



## INTRODUCTION

### Building on Strengths

Parkville has many strengths or assets to draw upon to build a more vital neighborhood. Historically Parkville has been a place to implement progressive and creative thinking. Since the beginning of the 20th century, this neighborhood has represented the latest in industrial innovation in its manufacture of such items as tires, bicycles, pay telephones, bricks and typewriters.

As we enter the 21st century we will continue to build on that strength and become a model for urban revitalization of a post-industrial neighborhood. Recent renovations of the neighborhood's historic, industrial buildings for a variety of uses including employment and entertainment attest to the fact that we are a neighborhood on the move.

Parkville has also been a neighborhood of varying ethnicities. Today, we are even more diverse. And we view that as a strength. We can boast of a diverse resident population from such far away places as the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and Europe. Our appreciation for diversity is reflected in our elementary school that proudly displays flags from around the world and a student population that comes from approximately 20 different countries. In addition, the neighborhood is home to numerous ethnic restaurants, as well as cultural food and craft supply stores.

The neighborhood also has a healthy mix of small businesses, industry, offices, residences and neighborhood amenities including supermarkets, banks, a library branch, day care center, senior center and a post office. There is a concentration of creative industries, particularly in the Arbor Street buildings, including architects, artists, advertising agencies, etc. We even have a movie theater in an art center complex!

### Background

For most of its recent history, Parkville has been an ethnically mixed, working class neighborhood of the city of Hartford. This triangular-shaped neighborhood is located on the western side of the city between the northern and southern neighborhoods. It is bordered by West Hartford on the west, Capitol Avenue on the north and Laurel Street, Pope Park and the Behind the Rocks neighborhood on the eastern and southern sides. It should be noted that the Parkville Revitalization Zone is slightly different than the neighborhood

boundaries. The Revitalization Zone includes the north part of Capitol Avenue from Prospect Street to Forest Street and both sides of Sisson to West Boulevard, and extends its southern and eastern borders to the highway.

Parkville covers an area of approximately 330 acres or 2.9 percent of the total land area of the City. Of the 17 established neighborhoods, Parkville ranks 15th in size, making it one of the smallest neighborhoods in the city. Approximately 6,000 people live here.

Parkville took its name from the fact that it lay at the junction of the north and south branches of the Park River not because it has a lot of park land. On the contrary, Parkville has the least land dedicated for parks of all the city neighborhoods.

Before 1870, Parkville was open fields and farms. Due largely to Hartford's post Civil War Industrial expansion, the demand for building materials was on the up-swing. By 1890 all of Parkville was developed with streets and residential areas. At the turn of the century Parkville, like other Hartford neighborhoods, was a manufacturing center. The housing development activity continued until 1917 and forms the present residential housing stock in the area.

The post World War II era and the construction of Interstate 84 caused the industrial base of Parkville to evaporate as the larger industrial companies moved out of the Parkville area and the city. At this time more established middle class families began to move to the suburbs. They were replaced by new immigrants and people moving from other parts of the city.

By the mid 1960's the Portuguese community had made Parkville its home. Many of its Portuguese residents worked in the nearby factories. Portuguese small businesses have been established mostly along Park Street.

Recently this community has been leaving the neighborhood and is being replaced by Caribbean and American Blacks as well as more Latinos (mostly Puerto Rican), and Asians (Vietnamese and Cambodian). The latter two groups are opening small businesses. At the same time, the number of renters is increasing and the neighborhood is losing more homeowners to the suburbs.

## Parkville Today

Presently, Parkville maintains fairly sound housing stock, primarily one, two and three family houses, and multi-ethnic retail corridors along Park Street, New Park Avenue, and to a lesser degree on Sisson and Capitol Avenues. There are still several industrial properties, some vacant, some occupied, most located around Bartholomew and New Park Avenues.

Approximately 40% of Parkville's land is used for residential purposes and 30% is used for business and industrial purposes reflecting its past as an industrial neighborhood built along railroad tracks that run through the neighborhood's southern side.

The diversified asset base of the Parkville neighborhood - as profiled in its

people, enterprises, structures, history, location, and natural environment - is substantial. The community-based revitalization of the Parkville neighborhood will occur during a process in which these assets become recognized, organized, and protected, growing the Parkville neighborhood capacity from the inside out.

Parkville's major retail corridors - Park Street and New Park Avenue, the "United Nations of Hartford" - offer a lively mix of uses, boasting some ninety businesses owned and operated by people of numerous ethnic backgrounds. Additional retail, service enterprises, and light manufacturing (including furniture, upholstery, machine and engine parts, plastics, and swim wear) round out Parkville's estimated 215 businesses.

A new Super Stop & Shop recently opened on New Park Avenue, reversing 28 years of supermarket flight from the city of Hartford. There is potential for a multi-plex cinema on 13 acres of land where Heublein has recently closed its plant. A few blocks away in West Hartford, a Home Depot, B J's Buying Club and a large furniture showroom have recently opened. These projects should have an immediate impact on the area.

Real Art Ways (RAW), a nationally-recognized arts organization located in a historically significant industrial property on Arbor Street, has recently expanded by building a movie theater, more gallery space, a concert and performance theater, and a cafe. RAW has attracted city, state and national funding for its capital development and programming and is drawing film, music and art audiences from throughout the region to Parkville. Future plans call for an outdoor concert space and other physical and programmatic enhancements.

Pope Park lies adjacent to the eastern edge of Parkville. It was donated to the City by Colonel Albert A. Pope, whose Pope Manufacturing Company enterprises built bicycles, motorcycles, and automobiles for worldwide markets one hundred years ago in Parkville's Industrial Corridor.

The housing stock in Parkville is generally sound, but deteriorating buildings are becoming more frequent. There are currently approximately at least 15 vacant multi-unit buildings.

The area has shown creative reuse of industrial buildings with multi-use buildings on Arbor Street, offices on New Park, and new businesses including a brew pub and restaurant on Bartholomew Avenue.

Other recent activities in the neighborhood include the formation of the Parkville Business Association (which has secured funding and hired a merchant coordinator), the Parkville Problem Solving Committee (which has funding and staff support from a Comprehensive Communities Program grant), and the recently established Parkville Revitalization Association. These groups, along with City officials, and other community organizations including the more established Parkville Senior Center and Parkville Community Association have been working together to address community challenges, develop cooperative strategies to revitalize the Parkville neighborhood. Another strength of the neighborhood, the willingness of its residents and businesses to work together, will certainly bode well for the future vitality of the neighborhood.