

SINA REPORTS



Melvyn Colón,
Executive Director

SINA Begins Economic Development Planning

Our recent work has emphasized housing development, but our new strategic plan has identified economic development as an area for our next major initiative. As a result of the economic development planning process we will identify and prioritize projects that will accomplish one or several of these objectives:

- Contribute to the physical and economic revitalization of the SINA neighborhoods, including but not limited to the Washington Street, Broad Street, and Zion Street corridors.
- Increase job opportunities for SINA neighborhood residents by strengthening linkages between residents and SINA institutions.
- Increase entrepreneurial opportunities for SINA neighborhood residents, with particular attention to markets created by SINA institutions.

The plan will serve as a blueprint for action and from it SINA will select at least one project to pursue immediately, either in the role of catalyst or as a direct implementation agent (or both).

Peter Kwass, who has had several decades of economic development experience and Luis Cotto, a former Hartford City Councilman, with strong community ties, will work with us as we move forward.

Hartford PROMISE Offers Academic and Scholarship Support

Trinity College, Hartford Hospital, Connecticut Children's Medical Center, The Learning Corridor Academies, several parks and a number of good restaurants are all within walking distance for new homeowners in the SINA neighborhoods.

Among the exceptional educational programs that families should consider when they think about buying a home is Hartford PROMISE. Hartford PROMISE is a comprehensive college access program that includes college advising for Hartford Public Schools students, grades 9 through 12, awards scholarships to top students and continues to provide academic support when the recipients enter college. Graduates with a minimum 3.0 GPA are eligible.

The initiative is being led by a group from the business community called the Hartford Champions.

Scholarships of up to \$5,000 per year (\$20,000 total) for those attending 4-year colleges and \$2,500 per year (\$10,000 total) are available.

Kevin Roldan (kroldan@hartfordschools.com) and Diedre Tavera (taved001@hartfordschools.com) can provide more information.

COLONIAL STREET REBUILDING FROM THE GROUND UP

Realtor Lesbia Hernandez, of RE/MAX Renaissance, was relieved and elated last month when she completed her final two sales contracts for the ten single-family homes that were a part of SINA's major homeownership initiative on Colonial Street.

"I'm proud to be a part of this," she said of her almost 2-year effort to successfully market the homes to first-time homebuyers. "We built a totally new community here. Some people thought the houses would never sell."

"This was as bad as it can possibly get," said SINA Director of Real Estate Development Dean Iaiennaro, describing the condition of the area and the five years that led up to the completion of sales. He described how Colonial Street had become the victim of drug dealing, homelessness, abandoned buildings and multiple forms of soil contamination.

Colonial Street's strategic location between Washington and Broad Streets, with The Institute of Living at the East end and Trinity College to the West, and just a block South of The Learning Corridor, made its potential for spreading blight a serious concern. Working with the City, SINA gradually gained control of most of the properties through foreclosures and abandonment.

Before the Colonial Street construction could begin, 17 structures had to be demolished and the serious soil contamination problems had to be addressed. All told, more than 600 cubic yards were removed, some of it so toxic that no local facility would accept it. Ultimately it was trucked to a New Jersey disposal site. Iaiennaro said, "We had never seen anything like it. There was nothing there to work with. We just had to dig down and start over again."

Construction on the homes began in 2011, with a partnership consisting of city, state, federal agencies and SINA member institutions providing the financing. Each home has 3 bedrooms, 1.5 baths and an attached garage. The workmanship is high quality and each yard was beautifully landscaped. They are priced at \$165,000.

"Before and After" photos in this edition of SINA Reports show dilapidated Colonial Street properties, (approx. 1998 -2005), and the new homes built and successfully marketed by SINA (2013).



When the time came to sell the homes, Lesbia Hernandez built a grassroots marketing approach to reach potential buyers. She created her own fliers and distributed them in what she determined were key locations in Frog Hollow, Hartford neighborhoods with similar demographics, as well as at the SINA institutions. She worked personally to grow interest among relatives and friends of families who had committed to buy. She arranged information sessions for community groups, enrolled potential buyers in HART's homeownership classes, and ultimately helped find financing.

Typical buyers came from the neighborhood, she said. New owners' ages ranged from 27 to 50 years old. In one case, a mother and daughter bought houses next to one another. In another case, a modest-income Hartford Hospital employee was able to afford the mortgage when Hernandez helped arrange for a down payment through the hospital's homeownership incentive program (HIP).

SINA sees the Colonial Street success as the result of a concentrated-investment strategy that will produce multiple long-term benefits as the impact of homeownership takes root. "Not only did it clean up the blight and other issues associated with it, we've put property back on the city tax rolls and created a safer neighborhood, where working people can make an important contribution to the overall quality of life," said SINA Executive Director Melvyn Colón.

"There is a new sense of vibrancy on the street and that is very important to the larger community around it," said board member Jason Rojas of Trinity College. "We're very proud of our role in making it happen."

SINA plans to continue to use its concentrated-investment homeownership strategy on its Wolcott/Squire development, where it has started to completely restore an enclave of historic townhouses that were abandoned or are currently sub-standard rentals.



SINA Neighborhood Service Awards
Program Seeking Nominations

The SINA Neighborhood Service Awards program recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions, or have made a difference to our neighborhoods, on paid or unpaid basis. We invite you to nominate anyone who lives or works in the neighborhoods south of Capital Avenue. For a nomination form contact the SINA office at (860) 493-1618 or nominate online at www.sinainc.org/2014nsa.

Hartford Public School’s 2nd Annual
Citywide S.T.E.M. Expo Seeking Volunteers

The 2nd annual Hartford Public Schools’ citywide S.T.E.M. Expo, co-sponsored with SINA, will be held on May 21, 2014 at Trinity College’s Koepfel Community Center, 175 New Britain Avenue, Hartford. SINA is looking for volunteers to be judges at this year’s S.T.E.M. Expo. The time commitment will run from 8:30 am to 1:00 pm. (Lunch will be provided). If you are interested, please call the SINA office or visit www.sinainc.org/hps_stemexpo for more information and to fill out a Judge’s Volunteer Information Form; **forms are due by March 28, 2014.**

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RESTAURANT FAVORITES

The Firebox

Across from the state Capitol, in the historic factory building that was once Billings Forge, the Firebox has won just about every award possible for its outstanding farm-to-table menu. The handsomely restored interior includes the tavern, a gathering place for local politicians, students, artists, locals, and visiting guests. Among the unusual cocktails they offer is The Billings Forge, the proceeds of which are donated to Billings Forge Community Works.
539 Broad St., Hartford
860-246-1222



SINA
SOUTHSIDE INSTITUTIONS
NEIGHBORHOOD ALLIANCE
207 Washington St.
Hartford, CT 06106

J Restaurant | Bar

The menu ranges far and wide, from gourmet (sesame crusted Ahi tuna) to a long list of something-for-everybody choices that include top-notch pizzas, wraps, burgers and salads. Located on Washington Street, right across from Hartford Hospital and Connecticut Children’s Medical Center, it has a comfortable bar, spiffy contemporary ambience and plenty of free parking.
297 Washington St.
Hartford
860 527-7764

ABOUT SINA

Since its founding in 1977 SINA has worked with community organizations on issues such as affordable rental housing, education, public safety, homeownership and commercial development. With dozens of apartment units rehabilitated, homeownership programs, and the opening of The Learning Corridor, its visible impact in Frog Hollow, Barry Square and South Green neighborhoods has been significant and its community involvement has been a constant presence. SINA continues operations today in offices at 207 Washington Street. For more information call 860-493-1618 or visit sinainc.org.

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WINTER 2014



COLONIAL
STREET
REBUILDING
FROM
THE GROUND UP

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SINA is a partnership between Connecticut Children’s Medical Center, Hartford Hospital and Trinity College. SINA’s mission is to restore economic vitality and improve the quality of life for the people who live, work, play and study in the neighborhoods of South Hartford.