interest in the city. Relocation of the Greater Hartford Community College to the downtown and proposed high-rise apartments at the Civic Center have added enthusiasm about the City's commercial market appeal. Time and the depth of Hartford's economy, in addition to these pump priming efforts, have repaired some of the local market losses as the state and national economies enjoyed substantial energy. Realtors now indicate that industrial, office and apartment space in the city has tightened considerably in recent months, stabilizing these segments and seeding the interest in new construction investment. The Hartford market appears to be poised for improvement in the new millennium.

The impact of these development proposals upon Hartford's neighborhoods, however, is not readily apparent and will require some time before its visible. Neighborhoods closer to the downtown are likely to benefit more directly than others as investment interest looks for more opportunities. The key is to be able to sustain the momentum.



The South End neighborhood remains one of Hartford's most vibrant and stable areas. Franklin Avenue, the linear commercial center gives the neighborhood its identity and vibrancy. The area was once known as "Little Italy", but in recent years it has had to deal with changing ethnic population and deteriorating housing in some of the blocks that feed the avenue. Loss of property value and negative equity have put pressure upon the residential market in this neighborhood, as well as other neighborhoods in the City. This situation could be overcome by increased residential demand, but forecasts of city population decline and suburban growth give no indication that these trends will change.

When market values are weak, residential property owners, particularly multiple family owners, are less motivated to undertake expensive improvements. Retail and commercial property owners are under similar pressure and investors remain cautious. These reactions may be compounded by public policies. Market investments are primarily motivated by the level of financial return possible, but are greatly influenced by stability in the marketplace; not instability.



The South End also includes the South Meadows and Colt Park South industrial areas. These developments are very different. The South Meadows adjacent to Brainard Airport is a more contemporary industrial park with excellent interstate highway access and visibility - key to attracting tenants. Colt Park South includes a contemporary section and an area with older industrial uses some of which are particularly gritty. The latter describes a sizable area that detracts from the area's industrial marketability. Many of these older properties and uses are attractive in the marketplace, suggesting the need for change.

Wethersfield Avenue is a secondary commercial corridor when compared with Franklin Avenue. Uses tend to be more diverse and more service oriented.

6. Transportation

Three arterial roads, Franklin Avenue, Wethersfield Avenue and Brown/Airport Road traverse the neighborhood. Franklin and Wethersfield provide north-south access and Brown/Airport allow for east-west movement.

Interstate 91 lies to the east of the neighborhood with access from Airport Road. The approach to the Interstate along Airport Road can be difficult at times with traffic from the industrial areas in the neighborhood mixing with commuters. Improvements to the area may be difficult due to a railroad bridge parallel to the Interstate. An option to improve access to the neighborhood could include an exit ramp from the Charter Oak Bridge to connect with Airport Road

The north-south roads allow access into the neighborhood, to downtown, and to areas beyond the City. Wethersfield Avenue continues into the Town of Wethersfield as a major arterial. Franklin Avenue continues into the Town of Wethersfield as Wolcott Hill Road, but has less of an arterial presence.

The concept of angled parking and median on Franklin Ave. was reviewed. This was discussed as a way to increase parking and improve pedestrian safety. There was agreement with the consultant's analysis that this concept would not be feasible, given the existing width of the public right of way and the desire to keep the four traffic lanes open. A more feasible option would be to construct bump-outs at specified intersections, and develop off-street parking at strategic sites.

The CT-Transit routes map depicts bus access within the South End area. Four routes service the neighborhood: the N, T, U and G lines. While the transit system provides a variety of north-south access links in the South End, there is no east-west linkage. The G line provides access to the industrial areas of the South Meadow. City buses use all main arterial roads for services throughout the neighborhood. The remaining routes serve residential and commercial areas within the neighborhood.



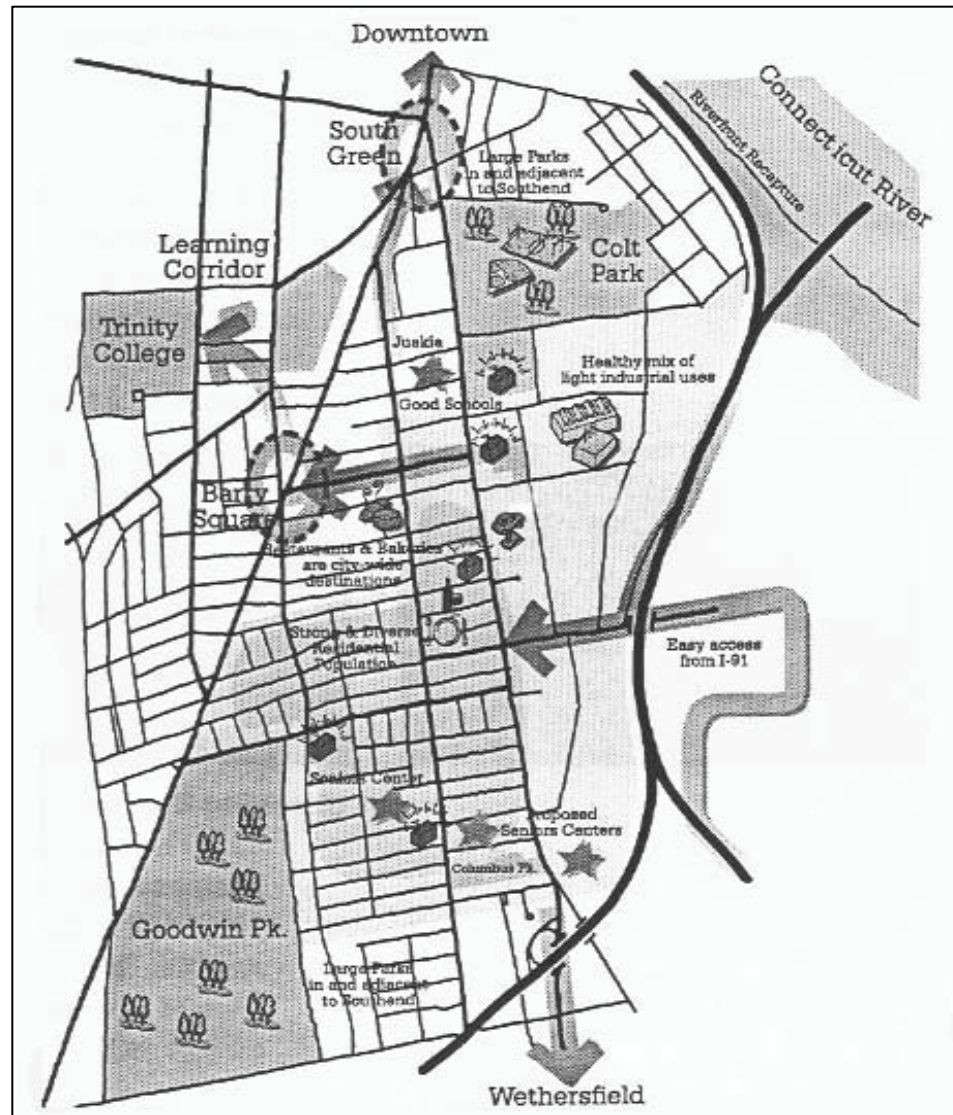
7. Directions for the Future

Principal Directions for South End NRZ Revitalization Plan

The draft “Principal Directions for South End NRZ Revitalization Plan” was prepared for the Committee in 1999. This Plan assessed the neighborhood’s assets and constraints, and provided for key directions to strengthen the South End. The five key areas that the Plan discussed were:

- To strengthen the relationship between the South End and its neighboring context.
- To create pride in the public realm.
- To create/establish distinctive uses along key streets:
Promote Franklin Avenue as a cluster of multicultural restaurants;
Promote Wethersfield Avenue as “Main Street” South;
Promote greater diversity of uses within South Meadows.
- To encourage balanced modes of transport.
- To enhance utilization of existing community amenities.





To implement the key directions, the Plan suggested a number of measures.

- Better use of capital and community improvement programs, community facilities, and existing organizations.

This would entail understanding and utilizing Federal programs where available (TEA-21, Community Development Block Grants, etc.), and City and State programs (Façade Improvement Program, Streetscaping Program, Hartford Signage, Hartford Gateway Project) for street improvements. To help with community programs, an inventory of programs at the various facilities was recommended. Also, understanding mandates of existing community organizations will help align similar efforts for greater effect.

- Build consensus among local stakeholders

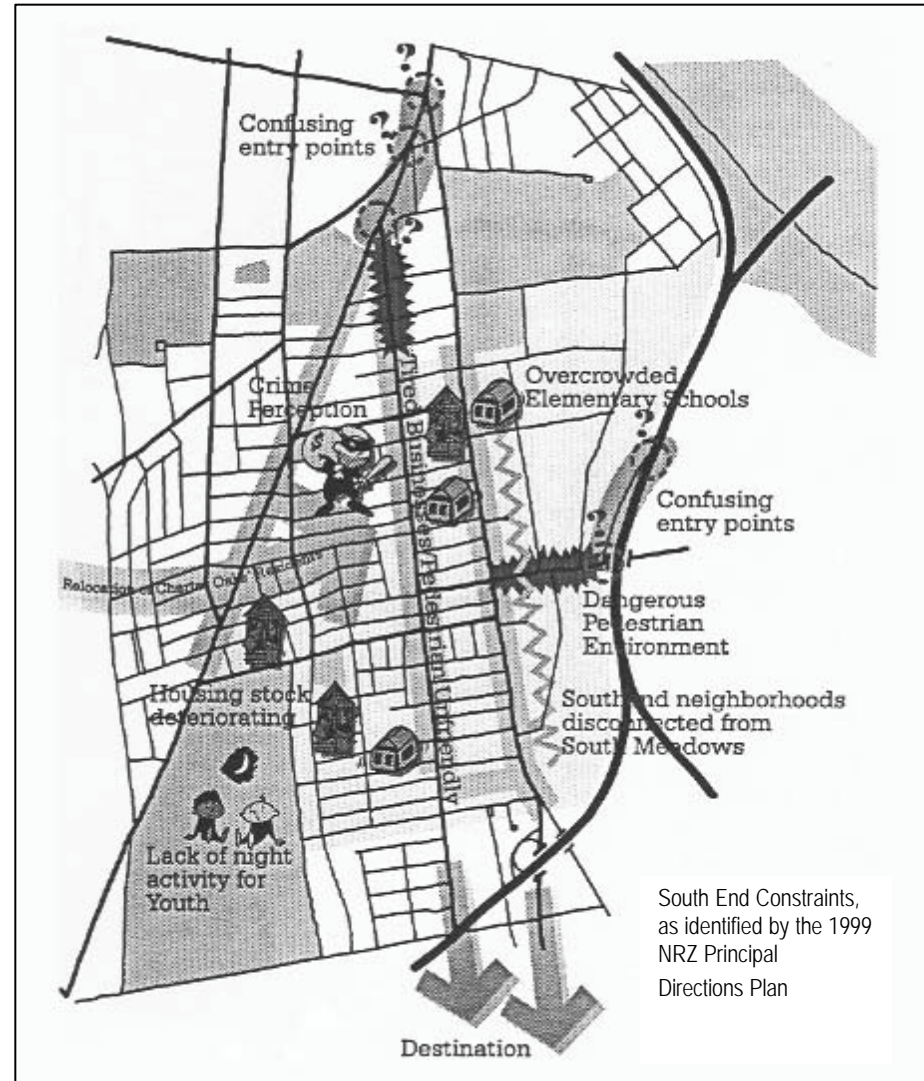
The diversity of the neighborhood will require consensus building on implementing the various aspects of the Plan. Representation on the NRZ Committee should be inclusive to achieve the best results for the South End.

- Seek partnerships with neighboring communities

The areas surrounding the South End are equally as rich with amenities and resources. For example, Colt Park and Goodwin Park are adjacent to the neighborhood and provide links among areas of the City.

- Link with Hartford Revitalization Initiatives

There are many initiatives being undertaken by the City and other interests. Alliances with the various programs will help to identify opportunities and assist the City as a whole.



8. South End Plan

As discussed within this report and in previous strategic planning documents prepared for the South End, a primary issue for area residents is to strengthen the best qualities of the existing environment. Several overall goals will help to drive the strengthening of the neighborhood. Within each goal, a number of strategies are highlighted to achieve the overall objective of neighborhood improvement. Specific projects have not been identified in order to allow the NRZ Committee to determine immediate actions as issues change.

The opportunities to strengthen the neighborhood are highlighted below. The NRZ Committee will work to execute the following Goals and Strategies:

COMMUNITY BUILDING STRATEGIES

The South End neighborhood has a variety of attractive elements that will help to retain its stability. For example, the housing stock is in relatively good condition, compared to other parts of the City, Franklin Avenue continues to be a regional draw for consumers desiring quality restaurants and the industrial areas are largely occupied. These features should be preserved and enhanced where possible. Maintaining high quality public safety is important for the neighborhood. The NRZ expects that improvements to public safety will create a presence in the South End. It is also important to address the needs of the elderly population who remain in the neighborhood.

Goal: Advantageously build the community from within.

Strategies:

- Enhance property security and police protection.
- Support Hartford's Community Court.
- Monitor the Metzner Center expansion and potential Goodwin Park pool enclosure capital projects to their completion.
- Advocate for the creation of a multi-purpose community center in the South End; any closing of a school building in the South End should be considered for this re-use.
- Support in-home services for the elderly through South End Community Services.
- Expand infant and toddler day care services.
- Open schools for community activities during non-school hours.
- Make organizational linkages with other groups, such as Parent/Teacher Organizations, South End Community Services, South End Neighborhood Action Project, South Meadows Problem Solving Committee, etc.

- Monitor quality of life issues in the South End, such as access to health care, emergency medical response, library services, community policing, etc. to ensure that the NRZ area is adequately covered and served.
- Initiate a process for the NRZ to be informed regarding all development issues and City actions in the South End.

Goal: Address public safety concerns.

Strategies:

- Work to maintain a safe environment in public facilities and neighborhood parks (Goodwin and Columbus parks).
- Support improvements to public safety initiatives in the South End.
- Advocate to retain community services officer(s) in the South End.
- Support Community Court programs that benefit the neighborhood.

RESIDENTIAL STRATEGIES

The most important issue for the South End Neighborhood is to eliminate vacant and boarded up buildings. Such blight reduces the passion that residents hold for their neighborhood. A proactive effort should be undertaken to provide property owners with home and building improvement program information. A quick process to identify and condemn unsafe buildings is also encouraged. The strategies listed below focus on reducing deteriorated conditions to strengthen the neighborhood's heritage. It is also important for the neighborhood to retain the senior population living in the area, with appropriate accommodations and support services.

Goal: Improve the residential quality of the neighborhood.

Strategies:

- Increase home ownership rates.
- Identify and demolish derelict buildings.
- Advocate the development of senior housing/assisted living in the South End at the following potential sites: 815 Wethersfield Avenue, 163 Preston Street, or 536 Wethersfield Avenue. There is also the potential for creating a larger development site by combining the proposed Senior Center site at 990 Wethersfield Avenue with the adjacent vacant property at 1000 Wethersfield Avenue, for a assisted living senior housing complex.
- Work to make creative use of vacant lots for private open spaces and off street parking to assist in lowering residential density.

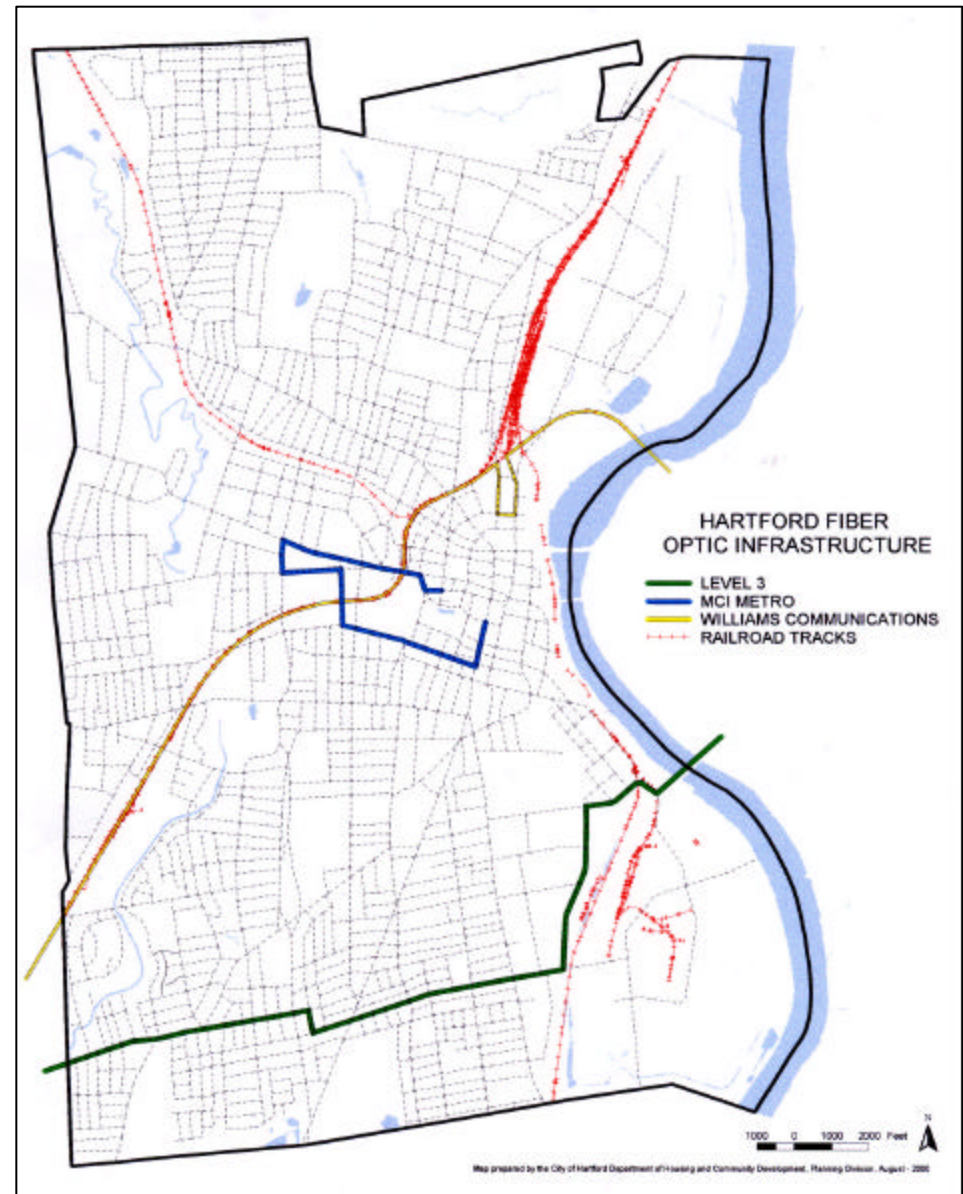
ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The two main business areas in the South End - Franklin Avenue and Wethersfield Avenue - can be strengthened. Safety and street improvements should be undertaken to provide a positive image of the unique qualities for each economic area. The strategies listed below are envisioned to assist with retaining business in the neighborhood and attracting new economic activity. In order to remain viable, the neighborhood must sustain economic development opportunities. This should go hand in hand with ensuring available industrial lands are capable of accepting new development. In addition, a fiber optic telecommunications line traverses the neighborhood, running through Locust Street and along Airport Road and Brown Street, which may help attract new industries.

Goal: Improve appearance and function of the commercial areas to attract and retain users to the area.

Strategies:

- Improve sidewalk conditions and consistency along Franklin Avenue and Wethersfield Avenue.
- Restrict parking on private land in front of commercial buildings to reduce car-pedestrian conflict.
- Provide more off-street parking to reduce perception of lack of parking on Franklin Avenue.
- Construct intersection curb bump-outs at key intersections (i.e. Franklin Avenue/South Street, Franklin Avenue/Brown Street).
- Replace telephone poles with more consistent pole/light combination.



- Promote Franklin Avenue retail/restaurant atmosphere.
- Target the site at 606 Wethersfield Avenue for potential future commercial/industrial redevelopment if there is an opportunity to do so.
- Support the façade improvement program.

Goal: Ensure economic opportunities in the industrial areas of the neighborhood are available

Strategies:

- Support jobs programs at South End Community Services.
- Work with the Human Relations Commission to link Hartford residents with jobs in public works construction projects; and with training opportunities.
- Work with the Workforce Development Agency and encourage residents to participate in its programs and opportunities.
- Improve streets to conform to typical Industrial Park standards, helping to attract high quality industrial activity.
- Work to retain industrial properties that are large enough to accommodate modern-day industrial development needs.
- Support the assemblage of large commercial and industrial parcels of land for new, expanded or relocating businesses.

ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGIES

Lands that are located in industrial areas need to be evaluated for environmental remediation to ensure that they are capable of accepting new development. Properties that have sustained land uses that would require environmental clean-up in other business and commercial areas of the neighborhood should be targeted for remediation as necessary.

Goal: Clean up sites that pose environmental problems for development opportunities.

Strategies:

- Identify environmental sites needing clean-up, and assist in developing clean-up programs for these sites with federal funds and owner cooperation.
- Identify vacant Brownfield properties for remediation and prepare for redevelopment.
- Form liaisons with public agencies that sponsor clean-up programs, and participate in initiatives that would benefit sites in the South End.

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

Linkages within the South End, and to neighborhoods and areas beyond, are important for continued viability of commercial establishments. A balance between adequate parking, connectivity, and aesthetics within the South End must be considered in relation to transportation patterns.

Goal: Provide appropriate parking and transportation links throughout the South End Neighborhood.

Strategies:

- Explore the development of commuter parking in the South Meadows, or at the State Dept. of Corrections parking lot on Franklin Ave. (just over the town line in Wethersfield).
- Use State Department of Corrections parking lot for a commuting lot during special events.
- Develop a shuttle to link Franklin Avenue to other areas of the City.
- Advocate east-west bus routes in the South End.

Acknowledgements

The Southend Neighborhood Revitalization Association was formed in the summer of 1996 to embark on a Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) planning process. The time and work that many residents, businesspeople, and representatives from public and private organizations contributed to this neighborhood planning effort is greatly appreciated.

The following individuals served on the Southend Neighborhood Revitalization Association (NRZ) during the last four years:

Carl Williams, Co-Chair
Kathy Kosmaler, Co-Chair
Peter Bilello
Dan Carey
Ed Connelly
Chief Joseph Croughwell
Marie de Frietas

Ruth Howell
Fred Lehman
Al Marotta
Katherine McCormack
Phylliss O'Doherty
June O'Neil
JoAnne Peters

Bob Rath
Bessie Reid
Tito Tata
Neal Taty
John Thomas
Beulah Williams

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Berri Gerjuoy
Wendy Kaysing
Yvonne Kuwar
Paul La Rosa
Alta Lash
John Lupo, Jr.
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Jeffrey Parks
Tony Pinone
Fran Reale

Hannah Roditi
Marina Rodriguez
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Lucy Romeo
Tony Sabatin
John Speziale
John Tornatore
Jill Tuckman
Alan Tuckman
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