

Transforming Blight

At the groundbreaking ceremony, a SINA homeowner and Madison Street resident, Andrea Richardson, described how 39 and 41 Madison Street had been dragging down the neighborhood. The properties were abandoned and attracting negative activity such as drug trafficking, drug use and other quality of life issues. The final two blighted buildings on the block, SINA worked actively to own the properties and at last won them at a bank auction where Melvyn outbid the same absentee owner who had lost the property to foreclosure.



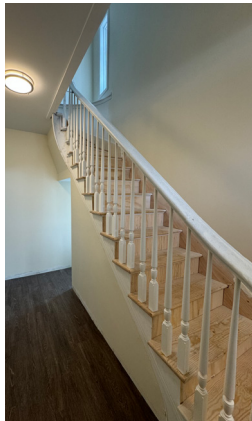
41 Madison St.

Out of all the properties that Dean has rehabilitated over the years, 39 Madison Street was “one of the worst I have ever seen,” he said. The roof had a gaping hole from a fire created by squatters. Forty-one Madison Street wasn’t much better. Both properties had litter covering most of the floor and were infested with rodents. Some of the contractors who normally work to do the initial clearing of the buildings refused after taking an initial look.



Before and After of 41 Madison St.

With \$1.1 million from the state Department of Housing and an \$800,000 construction loan from the Local Initiative Support Corporation, Dean overcame supply chain and labor obstacles to transform those two properties as well as a duplex at 45-47 Squire Street (which also was vacant and abandoned before SINA took possession of it). The finishing touches are now being made on the properties and they will be listed on the market in the next few months. Far from the early days of SINA’s construction projects where they worried if there would be any buyers, Dean has been getting phone calls from interested individuals since the construction signs were installed. Whoever ends up as the owner, Andrea Richardson is looking forward to meeting her new neighbors and welcoming them to the neighborhood as well as breathing a sigh of relief. What used to be a source of stress is now a source of pride for the neighborhood.



39 Madison St. (Before)



39 Madison St. (After)



SINA
SOUTHSIDE INSTITUTIONS
NEIGHBORHOOD ALLIANCE
207 Washington Street
Hartford, CT 06106

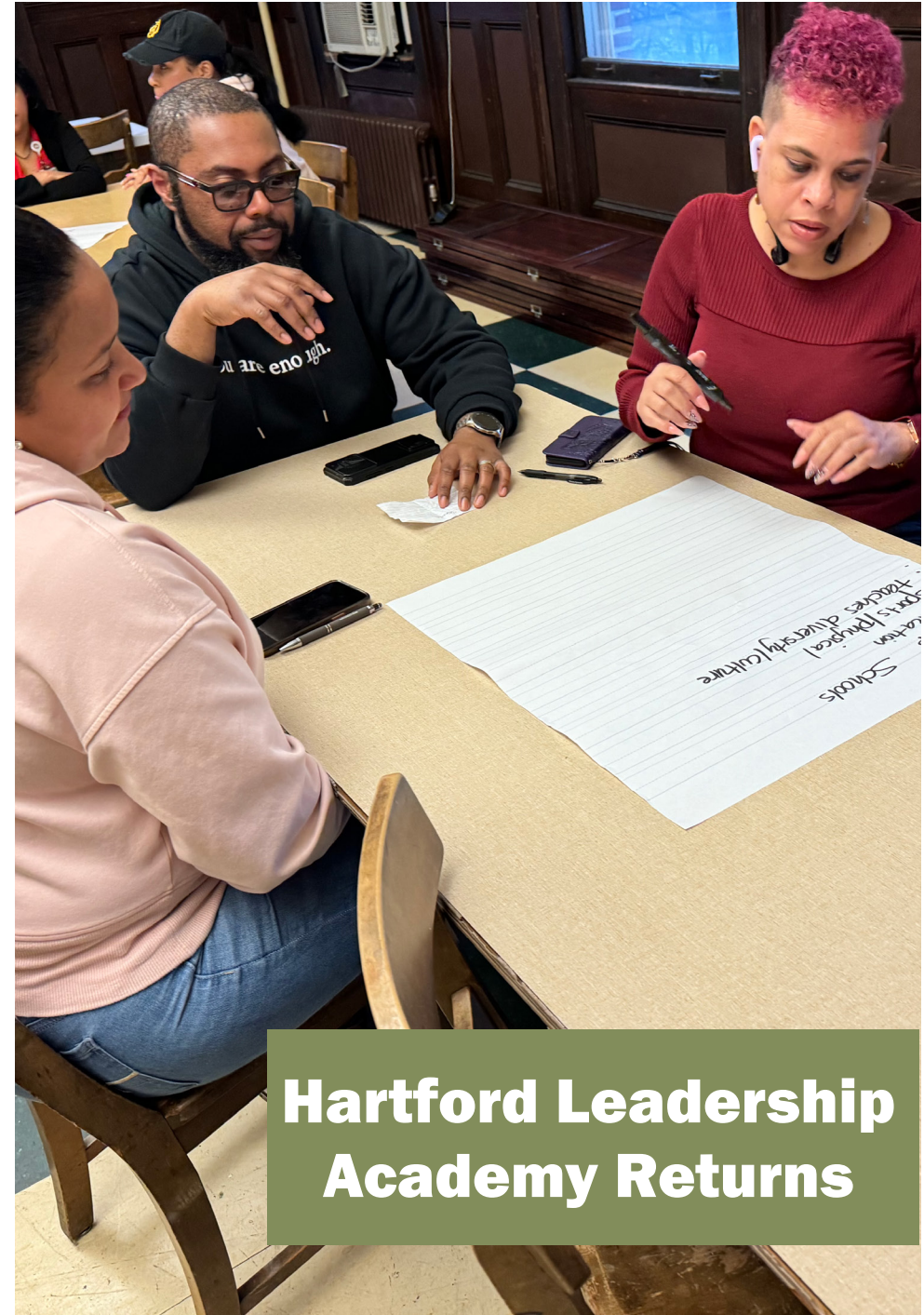
About SINA

Since its founding in 1977 SINA has worked with residents and community organizations on issues such as affordable rental housing, education, public safety, homeownership and employment. With nearly 100 homes built, a thriving Walk to Work Program, and the creation of community gardens and murals, its visible impact in the Frog Hollow, Barry Square and South Green neighborhoods has been significant. SINA continues operations today in offices at 207 Washington Street. For more information call (860) 493-1618.

Winter Clothing Drive



With temperatures dropping, the REACH Community Projects sub committee decided to organize a winter clothing drive to benefit families in the neighborhood. Every SINA institution participated, and the drive brought in a record number of donations- 204 coats and 70 hats and scarves. A significant number of coats came from collaboration between SINA and our esteemed partner, CRT (Community Renewal Team). In partnership, we received a generous donation of warm winter coats from Ocean State Job Lot. When Logan checked back in after two weeks of the donations being dropped off he learned from program staff, “all the coats are gone.”



Hartford Leadership Academy Returns

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.

Hartford Leadership Academy Returns

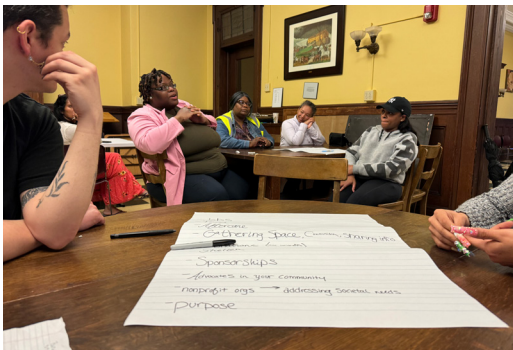
Ten years ago, there was a leadership academy facilitated by Mutual Housing of Greater Hartford that trained residents to identify assets in Hartford and use their skills to make positive community change. The program was extremely impactful. Some graduates went on to attend college and obtain master's degrees, some started youth organizations that now win national competitions, and one alumnus even went on to become a city council member. Unfortunately, this academy came to an end, but the need for it has remained. Recognizing this, in SINA's current strategic plan we committed to bringing it back.

To start this process, Logan interviewed alumni from the former program to identify the most crucial components of the old academy and receive suggestions for improvement. SINA received funding from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving to fund this through a core support grant. An implementation committee consisting of representatives from the Frog Hollow NRZ, Hartford Next, Mutual Housing Association of Greater Hartford, and other partners shaped the course structure and outreach. We set an aggressive goal of recruiting 20 students and launching the program within three months.

After a lot of hard work, on March 21st we held our first class in downtown Hartford. Through grassroots outreach the class was maxed out at 25 students and had a wait list. Originally Melvyn and Logan planned to facilitate the class, but through alumni engagement, two alumni were identified with the experience and skills needed to lead the class. They are facilitating the class and in the future alumni will be the main facilitators. This is crucial to the sustainability of the program. The plan is for some graduates from this cohort to facilitate the next cohorts in English and Spanish.

The academy includes a lot of material from Neighborworks America's Building Leaders' Building Communities curriculum. Students learn to identify and strengthen their leadership qualities, map assets in the community, and carry out group projects that address an issue they are passionate about. Following the class graduates can apply for additional grant funding to implement ideas and some can attend a national leadership conference put on by Neighborworks America.

In addition to the class, students receive coaching from Logan to help make progress on their personal and professional goals. Already, just three weeks into the class, people have made significant progress and life changes. Below are just two examples.



Lenita joined the program because she wanted to become more involved in her neighborhood. She mentioned her goal of owning a home some day and that she is employed at Hartford Hospital. Logan shared with her information about the HIP program and connected her with Claudia Riley of Webster Bank to discuss navigating the homebuying process. After the second class, Logan checked in with Lenita. She shared she had met with Claudia and expressed, "I am extremely excited to be connected to you all. I am more hopeful than I have been before."

Leanaly heard about the program when a flyer was shared with her by a community health worker from Hartford Hospital. She had gone through homelessness and is now trying to get back on track as she raises her son. Since starting the program, she began attending a class at Hartford Public Library that helps you open up a bank account and then gives you \$200 towards savings. She also got resume assistance at Goodwill and then met with Elsa to explore her options with the Walk to Work Program. When Leanaly met with Elsa, she left her office singing, not being able to contain her excitement.

These are just two of the 25 students whose progress could be shared, just two of the 25 students who might end up holding public office, leading nonprofits, and make positive change in our community. And the class isn't even halfway done. If you are interested in learning how these stories end and celebrating their accomplishments, you are invited to attend the graduation ceremony taking place on Thursday May 30th from 6- 7 pm at the Cornelia Center (114 Vernon Street) on the Trinity College Campus. Dinner starts at 5:30 pm. If interested, please RSVP by contacting Logan at Lsingerman@sinainc.org or calling the SINA office at 860.493.1618.

JOB SEEKERS

Get an Inside Track to a Career at:



SINA's Walk to Work Program

helps Hartford residents (18 and over with high school diploma) launch their careers at Hartford Hospital, Connecticut Children's or Trinity College by connecting neighborhood residents to available jobs.

Working at these major employers offers residents the chance for a career growth and not just a job, great benefits, competitive pay, and the convenience of working close to home. Great opportunity to work, live and play in own community.

Contact Elsa Huertas at (860) 493-1618
or email ehuertas@sinainc.org



Job to Career



The goal of the Walk to Work program is not just getting people hired, but also encouraging career growth and improving retention. It is also helping people advance in their careers as they remain employed in their neighborhood. One powerful example of this is Shirley Motta.

Shirley Motta was working in Florida in various fast-food restaurants. She decided she would try working as a scheduling assistant at a medical office. After a couple weeks a doctor approached her and told her things weren't working out. "This isn't for you," he said. "You should go back to the food industry because that is what is for you."

Seeking a better life, Shirley and her four children got into her min van with a mattress tied to the roof. She drove from Florida to Connecticut. Once she arrived, she worked on obtaining her GED and accessing all the resources she could. Shirley also did her best to provide for her family. "I was just jumping from job to job," she described. "Every type of job, you can name it." When she met Elsa, Shirley was working at Burger King.

Before the Walk to Work Program, Shirley had never worked in a hospital. Elsa advised Shirley to start at a job in food services given her experience. Elsa supported Shirley with her application and preparing for the interview.

Elsa and Shirley maintained contact through her time at Hartford Hospital. Elsa guided Shirley with her applications for two promotions. Within one year Shirley was promoted to the Nutrition Office as an Administrative Associate. Once there, Shirley desired to have a different schedule that better aligned with her kids' schooling and applied to be an Administrative Associate in the access center. Shirley was accepted and has been happily working there for two years. This job is very similar to the position the doctor in Florida told Shirley she wasn't cut out for.

Shirely loves working at an organization with such an important mission and is amazed where she has landed. "Looking back seven years ago I never would have thought I would be working for a large company like Hartford Healthcare," she said. Shirley also shared that she isn't done. She is thankful for the training she has received which has helped her succeed and would like to pass that on to others. "I see myself training other people," she said. "I like teaching others. I have told my current job that I would like them to help me get ready to be a lead or supervisor." With Shirley's determination, this goal is not far off. She will one day be able to help others obtain jobs they too never thought were possible.

