



NINA - ASYLUM HILL NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN 2023-2027

NINA
Revitalizing Asylum Hill

LLSC
CONNECTICUT

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT¹

WHAT IS A LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT?

A Land Acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes the unique and enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories.

WHY DO WE RECOGNIZE THE LAND?

To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose territory you reside on, and a way of honoring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. It is important to understand the long-standing history that has brought you to reside on the land, and to seek to understand your place within that history. Land acknowledgements do not exist in a past tense, or historical context: colonialism is a current ongoing process, and we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation. It is also worth noting that acknowledging the land is Indigenous protocol.

WHOSE LAND ARE WE ON?

In Hartford, we are on the traditional territory of the Sicaog/Suakiog, Tunxis, Wangunks, and Poquonook.²

Funding for the creation of these plans provided in part by Nutmeg Foundation, JPMorgan Chase Foundation, and U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development.



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Sponsor



1 Adapted from [Know The Land Territories Campaign | LSPIRG](#)

2 [Territory Acknowledgement | Native Land Digital](#)



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Painting gable at 115 Sigourney Street

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Northside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance, Inc. (NINA) is a non-profit community development corporation whose mission is the revitalization of Hartford's Asylum Hill neighborhood. Asylum Hill is located immediately west of Downtown Hartford at the geographic center of the city. It is home to some of Hartford's largest corporations (The Hartford Financial Services Group and Aetna) and many of its most prestigious institutions (Saint Francis Hospital and the Mark Twain House and Museum). It is an historic neighborhood known for its impressive collection of Victorian homes. Approximately 10,000 people live in Asylum Hill, 25% of whom live below the poverty line.³ Up to 15,000 more people commute to work here on any given day.⁴ The owner-occupancy rate has been trending upward over the last decade, from 10.3 % in 2010 to 13.1% in 2020,⁵ yet it remains substantially lower than the city-wide rate of 24.1% in 2020.⁶

From its founding, NINA has been working to develop more homeownership opportunities by restoring blighted historic properties for homeownership. Remediating blight for homeownership produces multiple positive outcomes for the neighborhood including: reducing crime, raising the quality of life, promoting economic stability, building family assets, and stimulating further reinvestment in the area. NINA's restoration work has been completed in the context of a targeted, block-wide approach to neighborhood revitalization that is central to NINA's redevelopment strategy and includes complementary programming designed to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood.

Going forward, NINA's five-year plan will continue to focus on targeted areas within Asylum Hill that can achieve critical mass and build on its previous successes. NINA will organize its efforts around the following priorities:

- Blight reduction and expanded homeownership opportunities
- Improved public safety
- Quality of life initiatives
- Economic development

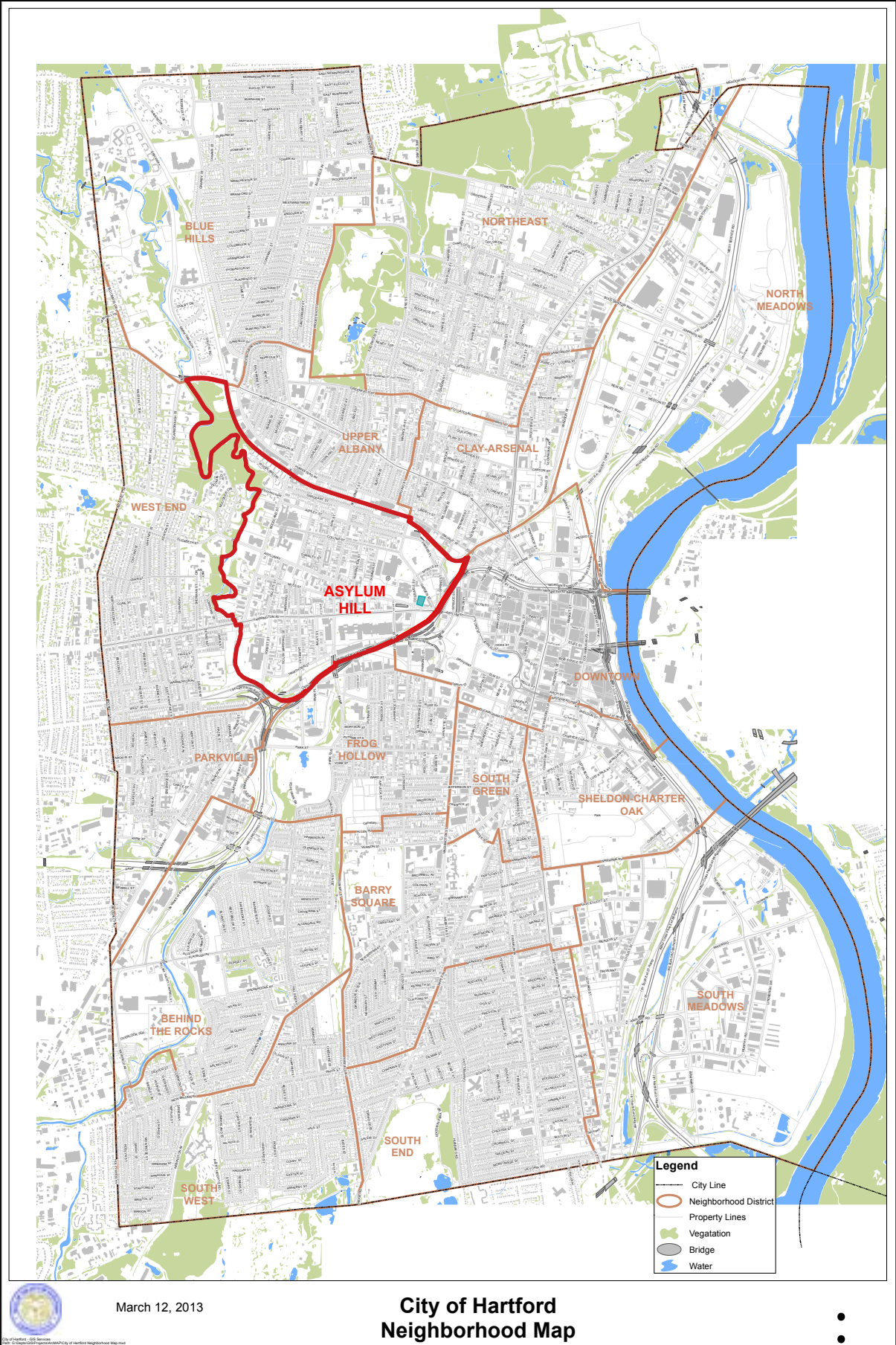
NINA's plan is to build on its previous revitalization work by generating \$10 million of homeownership investment in Asylum Hill over the next 5 years. NINA will start by restoring six blighted/vacant historic properties now in its pipeline as homeownership opportunities. These properties will preserve or create nine units of homeownership housing and help bolster Asylum Hill's reputation as one of the best places in the region to purchase an affordable historic home.

At the same time, NINA will address quality of life issues in the neighborhood by partnering with the Hartford Police Department and community stakeholders to improve public safety; working with Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association (AHNA) and a local developer on a plan to revitalize the Farmington Avenue commercial corridor, including the restoration of the landmark Comet Diner; supporting resident-led initiatives to improve Sigourney Square Park; offering volunteer opportunities; and organizing neighborhood walking tours designed to showcase Asylum Hill as a vibrant historic neighborhood rich in diversity that is an attractive place to live and work.

3 ESRI,2022 (the vintage of the data is 2022.)

4 Northside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance

5-6 ESRI,2022 (The vintage of the data is 2022.)



March 12, 2013

City of Hartford Neighborhood Map



NINA Member Institutions



Clockwise from top left: CVS Aetna, The Hartford, Webster Bank, and Trinity Health New England

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION



54 (L) and 52 (R) Huntington Street

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of this plan is to outline a 5-year vision for NINA's neighborhood revitalization investment. NINA has demonstrated that targeted, block-wide investment can maximize impact, improve the quality of life and strengthen economic stability and opportunity in the neighborhood. By being strategic, it is possible for each investment and development to have multiple outcomes, including: eliminating blight, creating new positive physical development, helping families to stabilize income and build assets, and stimulating local jobs and business.

This plan is intended to provide a strategic framework to guide NINA's neighborhood development activity. The plan has the following components:

- A review of the City and Neighborhood context and recent demographic trends
- A vision for the Asylum Hill neighborhood and how this vision aligns with the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association Plan and the Hartford 2035 City Plan
- Establishment of priorities for the next five years and anticipated outcomes
- Identification of challenges and opportunities to implementation

B. BACKGROUND

Northside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (NINA) is a not-for-profit corporation founded in 2003 with the goal of fostering the revitalization of Hartford's Asylum Hill neighborhood as an attractive neighborhood of choice that provides options for people of all incomes. NINA is a collaborative effort of four major local institutions—Aetna, The Hartford, Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, and Webster Bank – working with residents and other community stakeholders, to achieve their shared vision of a vibrant and revitalized Asylum Hill neighborhood.

NINA'S MISSION IS TO SERVE AS A CATALYST FOR REINVESTMENT IN ASYLUM HILL BY IMPROVING PUBLIC SAFETY, HOMEOWNERSHIP, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND EDUCATION IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

NINA focuses on the rehabilitation of blighted historic houses as owner-occupied opportunities primarily for low-to moderate-income households. NINA also builds new owner-occupied homes on vacant lots. Since its founding in 2003, NINA has rehabilitated 22 blighted structures and constructed seven new homes on formerly vacant lots. Of these, nine projects were completed in the past five years.



Family moving into their new home on Hawthorn Street

An example of one of NINA's rehabilitations is 156-158 Sargeant Street. Built in 1897, this two-family home occupies a prominent location across from Sigourney Square Park. NINA acquired it from foreclosure after a failed attempt to turn the property into a rooming house. The successful redevelopment project won the 2013 Hartford Preservation Alliance Award for historic rehabilitation.



156-158 Sargeant Street, Before (L) and After (R)

NINA goes beyond blight reduction to building and renewing community assets of very high quality. NINA offers community development programs to support the efforts of the neighborhood group and its stakeholders. Complementary programs operated by NINA include; homeownership, public safety, quality-of life, and economic development. These services include the following:

- Administering corporate homeownership incentive programs offered by NINA's member institutions, to encourage their employees to purchase a home in the community.
- Advocating for public safety enhancements through a civic network that has increased calls for service and repair of street lights.
- Collaborating on economic development initiatives to revitalize the Farmington Avenue business corridor; attracting tenants to the Zunner Building at Garden and Ashley Streets; and supporting and providing input on the proposed I-84 viaduct redevelopment.
- Offering quality-of-life initiatives including summer walking tours, working with Friends of Sigourney Square Park, promoting walking and bike trails such as the Sigourney Street bike lanes, and support of the Sigourney Street CTfastrak.
- Providing a range of community-based volunteer opportunities to employees of member institutions and others.



Celebrating completion of 207-215 Garden Street



AHNA General Meeting (NRZ)

C. PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

NINA developed the 2023-2027 Asylum Hill Revitalization Plan with the generous support and assistance from LISC, Dorgan Architecture & Planning, HousingSmarts, and Ralph Knighton & Associates. NINA’s strategic plan was developed based on community input as well as analysis of demographic data. The plan builds on recent neighborhood, municipal, and state plans. To inform the process, NINA undertook the following:

- Worked closely with the local resident and stakeholder organization, the Asylum Neighborhood Association (AHNA) on neighborhood issues and initiatives. NINA’s Executive Director is a longstanding board member of AHNA and NINA’s Program Manager is active on several of its committees including the Quality of Life and Public Safety Committees. NINA staff participates in an average of four AHNA meetings per month. During 2021-2022, NINA staff participated in the development of AHNA’s Asylum Hill Neighborhood Strategic Plan 2022 – 2031. During this process, 74 residents participated on eight task forces, of which NINA staff chaired the Housing and Historic Preservation Taskforce.
- Engaged other community partners and peer organizations on neighborhood issues. These engagements have resulted in a number of new initiatives designed to promote and/or improve the neighborhood. These initiatives have included partnerships with the following groups:

American School for the Deaf	Hartford Community Loan Fund
Asylum Hill Congregational Church	Hartford Land Bank
Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association	Hartford Preservation Alliance
Cathedral of Saint Joseph	Hartford Police Department
City of Hartford	Immanuel Congregational Church
Fresh Start Pallet Products	LISC
Friends and Enemies of Wallace Stevens	Trinity College Center for Hartford Engagement and Research
Friends of Sigourney Square Park	West Middle Community School
Hartford Blooms	

- Spontaneous street level conversations with residents, including NINA homebuyers, to learn what is on the minds of those who call Asylum Hill home.
- Surveyed staff, board, and stakeholders to understand perception of organization’s impact in the community.

**SECTION II:
CITY/ NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT
AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS**



SECTION II: CITY/ NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

A. CITY OF HARTFORD CONTEXT

Hartford is the capital city of Connecticut. Although once one of the richest cities in the US, it is now one of the poorest. It is the historic home of many prominent insurance companies that are still based in Hartford. Its population peaked in 1950 with over 177,000 residents but has since decreased to just over 121,000 residents in 2020. 85% of residents are BIPOC, while 15% are white.⁷ Hartford’s housing challenges are complex. See data below provided by the Partnership for Strong Communities.^{8,9}

2022 Housing Data Profiles

HARTFORD



KEY FINDINGS

Housing	40%	65%	81%
	of housing is subsidized	of households rent their home	of housing units are in multifamily buildings
Affordability	22%	27%	\$25.04
	of households spend between 30% and 50% of their income on housing	of households spend more than half of their income on housing	the hourly wage needed to afford a 2-bedroom apartment
Population	31	85%	+0.3%
	the median age of residents	of residents are people of color (BIPOC)	projected population change from 2020 to 2040

* Source: pschousing.org or housingprofiles.pschousing.org. Data comes from the 2016-2020 American Community Survey.

7 [2022 Housing Data Profiles: Hartford | Partnership for Strong Communities](#)
(Data sourced from 2016-2022 American Community Survey)

8-9 Data in this report is drawn from different sources that in turn cite various information sources. There is some variation in data particularly between Census Data and the American Community Survey.

Each year, the National Low Income Housing Coalition calculates the “housing wage,” the hourly wage needed to afford a two-bedroom rental home without paying more than 30% of income on housing. The current housing wage for a two-bedroom apartment in zip code 06105, which includes most of the Asylum Hill neighborhood is \$23.08¹⁰, however, Hartford’s median household income in 2020 is \$36,154¹¹ which is equivalent to \$17.38 per hour per household for full time work, not enough to meet typical housing costs in the city or the neighborhood.

To address housing need the City of Hartford recently finalized an Affordable Housing Plan¹² that highlights that over 40% of the housing in the city is deed restricted affordable. It also notes that the housing stock in the City is aged, substandard and needs improvement. The plan seeks to deconcentrate subsidized housing, improve the existing housing stock, and prioritize homeownership and tenant programs. Findings include:

- Affordable homeownership is lacking especially among people of color.
- Households are severely cost-burdened, especially among lower-income renters.
- Rents continue to rise.
- Increase in the number of complaints to the Hartford’s Fair Rent Commission noting lower-income households are particularly at risk of housing instability.
- Lack of affordable housing options for seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities.

10 [Two-Bedroom Housing Wage by Zip Code | National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2022](#)

11 [Hartford, CT | Data USA,2022, https://datausa.io/profile/geo/hartford-ct](https://datausa.io/profile/geo/hartford-ct)

12 [Affordable Housing Plan – City of Hartford \(hartfordct.gov\), 2022.](#)

B. NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

Asylum Hill is located immediately west of Downtown Hartford at the geographic center of the city. It is home to some of Hartford's largest corporations (The Hartford Financial Services Group and Aetna) and many of its prestigious institutions (Saint Francis Hospital, the Mark Twain House and Museum, and the Harriet Beecher Stowe House). With its proximity to Downtown and collection of some of the best examples of Queen Anne and late-Victorian homes found anywhere in the state, Asylum Hill is an area of tremendous potential.



Ashley Street block where NINA has restored seven historic homes to date

Approximately 10,000 people live in Asylum Hill, 25% of whom live below the poverty line.¹³ Up to 15,000 more people commute to work here on any given day.¹⁴ The owner-occupancy rate has been trending upward recently but in 2020 was still only 13.1%¹⁵, substantially lower than the city-wide rate of 24.1%.¹⁶

The neighborhood takes its name from the American School for the Deaf, formerly located at what is now The Hartford's building at 690 Asylum Avenue, from 1821 to 1921.

When the railroad arrived in Hartford in 1839, the main hub of transportation shifted from the port on the Connecticut River to the new railroad station at the foot of Asylum Hill. Around the same time, the city's manufacturing and industries began to expand rapidly, as did its population. Farmland was given over to housing in the areas immediately outside of Downtown Hartford, including Asylum Hill. Multiple mansions and expansive properties were built in Asylum Hill on old farmland. Only a few survive, such as the large Perkins-Clark House at 49 Woodland Street and the imposing Charles Boardman Smith House at 66 Forest Street. The most famous of these are the homes of Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of the ground-breaking novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and Samuel Clemens, better known as Mark Twain. Both the Stowe and Twain homes are now public museums and rank among the region's most popular tourist attractions.



Harriet Beecher Stowe Center (L) and Mark Twain House (R)

13 ESRI, 2022 (The vintage of the data is 2022.)

14 Northside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance, 2022

15 ESRI, 2022 (The vintage of the data is 2022.)

16 2022 Housing Data Profiles: Hartford | Partnership for Strong Communities (Data sourced from 2016-2022 American Community Survey)

In the decades following the Civil War, Asylum Hill became a hotspot for Hartford's rapidly expanding middle class. Smaller homes on smaller lots began to fill up streets such as Ashley and Sargeant. The ornate Victorian architecture of these homes has become a trademark of the neighborhood. Sigourney Square Park, located on the site of the former graveyard for the Hartford Alms House, was developed to attract new residents. On Woodland Street, one of Asylum Hill's major institutions, Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, got off to a modest start in 1897. The hospital originally had room for only 30 patients. It now occupies two full blocks and several adjoining properties.

Previously mainly residential—both private homes and increasingly apartment buildings—in the 1920s Asylum Hill began to attract large corporations. The Hartford Fire Insurance Company, now The Hartford Financial Services Group, opened its new headquarters on the site of the old American School for the Deaf in 1921. Connecticut Mutual soon followed suit, moving to Garden Street in 1926. Within a few years, Aetna began building its massive headquarters building on Farmington Avenue, opposite Saint Joseph Cathedral, when built, it was the largest office building in Connecticut and is considered the largest colonial revival building in the world. The thousands of people employed by these insurance giants stimulated commercial development along Farmington Avenue.



Asylum Hill Congregational Church

After World War II, residents increasingly abandoned the city for the suburbs, spurred by the new interstate highway system, social unrest, and the shuttering of factories. In Asylum Hill, private homes began to disappear, replaced by apartment houses constructed in a utilitarian, cost-effective way that was a far cry from the architectural masterpieces of earlier years.

But Asylum Hill rebounded in the closing decades of the 20th century. Asylum Hill's residents, corporations, churches and other stakeholders joined together to reduce the neighborhood's problems and highlight its many assets. These efforts met with varying degrees of success, but the general trend has been upward.

One major challenge facing Asylum Hill is the lack of homeownership. The primary cause of this is the nature of the neighborhood's current housing stock. More than 90 percent of the occupied housing units are in multi-unit housing buildings.

In the past two decades, there has been a large influx of refugees and immigrants into Asylum Hill, who have been welcomed by local community organizations and residents. Since then, these immigrants, primarily from Asia and Africa, have provided a stabilizing force in the neighborhood and greatly added to its cultural richness.



NINA believes that historic houses are among Asylum Hill's greatest assets and preserving them adds value to the neighborhood and for all of its stakeholders.



Asylum Hill looking east down Niles Street



Over 200 homes listed on the National Register of Historic Places

C. DEMOGRAPHICS

The neighborhood is changing. From 2014 to 2022, population declined from 10,853 to 10,356 and economic markers improved. During that period both the poverty rate (30.1% to 25.0%) and the percent of rent-burdened households (51% to 45.7%) decreased. The number of housing units has declined, however, the number of owner-occupied housing units has increased from 558 to 701.¹⁷

Below are highlights from demographic data of the Asylum Hill neighborhood:¹⁸ (Please see full data tables in the appendix.)

- Population has declined from 2010 by around 500, to 10,356 in 2022
- Poverty rate has decreased from 30.1% in 2014 to 25% in 2020.
- Percent of rent-burdened households has decreased from 51% in 2014 to 46% in 2020.
- Total number of households has decreased as of 2020 by about 400 from 2010 and 2014.
- Total number of housing units has also declined from 2010 and 2014 (by about 400 from 2010 to 2014 and by about 80 from 2014 to 2022).
- Number of owner-occupied housing units has increased from 558 in 2010 to 701 units in 2022.

A demographic profile of Asylum Hill as compared to the City of Hartford as a whole is set forth on the following page. Additional demographic information can be found in Appendix A at the end of this report.



South Marshall Street Block Party (L) and Urban League Backpack Giveaway (R)

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ ERSI, 2022 (vintage of data denoted in text)

NINA - Asylum Hill Neighborhood Plan

Demographics¹⁹	Hartford (City)	Asylum Hill (Neighborhood)
Population	121,054	10,356
Average Household Size	2.43	1.88
Households below poverty line	29%	25%
Unemployment rate	11.90%	10.8%
Median Household Income	\$36,154	\$30,159
Median Home Value	\$194,779	\$152,429
Housing Units ²⁰	53,259	6,284
Race²¹		
White	19.40%	16.60%
Black	38.20%	50.20%
American Indian	0.80%	0.80%
Asian	3.50%	6.70%
Pacific Islander	0.10%	0.10%
Other	25.50%	15.40%
2 or more races	12.60%	10.30%
Ethnicity²²		
Hispanic or Latino Origin	44.70%	30.50%
Not Hispanic or Latino Origin	55.30%	69.40%
Age		
Under 18	24%	22%
Ages 18 to 64	64%	67%
Aged 65+	12%	12%
Education		
No high school diploma	23%	15%
High school graduate	33%	31%
Some college	24%	29%
Bachelor's/Grad/Prof degree	19%	26%
Household Income		
<\$15,000	26.80%	30.10%
\$15,000-\$24,999	12.80%	11.70%
\$25,000-\$34,999	10.50%	13.80%
\$35,000-\$49,999	12.30%	12.10%
\$50,000-\$74,999	15.50%	17.30%
\$75,000+	22.20%	15.00%
Sex²³		
Male	47.50%	48.90%
Female	52.50%	51.10%

19 All data sourced from ESRI;2022, vintage of data is 2022 unless otherwise noted.

20-16 ESRI, 2022, vintage of the data is 2020.

23 ESRI, 2022, data drawn from 2016-2020 American Community Survey.

SECTION III: VISION, PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES



SECTION III: VISION, PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES

A. VISION

NINA and the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association envision that Asylum Hill can become a model urban neighborhood that is green and clean, pedestrian friendly, and a desirable place to live, to work, to play, and pray – in short, a great place to be. The primary mutual objectives are to:

- Expand homeownership opportunities in the neighborhood.
- Implement programming that enhances the physical infrastructure and appearance of the neighborhood.
- Expand community engagement and crime prevention initiatives.
- Promote economic development along the Farmington Avenue corridor.
- Build upon existing volunteer and quality-of-life initiatives.
- Support the implementation of the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association Strategic Plan and the 2035 Hartford Plan of Conservation and Development, the *Hartford City Plan*.



The Linus Plimpton House, 847 Asylum Avenue

NINA’s vision of the neighborhood aligns with the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association Plan and the Hartford 2035 City Plan, completed in 2020, which embraces the five key themes of *Green, Grow, Live, Move and Play*. These five interconnected themes help organize the plan and will support the City’s vision to become a more sustainable, prosperous, equitable, mobile, and vibrant City.

These themes include the following:

green

ENERGY
FAUNA
FLORA
RESILIENCY
RIVER
WASTE

To Green Hartford...
we need to make a more
sustainable environment

The city has an award-winning environmental sustainability initiative that has earned national recognition for its efforts in agriculture, green infrastructure, and renewable energy.

grow

AVENUES
CONSTRUCTION
DEVELOPMENT
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
KNOWLEDGE
WORKFORCE

To Grow Hartford...
we need a more
prosperous economy

With start-up entrepreneurs and established companies alike, we’re building an innovation economy that is growing fast, and we’ve created a service corps to bring job skills to hundreds of youth.

live

FOOD
HEALTH
HOUSING
SAFETY
SCHOOLS
SOCIAL SERVICES

To Live Hartford...
we need a more
equitable community

Quality, affordable housing is going up in nearly every neighborhood, along with new and rebuilt schools, streetlights, community gardens, medical facilities, and park improvements.

move

AIRPORTS
BIKING
BUSES
RAIL
ROADS
WALKING

To Move Hartford...
we need more
mobile transport

New commuter rail and bus rapid transit, and investments in walking and biking, are improving the way we move, while our popular regional airport is growing rapidly.

play

ARTS
CULTURE
HISTORY
PARKS
SPORTS

To Play Hartford...
we need more
vibrant culture

Our stadiums, museums, music halls, and neighborhood cultural attractions are pulling in visitors from across the Northeast, and downtown is emerging as a vital urban hub once again.

* Source: Hartford 2035 POCD

Action Items	Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association Goals	NINA Goals
<p>green</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage pollinator gardens. 2. Supplement tree canopy. 3. Encourage green space in new development. 4. Prohibit new paved lots. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhance neighborhood infrastructure and appearance. 2. Develop and implement programs to enhance landscape.
<p>grow</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement streetscape plans for Farmington Avenue. 2. Enforce design standards for retail and commercial buildings. 3. Encourage greater diversity of retail shops. 4. Encourage residents to use tax credits and subsidized loans. 5. Identify Historic Properties. 6. Propose new zoning to encourage new, neighborhood-friendly retail businesses. 7. Ensure children are involved in seeking a greener future including the new Engineering and Green Technologies Academy at Hartford High School. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand homeownership via new construction, rehabilitation of vacant properties, and purchase incentives for local workers. 2. Use homeownership development project on Farmington Avenue to encourage revitalization of Farmington Avenue Commercial District. 3. Liaise with Hartford Community Loan Fund to identify potential tenants for commercial spaces at 207-215 Garden Street. 4. Youth Development partnership with Fresh Start Pallet Products that places trainees on NINA jobsites.

Action Items	Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association Goals	NINA Goals
<p>live</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote visibility of police. 2. Measure Quality of Life Crimes. 3. Leverage technology. 4. Increase collaboration. 5. Enforce anti-blight ordinance. 6. Encourage employers to create incentive plans to attract employees to consider residing in Asylum Hill. 7. Improve public education: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Implement School Superintendent’s plan for student choice; b) ensure middle school students perform at grade level or above; c) Reduce dropout rates; d) Change West Middle School to community school format; e) Increase additional after school opportunities; f) Encourage Hartford college engagement; g) Increase adult continuing education 8. Share information with churches and other service entities. 9. Encourage local churches to undertake community initiatives. 10. Support tenant rights and landlord resources. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand community engagement and crime prevention programs. 2. Increase homeownership opportunities via new construction, rehabilitation of vacant properties, and purchase incentives for local workers. 3. Eliminate blight through rehabilitation and new construction projects. 4. Continue Safe Growth project to analyze public safety data. 5. Continue civic network to report on damaged street signs and lights. 6. Implement CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) strategies to reduce crime. 7. Partner with West Middle School to provide student supplies for at-home learning.

Action Items	Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association Goals	NINA Goals
<p>move</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage transit-oriented development. 2. Adopt complete streets policy. 3. Advocate for traffic calming measures and restoration of street grid. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plan for a pedestrian-friendly community. 2. Participate in new station planning. 3. Monitor and evaluate traffic-calming projects along Sigourney Street.
<p>play</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support community theater in Sigourney Park. 2. Work with Mark Twain and Harriet Beecher Stowe Houses. 3. Participate in Connecticut Public Broadcasting Network's Special Programs. 4. Engage high school students with oral history initiative. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhance neighborhood aesthetics through historic preservation and building design.. 2. Walking Tours and Events. 3. Support Friends of Sigourney Square Park.



B. PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES

NINA's mission to revitalize Asylum Hill has consistently focused on the priority areas described below, and NINA's work has demonstrated that focus on these priority areas – and applying them to targeted sections of the neighborhood – can create a critical mass that revitalizes the neighborhood. NINA's goals for the next five years will continue to focus on the following priority areas:

NINA's Priorities

- Blight reduction and expanded homeownership opportunities
- Improved public safety
- Quality of life initiatives
- Economic development

GOAL #1: BLIGHT REDUCTION/EXPANDED HOMEOWNERSHIP

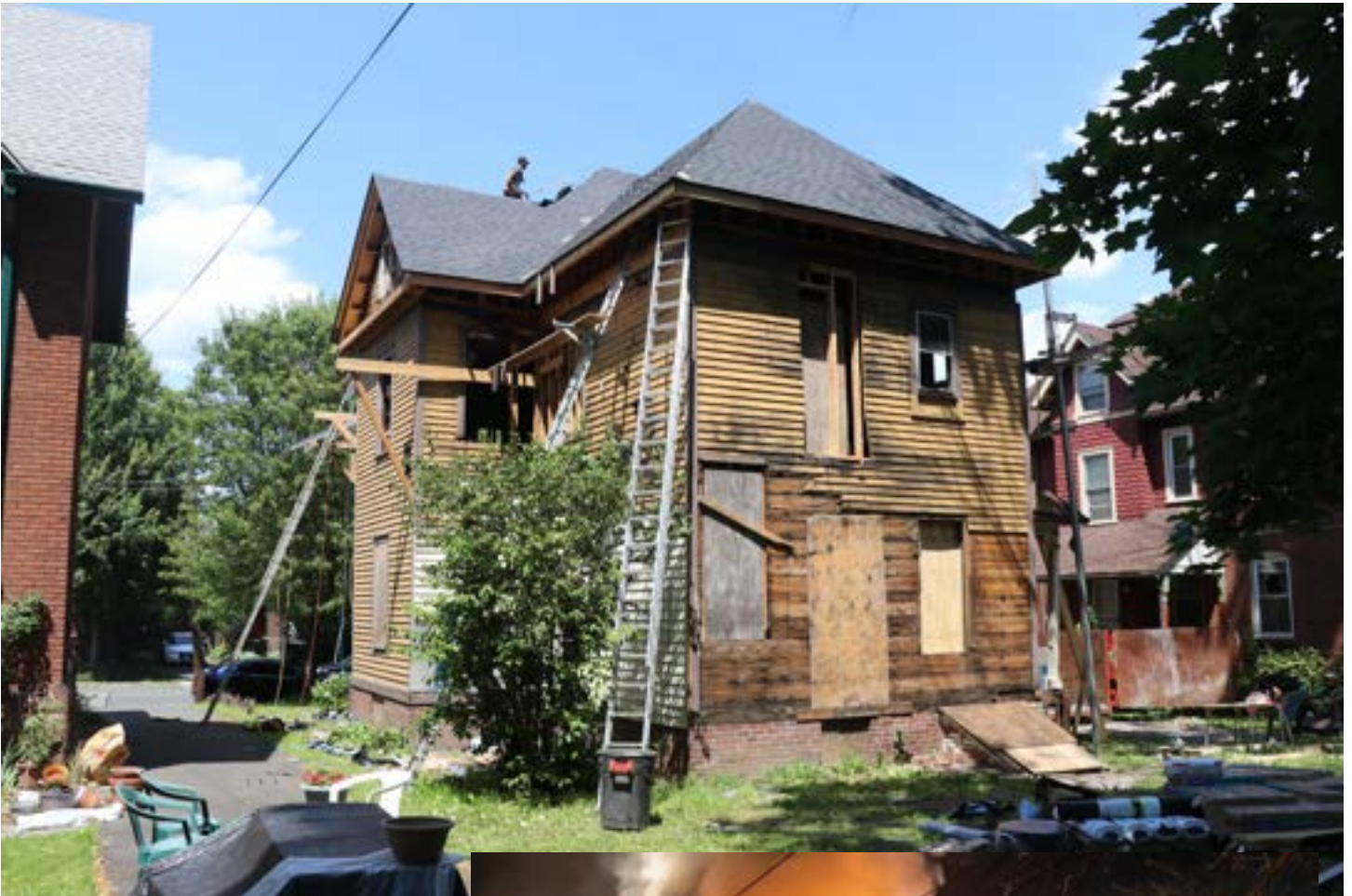
1) Increase homeownership through new construction, rehabilitation of vacant properties and purchase incentives for area workers.

a. Acquire blighted/vacant houses for rehabilitation as owner-occupied homes that are affordable for low- to moderate-income households. Currently, NINA has the following six properties in its pipeline:

Property Address	Scope of Work
29 Ashley Street	Restore historic property nearly lost by fire as an owner-occupied single-family home.
847 Asylum Avenue	Reconfigure historic Linus Plimpton House on Asylum Avenue as an owner-occupied three-family home.
279 - 285 Farmington Avenue	Two blighted properties located on a prominent corner of Farmington Avenue, only one block from the Mark Twain House and Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, will be restored to their original use as single-family homes.
59 Ashley Street	Work with a long-time homeowner on Ashley Street to make critical façade repairs to her home utilizing a new grant program from Historic New England.
287 - 289 Sargeant Street	Partner with a local contractor and the Hartford Land Bank to restore a blighted property at 287-289 Sargeant Street as an owner-occupied two-family home.

NINA 2023 Pipeline Projects

29 Ashley Street



New Roof replacing original lost in fire



847 Asylum Avenue



Window repair work underway



279 & 285 Farmington Avenue



59 Ashley Street



287-289 Sargeant Street



NINA working with Hartford Land Bank to restore blighted home next to earlier NINA home at 291-293 Sargeant Street (visible on right)

- b. Expand homeownership opportunities by acquiring vacant lots in NINA’s target areas in order to construct new homes that fit the historic and architectural character of the neighborhood. NINA has identified the following vacant lots as potential sites for new homeownership housing:

Property Address	Scope of Work
203 Laurel Street	Construct up to 20 new townhomes on an under-utilized Aetna parking lot fronting Hawthorn Street between Laurel Street and South Marshall Street.
85 Hawthorn Street	Continue development of a new homeownership community along Hawthorn Street by acquiring this city-owned brownfield site for homeownership development.
50 Huntington Street	Complete the infill of new homes on this block of Huntington Street by constructing a new Victorian-style home on a vacant lot adjacent to two new single-family homes NINA built at 52 and 54 Huntington Street.

- c. Administer HIP (Homeowner Incentive Program) for The Hartford and Trinity Health Of New England (Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center).
- d. NINA will undertake the following steps to facilitate site acquisition and thereby increase homeownership production:

- Work with the City of Hartford on a plan to undertake environmental remediation at Hawthorn Street in order to prepare the site for an up to 20-unit townhouse homeownership development.
- Work with the City and CVS/Aetna on acquisition of under-utilized neighborhood lots including 203 Laurel Street.
- Partner with the Hartford Land Bank to secure properties for redevelopment, starting with 287 - 289 Sargeant Street, which has been vacant for over 10 years.
- Work with the City of Hartford on the Connecticut Investment Fund 2030 (CIF) homeownership application and securing other funding resources.

Outcomes

- » Complete up to 15 homeownership development projects and address 35 affordable homeownership and rental units over the next five years. Through rehabilitation and new construction, NINA will generate \$10 million of homeownership investment over the next five years.



*Potential New Homeownership Community along Hawthorn Street
(203 Laurel Street in upper right, 85 Hawthorn Street at bottom)*

GOAL #2: IMPROVED PUBLIC SAFETY

- 1) Develop strategies to improve public safety and the quality of life in Asylum Hill related to reducing blight and expanding homeownership

Scope of Work

- Analyze crime and quality-of-life data at and around NINA property sites utilizing ArcGIS and CPTED techniques
- Expand outward from NINA property sites to engage neighbors
- Continue partnerships with Hartford Police Department and Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association – Quality of Life Committee (formerly Public Safety Committee)
- Link partners to residents to create robust response to ongoing crime and quality-of-life issues

- 2) Develop strategies to utilize data to identify crime.

Scope of Work

- Conduct analysis of public safety and quality-of-life data on Asylum Hill provided by the City of Hartford (Hartford Police Department, Hartford Fire Department, Hartford Department of Development Services, 311 Call Center)
- Utilize ArcGIS and CPTED techniques to focus on geographic hot spots
- Identify distressed and dilapidated properties through data analysis

- 3) Support efforts to repair or replace damaged traffic and parking signs and malfunctioning streetlights.

Scope of Work

- Assess streetlights and signs for malfunction, damage, or other indicators of disrepair
- Work with Hartford Department of Public Works to assess current municipal ability to repair streetlights and signs.
- Continue partnerships with Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association – Quality of Life Committee to determine changed or additional needs for streetlights and signs in the neighborhood

Outcomes

- » Upward trend in calls to municipal departments for service from neighborhood residents and other community stakeholders; downward trend in police incident reports of crime in Asylum Hill; improving perception of Asylum Hill as safe and attractive place to live and to work; and functioning streetlights and street signs that demonstrate regular attention from City and neighborhood.



GOAL #3: QUALITY OF LIFE INITIATIVES

1) Design and implement programming that enhance the quality of life for all stakeholders in Asylum Hill

Scope of Work

- Expand Virtual Summer Walking Tours into Next-Generation Walking Tours
- Continue partnerships with Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association, the iQuilt Partnership, and peer non-profit organizations to realize goals of Hartford400 City Plan
- Develop additional partnerships with Mark Twain House and Harriet Beecher Stowe Center as part of inclusive plan for engaging people on Asylum Hill history

2) Identify overlooked historic sites in Asylum Hill

Scope of Work

- Identify locations for interpretative signs or markers
- Identify additional sites that are eligible for historic designation
- Create a local history module for use in Hartford Public School curriculum

3) Support the Friends of Sigourney Square Park as the primary advocacy group for the park

Scope of Work

- Work with Friends of Sigourney Square Park and Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association to promote park as a critical asset within the neighborhood
- Identify potential new members for the Friends, in particular from the residences near the park
- Assess current use of park in order to determine additional programs of interest for park



4) Monitor and evaluate traffic-calming projects along Sigourney Street for their impact on the neighborhood

Scope of Work

- Monitor, evaluate, and publicize information on the planned cycle track (bike lane) south of the intersection at Farmington Avenue
- Monitor, evaluate, and publicize information on the planned traffic improvements to the intersection at Farmington Avenue
- Monitor, evaluate, and publicize information on the planned traffic improvements to the intersection at Asylum Avenue

Outcomes

- » Increased interest in Asylum Hill as a destination; increased awareness of Asylum Hill's history; consistent maintenance of Sigourney Square Park and its use for programming that reflects the interests of neighborhood residents; and participation in traffic-calming projects for Sigourney Street through regular communications from Connecticut Department of Transportation and Hartford Public Works.



Summer Jazz at Asylum Hill Congregational Church



Unveiling New Marker on Women's Voting Rights Trail on Forest Street



Summer Walking Tour at Aetna



Volunteers from The Hartford Raise a Wall at 52 Huntington Street

GOAL #4: IMPROVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

1) Support revitalization efforts along Farmington Avenue commercial corridor



Comet Diner on Farmington Avenue



Speaker of the House Matt Ritter at Press Conference Announcing \$1.2 million for redevelopment of Comet Diner

Scope of Work

- Utilize homeownership development project at 279 & 285 Farmington Avenue to encourage revitalization of Farmington Avenue Commercial District
- Utilize renovation of the Comet Diner at 267 Farmington Avenue to encourage revitalization of Farmington Avenue Commercial District
- Continue partnerships with Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association – Economic Development Committee, Farmington Avenue Business District, Hartford Police Department, Hartford Department of Development Services, and residents and business owners along Farmington Avenue
- Develop a comprehensive approach to the revitalization of the business district.
- Work with partners to design and fund new streetscape improvements along the Farmington Avenue commercial corridor



Farmington Avenue Target Area

2) Work with Hartford Community Loan Fund to identify potential tenants for commercial spaces at 207-215 Garden Street.

Scope of Work

- New commercial tenant at 213 Garden Street anticipated in near term
- Support HCLF's efforts to design and fund improvements to the eastern patio area of 207-215 Garden Street
- Encourage HCLF to connect with neighbors and other community stakeholders on prospective improvements to the intersection at Garden Street & Ashley Street/Fraser Place

3) Monitor and evaluate plans for I-84 Viaduct

Scope of Work

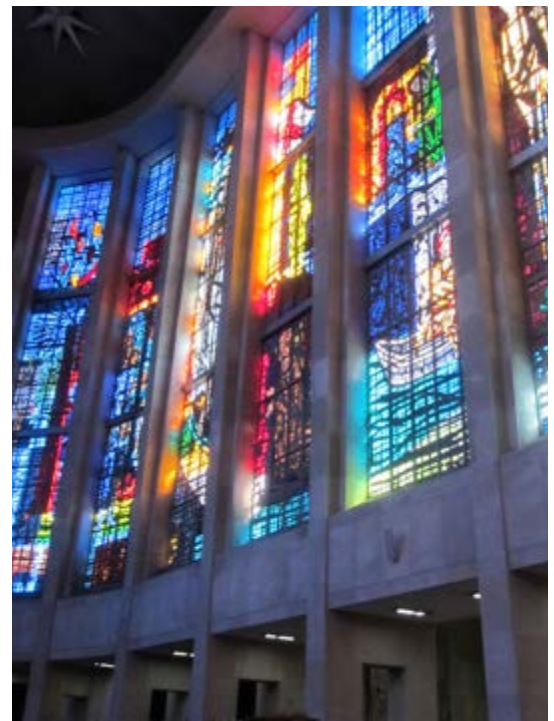
- Seek regular updates from Connecticut Department of Transportation, FHI Studios, and I-84 Viaduct Team in order to determine progress on planning for the improvement, repair, and possible alteration of the I-84 Viaduct.

Outcomes

- » Plans and funding for a comprehensive strategy to revitalize the Farmington Avenue commercial corridor; fully occupied commercial space at 207-215 Garden Street; and participation in any process to plan for the future of the I-84 Viaduct.

SECTION IV: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPLEMENTATION





One of Hartford's most historic and interesting neighborhoods.

SECTION IV: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPLEMENTATION

A. STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS

The SWOT analysis conducted as part of the planning process identified the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the Asylum Hill neighborhood. These are critical to NINA's strategic planning.

STRENGTHS

- **Planned investments** in the neighborhood including Trinity Health's multi-million-dollar investment in the St. Francis Hospital campus, Cathedral of St. Joseph \$12M capital campaign, and the announced redevelopment of 85 Sigourney Street (originally the Aetna conference center) currently under discussion.
- **Proximity to downtown** connected by robust transit.
- **The Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association**, the Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ), a robust, active volunteer organization.
- **Art and cultural venues** including theater, dance, exhibit space, the Mark Twain House and Museum, and the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center.
- **Home of The Hartford and Aetna** Insurance companies.
- **Farmington Avenue commercial corridor**
- **Schools** including Classical Magnet School, Covenant Preparatory School, Renzulli Gifted and Talented Academy, West Middle Community School, and Jumoke Academy
- **Religious institutions** including Asylum Hill Congregation Church, Cathedral of Saint Joseph, Immanuel Congregational Church, Trinity Episcopal Church, and Grace Lutheran Church
- **NINA**, an established, local community development organization (NINA) with a long history of providing high quality housing and other critical services in the neighborhood. NINA has highly skilled staff, predevelopment resources, and community connections. NINA recently received commitments of \$1 million from The Hartford Financial Services Group, \$1 Million from the City of Hartford, and \$500,000 from the State of Connecticut Urban Act Program to enhance this capacity.

WEAKNESSES



- **Almost 90% of the housing stock** is rental with a large transient population.
- **Limited real estate available** for development.
- **Lack of neighborhood oriented small businesses.**

OPPORTUNITIES



- **Increased financial and political support** for homeownership initiatives in Asylum Hill.
- **Hartford Land Bank** now operating with potential to target blighted properties in the neighborhood.
- **Corporate employees returning** to offices, bringing with them a resurgence in interest in volunteer opportunities.
- **Community Investment Fund 2030** - potential resource for state funding for homeownership development in Asylum Hill

THREATS



- **Supply chain issues, contractor availability, and higher prices** are impacting construction schedule and budget for NINA homeownership projects
- **Rising interest rates** are constraining the financial ability of some lower income families to purchase a NINA home
- **Perception of higher rate of crime** despite steady long-term downward trend in reported incidents of crime.

SECTION V: PLAN IMPLEMENTATION, UPDATES, EVALUATION AND REFLECTION



Over the next five years, 2023-2027, NINA will implement the planned priorities identified in this strategic plan, including but not limited to rehabilitation of blighted buildings, new construction, public safety initiatives, economic development activities, and quality-of-life improvements.

NINA will provide ongoing updates on the progress of its rehabilitation work and involvement in the community. NINA will conduct an annual evaluation to assess the progress of the plan and identify the impediments to accomplish planned activities, including funding, staff levels, and support of the community.

During the next five years, NINA will continue to collaborate with community stakeholders, the City of Hartford, and the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association (AHNA) to improve the overall neighborhood by addressing the quality of housing, economic development opportunities, public safety, and overall quality-of-life in the neighborhood. NINA will continue its effective work in the neighborhood and will continue its key role in building community connections and equity for those who live and work in the neighborhood. This plan describes the strategic goals and objects to address the community's needs, built on the momentum established during the past twenty years of work in the community.

APPENDIX A: NEIGHBORHOOD DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE²⁴**ASYLUM HILL**

This neighborhood profile includes data for Census Tracts 5031, 5033, and 5246.

2014	Asylum Hill	Hartford	2020	Asylum Hill	Asylum Hill Change (%)	Hartford	Hartford Change (%)
% Persons in Poverty	30.1%	34.4%		25%	-16.9%	29%	-15.7%
Median Household Income	\$30,588	\$29,313		\$30,159	-1.4%	\$34,962	19.3%
% Rent Burdened Households	51.0%	58.0%		45.7%	-10.4%	52.1%	-10.2%
Homeownership Rate	10.5%	23.5%		13.1%	24.8%	24.1%	2.6%

Population

Population	2010	2014	Change 2010-2014 (%)	2020	Change (%)
Asylum Hill	11,754	10,853	-7.7%	10,343	- 4.7%
Hartford (City)	124,775	124,705	0.0%	121,054	- 2.9%
Hartford (County)	894,014	897,985	0.4%	899,179	0.1%

Racial Characteristics

Race or Ethnicity	2010	% of Total	2014	% of Total	Change (%)	2020	% of Total	Change (%)
Black	5,758	49.0%	5,542	51.1%	-3.8%	5,189	50.2%	-6.4%
White	2,761	23.5%	2,527	23.3%	-8.5%	1,714	16.6%	-32.2%
Asian	653	5.6%	799	7.4%	22.4%	696	6.7%	-12.9%
Two or More Races	2,114	18.0%	415	3.8%	-80.0%	1,067	10.3%	157.1%
Some Other Race ⁴	468	4.0%	1570	14.5%	235.2%	1,589	15.4%	1.2%
Latino ⁵	3,963	33.7%	3,228	29.7%	-18.5%	3,159	30.5%	-2.1%

24 ESRI, 2022

Households & Housing

Households	2010	% of Total	2014	% of Total	Change (%)	2020	% of Total	Change (%)
Total Households	5,436	100.0%	5,450	100.0%	0.3%	5,047	100%	-7.4%
Family Households	2,304	42.4%	2,261	41.5%	-1.9%	1,765	34.8%	-21.9%
Married with Children	272	5.0%	296	5.4%	8.8%	384	7.6%	29.7%
Married without Children	399	7.3%	589	10.8%	47.6%	223	4.4%	-62.1%
Single Parents	1,050	19.3%	701	12.9%	-33.2%	902	17.8%	28.7%
Other	583	10.7%	675	12.4%	-15.8%	256	5.0%	-62.1%
Non-family Households	3,132	57.6%	3,189	58.5%	1.8%	3,309	65.2%	3.8%
Living Alone	2,699	49.7%	2,734	50.2%	1.2%	2,782	54.8%	1.8%
Average Household Size	2.58		1.9		-26.4%	1.89		-0.5%
Average Family Household Size	2.93		3		2.4%	2.94*		-2.0%

Housing Units and Tenure

Housing Units	2010	2014	Change (%)	2022	Change (%)
Total Housing Units	6,762	6,385	-5.6%	6,319	-1.0%
Total Occupied Housing Units	5,436	5,450	0.3%	5,367	-1.5%
Owner-occupied Housing Units	558	574	2.9%	701	22.1%
Percent Owner-occupied	10.3%	10.5%	1.9%	11.1%	5.7%
Renter-occupied	4,878	4,876	0.0%	4,666	-4.3%
Residential Vacancy Rate	19.7%	14.6%	-25.9%	15.1%	3.4%

*2022

* Source: Data sourced from the 2020 Census and 2016-2020 American Community Survey.

