Park Street Case Study

Best practices from a Latinx commercial corridor

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Grand Avenue

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context of Grand Avenue

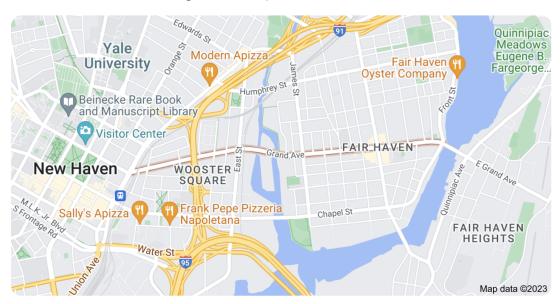


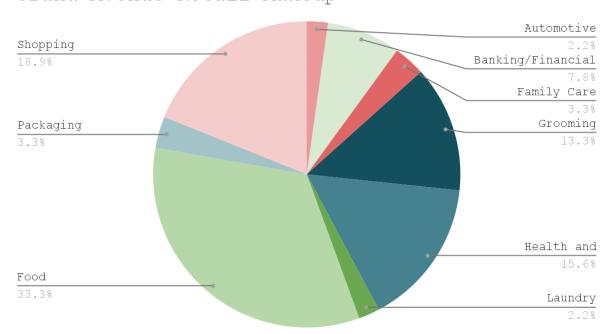
Figure 1.0: Map of Grand Avenue

Grand Avenue is a commercial corridor located at the heart of Fair Haven - a small neighborhood community within New Haven, Connecticut (*Figure 1.0*). Since the 1960s, it has been home to a significant Black and Latinx community who at the time were largely working class and had a distinct presence in the industrial sector (WalkNewHaven, 2022). As of 2020 the Latinx population, which consists of Central Americans, Mexicans and largely Puerto Ricans, was nearly 64% (*DataHaven*, 2020). Fair Haven has experienced immense changes in the last few decades

Key Assets

Following the de-industrialization period, which left areas west of the highway residential and to the east industrial and wholesale commercial, many revitalization efforts were put in place to form what we see today (WalkNewHaven, 2022). The commercial corridor boasts of an ethnically diverse Latinx merchant community with nearly 90 businesses on the corridor. *Figure 2.0* below gives an overview of the retail mix in Grand Avenue. Grand Avenue is also home to a myriad of community based anchors from banks to its schools, libraries and clinics. It is an active transport corridor and boasts of a strong architectural and historic identity.

Figure 2.0: Grand Avenue Retail Mix



Grand Avenue Retail Makeup

Grand Avenue SSD

The Grand Avenue SSD was established in 2009 with a clear mission to support the merchants and businesses of the commercial corridor in Fair Haven. It is located in the main office of the Spanish American Merchants Association (SAMA) and has close ties with the organization to enact efforts and offer resources for merchants on the corridor. Some of their efforts include facade improvement programs, business development support and resources, improving security and safety issues, and start up support.

Central Issues

As the board of the Grand Ave SSD entered a phase of restructuring in the last year, members began to refocus on some of the highlights and challenges faced by merchants of the corridor. Despite some level of resilience, over the last 20 years, the avenue continues to face persistent roadblocks. To better understand the context of Grand Avenue and the merchants that make up the corridor, the Yale IEDL team relied on two primary sources of research - 1) A research study conducted by AMS Advisory Services, LLC in January of 2001 and 2) a policy memo surmising extensive interviews conducted during an SOM summer 2022 internship program. The issues facing the merchants of Grand Avenue appear to be two-pronged and are explained in detail

below.

Key Challenges

Crime and Security

Businesses heavily reported issues with drug dealing, homelessness, panhandling, trash, loitering and prostitutes. With very poor police enforcement, the avenue and its merchants are more vulnerable to issues of crime, which lowers the corridor's safety levels and marketability. Issues appear to be more salient on the Mill River Side versus the Quinnipiac River side.

Business investment

Deferred maintenance, upkeep and investment into the appearance of the corridor has slowed efforts to increase consumer activity and marketability. This has been especially worsened by the pandemic. Lack of parking, poor public area cleaning, and little improvement to the image of the corridor continue to be unaddressed.

Project Overview and Goals

The Grand Ave SSD was partnered with a Yale IEDL team with the main objective of providing a repository of information and identifying potential avenues of action to support the merchants association as it begins to pave a strategic path forward for the future. Park Street was consistently referred to as a possible research case to help the special services district in thinking through how to revitalize and overcome some of the roadblocks the merchants are facing today.

To this end, the Yale team mobilized to create

(1) A **Mini Case Study on Park Street** to highlight the key activities, partnerships and milestones that contributed to the commercial corridors development as an example to consider in the revitalization efforts of Grand Avenue.

Park Street

PARK STREET, HARTFORD

General Context of Park Street

Park Street is located directly south of I-84 and north of Britain Avenue and is part of the Frog Hollow neighborhood of Hartford, Connecticut as shown below. The revitalization efforts of Park Street capture two very captivating story arches - the Parkville and Frog Hollow neighborhoods. While Park Street stretches along both localities, there is quite a distinct historical deviation between them both. The interview and journal references in the case study will briefly touch on Parkville and its socio-economic journey. The majority of the research here, however, is focused on the Frog Hollow neighborhood. As seen in *Figure 3.0*, the Frog Hollow neighborhood's boundaries are I-84 to the west, Capitol Avenue to the north, and Maple Avenue to the east.

Similar to Grand Avenue, Park Street has its own special services district (established in 2002) and is closely partnered with the Spanish American Merchants Association (SAMA). In the case of the Park Street SSD, however, SAMA's leadership oversees the SSD. When referring to the Park Street SSD in this paper, SAMA and Park Street's SSD are considered one in the same.

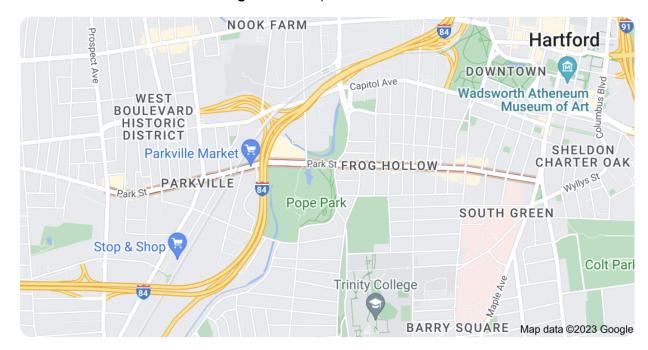
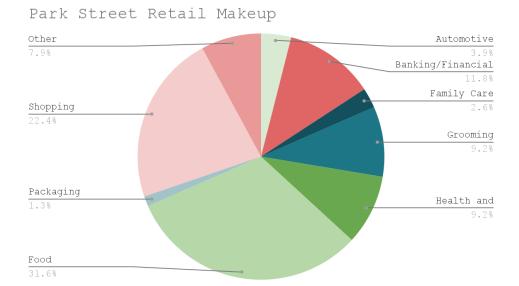


Figure 3.0: Map of Park Street

Figure 4.0: Park Street Retail Mix



History of Interventions to Date

Over the last 40 years Park Street has gone through a myriad of socioeconomic changes. Table 2.0 in the Appendices section is a historical timeline that gives an overview of the key events, demographic shifts and relevant stakeholders who were a part of the Park Street's revitalization efforts.

1990 - 2010s - Rapid Industrialization to Revitalization

The majority of Frog Hollow was largely diverse with a Puerto Rican Population of 30% in 1990 due to multiple waves of immigration from Puerto Rico and other Central American countries. By 2000, the entire Latinx population was 71.6% and 68.9% in 2010 (*U.S. Census*, 2000) of the entire Frog Hollow neighborhood (Rojas, 2015). Much of the rise of the Latinx population in the last decades is explained by a series of policy strategies between the United States and Puerto Rico. During the 1940s *Operation Bootstrap* sought out cheap factory labor for companies, including Pratt & Whitney and Rentschler Sharps Rifle Manufacturing Company, by moving their operations to Puerto Rico (*Operation Bootstrap*, n.d.). While higher wages and jobs became available for some, massive unemployment was rampant and forced many Puerto Ricans to migrate elsewhere for job and livelihood security (Rojas, 2015). This led to much of the Latinx diversity present in the Frog Hollow neighborhood today.

Policy focus

The state revitalization efforts of Park Street from 1990 - 2010 were three fold including efforts for housing, business development and streetscape renovation. Table 1.0 details the history of the different initiatives of the time period. While each policy focus had varying degrees of investment and actors involved, the main policy focus of the period was housing.

Housing Initiatives

Following the decline of manufacturing in Hartford in the 80s, many policy makers and local institutions considered that "housing would be a stabilizing force" for the local economy (Rojas, 2015). In 2000, the homeownership rate of Frog Hollow ranged between 6.6% and 10.8% across three census tracts and in 2010 between 7% and 13.4% (Rojas, 2015). As such, policy efforts as enacted by a mix of nonprofits, schools, and the City of Hartford, sought to provide new market rate housing, improve deteriorated communities and boost the overall image of the community. Local policy makers also saw the potential to revitalize the neighborhoods and bring in wealthier residents that could buy market rate housing and boost local purchasing power. The clientele of local businesses thus largely consisted of the new residents coming into the neighborhood (Rojas, 2015).

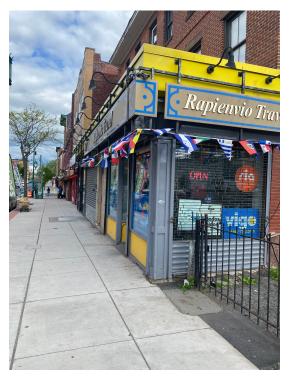
Latinx Community and Business Development

There were some efforts to build Latinx culture and businesses on the corridor as their population slowly grew at the time. In the 1970s and 1980s, community events such as the Park Street Festival were quite prominent celebrations until the festival was shut down in later years. The festival would bring in the entirety of the street (Singerman et. al, 2022). On the side of business development, with the formation of the Spanish American Merchants Association (SAMA) in 1982, there was a plea by its founding members to recognize the business potential of the Latinx community and create a network of support (Rojas, 2015). SAMA would finance some of the housing development, homeownership efforts and streetscape projects on Park Street in collaboration with organizations such as the Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (SINA), the Frog Hollow Neighborhood Revitalization Zone and the Broad-Park Development Corporation (BDPC).

Streetscape and Facade Improvements



Figure 5.0: Facade Improvement for Donde Julio Restaurant

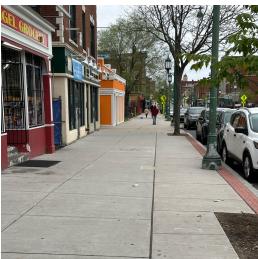


State revitalization efforts of the 1990s and early 2000s within the Frog Hollow neighborhood additionally sought to focus on landscape redesign, traffic calming, improved street parking, improvements and business renovation. Organizations such as SINA (under the leadership of Eddie Perez, who later became mayor of Hartford), and SAMA saw the need to bring about theses goals through the ordinance of a special services district (SSD) - a mile-long strip that would extend from Main Street to Park Terrace where property owners would pay higher taxes to access services and resources for their businesses (Rojas, 2015). At the time, the

creation of the Park Street SSD sought to improve the "ragged and dilapidated" image of the corridor and make it an "inviting destination" (Rojas, 2015). The SSD would work collaboratively with entities such as SAMA in their efforts to revitalize the corridor. *Figures 6.0 and 7.0* below show images of some of the oldest businesses on the corridor who were able to take advantage of the SSD and SAMA's programs.

Figures 6.0 and 7.0: Manny's Phone Repair Store Facade and Sidewalk Improvement on Park Street







Community Impact

While the revitalization efforts of the period saw much improvement and resiliency of merchants on Park Street in terms of availability of housing, cleaner streets, facade improvement and landscape design, Latinx communities were largely left out of these efforts. Many Latinx residents denigrated were to poor housing, unemployment, low household income, scant institutional support and poor education and medical services. At the start of 2000, per capita income for the Latinx community was a mere \$4,600 compared to \$13,500 for non-Latinx communities (Rojas, 2015). With locals being isolated from decision making roles and space, efforts additionally did not have any focus on workforce development or wage improvement. In addition, crime and gang violence were quite prevalent. At the start of

1994, the number of homicides in Frog Hollow doubled to 53 deaths from previous years, with

nearly 17% being associated with local gangs such as *Los Solidos, Young Guns, 20 Love and the Latin Kings* (NY Times, 1994). Toward the end of the 2010s, local efforts by SAMA, BDPC and SINA Plan (1995) strove to ensure locals would benefit from the revitalization policies. Their focus reoriented toward providing affordable housing, youth leadership, anti gang violence programs, commercial development outside of facade improvements and building community anchors such as *El Mercado*, which became a grocery store and food market for small businesses.

It is important to note that as redevelopment efforts began to gain traction in the Frog Hollow neighborhood of Park Street, local policymakers and advocates had a different image for Parkville. At the start of 2002, Parkville was identified as a key player for market and real estate development. The Parkville Special Services District (2002) additionally pushed for an increase in business development for local merchants. The timeline to follow (2010 - 2023), will highlight how this portion of the corridor grew in comparison to Frog Hollow.

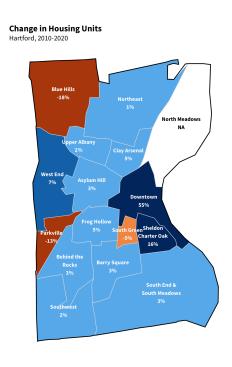
Table 1.0: Interventions/Policies Implemented from 1990 - 2010

Level	1990 - 2000	2000 - 2005	2005 - 2010
State	Reports 1980s Great Hartford Process Memo 1995 Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Committee 1998 Neighborhood Revitalization Plan	Reports 1995 Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (SINA) Plan 1999 Strategic Plan for Renewal Effort Hartford Process Memo 2002 "Parkville Economic Opportunities Report" Initiatives 2002 Park Street Streetscape project 2002 Neighborhood Economic Development 2003 Regulations Allowance for housing in industrial buildings 2003 Connecticut Historic Homes Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program for housing restoration	Reports • 2005 10 year Frog Hollow Neighborhood Revitalization Zone committee plan Initiatives • 2000s SINA and BDPC Affordable Housing Projects • 2010 Lyric Theatre Demolished
Social Sector	Initiatives 1982 Spanish American Merchants Association formed 1991 Broad-Park Development Corporation (BDPC) Hartford Areas Rally	Reports • 2001 Neighborhood Revitalization Plan • 2002 Urban Strategies Review: "Greenberg Report" Initiatives • 2002 Special Services District formed	Initiatives

	Together (HART)	 Special Services District Retail and Housing Initiative 2002 Park Squire project and Pride Block Initiative 2003 National register for Historic Places 2004 CityScape Project with SINA, SAMA and the City of Hartford 	Revitalization Plan
Private/	Initiatives • 1995 Aetna builds Family Resource Center and set up new headquarters	Initiatives ■ 2001 Mortson Street/Putnam Height Housing Venture	Initiatives Governor Jodi Rell (2005) Braun Investments State Loan Bond DECD federal HOME dollars Investment Billings Forge Community Work of the Melville Charitable Trust + Center for Community Partnerships (2007)

2010 - 2023 - Continued Efforts & Diverging Neighborhoods

Following the aforementioned efforts of the 1990's and 2000s, Frog Hollow has sustained a somewhat lower level of concerted development activity. In comparison, adjacent neighborhoods have experienced a flurry of efforts, suggesting the need for a renewed focus and reactivation with Frog Hollow.



Demographic Changes

The Frog Hollow neighborhood experienced population decline of ~8% from 2010 to 2020, which tracks with an existing gradual decline since the 1970's. Relatively on par with previous decades, the census designates the overall "Hispanic" population at 66% in 2019, with 75% of that population being Puerto Rican (*Frog Hollow Neighborhood Plan*, 2023; *U.S. Census*, 2020).

Frog Hollow residents have experienced only so much improvement compared to their Hartford and Connecticut counterparts. As estimated during 2014 - 2018, merely 7% of Frog Hollow residents were homeowners, compared with 24% of Hartford. This

comes even as housing units rose by 5% in the neighborhood (DataHaven, 2020).

In a similar timeframe, 34% of Frog Hollow residents have experienced poverty, compared with 24% of Hartford residents and 10% of CT residents. Interestingly, poverty in the southern portion of Frog Hollow was nearly 50%, while only 21% in the western census tract (*U.S. Census*, 2020). Lastly, a Labor Shed analysis shows 97.4% of Frog Hollow residents work *outside* of the neighborhood as of 2020 - a statistic that has remained constant since 2002 (*OnTheMap Tool*, 2020).

Taken together, Frog Hollow's ethnic and cultural makeup has essentially remained the same. Yet, despite the efforts taking place in previous decades, Frog Hollow continues to experience limited homeownership, persistent poverty, and a lack of jobs for its own neighborhood.

Policy focus

Over the past decade, Frog Hollow has kept up efforts to improve the built environment of Park Street and the overall neighborhood.

Streetscape and Facade Improvements

Efforts to improve the look and feel of streets in Frog Hollow were advocated for by both the Frog Hollow Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) and the Park Street SSD, which is run by SAMA. The NRZ's 2011 plan for the neighborhood focused almost exclusively on improvements to streetlights, pedestrian amenities, traffic circulation, and problematic properties. Many of these efforts, however, were focused on supporting the Capitol Avenue corridor (the northern edge of Frog Hollow that borders downtown) and other areas within the neighborhood besides Park Street. It is clear through the Frog Hollow NRZ's language in 2011 on partnering with the SSD (for certain Park Street-related efforts) that other community entities viewed the SSD as the primary advocate for the street.

During the same timeframe, the SSD provided services to improve Park Street. Such services include regular street cleaning, litter and graffiti removal, and coordinated efforts to make the street have a certain "feel." This is most embodied in the active facade improvement efforts that the SSD executed during the 2010s, which unified the appearance of many storefronts to have a similar look to shops in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Anecdotal evidence, which will be discussed later on, suggests that the SSD presently remains active in streetscape efforts and individual support to longtime merchants on the street. The SSD's general current activities, however, remain unclear due to the lack of publicly available information, financial reporting, or regular meetings.

Renovation and Historic Preservation Efforts

In line with the aforementioned efforts during this time period, several renovation and preservation initiatives for the Frog Hollow neighborhood took place. A few representative efforts include:

- <u>Historic Preservation Grant Funding</u>: The Connecticut General Assembly, The Connecticut Humanities Council and the Commission on Culture and Tourism awarded one of three grants to Frog Hollow in 2010. Provided to determine better usage for the former Immaculate Conception Church, this historic preservation and technical assistance grant was meant to "help foster jobs and preserve the city's heritage through the renovation of historic buildings and improvements in their energy efficiency" (*Grants to Help Renovate*, 2010). Today, this building at 560 Park Street serves as a homeless shelter operated by Immaculate Conception Shelter and Housing Corp., the awardee of the grant.
- Housing Development on Capitol Avenue: Originally surfaced as a potential project in 2008 and again in 2013, the Connecticut government approved millions in financing in 2015 for developer Dakota Partners Inc. to revamp the (vacant) former Hartford Office Supply Co. building at 390 Capitol Ave into an apartment building with mixed-income rental units. By 2016, the now-Capitol Lofts apartment complex provided 112 mixed-income rental units (Gosselin, 2013, 2015, 2016). The development is one of several efforts along the Capitol Avenue corridor to bring more affordable and market-rate apartments to the neighborhood.
- Tearing Down of Lyric Theater & Building of Library: Perhaps the most consequential development for the Frog Hollow neighborhood is the long-awaited demolishing of the historic Lyric Theater to build a new library on Park Street. After nearly three decades of attempting to address the theater, which had deteriorated to a level that could not be addressed without significant funding, the community nearly unanimously approved a state-funded plan in 2017 to demolish it and build a Park Street branch of the public library. The library the largest of all of Hartford's public libraries opened in 2021 with much excitement from community stakeholders (Vinny, 2017; McAvoy, 2021).

Another story: Parkville

Parkville, the next-door-neighbor of Frog Hollow that contains the west side of Park Street, has had a different trajectory. While initially demographically similar to Frog Hollow, Parkville was identified for major streetscape efforts in the early 2000s and has enjoyed continued

development since that time. Its main draws are its location at the intersection of a rail and bus line (which opened during the 2010s), its designation as an arts district, and the variety of properties available for revamping and scaling into new offerings.

In large part, the level of concerted development throughout the 2010s is due to the championing of developer Carlos Mouta, whose family immigrated to Parkville in the 1970s. As a developer, Mouta has a history of turning the older industrial buildings leftover from Parkville's past life as a manufacturing hub into mixed-use buildings more amenable to present-day Hartford residents' needs (*About Us*, n.d.). The Parkville Market, which opened in 2021 as Connecticut's first food hall, is a clear example of the collective vision that Mouta and other community stakeholders have for Parkville - a lively neighborhood with a flourishing set of businesses, restaurants, and arts initiatives.

Looking Forward: Frog Hollow's vision

At the present moment, it is unclear what direction Frog Hollow will move in. Perhaps the best point of reference is the draft plan made by the City of Hartford and the Frog Hollow NRZ in 2023 - the first plan available publicly since 2011.

Keeping strategies in line with the Hartford City Plan's "Green, Grow, Live, Move, Play" approach, community stakeholders are now organizing to rethink what the neighborhood needs. While this draft vision includes a variety of efforts around greener and cleaner spaces, arts and recreation initiatives, and transit design, the most pertinent part of the plan is its "Grow" section. This pillar contains initiatives for activating storefronts, connecting and incubating new businesses, providing job training, and attracting new industries.

Interestingly, the plan demonstrates that the NRZ recognizes a strong current need for wider business support and growth along Park Street. The draft explicitly asks for expanded support and better transparency from the Park Street SSD run by SAMA, whose activity on the street remains unclear to the public eye (*Frog Hollow Neighborhood Plan*, 2023). As adjacent neighborhoods like Parkville and downtown Hartford gain more attention for collective efforts, bringing community stakeholders together to work towards a vision for Park Street may give Frog Hollow its best shot at a new era of revitalization.

Table 2.0: Interventions/Policies Implemented from 2010 - 2023

Level	2010 - 2017	2017 - 2023
State	Reports • Frog Hollow Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Plan (2011)	Reports • Frog Hollow Neighborhood Revitalization Zone "Strategic Plan" (2023)

	Initiatives CT housing authority approves cache of federal tax credits including "\$760k for rental units in 6 historic Frog Hollow buildings (2013) CTfastrak commuter bus stations open on Park Street, on Parkville side (2015) NRZ approves state plan to demolish Lyric Theater and build library (2017)	 The Hartford City Plan 2035 Initiatives Demolishing of Lyric Theater, opening of \$12.5M Park Street Public Library (2020-2021) \$1.5M U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Grant for Housing- "Welcome Home Hartford: Promoting Health and Wealth through Homeownership" (2022)
Social Sector	Reports SINA's New Community Engagement Initiative (2015) S-Year Strategic Development Plan (2016) - prepared by SINA, LISC, and the Mutual Housing Association of Greater Hartford Initiatives Historic Preservation & Renovation (multiple)	Reports SINA 2018-2022 Strategic Plan Initiatives \$250,000 in State Appropriations Bill for La Bodeguita De La Gente, Frog Hollow food pantry created during pandemic (2021)
Private	Initiatives • Developers such as Dakota Partners revamp Capitol Avenue buildings for apartment complexes (2016-2017)	Initiatives • Parkville Market opens (2021)

Interviews

Over the course of the semester the Yale IEDL team managed to interview a myriad of stakeholders, from professors to SSD and neighborhood alliance members. The team also conducted a series of merchant interviews facilitated by Logan Singerman of the Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (SINA). To preserve the anonymity of the businesses, we only refer to the type of service they provide.

Merchant Interviews

The goal of the interviews with merchants was to have a brief overview of their business, as well as some of the highlights and pain points that have arisen over the years. In addition, as Park Street has been pointed to as an example for its revitalization efforts, the interviews sought to also uncover the key instrumental funding sources, stakeholders and individual strategies that lent to corridor resilience and success in the last few decades. There were many salient themes that arose in conversations with the merchants. To surmise some of the points that were brought up in the conversation, please refer to *Figures 8.0 through 11.0* below.

Figures 8.0, 9.0, 10.0 and 11.0: Merchant Interviews Summary



Interviews

During a visit to Park Street the Yale IEDL Team had the opportunity to speak with merchants on the corridor and hear from them

- 1) What has changed on the corridor in the last few decades?
- 2) Who has been instrumental in their success?
- What could be still be improved in terms of support and resources for local business?

Main Themes

Community

Social Level

City

Crime

Interview 1

Hardware Store

What has worked?

COMMUNITY LEVEL

- Huge sense of family
- Latinx Festivals used to happen (Puerto Rican Day Festival)

SOCIAL LEVEL

Beautification/Facade Improvement

• Fixed store fronts, sidewalks, pavers cleaning early mornings

Small Business Development

- Awareness meetings for new programs, benefits or loans to explain and help merchants qualify
- Computer classes
 - Graffiti team respond to vandalization within 24 hours
 - Street lamps and cameras inside and outside
- Rolled down gates and bullet proof windows to look like San Juan using federal \$

What is still an issue?

COMMUNITY LEVEL

- Festivals have moved to Bushnell Park
- Much lower foot traffic due perceptions of safety on the street

SOCIAL LEVEL

Beautification/Facade Improvement

No recent efforts

CRIME

- Used to have community service workers to walk the streets
- Mi Casa used to have youth programs
- Strong negative perception of the Street in terms of crime in the media

Interview 2

Phone repair



COMMUNITY LEVEL

DominGO open street festival occurs every year

SOCIAL LEVEL

Beautification/Facade Improvement

 Some cleaning and business front changes.

Small Business Development

- Very little assistance from business nonprofit programs
- Loan programs have strict upfront cost barriers nearing \$30,000

CRIME

- Have security rails on the storefront for safety and cameras
- Mi Casa youth programs

What is still an issue?

COMMUNITY LEVEL

 Used to have Park Street Festivals but had to pay to use your front area for vending

SOCIAL LEVEL

Beautification/Facade Improvement

- Not for free so resorted to cleaning on their own
- Loan programs have strict upfront costs of \$30,000 which is not accessible to all merchants

CRIME

- Used to have community service workers to walk the streets
- Strong negative perception of the Street in the media
- Break in do happen but they have window rails

CITY LEVEL

- Not many good investments. Too many of the same store on the corridor
- High taxes

Interview 3

Jewelry Store

What has worked?

COMMUNITY LEVEL

- Jamaican Day Parade
- Love Your Block Initiative
- Joggers from hospital frequent the store

SOCIAL LEVEL

Beautification/Facade Improvement

 Fixed store fronts, sidewalks, pavers cleaning early mornings

Small Business Development

- Access loan programs
- Some degrees of police assistance

CRIME

- Youth programs
- Store doesn't have many break ins and takes out watches everyday; Don't have window rails
- Store owners help each other out if there is no police
- Stores help homeless when they can

What is still an issue?

COMMUNITY LEVEL

• Used to have a spit roast day in front of Bohio cafe

SOCIAL LEVEL

Beautification/Facade Improvement

- No recent efforts
- Small Business Development
 - Large grants are mostly taken by larger businesses

CRIME

- Drug abuse by youth
- Mental health is an issue still
- Homeless in the Catholic Church have no place to go after

Key Findings

1. Building Community and Culture

The merchants of the Grand Avenue commercial corridor consistently pointed to the strong, tightly-knit bonds of the local community. There was a huge sense of family and camaraderie. Some of the key strengths of corridor and possibilities for growth mentioned during the interviews in terms of building community and culture include:

Community Festivals

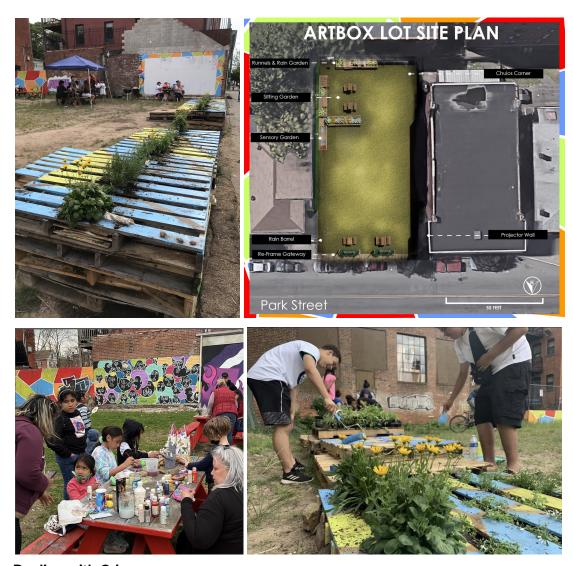
What we learned: Park Street used to be the hub for Latinx festivals such as Park Street Festival and the Puerto Rican Day Parade. In recent years, the DominGo open street festival has remained, but each merchant lamented the loss of the other festivals which served to bring in residents and outsiders to see their businesses, culture and community. What still needs to be improved: There is so much potential to showcase the Puerto Rican culture of the corridor despite losing some of the festivals to Main Street and Bushnell Park. There are such notable multiethnic food hubs such as El Mercado, which have still been highly frequented since 1991!

Community Public Spaces Beautification

What we learned: The merchants spoke on the individual strategies they each would take to bring Latinx identity into the community. One merchant spoke of a spit roast day for a whole pig that would happen in front of Bohio Cafe, which brought in visitors from all over to celebrate the culture from Puerto Rico. Partnering with organizations such as SINA, Real Art Ways, Grow Hartford Youth, schools and the local library, the City has also been able to ensure some revitalization opportunities with community led programs such as the Love Your Block Initiative (Love Your Block, 2019). Since 2019, they have led a few efforts on Park Street from art gardens to beautification projects, including garbage bouquets, clean up initiatives and an art box lot. The ArtBox Lot project engaged many locals in the process who wanted to see community celebration days, basketball, flowers, movie nights and markets in the vacant lot area (Project for Public Spaces, 2019). Funded by the community, the lot also holds education workshops by local nonprofits on placemaking. It additionally has murals that showcase local artists.

What still needs to be improved: Individual efforts to showcase community culture for businesses on the street, such as the example of the spit roast, have not happened in a while. With still a strong cultural presence of Latinx folks in businesses, there is room to really create both formal and informal public spaces that can make locals feel welcome but also interested in investing and supporting their merchant community.

Figure 12.0: ArtBox Lot Project Plan and Space



2. Dealing with Crime

It was clear to us that across all three merchants of the corridor, issues of crime were a consistent theme.

• Individual investment and Security measures

What we learned: On one end, it is clear that on an individual level dealing with crime has meant investment into store improvements. Individuals on the corridor invested in security cameras inside and outside of the store, railings that would cover windows and bulletproof proof store glass. All of these interventions, some paid for with federal money and some from personal investment, were in recognition that police enforcement may not always be so reliable. Interestingly, one merchant mentioned that she made sure that the railing had an aesthetic appearance similar to San Juan to urge customers to not associate the area with crime. There was room to ensure safety but also keeping in mind

the cultural identity of locals and attractiveness of the corridor.

What still needs to be improved: The merchants reiterated that drugs and loitering are still an issue and stressed the need for restorative programs for youth that really address the mental and social causes of crime rather than a focus on policing. They further made a plea for at least a single officer to patrol the street every night. The officer could get to know the locals and add some assurance that someone is taking care of the corridor.

Community Reliance to fend off crime

What we learned: The individual strategies of the merchants also reveal that while railing offers more security, there is a trade off with customers' feeling of safety. One merchant mentioned having to repaint their storefronts to ensure the attractiveness of their store with all the security measures. Another merchant mentioned that rather than rely on railings and other intense security measures, they form coalitions with their neighboring merchants to watch over each other's stores and stave of loiterers, help the homeless when they can and monitor crime on the block when police are unavailable.

What still needs to be improved: There is a gap that could be filled by the City and local nonprofit organizations in staving off crime, dealing with the homeless and ensuring that safety is felt all across the corridor. Some merchants felt a lot more safe than others on the street which affected the level of security measures. There is so much potential to further interrogate as to why and what social levers need to be put in place.

Institutional Interviews: Understanding the Community Landscape

The goal of interviewing individuals from local organizations was to have a better understanding of the trajectory of Park Street as a whole. These conversations explored the overall trajectory of the street, the development of the Hartford area, and how various stakeholders interacted to make the area what it is today. Our team examined key documents like neighborhood plans and proposals alongside these individuals, allowing the history and initiatives that took place on Park Street to be brought to life.

Figure 13.0: Institutional Interviews Summary



Interviews

Both online and during a visit to Park Street, the Yale IEDL Team had the opportunity to speak with individuals who had lived in, worked in, and/or studied the Frog Hollow area and its adjacent neighborhoods.

- 1) What has changed on the corridor in the last few decades?
- 2) Who has been instrumental in creating change in Frog Hollow?
- 3) How are surrounding communities changing in comparison?

Main Themes

Community

Social

City Level

Unlike in the previous section, the key findings listed next will pull from learnings across archival research and institutional interviews in an attempt to paint a clearer picture of what stakeholders shared.

Key Findings

 Given the vibrant activity of the SSD/merchant association during the early 2000s, other actors took more of a backseat. With less of a strong role in the present, the SSD needs an updated vision and connection to other neighborhood actors.

What we learned: Since SAMA and the SSD are one in the same, their role during the 2000s in driving streetscape and facade improvements on behalf of merchants demonstrated that active efforts were underway to support the business community. Based on individual feedback, the Neighborhood Revitalization Zone and other community stakeholders stayed in their own lanes, knowing that the SSD would step in for Park Street-relevant merchant efforts. The SSD has continued their overarching street upkeep efforts and business support, but any newer initiatives or roles are unclear given minimal public information.

Recent interviews with merchants on Park Street conducted by students at Trinity College indicated that several businesses are unaware of the SSD, lack contact with the SSD, and do not understand what it could provide for them. The Park Street SSD does not have the

transparency that neighboring SSDs maintain (and in general, are expected to have). Annual meetings are not held, financial statements are not shared publicly, and regular elections seemingly do not take place. Up-to-date information is not available online or through public records.

It has been noted that neighborhood stakeholders such as the Frog Hollow NRZ are now reactivating to meet the current needs of the street, including an expanding vision of what business support is needed.

What still needs to be improved: Without improved communication and transparency, the Park Street SSD is poised to play a smaller and smaller role in the changing merchant community and the Frog Hollow neighborhood at-large. Existing ties to long-time merchants remain, but newer merchants on the street also need to be made aware of and drawn into the sphere of the SSD. There is an opportunity for the SSD to catalyze a new period of growth in the area - ideally through dialogue with other community stakeholders, active outreach to newer merchants on the street, and regular online updates on the SSD's activities.

Neighboring districts are taking distinct approaches to revitalization and formulating larger-scale strategies.

What we learned: Both from discussions and publicly available reports, it is clear that nearby neighborhoods are formulating approaches to revitalization and receiving greater attention from local stakeholders.

As mentioned earlier, Parkville is now home to Connecticut's first food hall, a brewery, and a variety of arts initiatives. To the east of Frog Hollow, downtown Hartford has seen an investment into safety and employment through an Ambassadors program (Hartford 'Neighborhood Ambassadors', 2022) focused on keeping streets clean and safe.

Of course, each of these areas' pre-existing levels of public funding are different. Still, we hypothesize that the increased level of interest, investment, and development activity taking place adjacent to Frog Hollow is due to the neighborhood vision and partnership-building taking place on the ground between community members, private companies, nonprofits, and the local/state government.

What still needs to be improved: In recent years, Frog Hollow has not put forth a neighborhood vision or had many high-profile champions in the way that its neighbors have. Promisingly, Frog Hollow's NRZ has recently reactivated and put forth a broader vision for the neighborhood in conjunction with the City of Hartford - one that includes activities around business development and a call to action for the Park Street SSD.

Moving forward, the Park Street SSD should seek to create "activation strategies" that both tap into the strengths of nearby areas and create a better understanding of how Park Street can differentiate itself. Given the immense level of activity surrounding Frog Hollow, the SSD has a great opportunity for working closely with neighboring districts and co-learning.

Looking Forward: Lessons Learned for Grand Avenue

Given our findings on the overall trajectory of Park Street's revitalization, as well as the fact that Grand Avenue's SSD has recently elected new leadership, the following lessons are presented in the hope of providing starting ground for any SSD attempting to revitalize a commercial corridor effectively. Street-specific strategies can be powerful, but they are not enough.

1. Accounting for the <u>broader local context matters</u>. At its height of activity, Park Street's SSD provided a myriad of services to merchants. Even now, merchants use different tactics to cope with the challenges on the street. Simply taking the strategies discussed in this report and using a one-size-fits-all approach, however, misses the fact that communities have different capacities and assets.

Looking at Frog Hollow vs. Parkville vs. Grand Avenue/Fair Haven, there are critical differences in tax base, active community organizations, history of merchants, local networks, etc. Put simply, this report is not meant to prescribe the *best* strategies for improving an SSD's offerings, but it can serve as a great pre-read to an SSD brainstorming how it intends to expand services and engagement in a community.

- **2. SSDs** have the potential to <u>foster a community</u> of active support for <u>all merchants.</u> An engaged SSD that makes resources available and known to all merchants can make a difference. Activities that empower commercial corridors include:
 - Helping with applying for loans & other types of financing
 - Providing merchants with various business training opportunities so that they can better handle finances, operations, marketing, etc.
 - Working with the city government on street improvements, such as cleaning, graffiti removal, unifying the look of facades, pedestrian amenities
 - Facilitating networking opportunities both among fellow merchants and with other organizations in the area
 - Promoting local merchants and creating opportunities for greater foot traffic (through festivals, farmers markets, etc).

Ensuring access also means all merchants have equal access to and full information of all

possible resources. This looks like active and consistent engagement, communication, transparency with merchants and with the community, including:

- At least one open annual meeting
- Public reporting of the SSD budget
- Online updates and other forms of publicly available information (newsletters, blogs, reports, etc.)
- Check-ins with merchants to reassess changing needs
- **3.** <u>Co-learning</u> with merchants and external stakeholders matters. SSDs, through robust engagement, can be a powerful force for the entire community. An SSD aware of its linkages (see Figure 12) can harness them for learning and driving change.



Figure 14: Model for SSD Activity

Merchant Support & Advocacy: By actively supporting merchants, SSDs can understand their needs and elicit regular feedback. This allows an SSD to stay nimble to tailor its offerings and advocate for resources to fill gaps they are not able to meet on their own..

Policy & Community Partnerships: Merchant success and community success are intertwined. Given the synergies that exist between an SSD and community stakeholders who are pursuing economic development, it is important for an SSD to engage in long-term partnerships and collaborative initiatives. Being a visible, active partner paves the way for creating a neighborhood vision, articulating the unique character of the community, and driving policy change.

Co-Learning with Nearby Corridors: SSDs have something to learn from other commercial corridors that are nearby or may have a similar history such as the example of Parkville for Frog Hollow. Particularly with nearby commercial corridors, SSD leadership can meet with other SSD's leaders or attend public meetings to learn about other forms of engagement. There is also an opportunity for tandem SSD strategies that leverage respective strengths (e.g. a highly retail district serving as a go-to spot for people visiting a primarily recreational/arts district).

NEXT STEPS FOR GRAND AVENUE

Ongoing Questions

Grand Avenue is now in a reactivation phase. It will be important for the SSD to now consider important questions and opportunities. The Yale IEDL team identifies the following.

- **1. How expansive do you want your role to be?** What are the goals of the Grand Ave SSD? What is its resource capacity to meet those goals?
- **2. Who else is vying for Fair Haven?** What is the potential for collaboration and synergy in corridor vision?
- **3.** What are potential avenues for further research? What details of the policies are important to know? Why were certain foci chosen for a time period?
- **4. What are other regional partnership plans that have been done?** Are there existing partnerships to tap into or model?

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Appendices

Table 3.0: Historical Timeline of Interventions in the Frog Hollow Neighborhood (1990 - 2009)

omic (Danis Profile Centra Puerto (1990) Pover Ricans	diverse population ish, Vietnamese, ral America) to Rican Population 0) - 30%	70% of Frog Hollow neighborhood was Latinx in 2000	Frog Hollow Latinx community Per capita income was \$4,600,	INCOME: Parkville Household incomes (low to moderate) - 43% earn under
	orty rate of Puerto ns was 47.5%, National orty Rate was 30%,		Non-Latinx community Per capita income was \$13,500 (more affluent didn't shop in Park Street for fears of safety) Parkville Household incomes (low to moderate) - 43% earn under \$25,000	\$25,000 compared to 17% for the State); its median income is slightly higher than that of the City HOUSING: Rental (72%) and multi-family (84.6%). JOBS: Compared to city, residents have higher job concentrations in retail trade and services, typically lower paying jobs EMPLOYERS: Insurance carriers and agents constitute the most sizable employment base in the Parkville area with 25% of total jobs, followed by government with 19%, and retail trade with 15.6%. Contains 10% of employment in city
Context Gener	eral Sentiment			
	Street was the bone: cultural diversity	Frog Hollow became a Latinx enclave Discrimination to the Latinx community (poor housing, no institutional support for education or medical services)	Homeownership became the stabilizing force of development - Homeownership rate was quite low at 25% which made that a big focus - Some progress was made and business did grow Tensions/feelings of exclusion felt by locals on the nature of the projects of SINA for Frog Hollow (some projects were given green lights without consent, e.g - CVS on the intersection of Park and Washington Street wasn't decided on with residents in mind - Locals didn't approve the detention center (70,000 sq ft). It was short notice, a done deal with no conversation and would detract from Learning corridor - Spme complained that Hartford residents weren't getting a good bid on new housing Many churches and resident orgs were supporting neighborhood	Vitality remained even post the recession Some complained of the structural housing problems and lack of response from the city, even though progress was happening

	manuface Hartford Busines building Largely	bustling with cturing but then deconomy declined; ses struggled and s were abandoned. working class ion in manufacturing	All manufacturing jobs were gone. Workers feared displacement with new investment Revitalization efforts begin and included landscape redesign, traffic calming, street improvements, business renovation homeownership		
	Crime/S	afety + Discrimination			
			vity (Los Solidos and Latin arked a crack down by local	Accusations of crime in media continue (State wanted to remove wet shelters for addicts to bring in homeowners)	Drug dealing still an issue
Interventi ons Implemen ted	State	Operation Bootstrap 1940s Goal: Search for cheap factory labor in Hartford led to high levels of immigration and greater demand for housing	Great Hartford Process Memo (1980s) - \$800 million dollars invested by the state to renovate the city. There were some minorities in leadership positions - more marginalization Outcome - More marginalization of Latinx communities Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Committee (1995) Created with a focus on deteriorated communities Neighborhood Revitalization Plan in 1998 City of Hartford and Parkville Revitalization Association Family resource center - \$1 million investment	Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (SINA) Plan (1995) BPDC, SINA and SAMA collaborate in the 2000s' SINA and The inter-neighborhood Collaborative partner with Hartford Hospital, Institute for Living and Trinity College for revitalization efforts. A lot of their efforts focused on housing and commercial projects, antigang violence and youth leadership. 1999 Strategic Plan for Renewal Effort to grow a Learning Corridor, commercial growth, Washington Village. Though there was no collaboration and more so competition resources became an issue. 1997 HART, Vecinos Unidos and BPDC. SINA member institutions such as Trinity College, Hartford Hospital, the Institute of Living, Connecticut Children's Medical Center, and Connecticut Public Television provided the initial capital of \$10 million to advance the project, and subsequently raised an additional \$102 million to realize it in full. Hartford Process Memo 2002 "Parkville Economic Opportunities Report" Commissioned by the Parkville Neighborhood Revitalization Association. With Urban Act funding supplemented by the Connecticut Economic Development Fund, the report analyzed market and real estate conditions along the Park Street, New Park Avenue and Capitol Avenue corridors and assessed the redevelopment potential of	SINA and Affordable Housing SINA and BDPC enter the retail market and offer affordable units with a \$10 million dollar funding base. About \$7 million came from Fannie Mae Lyric Theatre State pushed to convert Lyric Theatre into EL Centro Cultural but the building was demolished in 2010 due to minimal funding (it would have cost \$20 million (there was a collapsed roof which hiked up cost) to build and there was no SINA support) It ruined the appearance of the area because all that was left was the juvenile detention center. 2005 10 year Frog Hollow NRZ committee plan Efforts made to improve employment, traffic, revitalize old buildings, and investment. Started out diverse in terms of focus areas and Latinx communities reached but soon declined.

Privat e/	Manufacturing sector Stakeholders Pratt & Whitney, and Rentschler	Aetna Headquarters New headquarters that came in brought more jobs)	Mortson Street/Putnam Height Housing Venture Key Stakeholder/Funders Travelers Insurance Citigroup** some units sold for \$99,00 0	Governor Jodi Rell (2005) \$4 million state grant into parking meters, facade improvement, video cameras. Braun Investments
Social Sector	1980 The Capitol District Coalition formed to handle blight and crime in the northern parts of Frog Hollow	Broad-Park Development Corporation (BDPC) (1991) Affordable housing and commercial revitalization efforts begin. On Park Street - The BDPC wanted to put a i Mercado food market because it saw the corridor as a stable area - it had food and would be an incubator for small businesses Hartford Areas Rally Together (HART) BPDC and HART - a community organizing group = stepped in to provide housing, revitalize old building e.g Mutual Housing Park Terrace 1 Initiative	Park Street Streetscape project \$6 million for street design which included lighting, street signs, benches, new sidewalks, decor, reopen Lyric Theatre) Neighborhood Economic Development Funded some buildings e.g Hispana Vision Connecticut Historic Homes Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program and Connecticut Historical Commission ¹ \$10 million in funding under new state law for redevelopment and restoration of significant neighborhoods. Banks or individual owners could seek out credits Urban Strategies Review: "Greenberg Report" Created a plan for Park Street corridor that centered on co-op housing, neighborhood improvement, business interest, expansion juvenile detention center Locals were upset by the expansion of the juvenile detention center and wanted compensation for it ⇒ the city decided to build Mi Casa which \$1.7 million bonds youth services org on Park St) Special Services District (est, 2002) Eddie Perez - Main Street to Park Terrace Started to help business community - doing well but looked ragged and bad image Park Squire project (2002) + Pride Block Initiative Retail and housing investment and Efforts to make blocks attractive and safe National register for Historic PLaces (2003) State names 5 blocks as historic areas and you could get historic tax credit and live there	Beloved Coffee shop La Paloma Sabanera returned (2008) Billings Forge Community Work of the Melville Charitable Trust (2007) They collaborate with the Center for Community Partnerships (music and culture org) and began a farm to table cooking movement at FireBox restaurant and started a breakfast place called Kitchen bakery. Their visions were different from SINA, didn't displace poor residents, employed locals and reduced crime.
			Bartholomew Avenue	

 ${}^{\underline{1}}\underline{https://www.nytimes.com/2000/02/27/realestate/in-the-region-connecticut-rehabilitating-historically-significant-enclaves.html}$

Sharps Rifle Manufacturing Company	\$120,000	Made a loan of \$5 million in state bond DECD federal HOME dollars (\$6 million)
		Billings Forge Community Work of the Melville Charitable Trust + Center for Community Partnerships (2007)

Table 4.0 Fair Haven Summary Statistics

Metric	2010	2016	2020²
Total population	14,685	17,305	15,044
% of population below 19	-	29%	36%
Latinx Population (Central America, Mexico, mostly Puerto Ricans)	62%	-	64%
Foreign born population	-	19%	-
Per Capita Income	\$17,147	-	\$20,788
Median Income	\$34,968		\$43,417
% of households that earn below poverty level	37%	33%	-
% of family run business (of all merchants)	52%	-	-

Table 5.0: Businesses on Grand Avenue and Park Street

Sector	Grand Ave Business	Park Street
Total number of Businesses	~90	
Automotive	Grand Audio Motorsport, LLC City Lights Auto	Ace Auto Body Inc Perseverance Auto Repair Park Hardware
Banking/Financial	DolEx Money Transfers Envíos de Valor Naciona Smart Tax Services	Jackson Hewitt Tax Service Liberty Tax Webster Bank

²ctdatahaven.org/reports/2020-census-data-demographic-change-connecticut-town-and-city-neighborhoo ds/new-haven-neighborhood-changes-2010-2020 and https://www.ctdatahaven.org/data-resources/new-haven-neighborhood-profiles

	M&M Check Cashing Durango Insurance Financial Key Bank Santander Bank	Ria Money Transfer - El Paisa Multiservices Rapienvio Money Gram LibertyX Bitcoin ATM Bank of America
Family/Child Care	Friend's Center for Children Wheeler Clinic Auntie Rose Child Care Development Center LLC	Mi Casa Family Services Nuestra Casa
Grooming Services	Esther Dominican Style Beauty Salon & Barber Shop Evolution Hair Studio & Salon Pury's Barber Shop Nissy's Beauty Salon 360 Barbershop & Salon Gil's Barber Shop Orlando's Barber Shop Sharp Ones Hair Salon El Jibaro HairCut Peluca Barbershop VIP Vivian's Nail Spa Le Paris Spa	Pelican Tattoo and Body Piercing Genesis Barbershop Roxy Nails Design Salud Y Vida Daniela Beauty Spa Hombre A place of Our Own Enhanced Beauty Bar
Health and Wellness	Fair Haven Family Dentistry Grand Dental Horizon Dental Group New Haven Pharmacy Fair Haven Pharmacy Hancock Pharmacy Rite Aid Pharmacy Fair Haven Community Health Center Grand Medical New Haven Medical Center Centro de Bienestar Wellness Center Mundo de Nutricion Green Place Nutricion Centro de Bienestar	ImmaCare Inc. Shelter Daniela Beauty Spa Hartford Pharmacy I Hartford Pharmacy II Hispana Vision CVS Center for Latinx Profress Kate Felter Gynecology
Laundry	Lucky Laundromat People's Laundromat	
Eat	Apicella's Bakery La Tapatia Bakery Mi Lupita Bakery Cositas Deliciosas Fresh Taco Isabel's Peanut LLC Corner of Grand & Ferry Mariscos El Pescador	Los Cubanitos Bakery Pa'l Caray New China House Wally's Deli and Grill Monte Carlo Bakery Sol de Borinquen El Gran DOminicano Restaurant Caribe Restaurant

	Salsa's Authentic Mexican Restaurant J&J Restaurant El Coqui Restaurant El Buen Gusto Restaurant La Molienda Peruvian Restaurant & Bar Grand Apizza Avellino's Pizza USA1 Pizza Ziggy's Pizza Justin's Deli Market Grand and Atwater Deli Mexican Grand Deli Adan Corner Store CTown Supermarket Grand Fish Market Pop's Grocery Fair Haven Mini Market LLC La Super Marketa Fair Haven Quality Market Rodeo Records & Groceries LLC Fast Food Dunkin Donuts	Broasterant Aqui Me Quedo Pirra Gourmet Sabor A Puerto Rico Bakery 3 Angels Cafe El Bohio Cafe 2 Donde Julio Restaurant Mi Sabor Restaurant Danny's Grocery Store J & J Liquors Autentico Sabor El Mercado Marketplace Chinese Kitchen Fashion Box Viva Mexico Taqueria Laqueria Vlva Mexico Grocery Store Greek Cafe Ogunda Masa Botanica Pitta Gourmet
Package Stores	McDonalds Arroyo's Package Store Redentis Package Store Grand Vin	Morris Package Store
Shopping	Cricket Wireless Metro PCS Turq Cell Best Offer / City Life Expressions Sofia's Boutique Botanica Chango Botánica Nuevo Amanecer Dayvett's Gifts, LLC Grand Beauty Supply LLC Grand Rodeo Jazmin Varieties Inc. Variety Store Dollar King Fair Haven Furniture Grand Avenue's Smoker's Market, LLC Blue Sky Smoke Shop	Walgreens FedEx Jay's Jewelry 3 Guys Appliances Queen's Fashion Boost Mobile CT Wireless Unique Jewelry Hoe of Watches and Jewelry K Beauty Supply Park Variety Celebritees Pereira Jewelry Alexandra's Boutique Sello De Amor Dollar Tree Family Dollar BiCi Co

Other	Hartford Public Library International Driving School
	Power Lounge Entertainment Black Out Tintz
	U-haul Key Me Locksmith