

COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

What Is – Or Should Be – Happening In Hartford's Neighborhoods

Keys To The City

Blue Hills

Legislature frees money to build the University High School of Science and Engineering on Mark Twain Drive Extension. Should mean that rutted road gets repaired. U of H's \$32 million science, engineering and technology center rising fast. Community service police officer Omayra Martinez praised – solves problems quickly. Civic association finds summer jobs for 120 youths. People still talking about bear's Ridgfield Street visit.

West End

Summer's here and the living's easy. Eighty kids participating in camp program at Community Center; fruits and veggies available at Methodist Church farmers' market; new planters and shrubs adorn Farmington Avenue; renovations begun at Noah Webster School; and traffic being calmed at Whitney and South Whitney. Carl Dudley retires as head of West End Civic group, replaced by David Barrett. Lines outside Braza, new Brazilian steakhouse that's opened thanks to \$5 million state grant.

Asylum Hill

Plans for a branch of the Connecticut Culinary Institute in former Hastings Hotel are good news, as is opening of the Mississippi Bar and Grille in vacant Farmington Avenue diner. Two-way rush-hour traffic on Asylum is a step toward enjoying the street more. Possible sale of properties owned by local landlords raises fears that apathetic outsiders will take over. Crackdown on mini-motorcycles makes them scarcer. Even one is a dangerous nuisance.

Parkville

Go-go developer Carlos Mouta is about to buy abandoned building at 1420 Park St. and renovate for possible major tenant. Mouta and partner just paved new parking lot on Bartholomew, near Hooker Saloon, a recently opened eatery whose owners are already encountering rough sailing. Parkville Community School has American flag for new flagpole, averting criticism from patriots. Municipal development plan in the works for industrial corridor from Park to Flatbush.

Frog Hollow

Patience, Park Street merchants. Today's street mess is tomorrow's miracle. Soon, sidewalks, lights, benches will make inconvenience a memory. New restaurants, yellow-shirted guides are signs of vitality. Housing improvements pepper neighborhood. Award-winning makeovers abound. Cathedral Lyceum worth a trip to Lawrence Street. Check out former firehouse on Hudson.

Behind The Rocks

As Charter Oak Marketplace takes shape, neighborhood residents look forward to a jobs fair that could put them on a payroll in the new development anchored by Wal-Mart. More good news: Goodwin branch library expansion proceeds apace. Little to complain about except noise from speeding cars and Mister Softee.

Upper Albany

Colorful banners proclaiming Upper Albany as "Neighborhood of Choice" emerged this spring along Albany Avenue. Pride also in abundance at Artists Collective, one of 13 organizations in the country picked by National Endowment for the Arts for "Jazz Masters Program." The result: wildly popular concerts by pianists Ahmad Jamal and Randy Weston. Enrollment at collective's Camp Culture, a summer youth program teaching arts and job skills, swells to 250.

Clay-Arsenal

Why do criminals want to spoil everything? House of Restoration's new Pentacostal church is rising quickly on Main Street. Clay-Arsenal's first-ever mall, with a Chinese restaurant and cellphone store, should break ground any day at Pavilion and Main. Homes everywhere are undergoing makeovers. But a string of shootings threatens progress. New Police Chief Patrick J. Harnett has to protect this struggling neighborhood.

Northeast

Renaming the area "Uptown" to project new image is catching on. Among many changes: New restaurant, Uptown Flava, and dress-up club, Vibz Uptown, open at old Club Pyramid site, 3155 Main St., three months after Hal's Aquarius Diner is reincarnated as the Rajun Cajun. First of about 30 Habitat for Humanity homes on Garden, Waverly and Risley streets will open in the fall. And on and on.

North Meadows

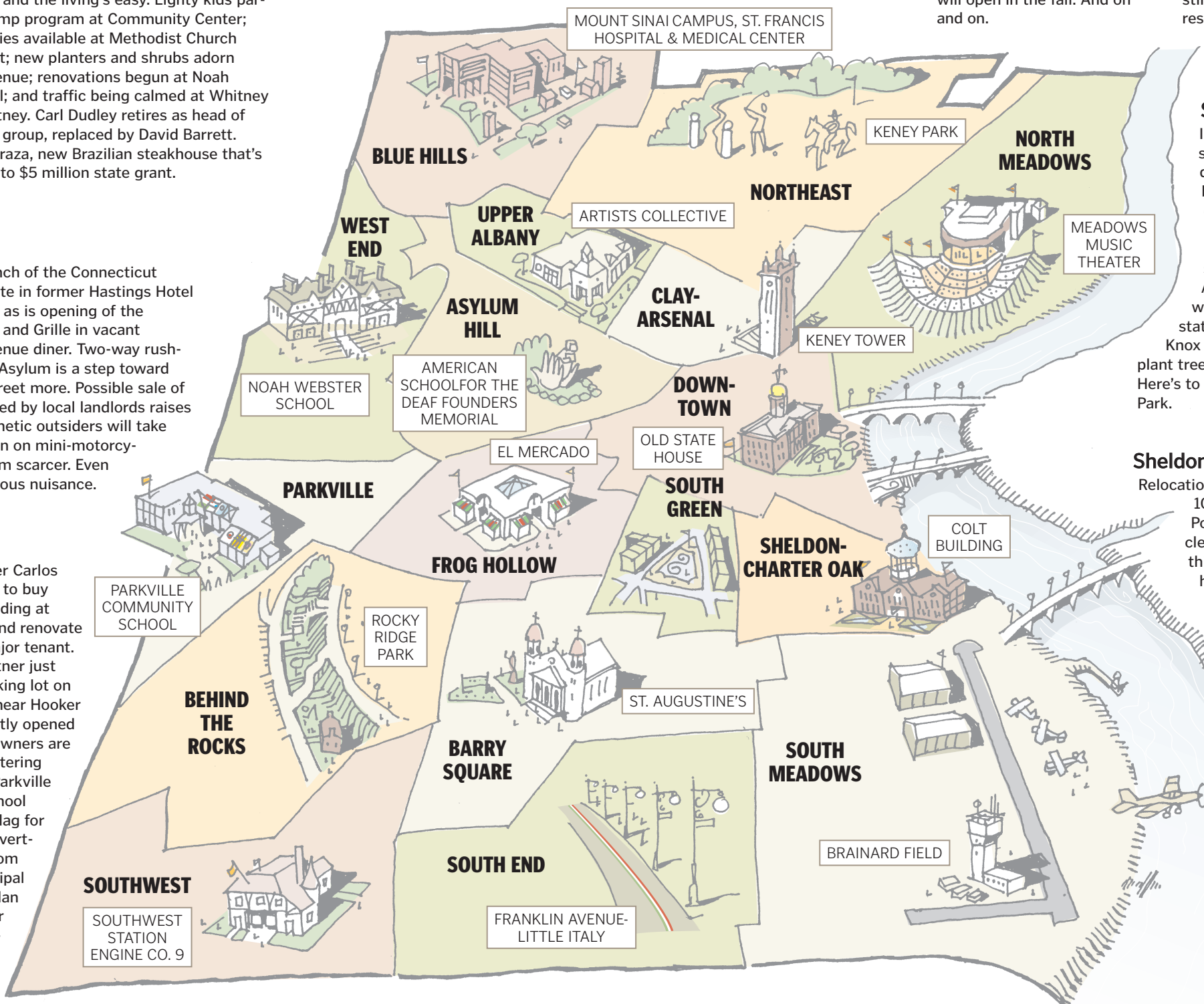
Aging jail-alai fronton will be demolished to make way for CarMax, a national used-car retailer - another step toward creation of robust commercial corridor. Next big challenge: Finding tenant for Advo building. One drawback is building's location across I-91 from ugly, smelly regional dump, which should be closed as soon as possible. Meadows still needs new sitdown restaurant. Any takers?

South Downtown

Improvements on all sides - Park Street, downtown, Adriaen's - bode well. Crime stable except for a June spike in car break-ins. Jersey barriers are gone from the south side of Capitol Avenue; now SoDo NRZ working with city and state officials as well as Knox Parks Foundation to plant trees along the new fence. Here's to Monday Night Jazz in the Park.

Sheldon-Charter Oak

Relocation begins for more than 100 families at Dutch Point housing project to clear way for demolition this fall. Replacement homes will be Perfect Sixes and Victorians with basements and no vinyl siding. Gutting goes on inside Capewell Horse Nail Co. factory; can 92 condos be far behind? At Charter Oak Cultural Center, children rehearse for summertime production of Dr. Seuss' "Oh, The Places You'll Go"; free courtyard concerts continue.



Hartford's Neighborhoods And Their Recognizable Landmarks

Southwest

At long last, action begun to eliminate two longstanding eyesores on New Britain Avenue across from St. Lawrence O'Toole Church. One of the boarded-up, graffiti-covered houses has been razed, the other is under renovation. This will remove a festering blight on an otherwise stable neighborhood.

South End

Residents calling for more police visibility after May shooting on Standish Street and July murder on Whitmore Street. They're right. New bike lanes on Franklin and Wethersfield avenues are a plus for neighborhood. But speeding on side streets is out of control. Crackdown needed. Plan to tow cars parked overnight in Franklin Avenue commuter lot is a good idea. Goodwin Park community cleanup shows what happens when neighbors work together. Keep it up.

Barry Square

Fresh-paved Maple Avenue looking spiffy, the better to carry customers to buzzing business district. Look soon for First & Last's saucy new cafe, deli, catering and retail outlet across from original restaurant; watch for classy club of different stripe in place of trouble-attracting Zebra. Credit police for closing crime den. Cool ice rink coming.

South Green

Biggest issue is future of Park and Main. City wrapping up purchase of corner parcels before seeking development proposals. Don't let it slide. Meanwhile, restaurant to open in Flatiron Building at Congress and Maple. Also, Valvoline Instant Oil Change has moved franchise headquarters to building next to South Green, displaying faith in neighborhood. And Community Renewal Team is completing construction of 100-unit assisted living facility on Retreat Avenue.

South Meadows

Tenacious beavers return. Dams clog I-91 drainage. DPW's trapper gets rid of the critters once again. Meanwhile, traffic congestion grows from being a nuisance to getting out of hand, and new shops draw gobs more pedestrians. Joint DOT-DPW study due in August. Move fast before someone gets hurt. Cutback in police presence in neighborhood is unacceptable. Chief Harnett should meet soon with neighborhood leaders.

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In 'Place'

Beantown Bumpers

Architectural fashion in Boston has moved in the direction of brashness and novelty. The results are not pretty.

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Personal Touches

Connecticut's landscape is shaped as much by biography as it is by geography.

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Kerry's Leadership Is Battle-Tested

By PETER N. UPTON

I was a naval officer who served with John Kerry, the Massachusetts senator who is soon to become the official Democratic presidential nominee. I came to know him under the extraordinary circumstances of combat.

In early 1969, I was in charge of a small unit of Navy Special Warfare men assigned to riverine duty in the southernmost part of Vietnam, south of the Mekong Delta. We were often assigned to run Agent Orange-infested rivers

aboard small watercraft known as swift-boats. Kerry was an officer in charge of one of these boats. They were indeed fast and maneuverable, but no match for AK-47s or rockets or grenade rounds. They were, in fact, floating targets, always in danger of ambush. It was only a matter of time before a boat would take incoming fire, causing injury or death.

My men and I were often with Kerry. We were on Kerry's PCF-94 boat on Feb. 28, 1969, when I felt the impact from a watery explosion. The crew reacted with small-arms fire and machine-gun and

grenade fire. The boat then veered hard left, toward the gunfire, and beached on the riverbank. All aboard disembarked and spread out. I didn't see what happened next, but reports are that Kerry pursued and killed a Viet Cong who was holding a rocket launcher.

Adrenaline was always at a high level on these operations. Reactions were usually instinctive. And so, instinctively, Kerry had given the order to veer, thereby narrowing the boat as a target and reducing the likelihood of us getting hit. In so doing, he saved lives and earned the

Silver Star. I then regarded, as I do now, this action as heroic. And, having operated with him on numerous other occasions, I regard his entire Vietnam service as in keeping with the highest traditions of naval service. He was an exemplar of the citizen-soldier.

Yet there remain many — including highly decorated Vietnam veterans —

PLEASE SEE KERRY'S, PAGE C6

Peter Upton is a lawyer practicing in New Britain.