

Recommended Actions

Based on input from WECA Committees and a series of meetings by the Working Committee developing this Plan, the following actions are recommended:

Expand Recreational and Leisure Opportunities

- ◆ Address the immediate need for recreation space in the south sector by pursuing the use of the vacant land adjacent to the Sisson Avenue Firehouse and pursue construction of a basketball court behind it.
- ◆ Compile an inventory of facilities and organizations that provide recreation/leisure programs in the neighborhood. Include schools, institutions, and faith based organizations.
- ◆ Examine geographic distribution of facilities and programs and develop recommendations to increase accessibility and distribution. Take under consideration the potential creation of additional open space as a result of the reconfiguration of the Interstate 84 Sisson Avenue exit ramp.
- ◆ When census 2000 data is available from the City, compare population characteristics (age is the most relevant) to existing programs and facilities.
- ◆ Sponsor a user-survey of patrons of existing programs, parents, and other stakeholders to determine needs and desires.
- ◆ Assemble a West End Neighborhood Recreation Plan that presents existing conditions, outreach, desired goals, and implementation mechanisms.
- ◆ Meet with the City's Parks and Recreation staff to discuss the need for specific improvements that meet the needs of the West End, specifically the staffing at Elizabeth Park.
- ◆ Work with the administration at Noah Webster to open the gym for after-school recreation.
- ◆ Consider applying for grants from foundations or other philanthropic organizations and seek corporate sponsorships and other partners for fundraising or for launching priority programs. Consider contacting businesses within the neighborhood and in the City as well as manufacturers of needed equipment.

Recommended Actions (continued)

- ◆ Establish dialogue with neighboring institutions and facilities to discuss future partnerships.
- ◆ Promote currently available programs and activities through the preparation of a flyer and distribution through Noah Webster School, other local institutions, frequented locations and web sites.
- ◆ Create a Neighborhood Sponsorship Fund to assist those in need with participation in the WECA Youth Athletic Program Initiative.

Improve Educational Linkages

- ◆ Work with school administration to identify physical, technology and educational resource needs of Noah Webster School.
- ◆ Meet with school administration, faculty, PTO leadership, Organized Parents Make a Difference (OPMAD), neighborhood institutional partners, faith based organizations, the library, parents and other interested parties to establish a partnership to lobby for school improvements.
- ◆ Develop a list of priorities.
- ◆ Prepare a presentation on school needs and schedule meetings with residents, businesses and neighborhood institutional resources to enlist commitment to some form of participation (programs, equipment, mentoring, volunteer assistance, etc.) as well as advocacy support from each participating group.
- ◆ Go to Board of Education with this strategy and commitment, and lobby for scheduling improvements.
- ◆ Consider establishing a Political Action Committee (PAC) to raise funds in support of actions that will result in desired improvements.

Promote and Protect Our Historic And Cultural Assets

- ◆ Prepare a flyer on the history/development of the West End. Use as a basis for identifying walking tours. Offer tours on fall and spring weekends, in conjunction with neighborhood-wide events, and to link with events scheduled by others (educational, business or institutional).

Recommended Actions (continued)

- ◆ Schedule special events with opportunities to visit historic sites such as Holiday open houses or focus on the characteristics of certain types of architecture.
- ◆ Coordinate library and school exhibits; link with curriculum units and special events.
- ◆ Encourage private preservation initiatives by providing information on programs, techniques, proper materials (architectural and landscape treatments to maintain historic character).
- ◆ Conduct a neighborhood-wide cultural assets survey to determine skills and interests residents have to offer.
- ◆ Link these cultural assets with neighborhood pride through programs, exhibits, bazaars, street fairs, block events, etc.
- ◆ Link education initiatives with performances, resident artists, etc.
- ◆ Inventory artists in the neighborhood and consider promoting their talents through a brochure and annual “West End Art Trail”.
- ◆ Partner with the Connecticut Historical Society and other institutions in offering programs and support for neighborhood initiatives.
- ◆ Establish West End Design Guidelines to address scale, streetscape, character, signage, and parking.
- ◆ Assemble a list of resources and guidelines available to help owners doing renovations or modifications to complete them in an architecturally appropriate manner.

Strengthen the Neighborhood

- ◆ Assemble a list of community resources serving West End residents.
- ◆ Elicit the interest and cooperation of other WECA groups in mutual accomplishments.
- ◆ Capitalize on the Block Group network, community organizer and Sector Representatives in continuing to identify needs and in stimulating increased involvement of residents.

Recommended Actions (continued)

- ◆ Develop mechanisms to help identify populations at-risk or individuals in-need of intervention so that an appropriate course of action is taken.
 - Pursue the formation of a Youth Center in cooperation with Asylum Hill
 - Attempt to secure funding from the United Way
 - Seek a suitable location for a Youth Activity Office
 - Determine schedule for procuring funds and hiring a Program Advisor
 - Create a governing body consisting of age-appropriate councils and adult representatives.
- ◆ Support neighborhood and City initiatives to increase the availability and use of public facilities for recreational, educational, cultural and social enrichment of West End residents.
- ◆ Meet with City Librarian to determine the feasibility of establishing a public library and community center at Noah Webster School (use SAND School/Ropkins Branch model).

Traffic/Traffic Calming

- ◆ Identify priority areas where traffic violations are concentrated and define a mechanism to elicit City action.
- ◆ Pursue and support a City-wide traffic calming initiative that takes into consideration physical improvements if police enforcement is not effective.
- ◆ Continue to educate residents about the effectiveness and feasibility of traffic calming measures.
- ◆ Explore the feasibility of resident monitoring of offenders and develop mechanisms to identify them.
- ◆ Conduct surveys of residents to ascertain need for alternative transportation modes.

Recommended Actions (continued)

Pedestrian Enhancements and Safety

- ◆ Map the existing pedestrian corridors and nodes, including schools, institutions, and public places.
- ◆ Where appropriate, tie in to the results of the Farmington Avenue Joint Planning Committee's initiative.
- ◆ Assemble a priority list of areas needing crosswalk improvements, changes in signalization and/or timing, or other upgrades.
- ◆ Monitor the neighborhood for additional accessibility improvements and notify City of any potential non-compliance (ADA) areas.
- ◆ Meet with City representatives to establish an effective approach and timetable and determine feasibility of capturing CDBG funding.
- ◆ Integrate priority areas in future urban plans or streetscape designs.
- ◆ Meet with the Police Department and City representatives to develop an alternative to providing crossing guards. Prior to the meeting, prepare a "white paper" on how other cities deal effectively with the situation.
- ◆ Support physical improvements to shift the focus from a vehicle-dominated environment to a pedestrian-friendly environment within residential areas and along Farmington Avenue.

Crime and Nuisance Activities

- ◆ Continue to advocate community service officers' positions for the West End by preparing statistics and testimonials of their effectiveness in not only enforcement but crime prevention, youth education, etc.
- ◆ Utilize the Block Club network to continue to identify communicate and seek remedies for nuisance activities (litter, loud music, loitering, etc.)

Public Health

- ◆ Continue to monitor and provide feedback on specific issues and general areas of concern related to the delivery of public services that affect the health, safety and well-being of residents.

Recommended Actions (continued)

- ◆ Seek partnerships and support available state or federal programs to communicate relevant public health threats.
- ◆ Identify specific conditions within the neighborhood that are serving as “pre-cursors” to public health threats (drug use, trash accumulation, etc.) that ultimately affect everyone’s quality of life and support both enforcement and educational programs to address them.

Overcome Negative Perceptions

- ◆ Support programs and physical improvements that create safe and inviting environments for residents to enjoy and visitors to appreciate (lighting, defensible landscaping, blight control, etc.).
- ◆ Invite members of the editorial board of the Hartford Courant to a facilitated discussion on the impacts of negative press on the neighborhood.
- ◆ Establish a good working relationship with the media to ensure the “neighborhood” position is clearly and effectively communicated.
- ◆ Offer walking tours of the neighborhood to targeted groups (possibly the suburbs) to showcase “architectural gems” and other assets.

Community Outreach

- ◆ Continue to use the Block Group network to raise concerns effecting the health, safety and welfare of West End residents.
- ◆ Organize activities that, although they may be linked to specific issues, would serve to unify various factions throughout the West End.
 - neighborhood-wide clean-up days with residents from one sector helping out another sector
 - neighborhood informational fairs to share programs, services offered and the opportunity to “meet and greet” provider representatives
 - work with related West End NRZ committees as well as the Asylum Hill NRZ and other partners to successfully launch the Play Spaces initiative

Recommended Actions (continued)

Support Owner-Occupancy

- ◆ Liaison with an established agency to administer neighborhood housing services: providing program information; working with City on zoning and city program modifications; administering program intake, processing and execution; marketing of programs to West End property owners.
- ◆ Facilitate use of the Historic Homes Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program by identifying eligible homeowners, corporate tax credit buyers and lender institutions willing to participate in the program.
- ◆ Host a workshop at which the program is explained, corporate and financial partners describe their participation and homeowners can initiate the process.
- ◆ Determine WECA/NRZ role in moving the process forward and/or providing technical assistance.

Address Absentee Ownership

- ◆ Work with the City to establish a coordinated code enforcement approach to addressing code violations/enforcement including a monitoring mechanism that will provide feedback to the City.
- ◆ Support the establishment of a rent receivership program in the City.
- ◆ Develop a peer group network of responsible landlords who can share their knowledge of programs, resources and mechanisms for property maintenance, management and tenant relations.
- ◆ Develop an outreach initiative to real estate brokers, management groups and other third parties to educate them about the neighborhood's rental property concerns and enlist them as partners in strengthening the quality of the neighborhood's rental housing.
- ◆ Work with owners of targeted multi-family properties to develop a schedule of physical improvements.
- ◆ Work with the City, non-profit, for-profit, corporate and private partners to bring investment consistent with neighborhood goals into the neighborhood.

Recommended Actions (continued)

- ◆ Work with the Planning Division of the City's Department of Housing and Community Development to review zoning requirements (i.e. permitted uses, design standards, applicable parking requirements, etc.). Develop a checklist of issues as the basis for developing design guidelines and potential modifications to zoning regulations.

Strategies for the North Sector

- ◆ Maintain the architectural and historical character of the area, the City's only R8 low Density Residential Zone, through adherence to Zoning Regulations.
- ◆ Oppose changes in use of large single family homes to institutional or commercial uses.
- ◆ Discourage expansion of non-conforming uses.

West End Development Parcels

- ◆ The Goodwin Estate
 - Support residential uses, which retain the character of the parcel and are consistent with the neighborhood. The Developer should be encouraged to work closely with WECA.
- ◆ Connecticut Historical Society/Connecticut Community Technical College Sites.
 - Relocations may result in a development opportunity for 20 acres on Asylum Avenue straddling the West End and Asylum Hill neighborhoods. Both neighborhoods should work with the owners to consider options for these sites, including a site-specific reuse study and reuse criteria to achieve compatibility with neighborhood goals.
- ◆ Medical Society Building (Scarborough Street and Albany Avenue).
 - Support efforts to conduct a highest and best use analysis of this deteriorating and underused site that is consistent with neighborhood goals.