

# 40 Years of LISC CT

#CountDownto40

*In honor of LISC Connecticut's 40-year anniversary, a series of capacity building stories will be shared -- featuring prominent partners, funders, and community members.*



Community-Centered Dialogue. SOC Staff at Bacon Congregate Housing conducting interviews with residents to capture diverse perspectives

## Featuring: Sheldon Oak Central *Impact through community engagement*

Founded in 1986, Sheldon Oak Central, Inc. (SOC) is a not-for-profit community development corporation that works with community partners to develop and operate rental housing that contributes to neighborhood stability and resident quality of life. SOC spent a majority of 20 years concentrating on the development and management of small-scale rental projects in Hartford's Northeast neighborhood. In the mid-1990s, SOC returned to its roots in the Sheldon/Charter Oak neighborhood of Hartford to turn SOC's focus on its comprehensive community development. Today, the organization works in several neighborhoods in Hartford.

SOC has been a partner of LISC for 34 years. While the organization has been focused on intentional and comprehensive community development, SOC recognizes the growth of community is dependent on its members and residents. With LISC's support, SOC has been able to establish a meaningful and consistent community and resident

engagement program in the Northeast neighborhood.

In 2023, SOC established an ongoing weekly breakfast at its community center located at 127 Martin Street. The purpose of this was to empower residents to take a more active role in improving the quality of life in the neighborhood.

Since then, SOC has seen increased involvement in community center programs, in neighborhood planning, and more interaction and collaborative problem-solving between residents and property management. Twenty-eight community residents participated in their neighborhood planning events, including several seniors. As a next phase, SOC is organizing neighborhood beautification and public safety projects, aiming to partner with the city-wide organization Hartford NEXT to run a Neighborhood Training Institute to give residents tools for effective civic participation.

### Background

*Programmatic work through the lens of intentional community engagement*

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With the mission to create resilient and inclusive communities of opportunity, LISC has been intentional in advancing its programmatic framework through community engagement. The key to closing equity gaps and resolving systemic issues impacting the community is through the direct participation of those with lived-experiences and the residents of the communities served. To empower community voice, LISC CT asks residents to actively engage in informing LISC about critical issues and to participate in the creation of solutions that are responsive and inclusive of the entire community.

In the past four years, LISC CT has begun more direct community engagement, with the goal of supporting resident leadership so that residents are truly driving the development of their neighborhoods. LISC is intentional in partnering with residents, businesses and local organizations who engage in the work of revitalizing neighborhoods across Connecticut.

LISC CT staff engages regularly with community, grassroots, education and faith leaders. LISC CT participates in community, state and municipal level meetings, as well as healthcare initiatives, to address the overall well-being of the neighborhoods.

