

the HEALTHY HARTFORD HUB

Creating Access to Healthy, Affordable Food and Better Health Outcomes for Hartford residents

BACKGROUND

Invest Health – Hartford: In March, 2016, Hartford was one of 50 U.S. cities selected to participate in *Invest Health*, a collaborative initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Reinvestment Fund designed to develop new strategies to improve health outcomes in communities facing the greatest barriers to health. *Invest Health - Hartford* team members included the University of Connecticut, Hartford Food System, Trinity Health/St. Francis Hospital, the City of Hartford’s Dept. of Health and Human Services, northend-based nonprofit Community Solutions, and city residents.

Research confirmed that residents of the North Hartford Promise Zone (NHPZ) face the most significant barriers to health in the greater Hartford region, including a significantly higher rate of food insecurity. Only one full service supermarket is located within the city limits (a Stop & Shop on the western border) and, for cities its size (100,000 – 250,000) Hartford recently ranked as 8th worst in the US for providing access to healthy and affordable food for its residents. The *Invest Health - Hartford* team led a comprehensive effort to engage NHPZ residents and other stakeholders in a thorough assessment of the community’s food system, leading to the identification of investable opportunities for improvement. At the conclusion of the 18-month process, the top priority identified by NHPZ residents and other stakeholders was for the development of a new full-service supermarket providing affordable, high quality fruits, vegetables, meat, and dairy products.

Hartford Food Retail - Market Study: Meanwhile, during the summer of 2017, Hartford Community Loan Fund and the City of Hartford’s Dept. of Development Services partnered to commission a comprehensive market analysis to determine both the feasibility and optimal location of a potential full-service supermarket. Completed in the fall of 2017, the analysis confirmed the economic viability of a potential full-service supermarket in Hartford. The study, conducted by MTN Retail Advisors, also indicated that the NHPZ residents represented the greatest market opportunity to be served, with an additional opportunity to serve the city’s rapidly growing downtown population. As such, the optimal location for the store was determined to be the intersection of Main Street and Albany Avenue – adjacent to the southern border of the NHPZ, two blocks north of the city’s CBD, and at the heart of the soon-to-be-developed ‘Downtown North’ neighborhood, where more than 800 new residential units are slated for construction. The market study indicated a 41,000 sf full service store (ShopRite format) in this location would generate revenue of \$13.96/psf in its initial year of operations, outperforming each of the five largest existing supermarkets in a four mile radius on a sales/psf basis.



The Main/Albany intersection represents the focal point for the greatest number of CT Transit bus lines (nine) which serve NHPZ residents. With 'Zero Vehicle' households representing approximately 42% of all NHPZ households, location of the supermarket in close proximity to public transportation is considered a critical factor in a prospective store's success. Based on 2018 CT Transit bus routes, most of the 24,000 NHPZ residents will be able to access a store sited at the Main/Albany intersection in less than ten minutes from any bus stop location within the NHPZ. Currently, some NHPZ residents taking CT Transit buses to the Bloomfield Stop & Shop can spend more than an hour in transit each way (the Bloomfield Stop & Shop is the supermarket in the metro area most frequented by NHPZ residents, according to a 2018 *Invest Health - Hartford* survey). The Main/Albany location is geographically situated at the heart of the city and can be accessed by vehicle in ten minutes or less from each of Hartford's 14 residential neighborhoods.

CREATION OF THE HEALTHY HARTFORD HUB

Based on the strength of the 2017 retail food market study and the results of the *Invest Health-Hartford* (IH-H) work in the NHPZ, the concept for the Healthy Hartford Hub (HHH) was developed by the *IH-H* team in collaboration with Hartford Community Loan Fund and the Office of the Mayor of Hartford, Luke Bronin. **The HHH has two primary objectives: 1) Improve access to high quality healthy and affordable foods for city residents, especially those in the NHPZ; and 2) Improve health outcomes for city residents, especially those in the NHPZ** (see attached '*Health Outcomes & Disparities: North Hartford Promise Zone*').

With predevelopment funding provided by **Hartford Foundation for Public Giving** (HFPG) in March, 2018, the HHH team began the initial phase of work to develop the Healthy Hartford Hub – a proposed mixed-use development located at the Main/Albany target area which will combine a full-service supermarket, a variety of health-promoting services, and a parking structure. A vacant, city-owned parcel will house the supermarket, while the adjacent, now vacant Sacred Heart church will house some or all of the HHH health-promoting services, which may include a pharmacy, health clinic, wellness studio, community teaching kitchen, and healthy café. In consultation with Friends of Keney Park, the HHH will also surround, incorporate, and revitalize the historic Keney Clock Tower Park, which will become the Main Street courtyard for the development. The primary target market for the project consists of NHPZ, Downtown, and Asylum Hill neighborhood residents, although the project is also expected to draw from other Hartford and East Hartford neighborhoods with limited supermarket access.

The HHH takes inspiration from other innovative supermarket-anchored health hubs designed to positively impact health outcomes of area residents. These include the **Refresh Project** in New Orleans (<http://broadcommunityconnections.org/projects/refresh>) and the **Brockton Health Hub** in Brockton, MA (<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2015/07/11/brockton-grocery-store-and-clinic-team-deliver-better-health/ILjZr6xICdf2Buw3FNZdbL/story.html>)



Youth cooking classes at the Refresh Project, New Orleans

THE REFRESH PROJECT, NEW ORLEANS

The Refresh Project was developed by NOLA-based nonprofit, Broad Community Connections, and includes: a unique Whole Foods market designed to be affordable for lower income residents; the Goldring Center for Culinary Medicine, led by Tulane Univ.'s Medical School; Liberty's Kitchen, a youth culinary training program/café; and an onsite teaching farm. With a 2014 opening, the Refresh Project represents a \$21 million, 60,000sf development serving the residents of the Tremé – Lafitte neighborhood.

Community Benefits: With a primary goal to improve health outcomes among Hartford residents, especially those in the NHPZ, the HHH seeks to be one on the nation’s premier catalytic projects designed to bring equity to health outcomes of city residents. The proposed 35K-41Ksf supermarket itself is expected to return to Hartford at least 60% of the nearly \$40 million currently spent annually by Hartford residents travelling to the suburbs to buy groceries. The supermarket is projected to employ 75-90 PT workers and 20-30 FT staff members. Additional retail and health-promoting services are estimated to bring an additional 50-60 PT and 20 FT positions to the project. Construction of the Hub is projected to last 18 months, with 125+ construction jobs created by the \$21 - \$24 million project.

Key members of the HHH Project Team include the following:

Uplift Solutions is a NJ-based consulting group retained to assist with identification of the anchor supermarket and other health-promoting tenants most appropriate for the HHH project. Uplift works across the country to support food businesses, local governments, and nonprofits in creating sustainable access to fresh and healthy food, nutrition education, and health care in underserved communities.

Affirmative Investments (AI), a Boston-based mission-oriented developer, is overseeing the HHH project. AI responsibilities include securing site control of key parcels for development, assembling financing, coordinating architectural, engineering, traffic, and parking work, and collaborating with Uplift Solutions to identify and secure HHH tenants. AI has closed over 70 New Market Tax Credit-financed transactions across the country (NMTC will be a critical component of HHH financing).

With a mission to fight hunger and improve nutrition in our community, and an original member of the **IH-Hartford** team, **Hartford Food System (HFS)** oversees the HHH community advisory task force (CATF), consisting of residents from the Asylum Hill, Downtown, & NHPZ neighborhoods. Input of the CATF members contributes to the formation and design of the project, along with tenant selection. Assisting with community outreach and engagement is **Voices of Women of Color**, a social justice corporation empowering women of color to be increasingly engaged in private and public sector initiatives.

The **North Hartford Triple Aim Collaborative (NHTAC)** is providing critical oversight for the determination of the most appropriate health-promoting services to be included in the HHH. NHTAC Leadership Council members include **Trinity Health/St. Francis, Hartford Healthcare, Connecticut Childrens Medical Center, Connecticut Health Foundation, United Way, UConn, Hartford’s Dept. of Health & Human Services**, the **NHPZ Administrator (Mayor’s Office)**, a resident leader appointee by the NHPZ’s Neighborhood Revitalization Zones (NRZs), and **Wellville**. The Collaborative serves as the Health & Wellness workgroup for the NHPZ with a mission to create greater alignment, collaboration, and collective action among residents, organizations, government and investors working together for the benefit of Promise Zone residents.

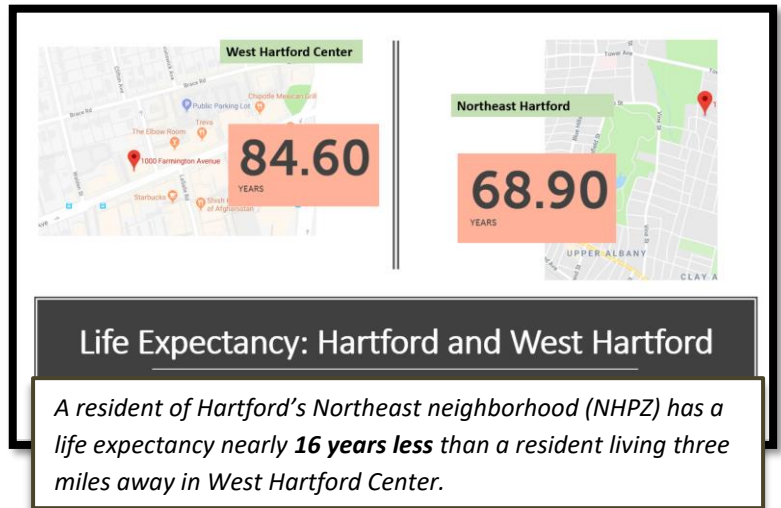
In the spring of 2019, the NHTAC will oversee a market assessment to identify and determine the feasibility of various clinical and non-clinical services to promote health and wellbeing that might be integrated in space adjacent to the proposed supermarket. NHTAC has contracted with Uplift Solutions to assist with this work.

Hartford Community Loan Fund serves as project coordinator for the Healthy Hartford Hub. HCLF is a community development financial institution (CDFI) which provides financing for investments that benefit the low-wealth residents of Hartford.

The **Mayor of Hartford**, Luke M. Bronin, coordinates support from the City’s **Department of Development Services** and the **Department of Health and Human Services**. Mayor Bronin has pushed for creation of such a project since taking office in 2016, and has played a critical role in securing early financing commitments from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, State of Connecticut, LISC, BlueHub (formerly Boston Community Capital), Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation, Trinity Health, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and others.

HEALTH OUTCOMES & DISPARITIES: NORTH HARTFORD PROMISE ZONE

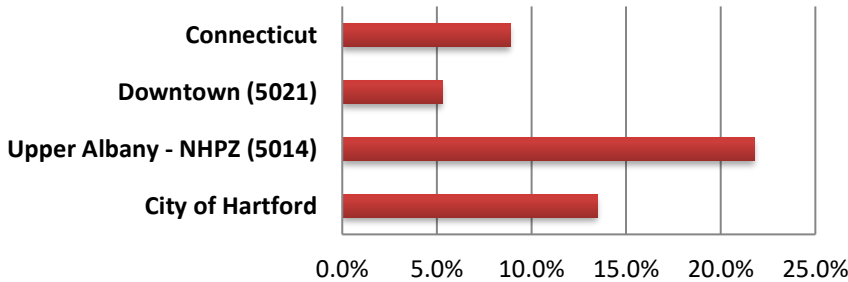
Health outcomes of residents in the **North Hartford Promise Zone (NHPZ)** are among the worst in Connecticut and **reflect significant disparities** when compared to outcomes of residents of the city's downtown neighborhood and other communities in the region. Key disparities with a substantial impact on life expectancy include diet-related diseases such as **diabetes, hypertension, and obesity.**



Life Expectancy graphic from CT Health Foundation. Other data taken from www.cityhealthdashboard.com

Diabetes

Rates among group (census tract)

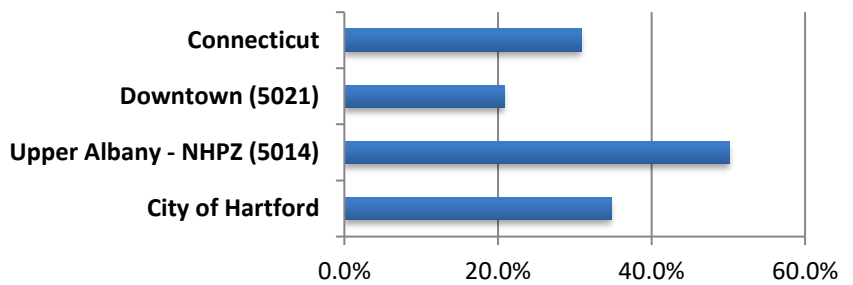


A resident in Hartford's NHPZ is more than **4x** as likely to suffer from diabetes as a resident in the city's downtown neighborhood.

1 out of 2 black women in the NHPZ suffer from hypertension (high blood pressure), a rate nearly 50% higher than experienced by caucasian women statewide.

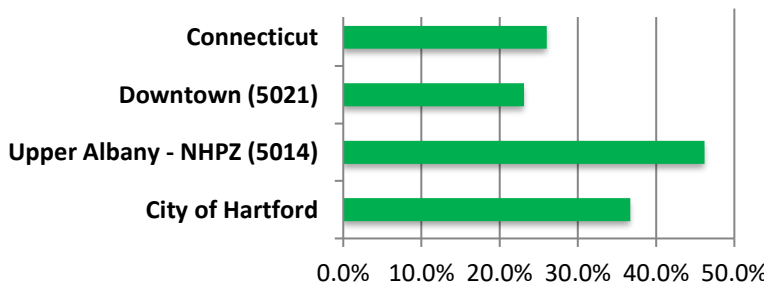
Hypertension

Rates among group (census tract)



Obesity

Rates among group (census tract)



A Hartford resident living three blocks north of Dunkin Donuts stadium is **2x** as likely to suffer from obesity as a resident living three blocks south of the stadium. *Obesity significantly increases the likelihood of diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke.*