

Southwest/ Behind the Rocks Neighborhood Plan



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

At the heart of the Southwest/Behind The Rocks neighborhood are its residents. As a diverse and largely residential neighborhood, it's considered the quiet corner of the city where neighbors maintain a strong quality of life and are engaged with their community. Southwest/Behind The Rocks is home to the city's growing Puerto Rican population. The neighborhood's restaurants and retail reflect the rich cultural diversity of the neighborhood, on the West Side of New Britain Ave is The Russell Grab and Go, specializing in authentic Caribbean cuisine, while on the East Side of New Britain Ave is CTown, a niche grocery store that caters to the cultural specialty items of the neighborhood. The neighborhood is also home to restaurants specializing in Portuguese, Peruvian, and Mexican fare as well as the city's first Black-owned pizza shop.

Residents take pride in the proximity of the neighborhood's parks: Rocky Ridge, Hyland, and Forster Park and the trail that will soon provide a pedestrian/bicycle corridor connecting the neighborhood to the rest of the city. The neighborhood is also served by CTFastrak, a 9.4 mile bus rapid transit (BRT) system extending from New Britain to Downtown Hartford providing frequent, fast, and reliable connections across central Connecticut. CTFastrak runs along the western edge of the neighborhood with station stops located within West Hartford at the Elmwood Station and in Hartford at the Flatbush Station.

The Southwest/Behind The Rocks neighborhood is approximately defined as the area bounded on the north by Hamilton Street, on the west by Interstate 84 and West Hartford town line, and on the south by Newington and Wethersfield town lines.

Southwest/Behind The Rocks is a neighborhood in the Southwest corner of Hartford, abutting the towns of West Hartford and Newington.

The Southwest/Behind The Rocks is a great place to live and raise a family, but more needs to be done to preserve its quality of life and strengthen its sense of community. Business districts are in need of façade improvements, speeding and traffic concerns thwart the neighborhood's walkable feel, and illegal ATVs disrupt neighborhood peace. Neighborhood residents have a deep sense of pride in their neighborhood, attending Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Meetings, community events, and organizing and identifying neighborhood problems and brainstorming solutions. Southwest/Behind The Rocks residents are the backbone and drivers of neighborhood investments.

This Neighborhood Plan presents a framework of goals, strategies, and actions to create a more vibrant, prosperous, and sustainable neighborhood. The plan mirrors the Hartford 2035 Plan and is organized to reflect local priorities at a neighborhood level. To achieve neighborhood progress requires steadfast coordination and a renewed partnership from the City of Hartford as well as investments from institutions vested in the success of the neighborhood.



A blue-tinted photograph of a row of houses, likely in a suburban neighborhood. The houses are two-story with various rooflines and chimneys. Bare trees are visible in the background. A large white number '2' is overlaid on the left side of the image. A street with a few parked cars and utility poles is visible in the foreground.

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INTRODUCTION TO NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS

Hartford Neighborhood Plans

What is a Neighborhood Plan?

The Neighborhood Plan provides Southwest/Behind The Rocks with a roadmap to a more prosperous and sustainable neighborhood. Over the next ten years, this Plan will guide both City officials and neighborhood residents as they prioritize initiatives to advance the City of Hartford and its diverse neighborhoods, ensuring neighborhood priorities are kept at the forefront of larger planning efforts.

The strategic planning process brings Hartford City officials, neighborhood residents, and local stakeholders to the table to establish a plan that reflects the unique needs and characteristics of each of Hartford's historic neighborhoods. Focusing on housing, social services, transportation, jobs, economic vitality, and parks and open spaces, the Plan will identify opportunities for growth and development. After examining findings and recommendations from

previous planning and engagement efforts, residents work with the planning team to build consensus on high-priority goals and the strategies needed to achieve them.

The process and resulting Plan ensure that residents and community leaders have a resource for their future conversations with the City that advocates for the issues they care about most and ensures that investments and resources are distributed appropriately to achieve progress in the Southwest/Behind The Rocks neighborhood.

The Hartford Neighborhood Plans will be developed in different phases, with the first phase focusing on four neighborhoods: Frog Hollow, Southwest/Behind The Rocks, Southwest/Behind The Rocks, and Upper Albany.



History of the Neighborhood Planning Process

State legislation in 1995 established the Neighborhood Revitalization Zones (NRZs), creating a process for communities to work with all levels of government to revitalize neighborhoods that have become substandard, unsafe, and blighted. Before this Neighborhood Planning effort, each NRZ separately adopted an NRZ Strategic Plan that was approved by the state and established priorities and accompanying action plans for revitalizing the neighborhood. While these NRZ Strategic Plans offered a comprehensive review of the priorities of each neighborhood and were reviewed and adopted by Council and in many cases Planning Commission, efforts to develop the strategic plans were independent of the City. Strategic plans also focused more on priorities and efforts of the local NRZ, and not coordinated efforts between partnering organizations. The Hartford Neighborhood Plans align City and neighborhood resources to create a more coordinated and collaborative roadmap for future partnerships and investment in the neighborhood.

The Southwest/Behind The Rocks (SWBTR) NRZ was formed and published its first strategic plan in 1996. The strategic plan was last updated in 2016 with a focus on improving quality of life and strengthening neighborhood investments. The 2016 NRZ Plan assessed neighborhood perceptions and developed a vision for the neighborhood for the year 2024 as well as goals and strategies for how to achieve the vision. The NRZ has been actively working for nearly 30 years on the revitalization and improvement of the neighborhood and the 2022 Southwest/Behind The Rocks Neighborhood Plan builds on the NRZ's vision for a more livable, vibrant, and sustainable neighborhood.



How do the Hartford Neighborhood Plans Connect to the Citywide Hartford 2035 Plan?

The Hartford Neighborhood Plans are aligned with the broader goals and framework of Hartford 2035, the City's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). Adopted in May 2020, per mandated state requirements, Hartford 2035 presents a vision for the City as it reaches its 400th anniversary in 2035. To build on the broader City Plan, the City of Hartford has commissioned the development of Neighborhood Plans that offer a more detailed look into the needs of each neighborhood and how they relate to the POCD update.

Hartford 2035 seeks to achieve eight overall priorities, including unity, health, density, ingenuity, security, identity, connection, and nature by focusing on five key action areas: Green, Grow, Live, Move, and Play. Following the format of Hartford 2035, the Neighborhood Plan is organized across the same five action areas, with an additional category in the Neighborhood Plan addressing the organizational needs and strategies for the Southwest/Behind The Rocks NRZ. The Green action area explores goals and strategies to achieve a more sustainable and resilient community; Grow strives for a more prosperous economy by addressing development and supporting businesses and the workforce; Live examines the path to a more equitable community and addresses quality of life issues; Move addresses the need for more mobile

transport options and highlights key transportation needs; Play seeks to establish a more vibrant culture through the promotion of art, history, vibrant parks, and a sense of community; and finally the NRZ action area will strategize on how to strengthen and expand the organizational capacity of the Southwest/Behind The Rocks NRZ.

It is important to note that the Southwest/Behind The Rocks Neighborhood Plan highlights some initiatives also identified in the Hartford 2035 Plan which may already be in the process of implementation by the City. The Neighborhood Plan aims to provide a more detailed perspective of the impacts and opportunities that each initiative presents to the Southwest/Behind The Rocks and presents additional strategies for how the neighborhood can support a localized effort. Highlighting these action items for the City's implementation process will be key to advancing shared priorities and achieving a more vibrant, prosperous, and resilient network of neighborhoods across the City..

Ten Transformative Projects

Hartford 2035 identifies ten transformative real estate projects that are priority developments intended to knit together communities within and across neighborhoods. The projects aim to catalyze growth and physical and social unity across Hartford's diverse neighborhoods. The projects that impact the neighborhood include:

- **Parkville Arts & Innovation District** aims to build on Parkville's manufacturing roots and recent emergence as a hub for makers and creators, and build a distinctive transit-oriented destination that will be known for arts and innovation.
- Given the neighborhood's proximity to Parkville that this project would have an impact.

Implementing Agency and Roles of Different Actors

City of Hartford Planning Department

The City of Hartford Planning Department, led by Aimee Chambers and supported by Owen Deutsch, facilitated the Hartford Neighborhood Plans on behalf of the implementing agency, the City of Hartford. The Planning Department selected the first round of neighborhoods and assigned consultant teams to lead each planning effort. The City offered guidance and connection to other City departments, shared key data sets and stakeholder contacts, and housed the project website.

The Southwest/Behind The Rocks NRZ

The Southwest/Behind The Rocks NRZ has been on the forefront of neighborhood priorities and investments for almost thirty years and was instrumental in helping the planning team gain an understanding of existing conditions and facilitating discussions with key stakeholders and residents. The NRZ used their lived experiences in the neighborhood to provide vital perspectives and context that helped shape the goals and strategies.

The Southwest/Behind The Rocks Neighborhood Planning Committee

The Southwest/Behind The Rocks Planning Committee, comprised of local community leaders, neighborhood residents, and SWBTR NRZ members, met regularly throughout the planning effort to work through a visioning process, guide the community engagement strategy, and workshop goals and strategies. The insights and lived experiences of the Planning Committee led to the creation of a Plan that reflects the vision and priorities of the Southwest/Behind The Rocks neighborhood.

FHI Studio

FHI Studio, outside consultant to the City of Hartford, brought its technical expertise and 35 years of planning experience in Hartford to facilitate the neighborhood planning process. FHI Studio analyzed the existing conditions and assets, established the Neighborhood Planning Committee, developed and promoted online engagement materials and platforms, conducted stakeholder interviews with local organizations and City officials, and developed the final Southwest/Behind The Rocks Neighborhood Plan.

Southwest/ Behind The Rocks Neighborhood Planning Process

Overview

The goal of the Southwest/Behind The Rocks Neighborhood Plan is to help residents and stakeholders identify community priorities, build consensus around long-term vision, and ensure the consistency of community goals with those of the City. The community-driven plan builds on current and previous planning efforts to highlight the goals and priorities of the neighborhood, gaining insight from resident and stakeholder interviews, on-the-ground engagement, and Neighborhood Planning Committee Guidance. Conversations with residents, as well as data analysis, projections, and mapping helped set the context of the neighborhood, and answered questions such as:

- Who lives in Southwest/Behind The Rocks and where do they live?
- How do they get around?
- What jobs are employing residents?
- What quality of life issues are affecting the neighborhood?

Timeline of Phases and Activities

First, the Project Team established a context for the neighborhood, using Census and City data sets to analyze the existing conditions, supplemented by insights from the Neighborhood Planning Committee. The Committee met every one to two months beginning in July until December to workshop the vision for the neighborhood and to develop and refine the goals and strategies to achieve that vision.

Throughout each of the phases, conversations with stakeholders and residents for individual interviews, conducting business visits and walking tours in the neighborhood, and connecting with local organizations and potential partners helped ensure an iterative and comprehensive process to create a Plan that accurately reflects Southwest/Behind The Rocks.



Community Engagement

The Planning team worked closely with the Neighborhood Planning Committee to create a multi-faceted engagement approach that allowed residents multiple avenues to provide their feedback and perspectives at each phase of the process.

The Planning team worked closely with the Neighborhood Planning Committee to create a multi-faceted engagement approach that allowed residents multiple avenues to provide their feedback and perspectives at each phase of the process. The Neighborhood Planning Committee, comprised of approximately 20 residents, community leaders, non-profit staff, and NRZ members, met for the first time in July 2022 and continued meeting via Zoom throughout the duration of the process.

FHI Studio deployed a post-card mailer linking to a brief online survey. The survey asked residents what their favorite things about the neighborhood were, and what things they would like to see change in the coming years. The Neighborhood Planning Committee helped distribute the survey to the neighborhood both online and print versions of the survey.

FHI Studio conducted business drop-ins, distributing post-cards with the survey link to businesses throughout the neighborhood. FHI Studio also engaged Hartford's Youth Service Corp for a neighborhood tour to receive youth perspective on their desires and challenges facing the neighborhood.

Vision

The Vision describes what the people of the Southwest/Behind The Rocks value and what the neighborhood will strive toward over the next 10 years. The vision is not a description of the neighborhood as it is today. Instead, it is an expression of the desires and aspirations of the community in a statement that is meant to guide local and municipal leaders and organize the goals and strategies of the Plan.

Goals

Goals are commitments towards achieving the vision. They are meant to complement the goals of the Hartford 2035 City Plan and dive deeper into needs and improvements at the neighborhood scale and establish a desired impact for the neighborhood's future.

Strategies

Strategies are the methods by which the goals will be achieved. They describe the outcomes that can lead to achieving the impact described in a goal.

Actions

Actions are specific steps that can be taken to accomplish strategies. They are the first steps to be taken toward achieving the Plan's vision.

Key findings and quotes from the residents directly influenced the development of the goals and strategies included in this Neighborhood Plan. Residents highlighted a desire to increase civic participation throughout the neighborhood, reducing quality of life crime issues, improvements to local business facades, and bringing city events and festivals to the neighborhood.

The Neighborhood Planning Committee also hosted an in-person neighborhood planning forum at the popular neighborhood restaurant “Coyote Flaco”. This event drew approximately 35 residents to facilitate conversation around the concerns and desires for the neighborhood. Feedback and discussion from this event was also used to directly influence the development of the goals and strategies included in this Neighborhood Plan.

While there were a strong number of residents on the neighborhood planning committee and the NRZ who were engaged throughout the planning process, members of the planning committee understood that there were still many residents who were not being reached. Planning committee members expressed that given the pandemic, civic participation throughout the neighborhood had waned. The demographic that was hardest to reach were residents between the ages of 20–40 and younger families in the neighborhood.

The Southwest/Behind The Rocks neighborhood residents have participated in several planning processes and have been active in communications with city and state officials on desires for improvements for their neighborhood. Given this, many residents feel that their efforts are often met without action. FHI Studio hopes that the Southwest/Behind The Rocks Neighborhood Plan can provide a renewed sense of trust in the City’s processes and provide measurable action and implementation for a neighborhood that has been active in many planning efforts with limited impact.





A blue-tinted photograph of a row of houses, likely in a suburban neighborhood. The houses are two-story structures with various rooflines, including gables and dormers. Some houses have porches or small front yards. Bare trees are visible in the background, suggesting a cooler season. A large, white, stylized number '3' is overlaid on the left side of the image, partially obscuring the first house. The overall scene is quiet and residential.

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NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE

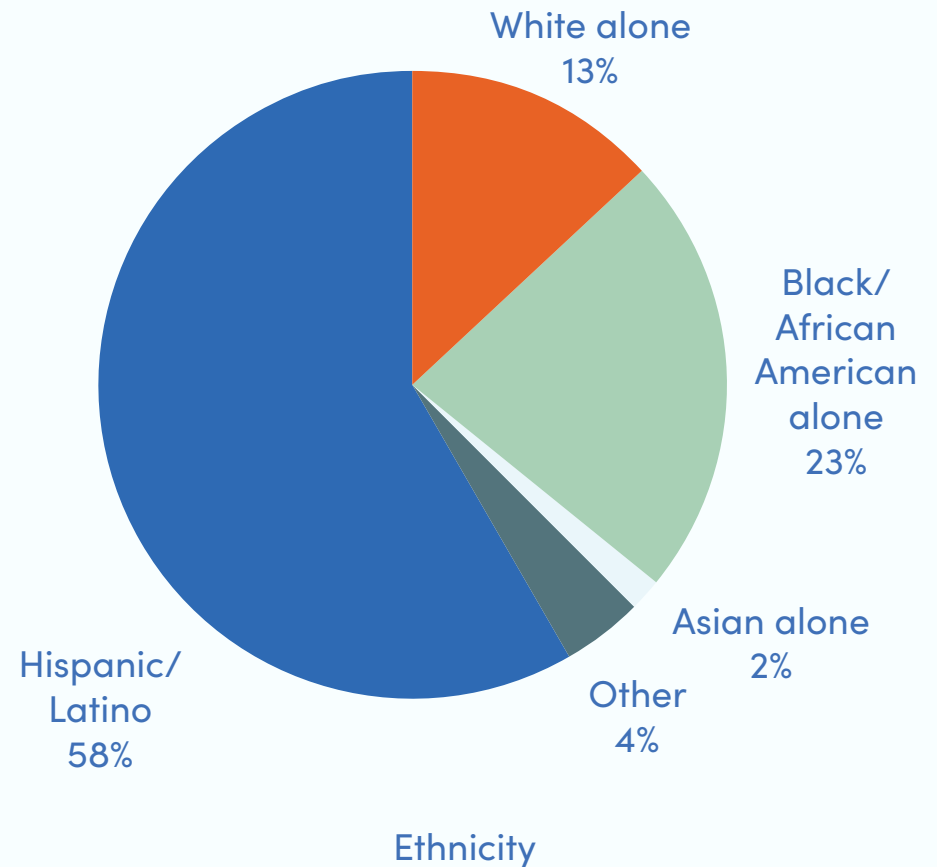
Southwest/ Behind The Rocks Neighborhood Profile

Demographics and Key Trends

The Southwest/Behind The Rocks neighborhood is a neighborhood of homeowners, with 92% of households owning their homes. The neighborhood holds higher-income households as compared to the rest of the city with the median household income at \$47,639, higher compared to the city median.

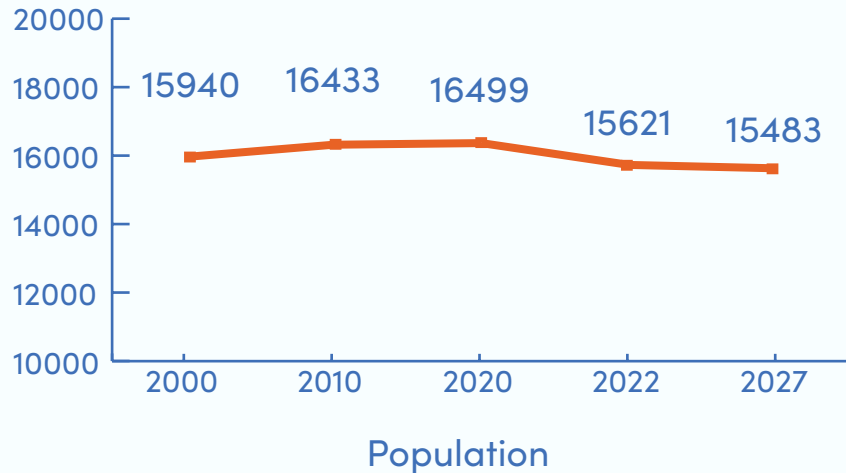
A stable and increasingly diverse neighborhood, the neighborhood is home to the city's growing Latino population where 58% of residents are Hispanic or Latino according to 2020 estimates.

87% of SWBTR residents represent minority populations.

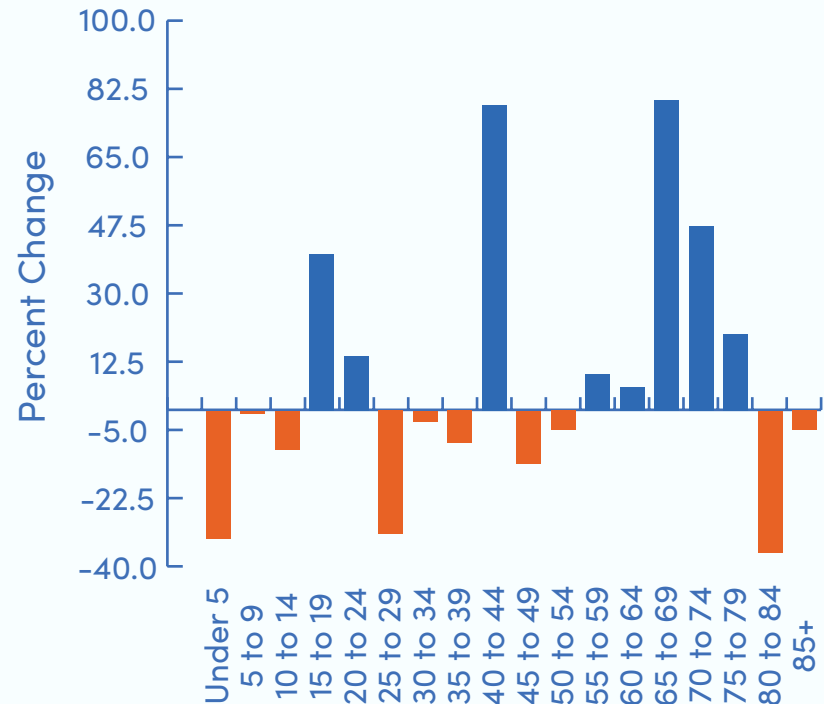


15,621 people live in the Southwest/
Behind The Rocks neighborhood as of
2022.

The population over the past two
decades and the projected population
over the next 5 years remain stable.

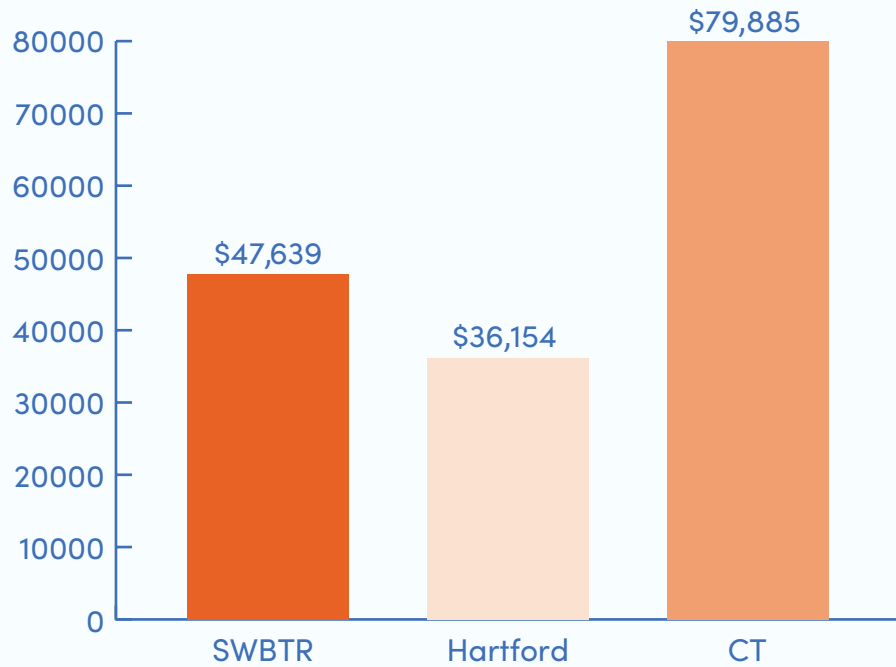


Population Change by Age Cohort
2010 vs 2020



Compared to 2010, the neighborhood
has seen population growth across age
cohorts, with the biggest increases in
the 40 to 44 and 65 to 69 age cohorts.

Planning for aging populations will
be necessary for the future of the
neighborhood.



Median Household Income: \$47,639

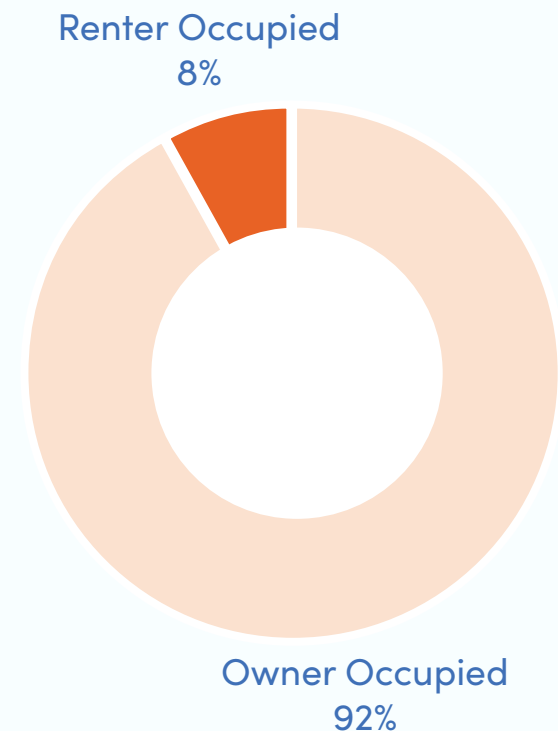
Per Capita Income: \$14,133

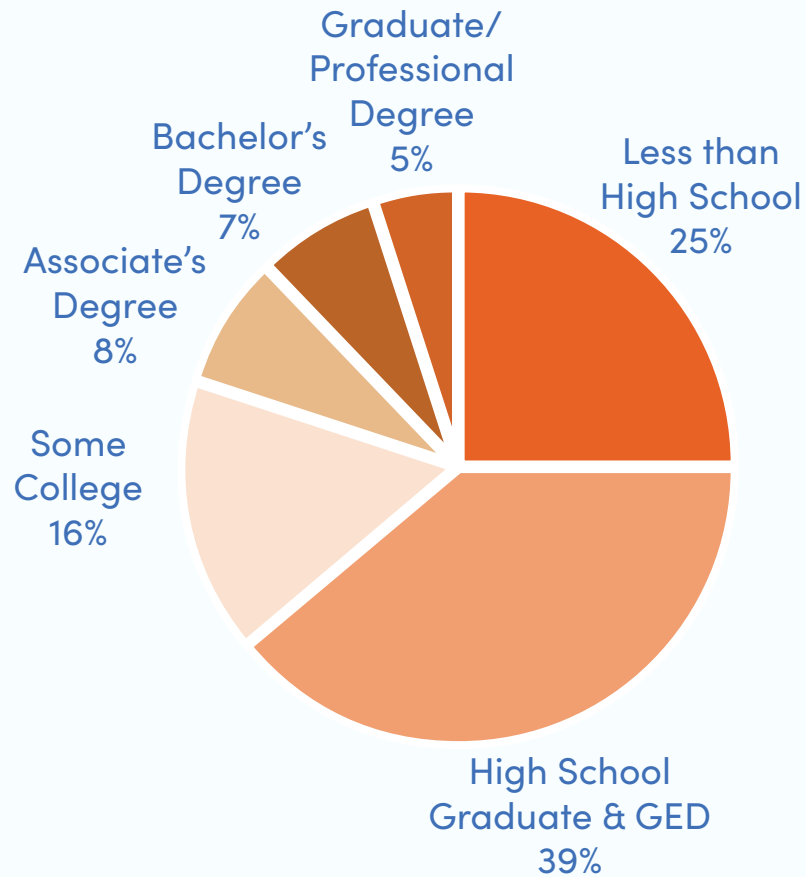
Average Household Income: \$39,456

Median household income is higher than the City, but less than the state median.

The neighborhood is comprised of 5,639 households

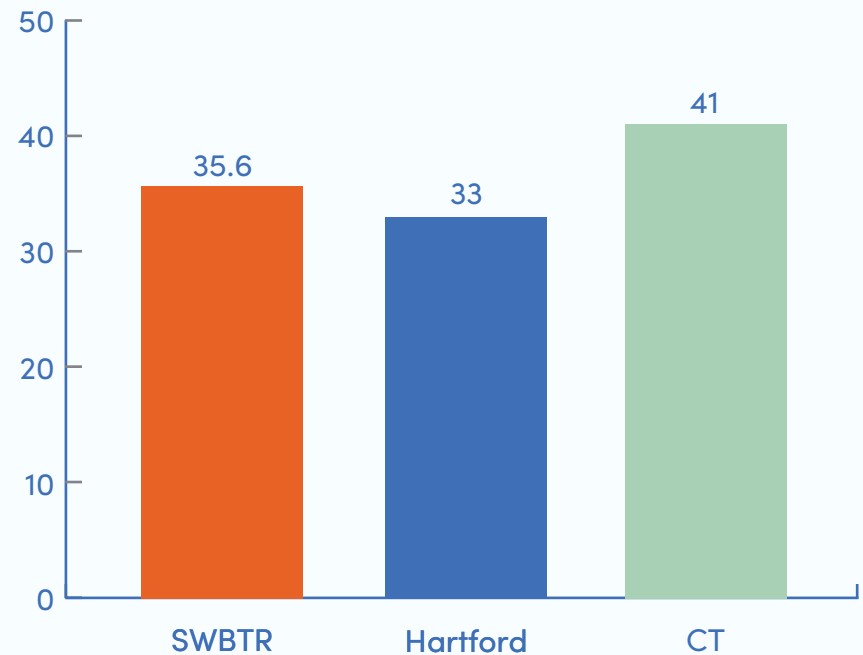
Approximately 92% of households own their homes.





Education Levels of 25+ Population

The median age in the neighborhood is 35.6 years, which is older than the Citywide median age, but less than the statewide median.



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VISION STATEMENT

Neighborhood Vision

The Vision statement presents an aspirational look forward for the future of the neighborhood, reflecting the hopes and needs of the communities that comprise it. The visioning process includes engaging residents and stakeholders to gauge their desires for the neighborhood, workshopping a Vision Statement, and then crafting goals and strategies to help the neighborhood achieve that vision.



Southwest/Behind The Rocks Vision Statement

The Southwest/Behind The Rocks Neighborhood is a vibrant and diverse neighborhood where residents are **connected and proactive in civic life**. The neighborhood is quiet and **filled with green spaces** for residents to walk and enjoy. The **streets are walkable, safe, and well-maintained** and there are frequent community events where residents can gather. Students are engaged in **schools, houses and apartments are attractive and well-maintained**, and there are a **variety of restaurants** for residents and people from outside the neighborhood to enjoy. The neighborhood has a strong quality of life with access to environmental, social, and cultural resources that provide a strong sense of community.



A blue-tinted photograph of a row of houses, likely in a suburban neighborhood. The houses are two-story with various rooflines, including gables and dormers. Some have porches. Bare trees are visible in the background and foreground. A large, white, stylized number '5' is overlaid on the left side of the image, partially covering the first house. The overall tone is monochromatic blue.

5

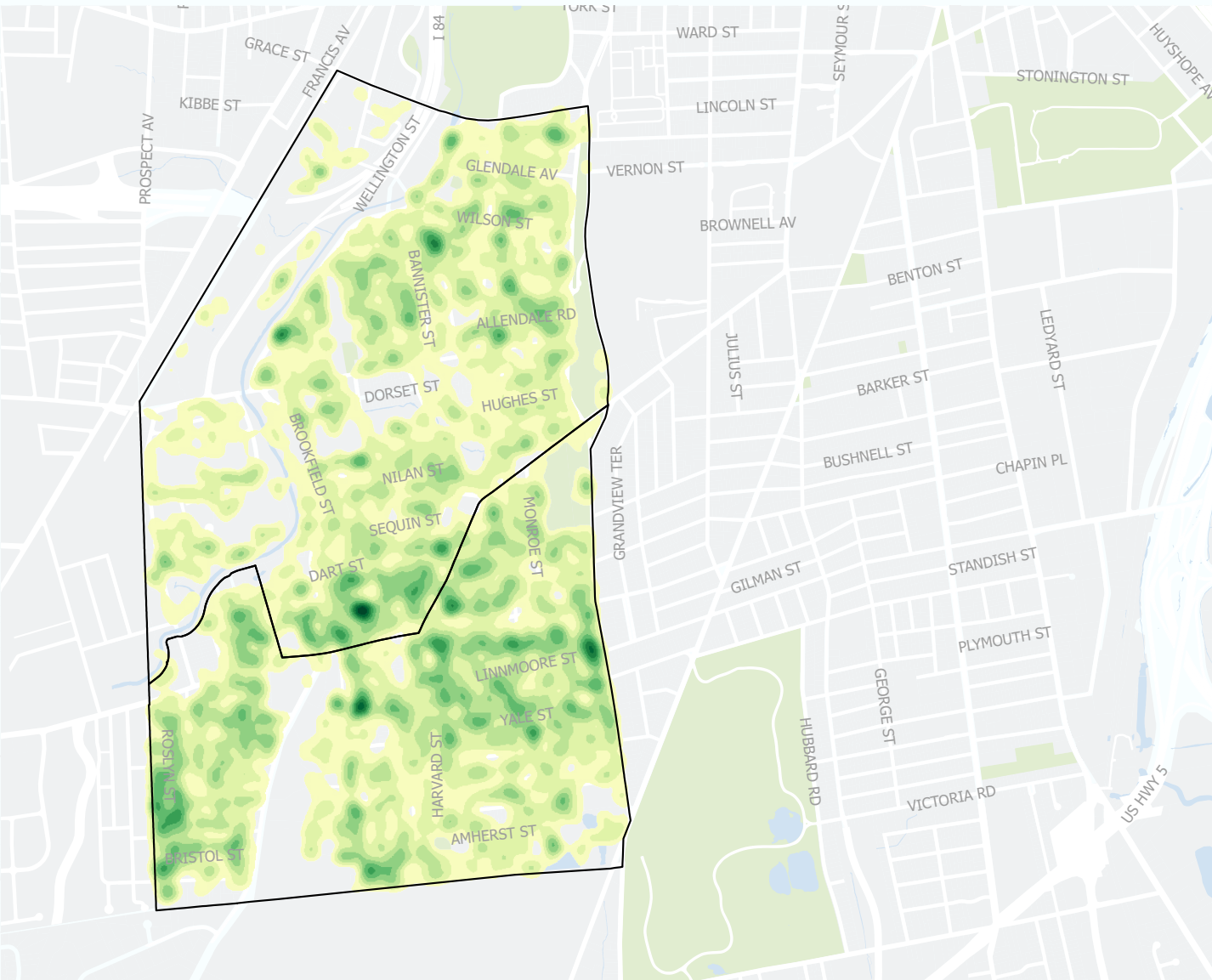
PLAN GOALS + STRATEGIES

Green

A More Sustainable Environment

The Hartford 2035 Plan examines energy, fauna, flora, resiliency, river, and waste as key focus areas of the Green Hartford action area with the goal of creating a more sustainable city. Among the priorities identified in the City Plan, transitioning to solar and expanding options for renewable energy are key priorities that benefit the Southwest/Behind The Rocks neighborhood and are highlighted in the goals and strategies listed below. Additionally, Hartford seeks to expand the City's tree canopy to 35% from the current 25% coverage. All of these City goals will enhance the quality of life for residents and make the Southwest/Behind The Rocks more sustainable as it faces future and current climate risks.

One aspect of climate change that is sometimes overlooked is the urban heat island effect or UHI, where urban areas experience hotter summers and higher temperatures year-round due to thermal pollution. Larger expanses of concrete and impermeable surfaces contribute to trapping heat and making the overall environment warmer for city dwellers. Planting trees and vegetation reduces the impact of UHIs.



Tree Canopy

 Northeast Neighborhood

Relative Tree Density within 200 ft



Goal: Ensure the neighborhood is resilient and prepared for future climate risks

- Advance green infrastructure learning and installation programs
- Expand use of solar energy in the neighborhood
- Expand tree canopy cover to add greenery, provide shade, and reduce the heat island effect (goal of planting 3,000 trees over 10 years)

Environmental justice solutions address the disproportionate risk faced by vulnerable communities and particular attention and resources are required to ensure Hartford's resiliency efforts do not exclude the most vulnerable residents. Solar Energy and investments in renewable energy bring equitable benefits and protect communities from the rising costs of traditional energy sources.

More work can be done to advertise existing resources and bring neighbors into the conversation to participate in the solutions. Finding ways to incentivize the planting of trees on private property could work towards addressing reducing the heat island effects for neighborhood residents.

Advance green infrastructure learning and installation programs at public schools and community facilities

Green infrastructure has a host of benefits that extend beyond managing stormwater runoff. Residents in communities with green infrastructure incorporated into the streetscape experience a friendlier pedestrian environment, which leads to improved safety and increased property values. Ensuring that green infrastructure is a part of new developments and looking for areas and opportunities to install it in the neighborhood with residents' participation delivers employable skills to communities with the benefits of improved environment and a more sustainable streetscape.

Expand use of solar energy in the neighborhood

Solar energy has been demonstrated to reduce energy costs for low-income households, who spend on average three times more on household energy costs compared to other households. Solar energy infrastructure reduces greenhouse gas emissions and energy bills while increasing property values for homeowners.

Action Items

- Identify green infrastructure partners and initiate collaboration between schools and centers to foster a working relationship

Partners and Programs

- Hartford Board of Education
- KNOX Parks Foundation

Action Items

- Expand access to “Solar for All” program
- Increase business participation in the C-PACE financing program

Partners and Programs

- Mayor’s Office of Sustainability

Expand tree canopy cover to add greenery, provide shade, and reduce the heat island effect

The tree canopy covering an urban area contributes more than just oxygen to a community. Trees beautify a street, connect a community, improve property values, and provide noise buffers for noisy streets. Additionally, they can reduce crime in the neighborhood. The Hartford Tree Canopy Action Plan rates the Southwest/Behind The Rocks a 4 on 5 scale describing the need for additional tree cover. This means that while there are an adequate number of trees overall shading the neighborhood's streets, there are still key planting spots for additional trees. These locations are identified in the Action Plan. Getting the community involved in planting and maintaining trees imparts vital and employable skills to community members who can pursue careers in landscaping through volunteer experience. The goal is to plant 3,000 trees over the next 10 years.

Action Items

- Partner with KNOX Parks Foundation and City's Tree Commission to initiate new street planting initiatives, particularly in heat-island areas.
- Keep inventory of new and existing trees and monitor the health of trees to build upon the 2007 Urban Street Tree Inventory.
- Identify areas for planting and maintenance of pollinator gardens, including residents' yards, and community gardens in partnership with KNOX Parks Foundation

Partners and Programs

- KNOX Parks Foundation
- Hartford Advisory Tree Commission
- Trinity College
- Hartford Job Corp

Goal: Produce food locally within the neighborhood

- Create accessible urban farms for neighborhood residents

Create accessible urban farms for neighborhood residents

Create accessible urban farms for neighborhood residents.



Action Items

- Partner with KNOX foundation to identify opportunities for urban farms in the neighborhood
- Partner with Hartford Land Bank to identify potential vacant land to redevelop into urban farms

Partners and Programs

- City of Hartford Office of Sustainability
- Hartford Land Bank
- KNOX Foundation

Grow

A More Prosperous Economy

The Grow action area seeks to achieve a more prosperous Hartford by addressing key factors impacting economic development, including avenues, construction, development, entrepreneurship, as well as knowledge, and workforce development. The City aims to support both start-up entrepreneurs and established companies alike to bolster an innovative economy.

Community Resources

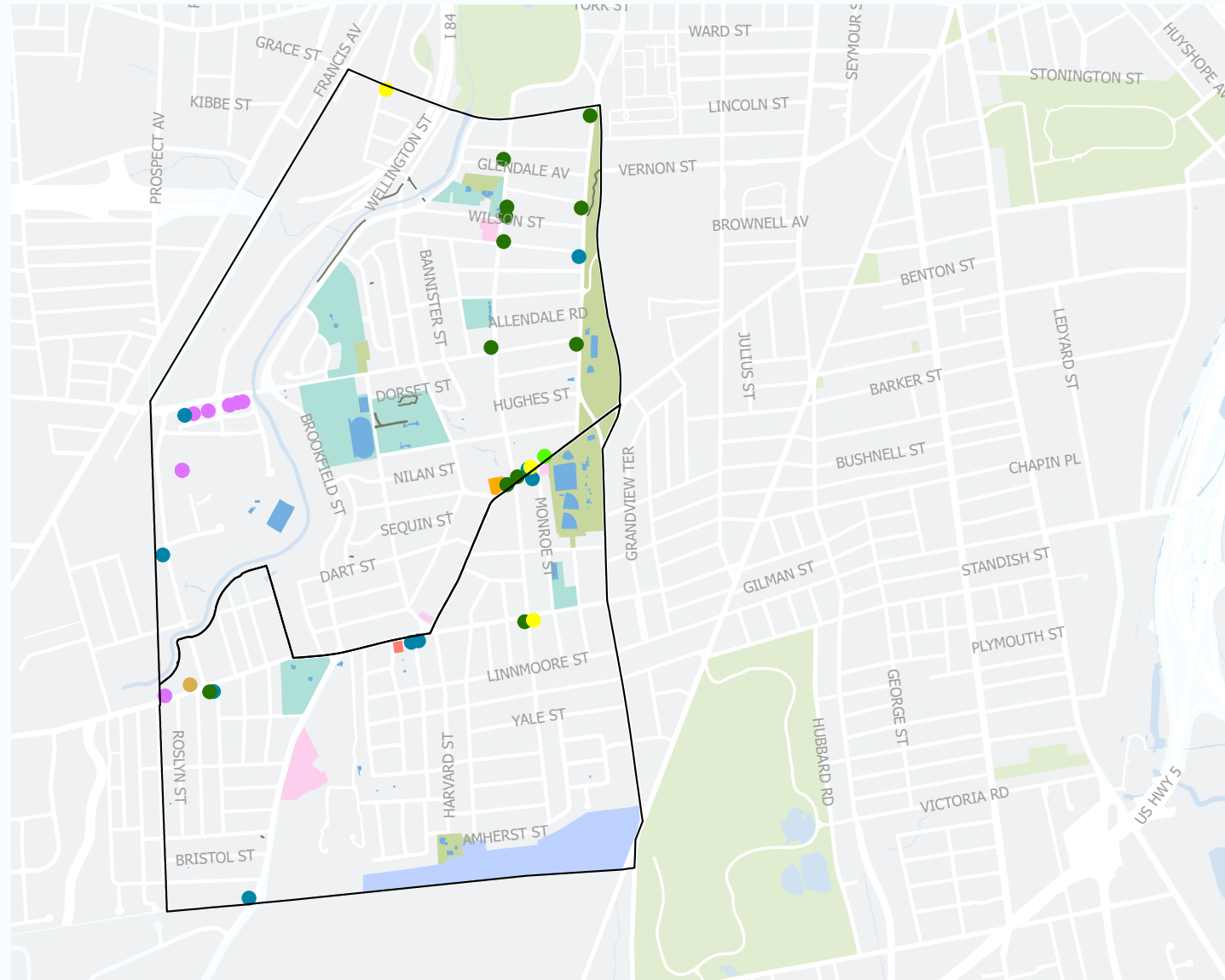
 Neighborhood

Food Establishments

-  Grocery, limited or no fresh food
-  Grocery, fresh food available
-  Restaurant
-  Convenience
-  Bakery or Cafe
-  Fast Food

Community Resources

-  Recreational Field, Court, or Playground
-  Park
-  School
-  Healthcare Center
-  Library
-  Cemetery
-  Fire Department
-  Walking Trails



Goal: Support the growth of retail and services that are targeted to the diverse needs of the communities in Southwest/ Behind The Rocks

- Beautify and invest in neighborhood storefront and façade
- Encourage and support locally owned businesses

The Southwest/Behind The Rocks is a diverse community and the businesses and services that serve it should reflect that. Economic growth should be balanced and uplift all the existing and future entrepreneurs that already live in the neighborhood.

A goal and strategy highlighted in Hartford 2035 important to the Southwest/Behind The Rocks is strengthening and enhancing it's commercial corridor. Shops and restaurants are vital to a vibrant community, and neighborhood residents take immense pride in their local gems. Walkability to coffee shops, restaurants, and local retailers create options for a third space, currently lacking in the neighborhood. Throughout the planning process residents expressed a lack of space for community gathering. Investing in creation and expansion of local businesses will create vibrant commercial corridors that strengthen community cohesion and sense of place.

Beautify and invest in neighborhood storefronts and façades

Southwest/Behind The Rocks is home to many shops, restaurants, and other retail services. Many of these storefronts are at the gateway to the neighborhood, and serve as a visual first-impression of the neighborhood. Ensuring that these storefronts have the necessary upkeep and visual appeal will increase the vibrancy and enhance the beauty of the neighborhood.

Action Items

- Partner with city on beautification program and funding for local businesses to make facade improvements

Partners and Programs

- City of Hartford Small Business & Community Development Division
- MetroHartford Alliance

Encourage and support locally owned businesses

Local businesses in Southwest/Behind The Rocks reflect the rich cultural diversity of the neighborhood and serve as a key asset to the neighborhood's vibrancy. Ensuring that these businesses are given the necessary visibility and support will strengthen neighborhood businesses.

Action Items

- Partner with City to identify potential vacant and underutilized retail spaces along in neighborhood for a future 'pop-up to brick-and-mortar' pipeline program
- Develop a robust social media presence to market new businesses in the community and bring awareness to opportunities and programs
- Establish a neighborhood business association and network support group
- Establish a Business Improvement District
- Compile a comprehensive list of neighborhood businesses
- Allow for additional neighborhood retail uses along key corridors to reduce the need to drive out of the neighborhood for basic tasks

Partners and Programs

- City of Hartford Small Business & Community Development Division
- Metro Hartford Alliance

Goal: Increase the marketing of businesses and home ownership in the neighborhood

- Develop a marketing and branding campaign for the neighborhood
- Increase promotion of home ownership programs in the neighborhood
- Partner with Metro Hartford Alliance to actively promote the Southwest/Behind The Rocks and distribute materials and information
- Consider formation of organization to manage investment in the neighborhood

Southwest/Behind The Rocks is a great neighborhood in which to raise a family. Providing the necessary marketing to tell the story of the neighborhood and its assets will serve as a way to encourage more businesses and residents to move into the neighborhood. The excitement generated through focused story-telling strengthens the neighborhoods vibrancy, economy, and sense of community.

Develop a marketing and branding campaign for the neighborhood

Initiatives surrounding branding and marketing will generate excitement in Southwest/Behind The Rocks. A marketing and branding campaign designed by the neighborhood helps strengthen sense of community and neighborhood pride.

Action Items

- Collaborate with local partners such as the Free Center to develop marketing materials and host events such as “Taste of New Britain Ave”
- Market retail businesses on New Britain Ave with signage and other marketing materials
- Market retail businesses on White Street, Zion Street, and Hillside Ave

Partners and Programs

- Free Center
- Metro Hartford Alliance
- Southwest/Behind The Rocks NRZ
- Active City
- Mayor Mike Peters Little League

Increase promotion of home ownership programs in the neighborhood

Homeownership not only builds generational wealth, it also strengthens civic engagement and pride. The City of Hartford, along with State and Federal programs can aid residents in transitioning to homeownership or help low-income homeowners with costly repairs that could inundate them. Offering neighborhood-level support for these initiatives and seeking out and connecting community members strengthens Citywide efforts and ensures that Southwest/Behind The Rocks residents do not miss out on these opportunities.

Action Items

- Work with local realtors to promote home inventory available in the neighborhood.
- Work with Prince Tech to ensure neighborhood homeowners have priority to 'on the job training' programs (where trades students work on site renovating homes to further learn building, plumbing, electricity etc. skills; which would also provide cost effective repairs to homes/homeowners).

Partners and Programs

- City of Hartford Housing Division
- State of Connecticut/Prince Tech

Partner with Metro Hartford Alliance to actively promote the Southwest/Behind The Rocks and distribute materials and information

Working with Metro Hartford Alliance will help elevate the visibility of the neighborhood and establish partnerships with employers to help promote Southwest/Behind The Rocks among their workforce as a great place to live.

Consider formation of organization to manage investment in the neighborhood

Community Development Corporations (CDC) have significant potential to transform communities. Forming a CDC in Southwest/Behind The Rocks will allow the neighborhood to better manage investment and critical initiatives surrounding economic development, streetscape, housing, and more.

Action Items

- Develop a neighborhood branding working group to identify neighborhood marketing opportunities

Partners and Programs

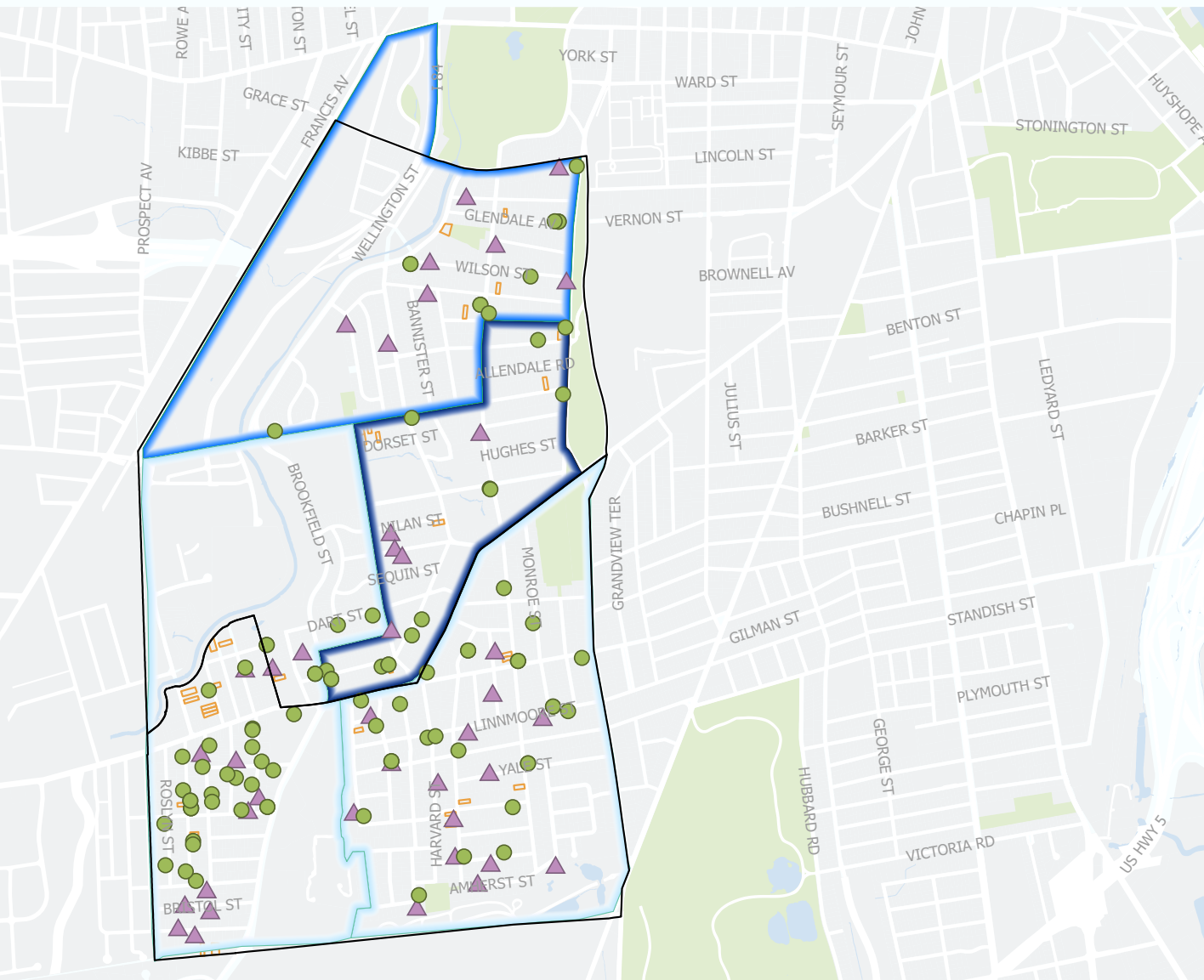
- Metro Hartford Alliance

Action Items

- Discuss with LISC partners involvement of CDCs within the neighborhood

Partners and Programs

- LISC



Housing

-  Northeast Neighborhood
-  Vacant Property
-  Foreclosure
-  Reported Blight

Housing Choice Voucher Usage

-  90
-  120
-  180

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Live

A More Equitable Community

At the heart of the Southwest/Behind The Rocks neighborhood are its residents. The neighborhood's pride and civic participation are among its strongest assets. Residents take pride in their homes, their parks, sense of place, and strong quality of life. However, many neighborhood residents acknowledge more needs to be done to enhance these on a larger scale throughout the neighborhood.

While the neighborhood enjoys a strong quality of life, it's challenged with nuisance crimes such as illegal ATVs, littering, and excessive noise from cars and speeding. Addressing these concerns through community safety programs will help protect the neighborhood's quality of life.

The pandemic put a strain on the neighborhood's community cohesion and connectivity. Many neighbors lost touch and gathered less. Formalizing neighborhood gatherings and events will help reestablish community synergy and connection.

Southwest/Behind The Rocks has a strong history of neighborhood pride, civic engagement, and quality of life. Strategically utilizing the neighborhood's networks of civic organizations, businesses, community non-profits, and city departments with intentional use of fostering community connectivity and protecting its quality of life will enhance the vibrancy of the neighborhood..

Goal: Encourage civic participation and community connectivity

- Bring city events and festivals to the neighborhood
- Foster community synergy in neighborhood Facebook group
- Host quarterly community gatherings

Bring city events and festivals to the neighborhood

Neighborhood events and happenings serve as a source of pride for many residents. These events and happenings create a sense of place and help other people outside the neighborhood gain familiarity with the neighborhood. There should be at least 2 neighborhood events or festivals per year.

Action Items

- Coordinate with city's community engagement office as well as partnering organizations to bring festivals to the neighborhood
- Partner with Greek Festival to promote event across the neighborhood
- Partner with local restaurants to organize Taste of New Britain Ave, Zion Street, Hillside Ave, and White Street events highlighting restaurants along the corridor
- Bring 'Domingo' open streets event to the neighborhood

Partners and Programs

- St. George Greek Orthodox Cathedral
- City of Hartford Office of Community Engagement
- Restaurants along New Britain Avenue

Foster community in neighborhood Facebook group

Online neighborhood groups are a good way to share events, help neighbors in need, or spark conversation and solutions on a particular neighborhood concern. Once neighborhood Facebook group rules are clearly established, these platforms are a useful way to enhance community connectivity. The goal is for the NRZ to have 500 members in the neighborhood Facebook group.

Host quarterly community gatherings

Community gatherings are critical to enhancing a strong sense of community. Whether it be a backyard cookout, a cultural event, or a neighborhood meeting, ensuring neighborhood residents can gather on a critical basis allows residents to keep in touch and continue to nurture relationships.

Action Items

- Utilize neighborhood Facebook group to share events
- Encourage dialogue related to neighborhood concerns

Partners and Programs

- Southwest/Behind The Rocks NRZ

Action Items

- Form committee on NRZ with focus on community outreach and events

Partners and Programs

- Southwest/Behind The Rocks NRZ
- The Free Center

Goal: Create a safe, healthy, and attractive neighborhood where residents and visitors enjoy walking and feel comfortable doing so

- Reduce quality of life crime issues
- Prevent littering throughout neighborhood
- Address the illegal use of ATVs

Reduce quality of life crime issues

Quality of crime issues remain a concern to Southwest/Behind The Rocks residents. By working in partnership with the police department and a neighborhood block watch program, Southwest/Behind The Rocks can identify problem areas and work collaboratively to prevent and stop these threats to their strong quality of life. .

Action Items

- Identify hotspots and work with local authorities and neighborhood block watch program to strategize community safety solutions
- Re-establish neighborhood block watch program.

Partners and Programs

- Hartford Police Department

Prevent littering throughout neighborhood

A clean neighborhood is a prideful one. Organizing efforts to clean up litter and to prevent litter throughout the neighborhood help reinforce standards of a clean and beautified neighborhood.

Action Items

- Launch anti-litter campaign throughout neighborhood
- Organize neighborhood clean-up days
- Develop and implement age appropriate school based anti-litter campaign

Partners and Programs

- Love Your Block Hartford Program
- Hartford Public Schools
- State of CT Tech School System
- Hartford Job Corps

Address the illegal use of ATVs

The illegal use of ATVs is one of the biggest disruptors of quality of life to Southwest/Behind The Rocks. Illegal ATV use not only disrupts neighborhood peace, but it's also dangerous to the riders, pedestrians, and motorists on the roads.

Action Items

- Coordinate with Hartford Police Department on solutions
- Explore physical infrastructure to deter illegal ATVs
- Provide alternative recreational opportunities

Partners and Programs

- Hartford Police Department
- City of Hartford Department of Public Works
- City of Hartford Parks and Recreation

Goal: Improve and expand public facilities and resources in the neighborhood

- Open schools and grounds for community use
- Utilize public art to activate public spaces and encourage community participation for all age groups
- Utilize vacant lots and school playgrounds to expand the public open space network
- Use schools as community education and gathering centers to stimulate lifelong learning and intergenerational learning

Public facilities in the neighborhood are opportunities for residents to gather to foster community connections or brainstorm solutions to community challenges. Ensuring Southwest/Behind The Rocks has access to these facilities will help strengthen the neighborhood's sense of community.



Open schools and grounds for community use

Schools and school grounds are places that cultivate creativity and community. Opening these facilities for community use increases opportunities for neighborhood residents to participate in programming, cultural events, sports and more.

School buildings have an opportunity to serve the comprehensive needs of the community. Rather than just educating school-aged children, these spaces could serve as evening centers for intergenerational learning.



Action Items

- Coordinate with Board of Education to allow for expanded programming on school grounds
- Use schools as community education and gathering centers to stimulate lifelong and intergenerational learning
- Coordinate with Board of Education on expanding programs and increasing neighborhood involvement in programs

Partners and Programs

- Hartford Board of Education

Utilize public art to activate public spaces and encourage community participation for all age groups

Activating public spaces with community art generates community excitement and pride, incentivizing residents to come out and enjoy spaces that may have previously been underutilized.

Utilize vacant lots and school playgrounds to expand the public open space network

Strategically utilizing vacant lots and school playgrounds gives residents, especially kids, more options for safer recreational options.

Action Items

- Coordinate with local artists and programs to activate spaces that foster community excitement

Partners and Programs

- RiseUp for Arts
- Love Your Block Hartford Program

Action Items

- Coordinate with Board of Education to further activate school lots and playgrounds
- Coordinate with local schools and their art programs

Partners and Programs

- Hartford Board of Education
- Trinity College
- Boys and Girls Club
- Hartford Public Schools
- Hartford Job Corps

Move

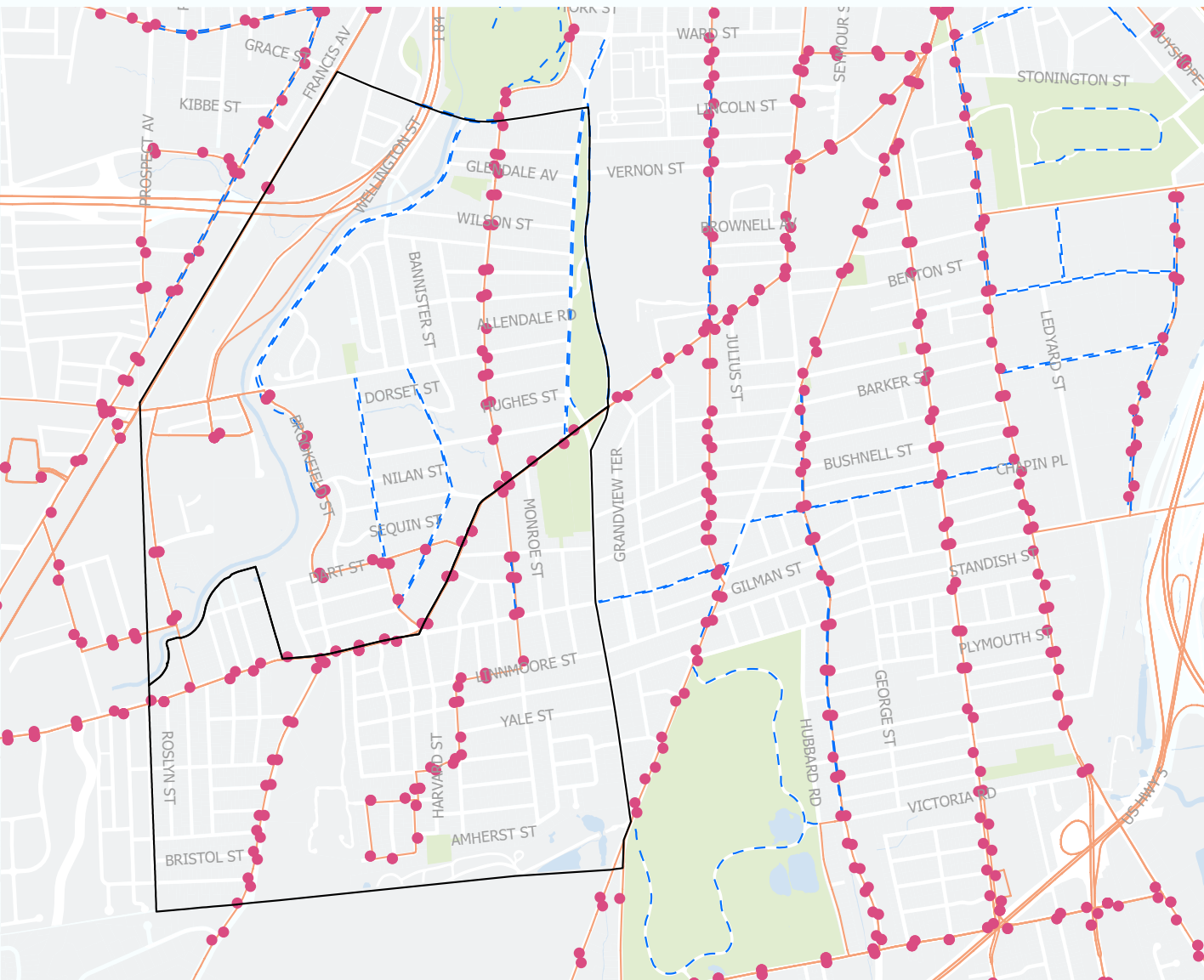
More Mobile Transport

The Hartford 2035 Plan focuses on developing mobile transport systems that take people where they need to go safely and efficiently. Southwest/Behind The Rocks is home to a major thoroughfare, New Britain Ave which connects the neighborhood to the neighboring towns of Newington and West Hartford. Given this connection, this corridor sees large volumes of traffic and congestion that threaten it's safety and efficiency.

The neighborhood is also divided through busy streets such as Zion Street, Fairfield Avenue and Hillside Avenue. These streets are often seen as barriers to connections to other parts of the neighborhood given their large volumes of traffic. Improving connections between these thoroughfares will help reconnect the neighborhood, and ultimately connect the neighborhood to the rest of the city.

Proper pedestrian and bicycle facilities lack throughout the neighborhood. Pedestrian connections to Hyland Park from Zion Street are dangerous due to heavy traffic on New Britain Avenue. Speeding concerns on Hillside Avenue and Fairfield Avenue threaten safe walkability.

Enhancing mobility and creating safer connections throughout the neighborhood will also help spur economic growth and community cohesion.



Transportation

-  Northeast Neighborhood
-  CT Transit Bus Stop
-  CT Transit Bus Route
-  Bike Route

Goal: Improve mobility options and safety of those options in the neighborhood

- Improve the pedestrian environment to encourage a walkable neighborhood
- Reduce traffic congestion on New Britain Avenue
- Ensure bikers feel safe and protected from vehicles on New Britain Avenue
- Increase access to transit in the neighborhood
- Maintain existing traffic calming measures and identify opportunities for new locations

Improve the pedestrian environment to encourage a walkable neighborhood

Reducing the number of vehicle trips can improve the local environment and improve health outcomes for community members who are more incentivized to walk, bike, or take transit on shorter trips.



Action Items

- Ensure streets are well-lit and residents and visitors feel safe using them at all hours
- Maintain a sidewalk improvement program
- Implement more speed bumps in the neighborhood especially around parks and schools to slow traffic
- Increasing the numbers of crosswalks
- Place well-marked school zone signs on both sides of Batchelder School

Partners and Programs

- Department of Public Works, Street Services Division
- Department of Development Services, Planning & Zoning

Reduce traffic congestion on New Britain Avenue

Traffic congestion and safety remain a top concern for residents traveling along New Britain Avenue. Explore implementation of a road diet, and conducting a road safety audit to examine alternatives to road design creates opportunities to improve safety on New Britain Avenue.

Action Items

- Road safety audit on New Britain Avenue
- Implement road diet for New Britain Avenue
- Implement complete streets on New Britain Avenue

Partners and Programs

- Department of Public Works, Street Services Division
- Department of Development Services, Planning & Zoning
- State of Connecticut Department of Transportation

Ensure bikers feel safe and protected from vehicles on New Britain Ave

New Britain Avenue's current infrastructure does not include bicycle amenities such as protected bike lanes. As New Britain Avenue sees high volumes of motorist a day, bicyclist riding along the thoroughfare must be protected to improve safety for bicyclists.

Increase access to transit in the neighborhood

Limited frequency in bus service poses challenges for neighborhood residents who don't own a car. Increasing frequency and enhancing bus stop amenities incentivizes transit and provides neighborhood residents with more options for travel

Action Items

- Ensure streets are well-lit and residents and visitors feel safe using them at all hours as recommended in the City's Bike Master Plan
- Maintain a sidewalk improvement program
- Implement more speed bumps in the neighborhood especially around parks and schools to slow traffic

Partners and Programs

- Department of Public Works, Street Services Division
- Department of Development Services, Planning & Zoning

Action Items

- Increase bus frequency for the 39W and 41
- Enhance bus stop amenities

Maintain existing traffic calming measures and identify opportunities for new locations

Vehicular speeding remains an issue in the neighborhood, and while traffic calming infrastructure has been installed in key areas, additional steps can be taken to prevent crashes and improve safety on the roads for motorists and others. Integrating public art and creating interactive demonstration projects that temporarily change road infrastructure through paint and temporary barriers engages residents and gets their thoughts and expertise on how to make their community safer. Britain Avenue.

Action Items

- Integrate barricades and barriers in a thoughtful way that enhances neighborhood character.
- Involve local artists to help create aesthetically pleasing barriers.

Partners and Programs

- Department of Public Works, Street Services Division
- Department of Development Services, Planning & Zoning
- RiseUp for Arts
- Local Artists

Goal: Enhance connectivity and accessibility across the neighborhood

- Complete South Branch Park River Trail Extension to connect neighborhood
- Create a Green Network that enhances connectivity between parks, open spaces, and other community spaces
- Build pedestrian and bicycle amenities connecting different sections of the neighborhood
- Improve connectivity within the neighborhood and to other neighborhoods

Improving connections across the neighborhood enhances community cohesion. Strong neighborhood assets such as the parks, South Branch Park River Trail, diverse cultural restaurants, and the Charter Oak Market Place shopping center are in need of stronger connections.



Complete South Branch Park River Trail Extension to connect neighborhood

The South Branch of the Park River Trail is a gateway to the neighborhood ultimately extending from Hamilton Street to Newfield Avenue and New Britain Avenue. When completed, it will form an important link between the East Coast Greenway and the Trout Brook Trail in West Hartford. This trail can also serve as an important link to the Parkville neighborhood via the Olive Street bridge

Create a Green Network that enhances connectivity between parks, open spaces, and other community spaces

Rocky Ridge, Hyland, and Forster Park are among the neighborhood's strongest assets, providing green space and recreation to residents. These parks need stronger links across the neighborhood. Bicycle and pedestrian greenways can serve as a critical way to encourage park connectivity.

Action Items

- Form neighborhood group with focus on trail development and maintenance

Partners and Programs

- Southwest/Behind The Rocks NRZ
- Prince Tech
- Hartford Job Corps

Action Items

- Engage iQuilt with connectivity projects across the parks
- Coordinate with Department of Public Works on possible linkages

Partners and Programs

- iQuilt Partnership
- Department of Public Works, Street Services Division
- Department of Development Services, Planning & Zoning

Build pedestrian and bicycle amenities connecting different sections of the neighborhood

Bicycle and pedestrian amenities will provide safer and more efficient ways for residents to visit other sections of the neighborhood and help foster more community cohesion. improve safety on New Britain Avenue.

Improve connectivity within the neighborhood and to other neighborhoods

Providing safer connections within the neighborhood and to other neighborhoods allows better cross-city connections and creates a more interconnected neighborhood.

Action Items

- Create clearly marked, grade-separated bike lanes and signage to connect neighborhood

Partners and Programs

- iQuilt Partnership
- Department of Public Works, Street Services Division
- Department of Development Services, Planning & Zoning

Action Items

- Engage iQuilt for connectivity projects across the neighborhood and to other neighborhoods

Partners and Programs

- iQuilt Partnership
- Department of Public Works, Street Services Division
- Department of Development Services, Planning & Zoning

Play

A More Vibrant Culture

The Southwest/Behind The Rocks is a neighborhood filled with parks, playgrounds, and greenspaces to enjoy. During the summer months, Hyland Park is a destination for families across the city as baseball diamonds fill with kids playing little league baseball. Many residents credit access to the parks as one of their top reasons for living in the neighborhood.

While Hyland Park is bustling with activity during the summer months, many residents acknowledge that on a broader scale many parks are underutilized. Parks such as Rocky Ridge and Forster lack formal use and in many instances are left for loitering and illegal uses. Creating programming in neighborhood parks, a neighborhood association for the parks, and creating pedestrian and bicycle connections across the parks will help enhance park use and connectivity to the neighborhood.

Goal: Expand and improve Southwest/Behind The Rocks parks and open space network

- Identify other opportunities for pocket parks and well-maintained recreational space
- Improve access points to open space assets and increase awareness of facilities
- Ensure community members feel connected to parks and open spaces
- Ensure the allocation of new park amenities is guided as described in the Parks Master Plan
- Provide incentives for the provision of publicly accessible open space in new developments or redevelopments
- Enhance connectivity of bike and pedestrian network between neighborhood parks

Identify other opportunities for pocket parks and well-maintained recreational space

Underutilized green spaces provide more opportunities for recreational spaces.



Action Items

- Partner with City Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission to discuss potential long-term and short-term improvements
- Conduct community survey to identify potential spaces
- Assess viability of suggested spaces
- Establish neighborhood committee to prioritize and move projects forward

Partners and Programs

- City of Hartford Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission
- City of Hartford Department of Public Works

Improve access points to open space assets and increase awareness of facilities

Access to open space and awareness of these facilities encourage more activity among residents in these spaces.



Action Items

- Utilize social media, neighborhood website and directional signage
- Establish one annual keystone event in the neighborhood that occurs at a public space
- Engage local artists and landscapers to beautify open space entrances
- Engage local organizations to hold public education events with open spaces
- Add an additional access point to Cedar Hill cemetery for South End residents to access it's North Side

Partners and Programs

- Southwest/Behind The Rocks NRZ

Ensure community members feel connected to parks and open spaces

Highlighting the neighborhood is important; Hartford is a city of its neighborhoods, that are all interconnected but each have their own story. Promoting the stories and people of the neighborhood preserves them and inspires the next generation to care about the place they live and the people that came before them.

Provide incentives for the provision of publicly accessible open space in new developments or redevelopments

Action Items

- Form “Friends of Parks” associations for Hyland, Forster, and Rocky Ridge Parks and South Branch of Park River Trail to create organization around park improvements
- Highlight key historical events and former state of neighborhood; highlight history of people and their stories, including history of marginalized groups and their culture

Partners and Programs

- Southwest/Behind The Rocks NRZ
- Cedar Hill Cemetery

Action Items

- Incorporate incentive through zoning code amendment

Partners and Programs

- City of Hartford Department of Development Services
- City of Hartford Planning & Zoning Commission

NRZ

A Better Equipped NRZ

The Southwest/Behind The Rocks NRZ and its residents have been the catalysts for neighborhood change and initiatives since it was formed in 1996. The NRZ, has operated on its own for the majority of its existence, ran by volunteers and community organizers who work tirelessly to move the neighborhood forward. However, many residents acknowledge that in order to achieve many of the goals set forward in the Neighborhood Plan, the NRZ needs a capacity boost. Many NRZ members work full-time jobs, care for their families, and split their time across various leadership and advisory commitments. Providing administrative support to the NRZ will help lift a burden off the NRZ and allow for more availability for members to participate more broadly within the NRZ. Formalizing a relationship between the Southwest/Behind The Rocks NRZ and the City of Hartford to strengthen communications and create clear systems will help ensure the needs and desires of neighborhood residents are being taken and met with action. There should be a semi-annual check-in between the NRZ and the City to ensure progress on the neighborhood plan goals.

Goal: Strengthen and increase the capacity of the NRZ

- Increase participation on the NRZ
- Increase access to capital
- Strengthen decision-making links with City
- Provide the neighborhood with a community gathering space

Increase participation on NRZ

Broader participation across the neighborhood helps the NRZ receive a broader perspective on neighborhood concerns and desires. Increased participation also enhances the presence of the NRZ within the neighborhood.



Action Items

- Train new and existing volunteers and establish succession plan for new leadership
- Coordinate with City and Youth Service Corps to have young adults provide administrative assistance to NRZ
- Create set of key messages to promote NRZ and the neighborhood
- Use messages on social media, email updates, and other media opportunities
- Design and implement neighborhood recruitment campaign

Partners and Programs

- Hartford Youth Service Corps
- Neighborhood School PTO's

Increase access to capital

A consistent funding mechanism gives the NRZ opportunities to advocate for more investments to the neighborhood. Access to capital allows for the NRZ to pay for grant writers, hire consultants for neighborhood projects, and more.

Strengthen decision-making links with City

Regular and clear communication with City staff, particularly Development Services, will ensure that Southwest/Behind The Rocks NRZ members are receiving regular updates and can easily communicate those with residents. Additionally, assess internal capacity needs and communicating with the City so they can help connect to additional resources

Action Items

- Identify potential corporate sponsors or partnerships to provide funding support and guidance on implementation of goals
- Create committee within NRZ to approach, apply, negotiate, manage funding from potential CDC

Partners and Programs

- Potential CDC Partner

Action Items

- Coordinate with city on full-time liaison to the NRZ

Partners and Programs

- City of Hartford Office of Community Engagement

Provide the neighborhood with a community gathering space

A neighborhood community gathering space serves as a central venue for residents to come together to discuss neighborhood concerns, brainstorm solutions, and gather socially to build community cohesion.

Action Items

- Coordinate with the Free Center on process for reserving space for monthly meetups

Partners and Programs

- The Free Center
- Hartford Public Schools
- Trinity College
- Neighborhood Churches

Goal: Improve the visibility of the neighborhood

- Create a website and social media accounts for the neighborhood
- Create a slogan and logo for the neighborhood
- Create wayfinding that welcomes visitors and establishes neighborhood boundaries
- Organize neighborhood events

Create a website and social media accounts for the neighborhood

The Southwest/Behind The Rocks neighborhood provides a strong quality of life, strong-knit community feel, and a diverse range of restaurants and retail options. These assets make it a great place to live. The story of the neighborhood and its strengths are overlooked and undersold. An active website and social media campaign highlighting the neighborhood's assets would be critical in increasing its visibility.

Create a slogan for the neighborhood

Neighborhood slogans help boost tourism and promote civic spirit. Creating a slogan for the neighborhood creates momentum around neighborhood growth and initiatives.

Action Items

- Work with City and community organizations to cross-promote and increase traffic and engagement to the site and social media
- Use the website to house neighborhood-specific resources such as resident welcome packet, amenities, and highlights, etc.

Partners and Programs

- Southwest/Behind The Rocks NRZ
- City of Hartford Office of Community Engagement
- Hartford NEXT

Action Items

- Kickstart community initiative and work with local artist for community branding

Partners and Programs

- RiseUP for Arts
- Local artists

Create wayfinding that welcomes visitors and establishes neighborhood boundaries

Wayfinding enhances neighborhood branding and sense of place. Murals and signage helps visitors identify the neighborhood and educate people about the identity of the community.

Organize neighborhood events

Community festivals, neighborhood block parties, and community gatherings give residents ways to get to know their neighbors and strengthen neighborhood connections.

Action Items

- Work with local artists to create neighborhood murals at gateway corridors

Partners and Programs

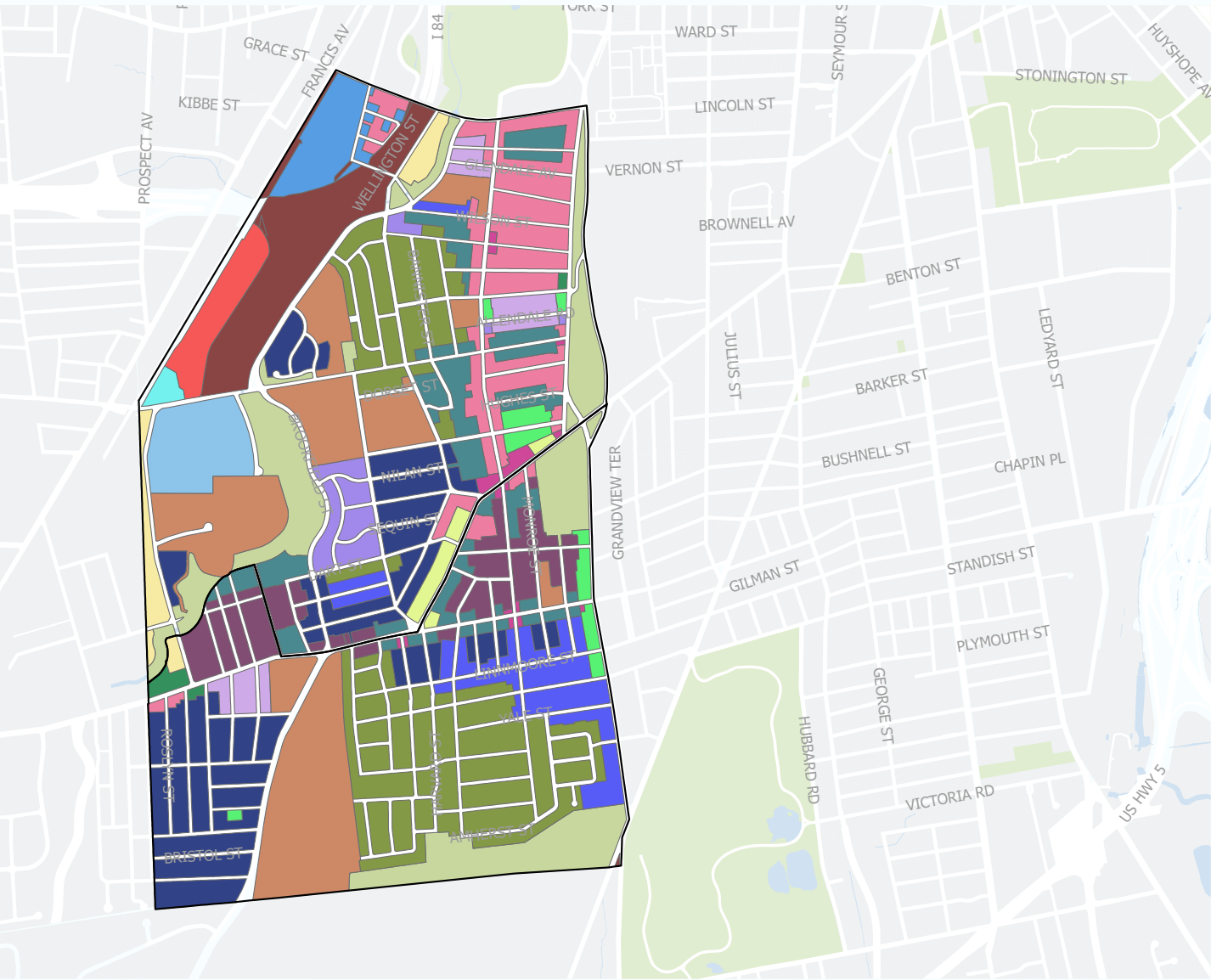
- RiseUP for Arts
- Local Artists

Action Items

- Form a neighborhood event organizing committee

Partners and Programs

- Southwest/Behind The Rocks NRZ
- Southwest/Behind The Rocks businesses



Zoning

Northeast Neighborhood

Zone Category

 CX-1	 N-3-1
 CX-2	 N-3-2
 ID-1	 N-3-3
 ID-2	 N-4-1
 MS-1	 N-5-1
 MS-2	 NX-1
 MS-3	 NX-2
 MX-1	 OS
 MX-2	 ROW
 N-2-1	
 N-2-2	

Land Use

-  Northeast Neighborhood
-  National Historic District
-  Reported Blight

Land Use

-  Residential
-  Commercial
-  Vacant
-  Mixed Commercial/Residential
-  Municipal or State Owned
-  Other
-  Unknown
-  Brownfield Sites

