

## WORKING PROCESS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION PLANNING

The Project Team led a nine month process in 2007 and early 2008 to work collaboratively with the community to develop a comprehensive approach to the revitalization of the Newhall neighborhood. The process relied on extensive community and stakeholder input, which was gathered through a variety of methods, including individual one-on-one interviews, a neighborhood survey, community meetings, and design workshops. The community outreach was supplemented by collection of existing data, site and soil analysis, design studies and the investigation of funding sources.

Using an iterative process, the Project Team used the information gathered from the community and outside stakeholders and applied their professional expertise in order to develop an appropriate and feasible Neighborhood Revitalization Plan.

### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

#### Stakeholders

The revitalization planning process for the neighborhood was guided by a steering committee, appointed by the Town of Hamden. The members of the steering committee represent a diversity of interests and perspectives, including town government, area businesses, the neighborhood, and the community at large. The steering committee met with the project team periodically to provide information and feedback on the process as the design concepts were formulated. Steering committee members are listed below.

Dale Kroop <i>Director of Economic &amp; Community Development</i>	Scott Jackson <i>Chief Operating Officer</i>
Sheila Epps <i>Newhall Advisory Board</i>	Elizabeth Hayes <i>Newhall Coalition</i>
Frank Cooper <i>Director of Parks &amp; Recreation</i>	Shanae Draughn <i>Mutual Housing Association</i>
Lane Driscoll <i>Whitneyville Civic Association</i>	Anthony Sacchetti <i>Economic Development Commission</i>
Peter Villano <i>State Representative</i>	Joseph Crisco <i>State Senator</i>
Kath Schomaker <i>Legislative Council</i>	Oswald Brown <i>Legislative Council</i>
Leslie Creane <i>Town Planner</i>	Michael D'Agostino <i>Board of Education</i>
Robert Bell, Ex-Officio <i>Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection</i>	Edith Pestana <i>Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection</i>
James Young, Ex-Officio <i>Olin Corporation</i>	Tom Chaplik, Ex-Officio <i>Regional Water Authority</i>

## **Regenerative Design**

Regenerative Design, a process of designing that focuses on healing the land, served as the basis of the design philosophy applied to the Newhall Neighborhood. This design process, which seeks to integrate nature and the built environment, served to inspire designers to conceive the neighborhood as a Garden District, apply Low Impact Development (LIDs) techniques including bioswales, constructed wetlands and rain gardens to address the flooding problem, and identify opportunities for community gardens. The Regenerative Design Workshop held on July 3, 2007 was led by Bill Reed, AIA, nationally known expert in the approach.

## **Key Community Interviews**

The Project Team undertook numerous one-on-one interviews with neighborhood stakeholders including Lane Driscoll of the Whitneyville Neighborhood Association, Tony Sacchetti and Nancy Dudchik for the Hamden Chamber of Commerce, Councilperson Kathleen Schomaker and representatives of the Newhall Advisory Committee.

In addition we met with a number of individuals and organizations that could and should play a large role in the revitalization effort including: Fannie Mae, Connecticut's Clean Energy Fund, the Department of Economic and Community Development, the Department of Environmental Protection, the state Office of Policy and Management, the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, state Representative Peter Villano and Senator Joe Crisco, the Community Loan Fund and Connecticut Housing Finance Authority.

These efforts helped to establish an understanding of the neighborhood and gather feedback on initial revitalization ideas for the property. The interviews revealed a number of key themes regarding the neighborhood as well as possible revitalization ideas.

## **Community Meetings**

Four open community meetings were held over the course of the revitalization planning process. The purpose of these sessions was to discuss potential revitalization options, solicit feedback and input, and present research and design options. Over the course of nine months, the meetings served as forums and design workshops for the community to offer their thoughts on the future of the neighborhood.

### *Brainstorming*

The initial community meetings on the revitalization of the neighborhood were held on weekday evenings on October 30, 2007 in the cafeteria of the former middle school and November 14, 2007 at the Keefe Center. The meetings were structured as introductions to the revitalization project and as brainstorming sessions for revitalization ideas.

### *Design Charrette*

The next two community meetings were held on Saturdays (December 1, 2007 and December 15, 2007) in the cafeteria of the former Hamden Middle School. These meetings reviewed the Project Team's research on historical and current physical neighborhood characteristics, existing community assets, and potential revitalization concepts, as well as discussing the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) plan for remediation of the neighborhood. After a summary of new research and analysis, participants were asked to choose one of four breakout groups. The first group focused primarily on streetscapes and flooding, the second on issues related to the DEP Remediation Plan for the neighborhood, the third on design/revitalization possibilities for the neighborhood and the fourth on creation of a community redevelopment fund.

### *Design Review*

The final community meeting was hosted by Friendship Baptist Church on January 9, 2008. This meeting included a presentation of possible revitalization design concepts for the neighborhood developed by the Project Team. Attendees were then asked for feedback on the design concepts in order to refine the final revitalization recommendations. A design review was also held for the steering committee prior to presentation of the plan to the town's legislative council.

### **Statistical Survey**

A survey was distributed to over 600 neighborhood residents collecting demographic information on respondents and querying them about impacts of remediation on their property and the neighborhood as well as favorability of possible reuses for the middle school and levels of concern for various community issues related to the location of their neighborhood. Seventy eight responses were received. The survey document, statistical results, and comments received are included in a separate appendix.