

The North Hartford Redevelopment Project

A Summary of Plans Developed to
Revitalize Neighborhood Housing
Support Small Business
Create New Businesses and Jobs, and
Improve Neighborhood Infrastructure

Department of Development Services
City of Hartford
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The purpose of this document is to detail the comprehensive efforts to revitalize the North Hartford Neighborhoods. Summarized in this document is a 5 year plan to invest in housing revitalization and development focusing on home ownership and energy sustainability; small business support and economic growth through property acquisition, site preparation and the development of affordable manufacturing space; and, infrastructure improvements such as streetscapes or parking for community facilities.

This document is based on ongoing city programs, projects and redevelopment plans and is divided into four sections:

- Neighborhood Redevelopment
- Neighborhood Housing
- Economic Expansion
- Infrastructure Improvement.

Neighborhood Redevelopment

Neighborhood Development efforts center on providing assistance to developers and neighborhood groups to ensure that blighted and underutilized properties are renovated and returned to productive use. In addition to providing technical assistance with business plans and attracting financing to projects, staff works to develop productive relationships between developers and community stakeholders. Staff is presently focusing on the following initiatives estimated to cost approximately \$15,000,000:

The Northeast Neighborhood Center - This area provides a focal point and community center for the northeast neighborhood. The confluence of Main and Windsor Streets and their configuration create visual interest. The subject area will be comprised of new housing and essential services in a mixed use format. Smart growth or true urban principals will be used as a guide in developing the area. Buildings will be built to the sidewalk. They will have substantial glazing and be visually connected to the street. There will be outdoor seating. This is where residents will go for their banking, shopping and entertainment needs. Redevelopment efforts in this area are focused in a “three prong approach”, which include the following:

Business Improvement Survey – A survey of local businesses has just been completed. The purpose of the survey is to understand the local business conditions and to help us understand the needs of the local business so that we can work with them and assist them to grow and create economic vitality in the northeast neighborhood. The study will compile data on the following:

- Impacts of environmental aspects
- Perceptions of public safety and security
- Business development
- Awareness and perception of programs/services offered by the City
- Communication to and from the City of Hartford
- Demographics

The survey is comprised of 10 in-depth person to person interviews and 50 telephone interviews that were conducted with local businesses and over three hundred residents. One of the results of the business survey was the lack of high speed internet affects business owners’ ability to conduct their own business, and also affects their ability to bring in other means of business including hiring more staff.

A community meeting is the process of being scheduled to share the results of the survey and launch the next phase of the initiative, which will be the design of a streetscape from Terry Square north to the Windsor Town line.

Neighborhood Center Development - The Terry Square area will comprise the “Neighborhood Center”. This area will create a focal point and community center for the northeast neighborhood. The confluence of Main and Windsor Streets and their configuration create visual interest. The subject area will be comprised of new housing and essential services in a mixed use format. Smart growth or true urban principals will be used as a guide in developing the area. Buildings will be built to the sidewalk. They will have substantial glazing and be visually connected to the street. There will be outdoor seating. This is where residents will go for their banking, shopping and entertainment needs. Initial funding has been identified by the City, who will publish a Request for Proposals (RFP) to retain a consultant to lead this planning effort.

Barbour Street Redevelopment - In 2008, the City, through a Request for Qualifications seeking a Public/Private Partnership, sought a prospective developer to implement a redevelopment program for the Barbour Street Corridor. The plan called for the prospective developer to implement a development program which was to include a mixture of neighborhood business and medium density residential uses. We propose to revive this plan and move forward with the plan to address property conditions of the Barbour Street Corridor, identify potential opportunities, challenges and rehabilitation possibilities that are considered key to the area.

Albany Avenue Redevelopment – Over the past few years we have been working to revitalize the Albany Avenue Commercial Corridor. With a soon to be announced developer for the Woodland Albany site, it is time to move forward with other actions that have been proposed on the street. These projects include:

Bravo Plaza Revitalization – Working with the plaza owner, we look to acquire adjacent underutilized properties, demolish the existing buildings and develop new mixed use development that will expand upon the concept of the Town Center identified in the Upper Albany Plan.

Albany Gateway – The intersection of Albany and Main is a major gateway into the North End. Today it consists of underutilized buildings and weed strewn vacant lots. Our plan is to acquire these properties and create mixed use gateway buildings that will frame the entrance to the neighborhoods.

Property Acquisitions – To achieve these plans a number of properties need to be acquired. These properties, throughout these redevelopment areas, are key elements to leveraging revitalization efforts of the Plan. Listed by neighborhood, they are as follows:

Neighborhood Area	Number of Properties	Total Acquisition Cost
Northeast	16	\$ 7,000,000.00
Upper Albany	7	\$ 6,000,000.00
Clay Arsenal	5	\$ 2,000,000.00
Acquisition Total		\$ 15,000,000.00

Property acquisition values were calculated using the Fair Market Value as listed in the City of Hartford’s Assessor System, with a 20% mark-up. Funding for this effort would be utilized over a three-year period.

Neighborhood Housing

These programs are designed to promote affordable and middle income homeownership opportunities and the rehabilitation and repair of Hartford’s existing owner-occupied housing stock. More specifically, the funds will be used to:

- Remediate blight, lead paint hazards and improve the appearance of our neighborhoods
- Eliminate code violations that threatened health and safety
- Create incentives to generate and sustain Homeownership
- Preserve and produce affordable and safe rental units
- Maintain and increase the utilization of Hartford-based and minority contractors
- Attract private investment in Hartford’s neighborhoods
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These programs are estimated to cost \$35,000,000 over five years.

HOMEOWNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Appraisal Gap Program - The purpose of this program is to provide financing for the new construction or rehabilitation of vacant, deteriorated homes in order to increase

the rate of homeownership in Hartford. Assistance is provided to for-profit and non-profit developers to bridge the “Gap” or the difference between the total project costs and either the appraised value of the property at closing or the actual purchase price. Substantial efforts must be made by the developer to sell the property at or above the appraised value. This program would be designed to increase production of quality, owner-occupied housing for any prospective buyer up to 250% of the Area Median Income seeking to purchase a home. This program would assist in the development or rehabilitation of 1 and 2 unit homes for sale to owner occupants. It would also result in the reduction of density through reconfiguration/conversion of 3 and 4 unit existing structures.

Construction Financing - This program will provide funding to eligible property owners, for-profit and non-profit agencies and Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDO) for the new construction or rehabilitation of quality affordable and market rate owner-occupied housing. Preference will be given to proposals that include a strong or exclusive homeownership component, eliminates blight, reduce existing density through demolition-reconfiguration, and provide adequate parking and open space. The funds will be used to finance construction costs associated with the creation of homeownership opportunities through new construction or rehabilitation. 1-2 units, row houses, or brownstones preferred.

SUSTAINABLE AFFORDABILITY FOR HOMEOWNERSHIP

“Welcome to Hartford Homeownership” Down payment Assistance Program would be open to any prospective owner-occupied buyer between up to 250% Area Median Income who desire to purchase a home in the Northend. Accessible and affordable financing will be available to serve prospective homebuyers with incomes over the income threshold allowed by the City’s HouseHartford Down Payment Assistance Program. Borrower may be eligible to receive up to 25% of the sales price as a down payment on a home in the Promise Zone and other Northend neighborhoods.

Home Improvement for Owner-Occupied Homeownership – This program offers home improvement loans with low-interest rates that may range from 0% to 4% depending upon each applicant’s household income level. The funds afford the flexibility to serve existing homeowners in the Northend neighborhoods with household incomes up to 250% of the Area Median Income. Scope of work includes interior and exterior improvements and repairs - not limited to exterior painting, floors, doors, porches, gutters, windows, bathrooms, kitchens, sidewalks, driveways, garages, etc. This program is targeted to existing owner occupied 1 to 4 residential buildings.

Weatherization and Energy Efficiency Program – This program assists income-eligible families and individuals by reducing their heating and cooling costs and addressing health and safety issues in their homes through energy-efficiency measures. Measures may include windows, boilers, hot water heaters, insulation, weather-stripping, new doors, new programmable thermostats, solar panels, oil to gas conversions, bathroom and kitchen fixtures, for example. Northend households with incomes up to 250% of the Area Median Income will be given preference. This program is targeted to existing owner occupied 1 to 4 residential buildings.

Residential Façade and Blight Program – This program is a high impact, low-cost approach to eradicating blight and improving the appearance of homes and neighborhoods. The Residential Façade Program will allow borrowers up to 250% of the Area Median Income to enhance the curb appeal of their residential properties by addressing exterior repairs such as porches, stairs, windows, railings, driveways, sidewalks, fencing, landscaping, gutters, etc. The cost of many of these repairs may be “burdensome” for many residents from a household budget perspective. Moreover, homeowners in this higher income demographic do not fall within CDBG income guidelines, rendering them ineligible for federal funding. Repairs and improvements under this program will increase property values, support homeownership, and improve the visual appearance and “walkability” of the City’s streets and neighborhoods. The program will allow flexibility in the areas of underwriting and lead paint protocols that federally funded programs do not allow. The program will be targeted toward existing 1-4 unit residential owner-occupied structures. Structures deemed “blighted” by the City’s Livable and Sustainable Neighborhood’s Division as defined by ordinance will be given preference.

HOMEOWNER AND RENTAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

The City of Hartford will provide gap financing assistance to developers and property owners seeking to develop or rehabilitate major housing projects in the Northend neighborhoods. This program is targeted to developments of 10 to 50 units. For new construction, the projects may consist of single family homes on individual lots.

Economic Expansion

There are five distinct programs that we believe will help us achieve economic expansion in the Northend detailed below. We estimate that these programs will cost approximately \$15,000,000 over five years.

North East Culinary Incubator @ Common Grounds – This facility will be located at 10 Love Lane; the Swift Factory, a partner in the Promise Zone. The

incubator consists of a 4,000-square-foot commercial kitchen with four kitchen stations and storage facilities that are open 24 hours a day to new or growing food manufacturers, caterers, and bakers. The facilities will provide food entrepreneurs:

- Fully licensed and certified kitchens
- Top of the line equipment
- 24/7 access with 8 hour shifts daily
- A supportive environment
- Discounted rentals for Hartford residents
- Small business development support

Public Sponsored Business Incubator – Light Industrial - Develop a 30,000 square foot light industrial facility incubator space for emerging light industrial companies. In addition to space the incubator will provide administrative and business development assistances.

Manufacturing Matching Grants for equipment and machinery purchases - Model after the State of Connecticut Small Business Express Matching Grant Program.

Small Business Development Training Program - Expand the University of Hartford Entrepreneur/City of Hartford small business development program and locate teaching facilities at 10 Love Lane and the future location of the Public incubator.

The NE Façade Program - The Façade Program will assist local businesses with façade improvement funding to help further establish viable communities and to stimulate the economy. In addition, the Façade Program will complement the comprehensive Streetscape Program which will improve the physical exterior appearance of the commercial business properties. The program will provide up to \$50,000 in grant assistance per business.

Infrastructure Improvements

There are five distinct projects in the Northend detailed below. We estimate that these programs will cost approximately \$35,000,000 over five years.

Main Street Streetscape - The project includes the design, development and construction of a streetscape that will be from the Windsor Town line to Terry Square at Earle Street and Boce Barlow Way. The proposed project will be comprised of the traditional elements which include new curbing, paving, street trees, and ornamental

lighting. The project may also include other elements such as big belly trash cans, benches and additional landscaping at important intersections. The City has identified funding for the design of the first phase of the project (Terry Square to Cleveland Avenue) published a Request for Proposals to retain a consultant to lead this design effort. Potential funding for this effort would be utilized over a two-year construction period.

Homestead Avenue Streetscape - Design and construct streetscape improvements along Homestead Avenue from Albany Avenue to Garden Street. Improvements will include new sidewalks, curbs, street trees and landscaping, crosswalk improvements, driveway aprons, street lighting, and other pedestrian amenities and street furniture. This project is designed to support the re-investment in Homestead Avenue as a new redevelopment area with a plan for property acquisition, environmental remediation and economic development of abandoned or underutilized commercial/industrial property.

Bedford Street Parking Structure - Design and construct a new 500 space parking garage along Bedford Street near Albany Avenue, to the rear of the CHS building. This project will provide acutely needed off-street parking to serve both CHS and the YMCA facility, as well as supporting the parking needs of local businesses along Albany Avenue. Providing this parking will support the further development and economic investment in the entire Upper Albany neighborhood and the Albany Avenue corridor.

Main Street/Albany Avenue Intersection - Provide additional funding to support the redesign and reconfiguration of the Main Street/Albany Avenue intersection, a vital gateway to the Clay-Arsenal neighborhood and the North End of Hartford as a whole.

North End Communication Infrastructure - Provide for the installation of high-speed internet service lines from the DoNo development area north along Windsor Street north to Terry Square, and from Terry Square north to the Windsor town line. The installation of this infrastructure is critical for ensuring that residents and businesses in the North End of Hartford have access to high-speed internet capabilities, which is both a quality of life issue and an issue of economic competitiveness for businesses.