

KEYS TO THE CITY

WHAT IS — OR SHOULD BE — HAPPENING IN HARTFORD'S NEIGHBORHOODS

Blue Hills

Neighborhood goes hi-tech, chosen for pilot wireless Internet service run by city. Can a cyber cafe be far behind? Still waiting to break ground on the University High School of Science and Engineering on Mark Twain Drive; opening planned for fall 2008. University of Hartford officials trying to land last grant to start \$20 million first phase of the arts center on the old Thomas Cadillac property.

Upper Albany

Chrysalis Center Inc. launches renovation of 65,000-square-foot former Sealtest building. Bronze statue of deer repaired and restored to its rightful place at Deerfield Avenue, a symbol of neighborhood resolve. Artists Collective hosting black-tie gala Dec. 1 commemorating founder and jazz great Jackie McLean, who died last spring. Weed-strewn lot at Albany Avenue and Woodland Street still vacant — empty canvas or just empty?

Clay-Arsenal

Fingers are crossed for 2007 groundbreaking for state-of-art YMCA, one leg of \$100 million renaissance plan for Albany Avenue at Garden, Brook streets. Best of luck to the Y, now raising money, showing schematics around. Johnny Duke Street has nice ring, eh? Mayor Perez would please boxers by renaming Wooster Street after legendary mentor of the old Bellevue Square Boys Club, who died in March.

Northeast

Main Street streetscape project moving along. Gateways at Terry Square and the Windsor line will be finished any minute now. New bus shelters are on order. And the banners are in hand for hanging in the spring. In the works: Park at the site of the 1944 circus fire memorial on Barbour Street; a new St. Monica's Episcopal Church on the site of its new subdivision.

North Meadows

Closing of the Hartford landfill only two years away; can't come soon enough for North Meadows businesses. New Subaru dealership almost ready, joining CarMax on the old Hartford Jai Alai property. Longtime business leader Steve Gorss has sold the Super 8 Motel. He pushed for new street between Service Road and Weston Street; city should name it for him. Plans for major retail development on Edart and Advo sites moving ahead.

West End

Farmers market at the United Methodist Church a huge success — now it needs a more permanent, formalized spot on the site. The West End Community Center working to revitalize itself. No progress on condos at Girard and Farmington. But Ethiopian restaurant opened this summer on Farmington Avenue.

Asylum Hill

Connecticut Culinary Institute cooking in the former Hastings Hotel, with about 300 students in residence. Work to begin soon on a restaurant, and on a police substation facing Farmington Avenue. Project is a home run. New streetlights on Ashley Street. Victorian Lady, the house moved from Sigourney Street to Ashley, is occupied. The preschool phase of the new school in the Asylum Hill Congregational Church is open.

Parkville

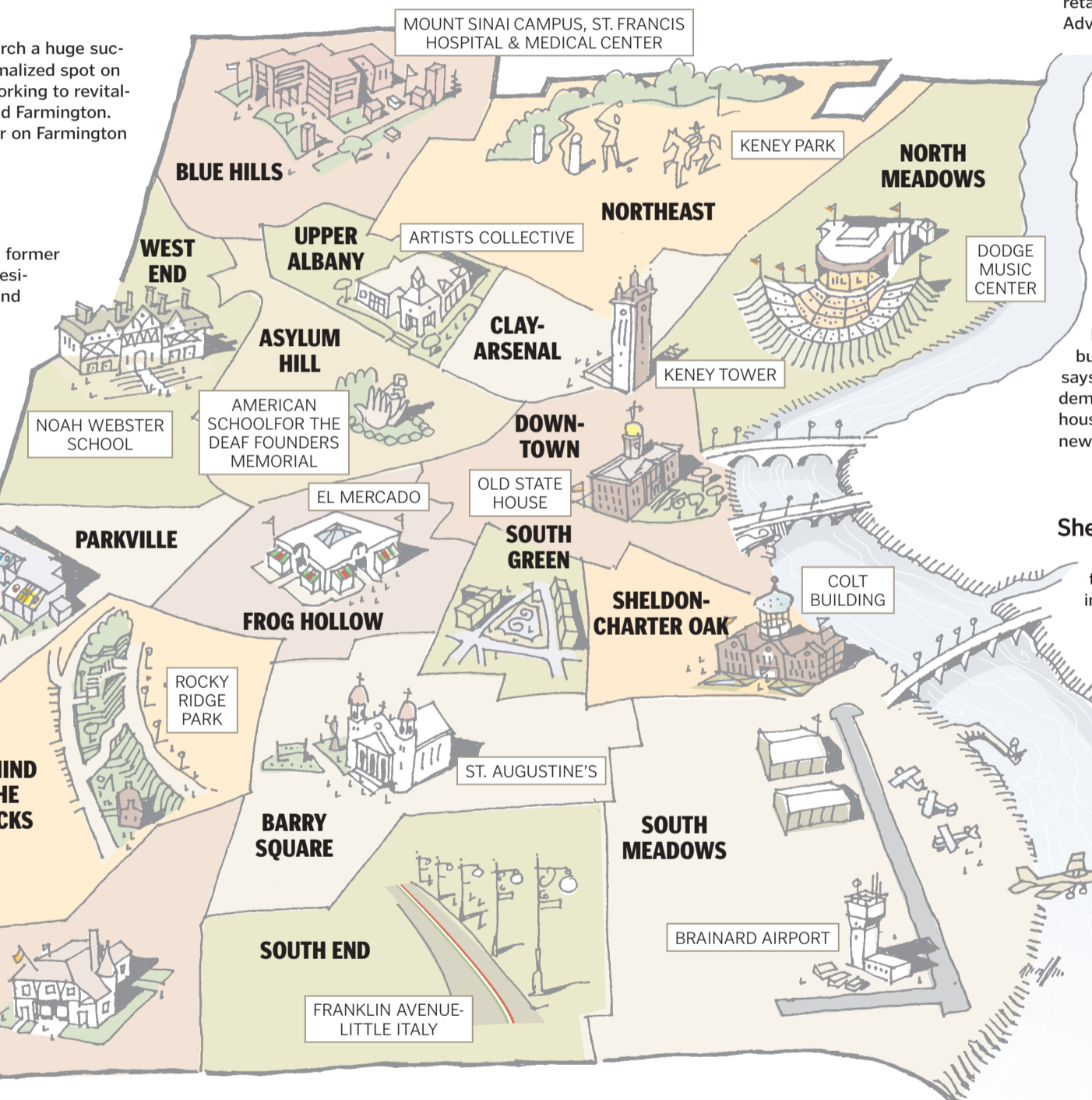
Burgeoning destination spot for art, home design. Call it Soho East. Real Art Ways remains a draw for movie, art lovers. DesignSourceCT in renovated factory is a designer's dream. Look for new bistro there soon. Dining options rising fast, including new spot on Prospect Street by owner of West Hartford's Elbow Room. Model factory lofts nearly ready for viewing. Check out www.popecom-mons.com for developer's big plans for sophisticated shopping.

Frog Hollow

Plans hatched to build on good bones of area bordered by Capitol, Broad, Park and Park Terrace; officials focus on safety, code enforcement, blight removal. Affordable housing picture brightens with rehab of perfect sixes near improved Pope Park. Park Street work progressing. Lyric Theater cleanup nearly done. Can't think of a better use for state budget surplus than reclaiming this gem as branch library. Governor?

Behind the Rocks

Park River's South Branch got a much-needed cleanup Sept. 30 by Trinity students and Green Party members. They hauled out loads of dumped metal that would have washed downriver in the heavy rains that soon followed. Bad news department: Two stores closed in 2-year-old Charter Oak Marketplace.



South Downtown

SoDo Neighborhood Revitalization Zone scores three victories. SoDo and South Green worked together for redesign of Plaza Mayor at the Park and Main gateway; new design a big improvement. Ditto with senior housing Immanuel House plans to build on Hudson Street. City says Catholic Charities will not demolish historic Italianate house on Wadsworth Street for new family center.

Sheldon-Charter Oak

Phase one of construction to replace Dutch Point housing project nearly done; 73 families expected to sign leases for nice new homes by end of year. Construction underway on Sports Science Academy, a magnet school for sports-related careers at Huyshope and Wawarme avenues. Another magnet, Kinsella School of the Arts, a candidate for overhaul and expansion. Exterior renovations to Colt's South Armory complete; the result looks clean, crisp and dignified.

Hartford's Neighborhoods And Their Landmarks

ILLUSTRATION BY PHIL LOHMAN / SPECIAL TO THE COURANT • TEXT BY COURANT EDITORIAL STAFF WRITERS

Southwest

Residents organizing to take back Forster Heights Park, which has fallen into poor condition and attracts unsavory characters. Friends of Forster Heights Park wants to find funding for a basketball court and a new playscape. Public meeting Jan. 17 at 6 p.m. at Kennelly School. City officials take notice. The park can be a great recreational asset and boost property values.

South End

Metzner Center addition to be completed in spring, adding room for after-school programs, computers, library and kitchen. City buys building at 850 Maple Ave.; may have police substation on first floor and senior center on upper floors. Businesses talk of creating a special taxing district. Organizers of South Hartford Alliance get nonprofit status; next step is raising funds and improving climate for business and quality of life in South End and adjoining neighborhoods.

Barry Square

Streetscape shaping up; new sidewalks look wonderful. Some plantings in, light fixtures next. Nice if federal grant could be boosted to \$8 million to cover larger area. Congressman Larson? Design in works for Maple Avenue senior wellness center to open next summer. Ice rink ready for skates. Community mourns loss of neighborhood police officer Matthew Arace, 35, killed in a car accident.

South Green

Plaza Mayor is a go. Scaled-back plan for the \$32 million, five-story twin condominium towers on Park and Main streets wins widespread community support. Expect groundbreaking in the spring. Let's finish repairs on Barnard Park.

South Meadows

Neighborhood's problem-solving committee developing plan to market the area — one of the most prosperous parts of the city — to companies looking to relocate. Business owners are still worried that the Metropolitan District Commission might revive its proposal for a mixed-use development on riverfront property occupied by Brainard Airport.