



Photo Credit: Andy Hart

Library at the Lyric

The Park Street branch of the Hartford Public Library held a ceremony opening early this month, on the site of the historic Lyric Theater. The eagerly awaited event included a well-attended ribbon-cutting ceremony with many guest speakers, among them Mayor Luke Bronin, state legislators, library President and CEO Bridget Quinn, and library board member Ana Alfaro, host of El Show de Analeh and one of our Frog Hollow heroes.



Photo Credit: Andy Hart

Two days later, a community grand opening event also drew large crowds. A parade from the old library branch to the new one was led by Leticia Cotto, former branch manager, current Customer Experience Officer for the library, and one of the Frog Hollow heroes whose image will be on our murals. Speakers included former Mayor Pedro Segarro, who was a key player in getting the library project started.

As part of the celebration, neighborhood residents and dignitaries were invited to participate in the creation of two murals at the nearby Artbox, which honored six of the newly named Frog Hollow Heroes: Maria Sanchez, Elba Cruz Schulman, Edna Negron, Leticia Cotto, Ana Alfaro, and Jorge Rivera. Two murals are displayed on Park Street and one on Broad Street.

SINA Executive Director Melvyn Colon, a library board member, was excited about the large turnouts. He explained “many people who had been involved when this new branch was first planned were able to attend, including Pedro Segarro and former school superintendent Hernan LaFontaine. This project has a long history of the community coming together to get the library built, just like the community has come together for our murals. The link with history, and with our Frog Hollow heroes, many of whom are still active, is very important and meaningful to me.”



Photo Credit: Andy Hart



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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 the 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 www.sinainc.org.



A Broad Street Art Garden Update

The Broad Street Art Garden continues to thrive. We had a very successful first season. Nine residents who live within a few blocks of the garden tended plots. One gardener grew corn over 6 feet tall! We also got help from over 45 volunteers including community residents, the Youth Service Corp, and students from Trinity College. The garden has been getting attention. It was chosen as the location for the press conference announcing the third year of Love Your Block, pictured in CT Mirror, and featured on national television by CBS Sports in the video introducing the University of Hartford Men’s Basketball Team during the NCAA Men’s Basketball Tournament. And we’re not done! We received another Love Your Block grant and plan to build a garden shed and an outdoor teaching classroom to help kids learn about gardening, nutrition, and sustainability.



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





Frog Hollow Heroes

On the first weekend in October, SINA hosted two community paint days to kick off the creation of murals honoring neighborhood heroes. Over 120 people participated during the two paint days. The murals are part of Nuestra Historia: Frog Hollow, a neighborhood history project funded by a beautification grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. The project will create three murals depicting nine neighborhood heroes. In addition, in collaboration with Trinity College, an interactive digital walking tour will be created in English and Spanish.

Heroes were chosen through a collaborative community nomination and voting process. Over 500 votes were cast. With the community paint days completed, the artists, Emida Roller, Jaii Marc, and Deka Henry, finished the murals and installed them on Broad Street and Park Street. The heroes that appear in the murals on Park Street are Maria Sanchez, Elba Cruz Schulman, Edna Negron, Leticia Cotto, Ana Alfaro and Jorge Rivera. The Broad Street mural will celebrate Reverend Julie Ramirez, Juan Fuentes and Yessica Amparo.



Maria Sanchez, known in the Puerto Rican community as La Madrina, was a long-time community activist and the first Latina elected to the state legislature.



Elba Cruz Schulman advocated for those in need, raising funds that enabled 1000 children to receive holiday gifts at the annual Festival of Light.



Edna Negron is an educator and community organizer who established the country’s first family resource center and school-based health clinic, and coordinated bilingual/bicultural education for Hartford Public Schools.



Leticia Cotto is the former branch manager of the Park Street library and founded La Paloma Sabanera Café and Bookstore.



Ana Alfaro hosts El Show de Analeh to connect the LatinX community with information and inspiration, coordinates volunteers at Eversource and serves on multiple boards of directors.



Jorge Rivera used his law education to found Mi Casa, dedicated to helping troubled children and families create a better life.



Reverend Julie Ramirez was pastor of Templo Fe for 53 years, managing the church’s move from Main Street to Broad Street.



Yessica Amparo has worked tirelessly for Our Piece of the Pie’s Youth Service Corps, helping young people to succeed.



Juan Fuentes was an exceptionally talented photographer, well known for his work of documenting Hartford’s Puerto Rican community.

Logan Singerman, Director of Community Partnerships and Communications, says “The response to the mural project has been inspiring, with more than 100 people participating in the community paint days. Our Frog Hollow heroes have had a huge impact, and their legacies live on. I am excited to learn even more when we interview residents for our Frog Hollow storytelling project, in collaboration with Trinity College.”

Making Connections

Much of SINA’s work involves helping neighborhood residents and employees of Trinity, CT Children’s and Hartford Hospital make connections to improve their lives and the quality of life in our community. Sometimes, these connections happen in unusual ways. This summer, our anchor institutions hired four people through our Walk to Work (WtW) program, run by Elsa Huer-tas, Career Navigator. Three of the candidates came to her attention through two programs run by Logan Singerman, Director of Community Partnerships and Communications.

When Elsa met Joty, who was participating in a neighborhood cleanup managed by Logan, the young woman asked Elsa to help find work for her parents. Both of Joty’s parents were exceptional candidates – her mother was a mid-wife/nurse in their home country and her father was a certified electrician. Elsa helped them update their resumes and practice with mock interviews. In three weeks, both parents were hired at Hartford Hospital, and Joty herself is now applying for jobs with Elsa’s help.



Teta was an active volunteer at the Art Garden, another program run by Logan, and told him she needed to find a job. He referred her to Elsa, who revised her resume and conducted mock interviews. A month later Teta was hired at CT Children’s for a PCA position.

The 4th candidate, Imanol, came from OPP Summer Youth Employment Program. His assigned worksite was SINA helping with office files, outreach, research, and WtW data base. He is currently a college freshman, due to class schedule, he needed a job with some flexible hours. Elsa had him apply to Hartford Hospital and he was hired. It was a win-win for both!



James Horan, Seila Mosquera-Bruno, Ryan Calhoun, Jane Baird, Mayor Luke Bronin, Bimal Patel, Andrea Richardson, and Melvyn Colon.

Building New Homes

SINA’s construction of new homes in Frog Hollow continues with Cityscape Phase 7, which broke ground in early September. It will create 11 new units on Madison and Squire Streets by rehabilitating four historic buildings, including one whose absentee landlord had abandoned it to blight and illegal activity.

Speakers at the groundbreaking included Hartford Hospital President Bimal Patel, Mayor Luke Bronin, Seila Mosquera-Bruno, Commissioner of State of CT Department of Housing, and Jim Horan, Executive Director of Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC), all of whom praised their institutions’ long-term partnership and commitment to SINA’s work in the neighborhood. Once completed, the properties will be purchased by low- and moderate-income first-time homebuyers. An additional benefit is that the renovations will put valuable properties back on the city’s tax rolls.

“Renovating these vacant, blighted properties improves public safety, provides families with healthy homes in which to build generational wealth, and gives the community committed neighbors who will take pride in their properties. The building at 41 Madison had an irresponsible absentee owner and was an eyesore used by squatters and drug dealers,” explains SINA Executive Director Melvyn Colon. “SINA’s purchase of it at a bank auction is the culmination of our work with neighborhood residents and the Safety Alliance for Everyone to address these problems.”

“We received \$1.1 million from the State of Connecticut Department of Housing to continue this important work,” says Dean Iaiennaro, SINA’s Director of Real Estate Development. “We are grateful to Housing Commissioner Seila Mosquera-Bruno, to Senator John Fonfara for his support, and to LISC for providing an \$800,000 construction loan. Other funders who have supported our housing programs include the City of Hartford, Travelers Foundation, UIL Holdings, Eversource, and Webster Bank.”

All four buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places and will be restored with attention to period details. The construction will meet Energy Star 3.5 standards, including energy-efficient insulation, windows and heating systems, plus EV plugs for electric cars. The general contractor and construction manager will be Pope Park Zion, LLC, a SINA subsidiary.