

KEYS TO THE CITY

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

Blue Hills

Rawson School in session amid fast-moving construction. University of Hartford opens science, engineering and technology building. UHart soccer plays on new artificial turf. University's performing arts center at Cadillac site on hold. Neighborhood police responsive, state police in evidence. Street improvements coming for Blue Hills Avenue commercial strip. More city street sweeping needed.

Upper Albany

Small hints of major strides: Police walk the street; litter is down, too. A redevelopment plan emerges for corner of Albany and Woodland — a gateway. Another is for a block-long lot between Brook and Bedford streets. At Artists Collective, more than 200 youths trained in performing arts or pre-employment skills in 29th annual summer program.

Clay-Arsenal

Temporary setbacks to progress in this poor part of town. Midland Farms went bankrupt before store could open in new Metro Center shopping plaza, but city promises "positive development" there very soon. Police field office will open at plaza in next few weeks. State, city police rounded up drug dealers in August, bringing calm after spate of early-summer shootings.

Northeast

Eyes are on an Oct. 13 meeting at Uptown Flava at which a network of business and community leaders and city officials will present a proposal for implementing a strategic plan for the Main Street corridor between Terry Square and the Windsor town line. Objective is to get neighborhood involved in the process, which includes streetscape improvements, massive code enforcement and gateways at both ends.

North Meadows

Construction of CarMax Auto Superstores nearing completion on site of former jai-alai fronton. Dunkin' Donuts recently opened new outlet adjacent to post office. Meadows area is alive with economic activity, much of it related to car dealerships. Big sore spot: ugly landfill on the east side of I-91. Nearby property owners suing Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority, seeking damages and closure of this mammoth eyesore along heavily traveled gateway to Hartford.

West End

New owners of vacant Shell station mum on plans. Farmington Avenue neighbors anxious, hoping for high-quality, mixed-use development. Trees planted in southwest sector. City cool to MJ Neiditz & Co. plans to tear down buildings at Whitney and Farmington for bigger CVS. Bad move; Moe's Midtown is an institution.

Asylum Hill

Connecticut Culinary Institute wants to buy the former Hastings Hotel instead of leasing it — great for neighborhood. CCI merits state help to get renovations done. NRZ board members opposed mental health services program on Sigourney Street. But apartments being marketed there will still help street's stability. Chrysalis Center should heed critics, get more involved in NRZ. Plan for security cameras at Sigourney Square Park is a smart idea.

Parkville

Developer Carlos Mouta poised to buy 30 Arbor St. building. City council jump-starts dormant Neighborhood Loan Guarantee Program. Loans from \$5,000 to \$150,000 to be available for small businesses. Senior center gets face lift thanks to Greater Hartford Youth Network. Great news: New Alliance Bank to open branch at Sisson and Park, filling void left by People's. Stakeout of Hour Glass Cafe yields major drug bust.

Frog Hollow

The condos are coming! Revival takes official giant step with impending conversion of brick behemoth at Capitol and Flower streets into owner-occupied market housing. Cared-for homes, businesses dot side streets where blight once reigned. But slovenly blocks with refuse-strewn lawns, gutters will keep newcomers away. Park Street sidewalk makeover in full disruptive swing.

Southwest

Hartford's newest shopping plaza, Charter Oak Marketplace, sees more restaurants and stores opening, offsetting ugly scenes of labor advocates and politicians nagging the Wal-Mart store there to provide affordable health insurance, let workers unionize. Wal-Mart sits on housing authority property, so city ordinance allows protests in front of store's doors.

Behind The Rocks

Hillside Avenue cleanup day on Sept. 24 will kick off neighborhood anti-litter campaign involving residents, schools and businesses. It can be a model for other neighborhoods. Renovation of the Goodwin Branch of the Hartford Public Library nearing completion. Trinity College and Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance need to focus on Zion Street. The street, adjacent to the college and home of Timothy's Restaurant, has great potential.

South End

Mini-mall planned at former Carmichaels' site has pedestrian-friendly potential. Good news is it will bring new businesses, possibly a Starbucks, to neighborhood. Bad news — Metzner Center bids came in too high. City doing less costly redesign, hoping to rebid by November. Brochure promoting South End will be available to hotels this fall. That's smart marketing. Mayor promises more foot patrols starting this month. Let's see them.

Barry Square

New laundromat brightens business district. Dunkin' Donuts may rise on Maple Avenue lot that's been empty for 15 years. Great! Next on residents' wish list, a restaurant that serves breakfast. Any good eggs out there? Litter still a problem, but some merchants shine in cleanup efforts. Trinity ties weakening for economic reasons, but association too deep to disappear.

South Green

Neighbors thrilled with increased police presence and crackdown on drug dealing. People feel safer with more officers on patrol. Condo prices near Hartford Hospital skyrocketing, part of ripple effect from downtown growth. Hartford Redevelopment Agency to decide soon on competing proposals for residential/retail/office development at key corner of Main and Park streets.

South Meadows

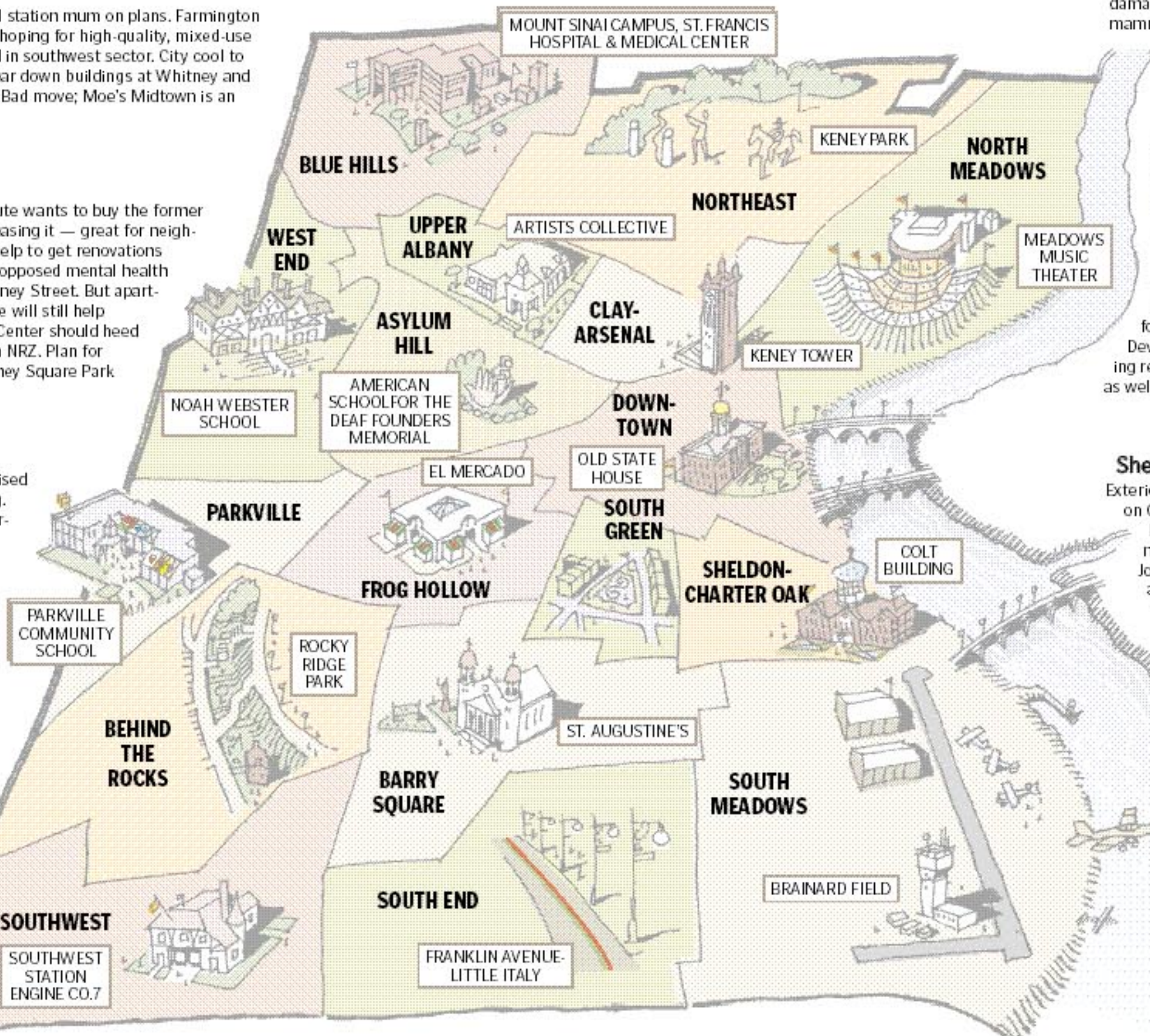
Businesses getting set to vote later this month on the final draft of a traffic study by city, CRCOG and DOT. Study confirms the area's success is attracting an unusually high volume of vehicles (27,800 a day) and accidents to Brainard Road between airport and the I-91 ramps that connect to Murphy Road. Merchants will choose from six short- and long-term ways of rerouting cars to allow for better flow. The trick will be securing funding for the projects.

South Downtown

New restaurant, Cate's Corner Bistro, has opened at Capitol Avenue and Main Street. Work progressing across street in the former Corry T's space; Emperor at The Linden shooting for a mid-October opening. Developer Shawn Eddy bringing retail and office clients in as well.

Sheldon-Charter Oak

Exterior renovations completed on Capewell, the former horse-nail factory; offices move in. Last month, Sen. Joseph Lieberman announced \$8.6 million in federal funds for streetscape and other improvements at Coltsville, including pedestrian gateway to river. Finally, Dutch Point housing project is demolished; ground-breaking expected this month on new apartments and townhouses. At 72-82 Main St., slumlord Ira Nagle sells apartment building. New owner works hard to make it a decent place to live.



Hartford's Neighborhoods And Their Landmarks

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