

G. IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

A. Phasing the Plan

Priorities for the First 10 Years

The four priorities that the neighborhood should focus upon in the first 10 years are as follows. These would be accomplished simultaneously:

1. Advocate for the construction of state parking garages.
2. Rehab existing vacant buildings (< 12)
3. Implement model projects on city property.
4. Consolidate parking areas behind Park Street businesses.

Some ideas for how these initiatives could be accomplished are:

1. Advocate for the construction of state parking garages.

Meet with State to discuss its role in the plan: interest in the parking strategy, approval process. If bonding needed, prepare to hire lobbyist; negotiate on potential timeline for construction of each facility. Discuss the potential of State leasing land above (future) Capitol/Buckingham underground parking garage. Anticipate the potential and seek professional counsel about how this could be done. Seek precedents in other states, document the cases, and secure legal agreements (in generic language) used in those transactions to prepare for the State's potential action.

2. Rehabilitating existing vacant buildings: 44-52 Cedar; 19, 53, 57 Wadsworth; 36-40 John

Advertise buildings or create a Community Development Corporation to do this as a neighborhood organization. Invite Local Initiative Support Corp. (*See 3e below*) to become a partner. Create a funding pool (similar to South Hartford Initiative) as a source for primary loans or bridge loans for *South Downtown Strategic Plan* projects.

In the short-term, secure vacant properties from vandals: secure plywood; to make them more attractive to potential buyers, paint plywood and cut unkempt landscaping. The city *does this anyway* by ordinance (and sends the bill to the property owner in the form of a lien). The neighborhood could do this (via independent contractor, with an agreement with the city for the lien action), instead of waiting for the city to do (which currently oversees more than 400 vacant buildings).

3. Advocate for demonstration or model projects to be built on city property.

The best way to spark development interest in a neighborhood is to *put something tangible in the ground*. A city property could be given away for \$1 to the best proposal, for which there is a competition. The advantage of having a competition over simply requesting ideas for a private development initiative is that there could be a great deal of press coverage (i.e., free advertising). It would give the NRZ the opportunity to show off the plan for the rest of the neighborhood, and potentially get others interested. Another advantage is that a competition draws talent, architects with vision, from all corners of the world. Hartford would also get wide advertising for the price of a competition fee (\$50,000 to run a competition).

Afterward: secure economic development funding for other model projects on city-owned property.

4. Consolidate parking areas behind Park Street businesses.

The Park Street merchant organization would be well-served by the South Downtown proposal to maximize more parking behind the businesses. While Park Street properties and businesses are outside the South Downtown Neighborhood boundary, the vacant land on which to create parking for them is within SoDo's boundary.

This initiative cannot be left up to Park Street, because the parking lots would also be used to serve new development on city land (the model projects). The parking lots should be created as they are part of the city infrastructure like streets which serve the public. They may eventually be sold and/or privately leased and managed (repaying the city) in the future, when Park Street has established itself as a successful retail street.

A summit of all stakeholders (which will include property owners, the business community, the city Dept. of Engineering, and at least 2 members of the common council), should take place within the first two years of this plan's adoption in order to plan the strategy to accomplish this aim. The best scenario would be to use city bonding money to leverage a combination of other funds to do this. Example: 25% city funding, 25% state economic development fund, 25% loan pool of 5 banks, 25% local major stakeholders in the neighborhood(Hartford Hospital). This pool may be big enough to begin other infrastructure investments to assist in sparking Park Street's revitalization.

B. NRZ Role

1. Working with Park Street and other neighborhoods, South Downtown can help ensure any buildings in the neighborhood on the city demolition list are removed (Feb 2001).

2. Decide how plan implementation will be managed. Will the NRZ continue as a volunteer committee/chair organization? Should it seek funding and hire a full-time manager? Should it retain the services of a consultant to implement different parts of the plan?

Recommendation: Meet the most established NRZ in the state to discuss how a staffed office could be created (bearing in mind this NRZ received \$5 million from the Governor to undertake its initiatives, a scenario unlikely to be repeated for any other NRZ). This is the Broad Street NRZ in New Britain, CT. Chris Traczyk, executive director, Neighborhood Housing Services of New Britain, Inc. Phone 224-2433.

3. Sponsor workshops to market the plan: to neighborhood property owners, private developers, neighborhood churches, the hospital, attorneys with offices in the area:

a. Existing property owners

What can they do to enhance their properties? Explain the code and how it simplifies requirements for each lot, what funding is available for improvements and code compliance for existing properties (removing floodlights...); how *Strategic Plan* projects will receive the NRZ's endorsement and other support when party applies for mortgages (letter from NRZ)

Advertise what properties are currently available near their property; offer the workshop as a forum for those who want to sell their own properties; offer management advice from experts, advice on marketing their space, attracting desirable tenants.

b: Attorneys in the neighborhood

Explain what the *Strategic Plan* is and what it aims to do; how they are affected; the benefits and

feasibility of shared parking; coordinating city money for demolition of interior block garages to create shared parking.

Hire a consultant to promote the benefits of their investment in the neighborhood: who wants to be a developer?; identify the key parcels for development; explain the benefits/advantages of pre-permitting, so development here is simplified

c. Church Housing

Identifying parcels for senior living, assisted living, or other residential; how it could happen: process, building construction cost, funding, etc.; recycling existing buildings to practice on



CHURCH HOUSING

One of the greatest demands for housing these days is for a senior housing. In many cities, churches have taken the lead in providing housing for their parishioners who are still quite independent, but want the choices that an urban neighborhood offers as they retire. Adjacent to all five of the religious institutions in South Downtown is vacant land, some already owned by these churches. Market rate housing can pay not only for its construction, it can be an additional income for these non-profit organizations.

d. Private Developers

Advertise the plan and the streamlined permitting process; discuss building typologies and average estimated cost; neighborhood role (support) in negotiating with city and financing agencies, etc.

e. Adjacent Neighborhoods

f. Historic Properties

Educate the general public about the opportunities for building ownership:

Local Initiative Support Coalition, 81 Wethersfield Avenue, Hartford: Ken Johnson, exec. director, 525-4821.

New Haven Trust for Historic Preservation: Ed Franquemont, executive director
(203) 562-5919;

CT Historical Commission (CHC), Amos Bull House, 59 S. Prospect Street, Hartford
566-305.

CT Trust for Historic Preservation, Hamden, CT, Greg Galvin (203) 562-6319.

4. Determine review process for projects to streamline them through permitting. (*Model on proposal for Sarasota, Florida, by Andres Duany, DPZ Architects & Town Planners, 3/01. Information available through Catherine Johnson, Architect & Town Planner Tel. (860) 343-1611.*)

5. Seek funding for street enhancements. Potential sources and/or partners may be: city, capitol district, link to Adriaen's Landing development, The Bushnell, or foundations funding urban park initiatives. Include in Phase I funding to hire an urban designer to not only create the design, but also to represent the neighborhood in the process to the city engineering department. As they have different constituencies, and both need representation.

Note: any projects in the pipeline need this level of review as soon as possible.

6. Consider becoming a National Trust Main Street. Retail streets in the neighborhood can have staff to manage, coordinate, market, determine strategy for businesses. National program also sponsors (and state sponsor pays) for the first three years of technical and management support. Call John Simone at the CT Main Street Center, Northeast Utilities Headquarters, Rocky Hill, (860) 947-2121.

7. Consider becoming a Local Historic District: higher real state values, higher quality of building renovations, esteem, identification. Inquire: John Shannahan at the CT Historic Commission; Barry Lubin, Planning Department.

8. Determine what aspects of the plan need NRZ to take the lead in initiating, and determine its funding needs by hire a consultant to research funding sources for each. Lobby the city to seek these funds, especially Urban Act and Community Development Block Grant funds. [Year 1 and 2]

9. Infrastructure improvements: building new streets, constructing new parking facilities: structured and at-grade (behind Main Street and Park Street). The cost to construct the new streets must be weighed against the cost to the neighborhood and potential development for not doing so. Construction costs can be passed on to the developer and a user fee, or as tax increment financing (TIF) or as public/private partnerships (50/50).

The new streets provide accessibility for neighborhood residents east/west where the only option now is to cut across vacant lots. Initially, the new "street" could be built of less costly materials: it may be gravel or simply grass. The purpose of the streets is to establish a right-of-way for local circulation rather than be ready for heavy vehicular through travel in all conditions.

C. City Role

There is no question that the neighborhood will need to advocate for this type of improvement (new streets) through every channel in the municipal government to see it become a reality.

1. Bonding for projects
2. Street Enhancements: lighting; sidewalks; street widening; trees
3. Parking Policy (on-street): after hours policy in metered areas
4. Zoning Enforcement
5. Building Permitting
6. Fire Safety: inspection of existing housing stock; inspection of existing buildings
7. Demolition of city-owned buildings
8. Distribution of Community Development Block Grant money and Urban Act funds

D. State Role

1. Relocation of parking for state employees to better locations in order to avail more valuable real estate for redevelopment. Build facility between Washington and Cedar. Build underground facility between Capitol and Buckingham. If 10 Clinton Street uses are relocated, build garage between Elm and Capitol Avenue.

2. Other: coordinate security initiatives (regarding physical, exterior, street level) with NRZ Committee. (Note of caution: state goals to increase security should not counter neighborhood goals of creating inviting places to walk, etc. Neighborhood aims, with good urban design, to increase security on all streets.)

E. Metropolitan District Commission

1. Infrastructure improvements : upgrade of sewer and water