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# Community Development and its Socioeconomic Impact on a Latino Enclave: A Case Study of the Frog Hollow Neighborhood in Hartford, Connecticut

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the Frog Hollow Neighborhood in Hartford, Connecticut

Reinaldo Rojas

University of Connecticut, 2015

The topic of low-income neighborhoods and the different approaches to community development dominate the national discussion on urban revitalization and poverty reduction. The debate is ongoing, regardless of whether economic development models serve the broader interests of the community or the narrow interests of proponents and benefactors. This study analyzes the impact of urban revitalization projects in the Frog Hollow neighborhood of Hartford, Connecticut, an impoverished but vibrant Latino enclave in the city. Frog Hollow underwent a highly publicized series of revitalization projects during the 2000s, where business owners, community organizations and local government were involved in both development and implementation.

This study focuses on three areas: (a) identifying the history, goals, strategies, and tactics behind the community economic development model used in Frog Hollow; (b) examining the impact of these revitalization projects on the socioeconomic conditions of the neighborhood and its residents; and (c) determining how being a poor, Puerto Rican/Latino enclave impacted the design, process, and implementation of community development projects. By looking at archival and census data, and interviewing key stakeholders, this case study analyzes the impact of urban revitalization on a densely populated ethnic district and its residents, contributing to the body of social work literature on the best practices of community revitalization and development.

Community Development and its Socioeconomic Impact on a Latino Enclave: A Case Study of  
the Frog Hollow Neighborhood in Hartford, Connecticut

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A Dissertation

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2015

APPROVAL PAGE

Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation

Community Development and its Socioeconomic Impact on a Latino Enclave: A Case Study of  
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## **Introduction**

The problem of urban poverty and the revitalization of impoverished and neglected low-income neighborhoods is a constant topic among political and development circles in urban centers. Discussions about how cities can reinvigorate themselves and which models of community development are most appropriate dominate the discourse, and are the focus of many studies on community development.

### **Neoliberalization and Community Development**

Newman and Ashton (2004) suggest that a neoliberal policy regime, focused on revitalizing cities by decreasing poverty and increasing low- and moderate-income homeownership, can create new funding decision environments for the redevelopment of select inner-urban neighborhoods. Van Der Berk-Clark and Pyles (2011) argue that this type of regime focuses (too much) on asset development, human capital building, and social capital enhancement to alleviate poverty and improve conditions in the neighborhood. This results in a process of neighborhood redevelopment that is driven primarily by local political actors, and community development organizations already struggling in resource-poor environments. Further, this process most benefits those with a vested interest in urban revitalization, such as moderate-income homebuyers. This process would, in turn, displace poor and less connected residents (Newman & Ashton, 2004).

DeFilippis, Fisher and Shragge (2010) argue that neoliberalism is a constitutive part of community practice in contemporary America. Within contemporary, community-based efforts there is an acceptance of the free market as the principal arbiter in the allocation of goods, services, wealth, and income in society. Furthermore, even within the current context of a free

market, with a greater recognition of market failures, there is relatively little interest in theorizing about other, alternative economic relations in society (DeFilippis, et al., 2010).

Although there is substantial social work literature about community development and its impact on neighborhoods (Rothman, 2001; Rubin & Rubin, 2007; Weil & Gamble, 1995), there have been limited studies of economic development models and the processes used to achieve certain goals. Wiewel, Teitz and Giloth (2012) explain that despite decades of neighborhood-based economic development, social work still does not have a comprehensive theory of economic community development that encompasses both a complete economic perspective and a sociopolitical condition analysis.

This study contributes to the community economic development literature in social work by trying to understand not only the process used in Frog Hollow, but also the impact on the community of a top-down, business-oriented model of community economic development.

### **The Case of Frog Hollow**

Located in central Hartford, Frog Hollow stretches along Capitol Avenue, from the west side of the State Capitol to Laurel Street, and then south towards Trinity College. From its origins as an area full of housing for the factory workers along Capitol Avenue, Frog Hollow has long been a working-class neighborhood. The area is rich in history, ranging from Pope Park, designed by The Olmstead Brothers Company, to the nation's second-oldest high school, Hartford Public High (Grant, 1989).

Among all other Hartford neighborhoods, Frog Hollow most resembles a New York-style urban area, with its retail and dense residential sections interwoven together to create a friendly, inviting and walkable neighborhood. Frog Hollow's residential area was originally developed with three- and six-unit buildings, to house the immigrant population working in the factories



that lined Capitol Avenue. This historic architecture includes the row houses on Columbia Street and Park Terrace that line the sidewalks and help to create a neighborly feeling. (Grant, 1989). It attracted elite residents and stakeholders who recognized its potential as an important cultural center and commercial district for the city. Today, despite its high concentration of poverty and extreme social problems caused by marginalization, Frog Hollow remains a vibrant and colorful neighborhood.

Frog Hollow is a historically unique Hartford neighborhood; it is a storehouse of memories of many different eras of the city's history. Some residents remember it as a bustling manufacturing center, while others recall it as a colorful melting pot of ethnic culture and tradition. Many remember the area's bargain stores around the commercial hub of Park Street. Those memories combine to describe Frog Hollow as a remarkably well-preserved urban environment, illustrating the historical interplay between industrial, residential and commercial development (Pawlowski & Dollard, n.d.).

By the early 1990s, however, Hartford's economic decline left Frog Hollow with blighted housing, abandoned buildings and struggling businesses. Because of Frog Hollow's importance as a commercial district to the city of Hartford and the state of Connecticut, public and private dollars found their way into the neighborhood. After delays and negotiations, Frog Hollow underwent a series of revitalization projects during the 2000s. These included landscape redesign, traffic calming, street improvements, business and building renovations, and several homeownership projects.

This study assessed the impact of the Frog Hollow revitalization projects on the socioeconomic conditions and social fabric of the neighborhood and its residents. Because Frog Hollow is the area with the highest concentration of Latinos in all of Hartford, this study also

assessed how the ethnic, racial, and cultural nuances of *Latinidad* in Frog Hollow (Dávila, 2004) have impacted community development projects and their outcomes.

Latinos, predominately Puerto Ricans, have primarily experienced the historical and contemporary marginalization and poverty in Frog Hollow. For example, Kuzyk (2001) details how a massive migration of Puerto Ricans to Hartford in the 1960s and 1970s created a concentration of Puerto Ricans in the city so high that by 1990, almost one-third of the population of Hartford identified themselves as Puerto Rican. Most of those people were concentrated in the Frog Hollow neighborhood and its surroundings. There is a critical ethno-cultural dimension to the marginalization, discrimination, and poverty experienced by Frog Hollow's residents. The 1990 Census showed that Puerto Rican poverty was 30 percent nationally, and 47.5 percent in Hartford (Rivera-Batiz & Santiago, 1994). Current data indicates that 45 percent of the residents of Frog Hollow live below the poverty line (Hartfordinfo, 2013). Cruz (1998) emphasized that neighborhood political mobilization in Frog Hollow has had limited impact on longstanding social and economic inequalities affecting Puerto Ricans. He argued that the power structure was penetrable, but only to a limited degree. Although some Puerto Ricans were able to amass political and economic capital, it only benefited those few that managed to penetrate the governmental structure and develop connections; it did not benefit the plural community as a whole (Cruz, 1998).

Critics speculate about what happened in Frog Hollow. The central city government, working with neighborhood business elites, imposed a narrow economic development model on the community, with little consideration of alternative models or for the implications that using the model would have on social and community conditions. Taking advantage of the marginalization and poverty present in the neighborhood, economic development was

implemented without the full input from the larger community. The developers considered the neighborhood's ethnicity, but only in a simplistic, commercialized way, focusing on Latino food markets, restaurants, and shops.

The results of this case study analyze what happened in the poor Latino community of Frog Hollow. It contributes to social work and community development studies overall by shedding light on the nature of top-down, community economic development models, and their implications for community organization theory and practice. This study also provides social work and community organizing literature a focus on Latino community development projects; through this study, a direct voice is given to key Latino stakeholders who shared their reactions to and perceptions of the outcomes of such economic developments, and how the community and its members were affected.

### **Significance, Rationale and Justification**

There were three main areas of interest for this research: (a) to identify the nature and effectiveness of the community economic development model used in this neighborhood's urban revitalization project; (b) to assess how being an impoverished Latino enclave impacted the process of community economic development; and (c) to determine the overall impact of the revitalization project on the socioeconomic conditions and community-building aspects of the neighborhood.

Three distinct methods were employed, adding to the feasibility of a study of this magnitude. Archival data was used to situate the neighborhood and its social and political conditions in time, including the periods pre- and post-revitalization. The archival data also provided a description and analysis of the community economic development that was implemented. Census and economic data obtained from the time period before and after the

revitalization project implementation was utilized, to compare the two and determine the impact of the project on the socioeconomic conditions of the neighborhood. Interviews with developers, community residents, and members of community-based organizations were analyzed, to determine perceptions about the development and the impact of the development on different groups in the community.

One of the interests of this study lies in understanding the level of involvement of community members in the process of neighborhood revitalization. To achieve that objective, the study depended mostly on interviews with residents and other stakeholders. This study sought to determine what their roles were during the process of the urban revitalization project, as well as to examine the barriers to greater grassroots participation. The emphasis on community involvement situates this case study in the literature of community development and organization, and it contributes knowledge-building facts about community participation, processes, and challenges for future community projects, especially for impoverished Latino communities.

Another significance point about this study was its measure of the outcomes of the revitalization projects for different groups in the neighborhood. The literature of Latino enclaves indicates that cultural identity is used to define space, and helps determine how residents perceive and interact within that space (Dávila, 2004). Furthermore, the literature indicates that different levels of power also have an influence on defining space, perception, and the effect of outcomes felt by specific groups (Dinzey-Flores, 2008). This study examined those different levels of power by accessing three different actors in the development project: (a) the developers and political classes, including City Hall, the institutions and the community development

corporations; (b) the business sector, which largely supported the projects; and (c) residents and neighborhood-based organizations at the grassroots level.

Serious problems remain in Hartford and other similar, de-industrialized cities in the Northeast. These cities have large immigrant and Latino populations concentrated within inner districts, and are shadows of what they used to be, lacking a sustainable employment infrastructure. This study intends to contribute to a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by diverse segments of these immigrant and Latino communities and the role community development can play.

### **Research Questions**

There are several research questions for this study.

1. What were the origins of the urban revitalization project and how did the project changed over time?
2. What was the history, goals, strategies, and tactics behind the type of commercial community economic development model used in this urban revitalization project?
3. What role did neighborhood Latino identity play in the process of the urban revitalization projects? Whose identity was reflected?
4. What was the impact of the overall community development projects on the socioeconomic conditions of neighborhood residents, including the impact on homeownership, income, employment, density, and education?
5. What was the impact of these community development projects on the commercial stability of the neighborhood, including business growth, diversity, earnings, and stability?
6. Which community group - political, business or residential - benefited most from the project completion?
7. What was the level of participation by the different groups, including from the political, commercial, and residential sectors?
8. What was the response of the community on the implementation of a commercial, community economic development model?
9. What was the perception of each group before and after the completion of the revitalization projects, based on expectations and outcomes?

## **Chapter One: Literature Review**

There are numerous overlapping elements that were related to the context, process, and outcomes of the urban revitalization project in Frog Hollow. A clear understanding of these elements allowed us to determine the different community development processes that were utilized during revitalization; analyze the socioeconomic impact for residents, developers, and community organizations on a Latino enclave in Hartford; and situate these results in critical theoretical debates.

### **Conceptual Framework**

There were several theoretical areas considered for this study. First, theories of community economic development and the socioeconomic impact of such development on a specific community and its residents were considered. Second, theories of social exclusion and marginalization, as experienced by Latinos or other ethnic minorities concentrated in urban neighborhoods, and the efforts of community development in these areas were reviewed. Regime theory, which views urban power as fragmented and examines the collaborative arrangements through which local governments and private actors assemble the capacity to govern, was also reviewed (Mossberger & Stoker, 2001). Also explored, how the process of development occurred and the role that regime actors, both political and private, might have had in the revitalization project. Finally, the concept of community resiliency - the ability to anticipate risk, limit its impact, and bounce back rapidly through a means of survival, adaptability, evolution, and growth (Community and Regional Resilience Institute, 2013) - was considered. Overall, determining how Frog Hollow coped with the changes that revitalization and development brought to the neighborhood and the community was addressed by using this conceptual framework.

## **Frog Hollow's Industrial and Immigrant Past**

The neighborhood gets its name from a marsh hollow located near the corner of Ward and Broad Streets. Residents say the marsh was the breeding ground for a substantial frog population. Most of the area was farmland until the mid-19th century, when several manufacturers and Hartford industrialists constructed production plants around Park River (in the northern part of the neighborhood), developing factories for rifles, arms, and sewing machines. Colonel Albert Pope, the father of the bicycle in America, settled in Frog Hollow in 1878 to commence production of the Columbia bicycle, and eventually started producing automobiles as well in 1895 (Pawloski & Dollard, n.d.).

Between 1880 and 1920, the industrial activity along Capitol Avenue stimulated the rapid development of residential property in the area immediately south of that industrial sector. This era saw the emergence of Frog Hollow's most characteristic type of residence: three- or six-unit homes, divided horizontally into flats, called "perfect sixes." The variety of ethnic churches, schools, and clubs which remain in the neighborhood today suggest a diversity of immigrant laborers, drawn to Frog Hollow during this time period to fill industrial jobs. This labor force was made up of Danish, Swedish, German, Irish, French Canadian, Lithuanian, Polish, and Greek laborers, in the first ethnic wave (Campbell, 2014). Puerto Ricans arrived later, in the 1960s, with the Portuguese and South Americans adding to this mix by the 1980s. More recently, Vietnamese and Central Americans have made up the latest wave of immigrants over the last 10 to 15 years (Hispanic Hartford, 2014). This diversity of ethnic groups is what makes Frog Hollow socially and culturally rich.

Park Street is the commercial backbone of the neighborhood. More than any other thoroughfare in Hartford, Park Street remains true to its origins: it is a narrow, often congested,



and gritty street that exudes more life and energy than any other in the city (Smith, 2002). It was the mainstay of the city when factories lined the Park River, making Park Street the commercial and social focus of the neighborhood. It was lined with tightly spaced, three- and four-story brick structures, with shops, and restaurants at street level and apartments above; churches and ethnic social clubs were interspersed throughout. It was one of the city's most desirable retail districts until the 1950s, when the loss of nearby industry and a trend towards suburbanization sapped much of its vitality.

In many ways, Park Street is the most livable street in Hartford. It has a manageable width, with lots of pedestrian activity. It has a dense population and its original low-rise, multiuse brick buildings remain intact, and have not been ruined or razed like those on other thoroughfares in Hartford. Park Street is arguably the city's most urban and cultural strip. Because of its endurance and resiliency, Park Street has been the focus of many revitalization efforts. It is considered the lifeblood of the entire neighborhood, in part because of its spatial relationship with the surrounding community. The business sector benefits from having residents who are also consumers, and residents benefit by having stores and restaurants catering to their needs.

### **Puerto Ricans in Frog Hollow**

The massive migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States resulted from Operation Bootstrap, a coordinated, rapid-industrialization effort launched in the 1940s and 1950s by the United States and the commonwealth government of the island (Ramos-Zayas, 1998). The search for cheap factory labor, combined with an intense recruitment of Puerto Rican farmers to tobacco farms around the Connecticut River valley, impacted Hartford, as large numbers of Puerto Ricans arrived in the city during the 1950s and 1960s (Morales, 1986). Unemployed farm

workers and sharecroppers from Puerto Rico made up the majority, however, skilled plant, factory, and restaurant workers also came. All were lured by the prospect of steady work on the tobacco farms, the possibility of industrial employment, and the ability to join family members already there (Cruz, 1998). Originally settling in the Clay Arsenal neighborhood of Hartford, Puerto Ricans moved a little to the south of the city about a decade later and concentrated in the Frog Hollow, South Green and Sheldon Charter Oak neighborhoods (Kuzyk, 2001). By 1990, Hartford had the largest concentration of Puerto Ricans in the United States per capita, with 27 percent of city residents identifying themselves as Puerto Rican, according to Rivera-Batiz and Santiago (1994).

Due to such a high concentration of Latinos in Frog Hollow - the 2000 Census indicates 70 percent of neighborhood residents identified as Latino, and most of those as Puerto Rican (Hartfordinfo, 2013) - issues like discrimination and prejudice have been deeply felt and have had a long-lasting impact on residents. Cruz (1998) indicates that poverty and marginalization became the defining elements of Puerto Rican life in Hartford, despite the fact that not all Puerto Ricans who migrated to Hartford were poor. Commenting specifically on Puerto Ricans, Grosfoguel (1999) explained that during and after their migration, this group suffered some of the worst socioeconomic conditions on the mainland. Negative public opinion of the Puerto Rican migrants combined with discrimination contributed to the deterioration of the social conditions of their new communities. The Puerto Rican migrants suffered from overcrowded and dilapidated housing; a lack of institutional support for education; poor medical services; oppression; and over-policing by law enforcement, which created rocky relations with police and an overrepresentation of Puerto Ricans in the criminal justice system. All of these issues, combined with their unskilled, agricultural, working-class backgrounds, and a negative socio-

political mode of incorporation resulted in a massive marginalization from the primary labor market and society (Grosfoguel, 1999).

Taking a closer look at the neighborhood in question, Cruz (1998) conducted a comprehensive and in-depth study of Puerto Rican politics in Hartford. Cruz argued that despite poverty, discrimination, and marginalization, the high concentration of Puerto Ricans in Frog Hollow facilitated an ethnic political mobilization, which promoted the development of leaders and organizational efforts, acting as a counterweight to the forces of poverty and marginalization. However, Cruz (1998) concluded that ethnic politics like those used in Hartford are limited; although the process of empowerment is structured by prompting and organizing mobilization around cultural, linguistic, and political issues, it does not transfer into incorporation and responsiveness. Identity and ethnic politics gave Puerto Ricans representation and a way inside the Hartford political arena, but it also complicated the exercise of power because of an autocratic and exclusionary system of governance (Cruz, 1998). Puerto Ricans managed to penetrate the structures of power in the city, but only a few were able to benefit from the system overall - some by becoming part of the business and economic class and some by going into the political establishment. According to Cruz (1998) despite its successes in helping many, the process failed to improve the conditions of the Puerto Rican community as a whole.

### **Marginalization**

Based on the struggles of Puerto Rican people and their migration patterns to Hartford, especially to the neighborhood of Frog Hollow, it is critical to consider the issue of marginalization. Young (2000) explained that the concept of social exclusion and marginalization refers to processes in which individuals or entire communities are systematically blocked from rights, opportunities, and resources (e.g. housing, employment, healthcare, civic

engagement, democratic participation, and due process) that are normally available to members of society and which are key to social integration. The outcome of social exclusion is that affected individuals or communities are prevented from participating fully in the economic, social, and political life of the society in which they live (Young, 2000).

Another theory used to understand marginalized and oppressed groups is Wilson's urban underclass model. According to Wilson (1987), concentrated poverty tends to perpetuate the social disadvantage of inner-city residents and feeds pathological behaviors, like welfare dependency, single-female headed households, and violent crime. Other writers, like Moore and Pinderhughes (1993), rejected urban underclass theory as a way to understand Latino poverty. They claimed that that theory failed to consider two points: segregation patterns, which are not as severe for Latinos as for African- Americans; and Latino barrios, which have more stability and social institutions because of constant, massive immigration that replenishes communities. It is important to note, however, that Puerto Ricans, more than other Latinos, are the group most similar to the Wilson model since historically, Puerto Ricans have had high segregation rates. In fact, the culture of poverty thesis, developed by studying Puerto Rican families, was what spawned the underclass debate. In addition, Puerto Rican migration can be substantially different from other Latino immigration.

Expanding on the marginalization of Latinos and immigrants, Grosfoguel (1999) applied the socio-political mode of incorporation to the issue of marginalization, to analyze a particular immigrant group's labor market. Incorporation is the outcome of the interaction between the class origins of the immigrant group, and the multiple social determinations composed by the socio-political mode of incorporation within the host society. In other words, incorporation depends on four factors: (a) whether the host government's policy is one of active support of, or

in opposition to the immigrant group; (b) whether public opinion is of acceptance or discrimination; (c) whether the country of origin is perceived by the core group as a friend or an enemy; and (d) whether immigrants have access to a community that provides capital and social networks of solidarity to the newly arrived, or not. Together, all these issues make a significant difference in terms of the particular mode of incorporation of immigrants into the labor and social arenas (Grosfoguel, 1999).

### **Latino Enclaves**

To further understand the problems of marginalization and the ethnic and identity politics of the Frog Hollow neighborhood, a review of other studies of Latino enclaves and neighborhoods around the nation is required. The growing research on the urban Latino experience reconstructs the historical role of Latinos in American cities and how they have shaped and inhabited these cities (Dinze-Flores, 2008). As an increasing number of American cities are becoming more Latino or “Latinized,” with 17 percent of the population claiming Hispanic or Latino origins in 2010 (U.S. Census, 2013), these research studies have shown exactly how urban spaces have been redefined and shaped by Latinos.

In an in-depth community study of New York City’s East Harlem, known to locals as Spanish Harlem or El Barrio, Dávila (2004) explored the role of race and ethnicity in creating distinct urban spaces for Latinos. The author convincingly illustrated how understanding the ethnic, racial, and cultural nuances of *Latinidad*, which is defined as identity based on ethnicity, supports the implementation of neighborhood projects, and how these projects, which are driven by local communities, have better outcomes (Dávila, 2004). However, traditional development, which is dependent on outside sources for funding, tends to support more projects that lack local and cultural connections, thereby creating projects that feel alien to the local community, such as

commercial districts in urban areas that tend to bring in outsiders but drive locals away (Dávila, 2004).

Dinzey-Flores (2008) argued that the sociological concept of framing offers us a conceptual basis from which to analyze the various relationships to the built environment. Framing also provides an alternative mode for understanding the production of space. The author claimed that how people perceive space and place is important not only for the implications of community development, but also for understanding cultural variations in spatial form, perception, and practices. A full exploration of the cultural variations of framing, such as how intergenerational redefinitions of “Puerto Rican-ness” or “Latino-ness” recalibrate relationships to space, are important to consider. Studies like these viewed Puerto Ricans as a cultural group and interlocutors of culture, which help to mediate their spatial claims (Dinzey-Flores, 2008).

In an analysis of Latino community efforts in Chicago, which utilized an alternative model of community development, Ana Ramos-Zayas (1998) explained that activists and barrio residents deployed the idea of the Puerto Rican nation. This was a means to delineate an urban space in which an authentic “Puerto Rican-ness” was able to exist, distinguished from Puerto Rican identities associated with conservative religious factions, professional Latino elites, and middle class suburbanites. Ramos-Zayas (1998) further argued that in Chicago and elsewhere, the concept of the Puerto Rican nation has become the instrumental, political, and cultural ideology, formulated from community-building efforts among barrio activists and residents. Small (2002) contended that in Boston, as the boundaries around a previously segregated Puerto Rican neighborhood were threatened by the urban renewal processes, official symbols of the

Puerto Rican nation were strategically deployed to symbolically re-appropriate physical and political urban spaces.

However, other studies point to divisions in the concept of Latino identity. Dávila (2004) revealed that although in El Barrio the presence of a diversity of Latinos creates a distinctive sense of place, this diversity also creates both unifying and divisive forces. The author further discussed the fact that although the connections among different Latino cultures add to neighborhood identity based on ethnicity, which she called *Latinidad*, there are separateness issues that inhibit the projection of a completely unified culture in El Barrio (Dávila, 2004). These seem to speak against the issue of homogeneity in Latino neighborhoods, as groups like Mexicans, Colombians, and Dominicans create a contested space and a contested community, with each group looking out for their own well-being, stature, and power.

The literature indicated that the divided nature of Latino ethnic identity - a central aspect of this study - needs to be explored and carefully considered. Frog Hollow is a Latino neighborhood that although predominantly Puerto Rican, is quite diverse when it comes to the different Latino groups that coexist within it. The literature further illustrated that the competition among these groups for resources and political positions, combined with class and access to power, creates significant barriers and divisions. This demonstrated the need for further exploration, consideration, and analysis of Latino identity in this distinctive neighborhood.

### **Community Economic Development**

The modern community development corporation (CDC) was born by the enactment of the Economic Opportunity Act in 1964. This created a new vehicle for community-based organizing, planning, and activism: the community action program (CAP) (DeFilippis, 2012).

Within three years, the Economic Opportunity Act shifted away from community activism towards additional economic development activities and, by 1970, had transformed the CAP into the CDC model, with more than 100 CDCs operating across the country, seeking bottom-up comprehensive redevelopment (DeFilippis, 2012). These CDCs intended to help communities to determine how to conduct redevelopment, build more homes and businesses owned by community members, and treat physical conditions in terms of redevelopment and regeneration (Stoecker, 2012). In the late 1970s, CDCs, with all their virtues and drawbacks, were the central component of the limited but significant, federally-assisted neighborhood development movement (Fisher, 1994).

According to Stoecker (2012), this model only worked if investors and community members had complementary interests. Despite the model appearing to be egalitarian and democratically sound, it was based on a free market philosophy. The rise of conservative politics in the 1980s and the formulation of a neoliberal development orthodoxy directly challenged the radical populism and institutional statism of earlier community development. The neoliberal approach regards local economic development as a mechanism for promoting capitalism on the local level and for integrating poor communities into the global capitalist culture (Midgley & Livermore, 2005). During this decade, CDCs experienced drastic cuts in government support. The privatization campaigns of the Reagan administration forced CDCs into becoming more business-oriented than their predecessors, with an emphasis on bottom line, economic success. This transformed them from community organizations into entities more like small businesses and investment projects (Stoecker, 2012).

After the globalization of the 1970s, political realignment and what is now call state-supported neoliberalism served to undermine the social action of the community organizing



model. This caused the community economic development industry to establish itself, using the archetypical CDC model (Sites, Chaskin & Parks, 2012). According to Stoutland (1999), the CDCs redefined the community development model from its origins of addressing community revitalization to a more holistic model, emphasizing the economic side of development with more business-related, brick-and-mortar projects. The CDCs shifted the concept from community participation and accountability to entrepreneurial inventiveness. This shift redefined communities that were formerly lower-income or minority as mixed-income (Halpern, 1995).

The literature illustrates sharply the ongoing debate about community development in social work. Sites et al. (2012) explored the debate between proponents of the two models of community development. On one hand, there are those that see economic development as the cornerstone of community development. On the other, some see community building as the most essential aspect. Writing from a social work perspective and following the process of community organizing and empowerment, Rothman (2001) argued that community-based development occurs when people strengthen the bonds within their neighborhoods, build social networks, and form their own organizations to provide long term capacities for problem solving. An important part of this type of development is neighborhood planning, which Rothman (2001) further defined as the development of plans and programs by and for community residents, which leads to community empowerment. Community-based development is seen as a more democratic way to develop low-income neighborhoods and cities because it's participatory. More residents are involved in the planning process and it provides them with more live-improving skills.

Despite its enormous contribution to social work practice, Rothman's model (2001) did not address the issue of economic development per se. Instead it focused on what he called locality development, a way to foster community building by promoting goals like community competency and social integration. Conversely, leading social work academics like Weil and Gamble (1995) and Rubin and Rubin (2007) added a model to the social work community practice that merges social and economic development. This recognized that in low-income, oppressed, and isolated communities, the creation of stronger and more sustainable institutions and resources requires attention. Its central purpose is to give people the ability to plan and initiate their own projects, to improve social conditions, and to build economic resources and opportunities that are appropriate for and in keeping with the culture of the community (Weil, 1996). It is important to note that while addressing economic development, Weil's model still recommended intensive involvement in the process by community members.

Wiewel et al. (2012) introduced eight different approaches to economic development practice, and how each strategy varies depending on the neighborhood composition and needs. The approaches are: business retention; commercial revitalization; business ventures; entrepreneurship; neighborhood capital accumulation; education and training; labor-based development; and community organizing. The one that seems to fit Frog Hollow is commercial revitalization, which involves promoting the economic growth of commercial districts by sponsoring marketing campaigns, special districts, commercial management, business attraction and retention, and targeted real estate development (Wiewel et al., 2012). The assumptions of this model are: (a) that the commercial area needs to be linked to the neighborhood; (b) that it needs to have an economic, regional hierarchy to commercial areas that are constantly evolving, particularly in response to decline of city populations and the growth of suburbia; and (c) that it

needs to be or appear to be in socio-political decline. Interestingly, for the revitalization to be effective incomes need to stay modest and there can be no competition from other districts or areas.

The central tension regarding the economic development model is that it neither lifts neighborhoods out of poverty nor preserves them from gentrification, while these areas struggle to sustain grassroots participation and accountability (Sites et al., 2012). The community building that is favored by the social work profession has made social networks and institutional collaborations a central link between physical redevelopment and group empowerment (Beck & Eichler, 2000). One of the central points that this study of Frog Hollow addressed are the implications of using a model with an economic focus for revitalization, instead of a model with community building as its central component. Understanding these implications contributes to the debate within the social work and community organizing literature, regarding the limitations and virtue of competing development models.

### **Regime Theory**

Considering community development, it would be useful to look at models of development in urban areas where the collaboration between government and business has been analyzed using the lens of regime theory. Regime theory analysis views power as fragmented and regimes as the collaborative arrangements through which local governments and private actors assemble the capacity to govern. It has been the dominant paradigm in the field of urban politics and policy over the last 25 years (Mossberger & Stoker, 2001).

One of the basic propositions of regime theory, Elkin (1987) argued, is that the division of labor between the state and market has manifested in cities to the point that city politics are a profoundly economic-oriented enterprise. On one side of this division is the state (i.e., local and

sometimes state government), which provides the city with a range of collective goods and is popularly controlled via elections. On the other side is the free market, which provides economic investment and development for the city and is controlled by private business. Because this division of labor estranges public power from economic activity, the state is left too weak to accomplish the complex policy tasks required for effective governance of the city. Therefore, local public officials need to form cooperative arrangements with private actors, to create the capacity to govern effectively. Elkin asserted (1987) that the governing of the city is bound with economic matters in direct and powerful ways, so that there can be no study of city politics without the study of the economy and economics actors. City governments are interested in the economic performance of industries that operate within their borders, so there's extensive contact between city officials and local businessmen, who meet with the goal of keeping these industries healthy. In addition Elkin (1987) claimed that growth politics means viewing the city via a pattern of land use; further, when a growth-oriented alliance between city officials and private business is consummated, the rearranging of land use patterns is a typical result.

There are two types of political economies: pluralist and federalist. Pluralist, which is found in cities in the northeast, means that older industrial cities had to reshape the landscape of their downtowns, to improve transportation to the business district. The reorganization of downtown Hartford in the 1950s and 1960s falls into this category. Federalist economies result as the mobilization of neighborhood forces imposes a strain on the effectiveness of governing coalitions, thus making governments dependent on more federal dollars for development.

Another giant of regime theory, Stone (1989), explained that regime is specifically about the informal arrangements that surround and complement the formal workings of governmental authority. Stone further claimed that because local government authority is, by law and tradition,

even more limited than authority at the street and national level, informal arrangements assume special importance in urban politics. A regime involves an informal yet relatively stable group, with access to institutional resources that enable it to have a sustained role in making government decisions. The regime is purposive, created and maintained as a way of facilitating action. Stone (1989) thought of cities as organizations that lack a conjoining command structure, with sectors independent of one another, thus viewing informal arrangements to promote cooperation as especially useful.

Stone (1989) contended that in forming governing coalitions, public officials seek to bolster their limited resources with resources held by large corporate organizations and actors. Because the city corporate business community is likely to hold a concentration of resources useful for accomplishing complex policy tasks, they make for attractive coalition partners. Hence, the regime formation process privileges private business. As a result, most urban regimes revolve around a cooperative arrangement between state officials and business leaders (Stone, 1989). The power wielded by these regimes stems largely from their ability to accomplish these complex policy tasks. This approach viewed political power more in terms of social production rather than in terms of social control.

The ascendancy of the regime paradigm to its position as the dominant empirical theory of urban politics has made it the subject of debate and scrutiny. Some criticize its locality orientation, which ignores the external environment and focuses on the city's internal politics. Others, like Imbroscio (1998), criticized its rigidity in the conceptualization of the division between state and market. His argument being that this public-private split is static because the economic development structures remain beyond the reach of the political process. Imbroscio (1998) proposed that we can have three alternative conceptions to the division of labor. The first

concept is where the local government plays an expanded and more direct role in the city's accumulation process via the enhancement of public property ownership and public profit making. The second concept is a division of labor where the community acts as a third sector beyond the state and the private entities, with a community economic development movement at the center, much like CDCs and their ability to act as representatives of the community. The third concept is a division of labor that was not considered by regime theory, one where small-scale entrepreneurs and urban agents move away from large, for-profit corporations, and towards smaller entrepreneurs. The private sector does not need to be represented only by large corporations; it might be more diversified, if driven by an array of small, independent businesses. Based on this alternative division of labor, Imbroscio (1998) presented three variations of the urban regime: one that is community based; one that is organized around small businesses; and one that considers the ability of the state to be an agent of wealth development.

Davies (2002) criticized regime theory because it failed to recognize larger economic structures and how these affect local political institutions and the balance of power within them. Furthermore, he argued that it is not enough to acknowledge the influence of the free market economy on local processes; it is necessary to explain how fluctuations of the free market enable or constrain political options (Davies, 2002). By straying away from Marxist structuralism theories, regime theory fails to see the true relationship between regime and socioeconomic conditions and ignores larger economic implications (Davies, 2002). The need of regime theory to deal with a coalition of both business and political agents moves it too far away from the deeper, Marxist analyses of structural problems. A deeper analysis required by Marxism does not preclude a concern with agency. It requires multi-level analysis over time of the anatomy of structure itself, exploring the profound interplay between structures and the agents who create

and sustain them. Davies (2002) concluded that regime theorists could usefully situate their work within a wider understanding of systemic trends and confront the impact of these trends for projects.

In another article, Davies (2003) attempted to use regime theory to analyze urban centers within cities in England, such as London and Manchester, and agreed with Imbroscio's (1998) earlier criticism that regime theory is too focused on the static private-public division of labor. According to Davies (2003), English government entities are far more engaged and powerful, with businesses less powerful in coalitions as their American counterparts. Although Margaret Thatcher's government began copying American urban policies in the early 1980s, with policies that emphasized extending a hand to businesses, these practices encouraged partnerships but did not delegate any political power to them. Therefore, by having larger bureaucracies involved, local governments do not need the contribution of business to rule or decide on development agendas. Davies' (2003) article showed the limitations of using urban regime theory to analyze and understand international entities, or places that did not fit the model of private and political agendas working in consortium.

Partially agreeing with Davies (2002), Imbroscio (2003) returned to the urban regime argument by explaining that regime theories, coming from a political science perspective, neglect a deeper analysis of the economic processes. According to the author, regime theorists failed to challenge economic determinism, and instead concentrated primarily on policy-making actors. By focusing entirely on corporate center development strategies, the theories failed to offer an analysis of urban theory that is grounded in economics, one that is contextually sensitive and critically exhaustive. Imbroscio offered several areas of economic research that regime theory should explore to become more robust: human capital, community stability, social costs, assets

analysis, economic localism, and alternative institutions. Imbroscio (2003) clamored for an end to the neglect of the examination of economic processes and for regime theorists to engage in economic questions in a more sustained way.

In an interesting regime analysis of Hartford, Connecticut, Burns (2002) showed that the political and economic history of Hartford included a governor (in this case Governor John Rowland) who acted as a regime actor, which is rare within the realm of regime theory. Burns points out that Hartford was a classic case of a development regime, where the “bishops” (or the CEOs of Hartford insurance companies) controlled productive assets and shaped many of the city’s policies. These business leaders were instrumental in the urban renewal efforts that Hartford underwent in the late 1950s and early 1960s, including the development of Constitution Plaza, which replaced a vibrant downtown neighborhood called East Side with a concrete office park. This development regime broke down after the mid-1980s, as many of the insurance companies left town and new businesses and political actors started performing in their own regime roles.

Stepping in to fill the void, Governor Rowland outlined a plan in the 1990s to make Hartford an educational, cultural and entertainment center, which included the development of the “six pillars,” or six important development projects which were to be the foundation of the whole development of downtown Hartford. Among these pillar projects was the development of a new convention center; the redevelopment of the Wadsworth Museum of Art; the development of a science center; the building of a major sports stadium; and the relocation of Capital Community College to downtown Hartford. Burns (2002) explained that the absence of proper political and business leadership at the time led to the governor stepping in as a regime actor, which is highly unusual. Departing from the rigidity of regime theory, the Hartford case



illustrated how state governments sometimes use their assets to expand their authority over urban areas, make local policy, and in some cases, take over entire urban school districts (which in Connecticut happened in Bridgeport and Hartford). These state governments can become powerful members of the urban regime, with an increased role played by the Governor, from the capital city. Burns' (2002) study would seem to fall in with Imbroscio's (1998) criticism of the rigidity of regime theory, which only looks at local political actors and ignores the larger structures of state government, which in the case of Hartford became crucial for development in the mid-1990s.

### **Community Resiliency**

According to Xiao and Van Zandt (2011), urban growth patterns have long suggested a dynamic but intertwined fate for households and businesses. In many cities, growth creates a multi-linear pattern, with clusters of commercial and retail businesses serving dispersed residential areas. These linkages create inherent spatial relationships, or economic geographies, because businesses depend on a critical mass of consumers to be profitable. How a business defines its market area will influence its level of spatial dependence.

The interdependent nature of business and households can be illustrated by a circular flow model - a simple economic model commonly used in macroeconomics to illustrate the flow of goods through the economy. In this case, the model focuses on local businesses that are consumption-oriented, rather than large multi-national corporations. The model states that firms produce and supply goods and services, while households consume these goods and services. The households then supply factors of production, and the firms in turn convert these factors into finished products for household consumption. When this model is applied to Frog Hollow, the neighborhood acts like the firm in the production part of the model, with neighborhood

businesses providing goods and services to households, to fulfill their needs, and receiving revenues in exchange, which are then used to produce more goods for consumption.

Furthermore, Xiao and Van Zandt (2011) stated that the understanding of the spatial linkage between households and businesses help us address community resiliency, as community resiliency is the well-being of businesses and households. Recovery from hard times should involve the recovery of both, since they are mutually dependent. Understanding this level of dependency between the business and household sectors should help communities correctly assess their social and economic vulnerability. Although many studies examine the hard economic recoveries of the business sectors and households separately, barely any examine the links between the two. By studying neighborhoods and cities following natural disasters, Xiao and Van Zandt (2011) demonstrated the importance of the linkages between both. The authors concluded that public and private sectors and households formed a finely integrated system, through social, economic, judicial, and cultural connections. The authors also deduced that enhancing the resiliency of one helps the other. Therefore in Frog Hollow, the vitality of the commercial corridor has always been beneficial to residents despite poverty and crime in the neighborhood. The residents, in return, have helped with the maintenance of the neighborhood. Businesses in Frog Hollow need to invest in residents and households, because helping residents is a way of helping themselves.

Addressing community resiliency, Travis (2004) explained that in the 1990s, the emergence of tenant organizations, business improvements districts, block watches, and safety coalitions reduced crime and returned safety to many neighborhoods across America. There was probably a tipping point for each neighborhood, or a moment in time when the political structure began to reverse a trend toward decline and reassert itself. The most powerful predictor of this is

the level of collective efficacy - a sense of trust, common values, and cohesion in a neighborhood. In Frog Hollow, despite all its social and economic problems, there has always been a deep sense of culture and trust, backed by a business district that remains vibrant and relevant (Campbell, 2014). Despite challenges, the neighborhood has endured time and time again, and has managed to keep its vibrancy and relevancy.

Sconn and Fisher (1998) proposed that resiliency represents successful adaptations to adversity, stressful events, and oppressive systems. Often oppressed communities are seen as lacking resiliency, but in fact quite the opposite is true, with minority communities often showing large display of resiliency and resistance. These communities might give the appearance of capitulation, but church groups, extended family networks, and business associations provide opportunities for mobilization and empowerment. Communities can be resourceful and still hold onto the socio-cultural assets that provide them with a sense of meaning, as various groups and networks provide opportunities and structures that can moderate the impact of oppressive systems (Sconn & Fisher, 1998).

## **Summary**

Overall, this chapter reviewed how an industrial urban neighborhood struggled with transitioning into a post-industrial area while simultaneously welcoming a new wave of socially excluded and marginalized immigrants, including many Puerto Ricans and other Latino minorities. It explored the details of the transformation of Frog Hollow into a Latino enclave while discussing the concept of Latino identity. Examples from other urban areas across the nation were given to add context and meaning to the experience of Latinos in this neighborhood, and to provide a point of comparison and contrast for the local Latino population.

There was an analysis of different models of community economic development and a discussion of the sharp debate in the social work profession as to which model is best for communities in need. On the one hand, there are those that see economic development as the most important aspect of community development, while others see community building as the most essential aspect. Each has different approaches and tactics in how they would attempt to revitalize neighborhoods.

This chapter also considered the aspects of regime theory and the collaborative arrangements through which local governments and private actors assemble the capacity to govern. The role that these actors might have had in the revitalization project was explored. Finally, this chapter examined the concept of community resiliency, and how Frog Hollow coped with the changes that deindustrialization, revitalization and development brought to the neighborhood.

## **Chapter Two: Methodology**

This chapter provides an overview of the research design and methods employed in this study. The following are presented: (a) the rationale for research design; (b) the researcher's role; (c) the data sources, presented separately for each phase; (d) the data collection method, presented separately for each phase; (e) the data analysis process, presented separately for each phase; (f) the strategies employed for verification of the data; and (g) the ethical considerations in this study.

### **Rationale for Research Design**

This research was conducted as a case study of the Frog Hollow neighborhood in the city of Hartford, Connecticut. Yin (2009) defined the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context. This is when the boundaries between phenomena are not clearly evident, and multiple sources of evidence are used. Case studies have several strengths including depth; high conceptual validity; the understanding of contexts and processes; understanding and linking of causes and outcomes; and the fostering of new hypotheses and research questions (Flybjerg, 2012).

The neighborhood of Frog Hollow was selected for this study because it underwent an array of urban revitalization projects during the 2000s that affected the neighborhood's physical and social structure. In order to understand the impact these revitalization efforts had on the socioeconomic fabric of the neighborhood, a wide array of tools were used to offer information on diverse social phenomena. Using only one research tool would leave information gaps, which would then require revisiting the neighborhood and researching it from a different perspective.

Frog Hollow presented a complex and multi-level social situation: a historical urban neighborhood that transitioned from industrial to residential; ambitious efforts towards urban revitalization by a large pool of developers, businesses and political actors; a diverse and multi-

ethnic demographic population; and a dynamic and sustainable commercial district coexisting with a myriad of urban issues, such as segregation, unemployment, concentrated poverty and crime.

Snow and Trom (2002) claimed a case study is an important and appropriate research tool to measure complex and diverse levels of social change. The authors indicate that a case study is defined by three features: (a) it has an empirical and analytical focus on a social event or phenomenon; (b) it generates a detailed elaboration of the phenomenon under study, and the context in which it is embedded; and (c) it uses a triangulation of multiple methods that includes, but is not limited to, qualitative techniques such as ethnography (Snow & Trom, 2002). Furthermore, case studies differ from other procedures because they generate analyses and understandings that are more multilayered and nuanced, which makes them appropriate for the study of complex social phenomena like the one Frog Hollow presented.

Case studies have been used many times for research in urban areas. One example, perhaps one of the most famous community studies in the social sciences, is the study of *Middletown* by Robert and Helen Lynd (1929). The authors and three other staff members lived for up to 18 months in the city of Muncie, Indiana, to conduct their research. This was a pioneering study because previously, no one had ever provided such detailed and comprehensive coverage of American life in a medium-sized city. As part of their methodology, the research team used observations; archival material; newspaper articles; minutes from local town meetings; diaries; state and local histories; statistics; interviews; and survey questionnaires (Lynd & Lynd, 1929).

Another case study that analyzes the complexity of urban phenomenon is Drake and Cayton's (1945) groundbreaking and classic *Black Metropolis*, a landmark case study of race and

urban life in Chicago's South Side neighborhood. Creating a compendium of previous studies and reports conducted in cities with the same population, the researchers compiled historical, economic, sociological, and political data to construct a detailed picture of the classic black urban ghetto.

Wherry (2011) conducted a comparable case study in a historically Puerto Rican neighborhood in Philadelphia similar to Frog Hollow. His research goal was focusing on the efforts of local entrepreneurs, organizations, and residents to harness arts and culture as tools of neighborhood improvement. He drew from archival material, interviews, and participant observations to compile data. Following a similar methodological approach, this case study used three main sources of information to collect data: (a) archival and historical materials; (b) available secondary data from the census on neighborhood socioeconomic status; and (c) qualitative interviews with key stakeholders. No single source of information offered a complete picture of the neighborhood; therefore, using three separate sources provided a richer and more complex analysis of community institutions and processes.

### **Researcher's Role**

Importantly, the researcher in this study has a strong relationship and ties to the Frog Hollow neighborhood, since he has worked there intermittently as a community organizer for the past 15 years. Several of the organizations that the researcher worked for in his career did work in this neighborhood, including service, research, and organization-oriented work. He has also been a board member of some of these organizations at different points in time, and has come to know several key figures and leaders in this neighborhood. The researcher is also a Puerto Rican male with similar culture and language to the residents of Frog Hollow, which has helped with communication and familiarity but also presented risks such as respondent and researcher bias.

Padgett (2008) explained that researcher bias emerges when observations and interpretations are clouded by preconceptions and personal opinions of the researcher. This could result in the asking of leading questions or in the researcher ignoring data that does not support his or her conclusions. Respondent bias occurs when respondents may withhold information or even lie to researchers to protect their privacy, avoid revealing unpleasant truths, or to offer help and answers that they think the researcher might want to hear (Padgett, 2008). All of the aforementioned risks were present in this study since the researcher is certainly considered an insider.

The closeness that the researcher has had with residents and the affinity he has for the neighborhood presented the risk of over identification by the researcher. Preconceptions about the neighborhood and its residents, as well as the researcher's personal opinions about the history and status of the neighborhood, presented risks to objectivity and to the accuracy of data. Moreover, the fact that the researcher knew many of the neighborhood residents and potential informants also presented risks, such as the possibility that some of the informants would not offer the most honest answers or would hold back on offering deep information.

Despite these risks, being an insider can be extremely valuable. According to Labarre (2002), insider status offers a distinct advantage in terms of accessing and understanding the culture, although these advantages are not absolute and come with limitations. The researcher has to be aware of the ethical and methodological dilemmas associated with entering the field: positioning, disclosure, shared relationships, and disengagement (Labarre, 2002). The researcher also has to exercise caution and professionalism when interviewing participants and/or people he or she might know from the community. The researcher must always remain aware of study boundaries.



In this case study, the researcher's familiarity with many of the neighborhood service agencies and programs proved to be an enormous asset for locating informants to participate in the study; in recognizing key community development agencies in the neighborhood; and for identifying contacts and other sources in the archival material research. Many of the development projects discussed in the archival materials were familiar to the researcher, which allowed for a more in-depth research effort. The familiarity with both the neighborhood culture and population proved to be an asset when talking to informants, who were more comfortable, as a result. The researcher was better able to understand their expressions and the information provided, and the researcher was able to give them more cultural context, in order to better comprehend their responses and reactions to the topics discussed.

### **Data Sources**

**Archival data.** The first source of data were archival materials, including newspaper and magazine articles; brochures; project proposals and reports; maps; planning documents; and development studies. These documents situated the neighborhood, prior to the revitalization project, in time and place. This also allowed for the narrative of the neighborhood and revitalization efforts to surface: the transformation from an industrial neighborhood to a residential one; the economic ups and downs of the neighborhood; the nature and history of the many community development projects; the content and objectives of multiple project proposals; and the results, including successes and failures, of the many proposed projects. The nature of the material helped indicate which organizations were behind the projects, what their roles were, and what their interests were beyond their involvement.

The archival material also helped identify which groups held power during the development and implementation process, and what different models were proposed and used.

Archival material also shed light upon the complicated and stratified relationships between government, developers, business people, and residents, and how these relationships helped some projects move forward while stalling others. It also helped identify the role the Latino identity of the neighborhood played in the development plans, and if there were alternative development models considered besides a top-down economic development one.

Padgett (2008) suggested that researching documents and existing data has its advantages, such as a lack of reactivity, as this material is considered unobtrusive. But it also has its disadvantages. For example, because this material was not produced for research purposes, it may be inaccurate, uneven, or incomplete. Harris (2001) recommended that having a direction or mapping things out prior is crucial for archival research. A proper map, based on questions and inquiry topics, will help a researcher with the immersion of data. However, the author recommends the researcher not become too attached to his map, as immersion in the data might guide the researcher in new directions (Harris, 2001). The use of three methods for this study is designed to compensate for the incompleteness that, as Padgett (2008) discussed, any single method might have.

**Census data.** The second source of data came from the U.S. Census, taken before and after the urban revitalization project. It included data about homeownership, employment, density, stability, and education. The data, which was used as a base of comparison, came from the 2000 Census. This gave the researcher a data baseline, which included homeownership, income, education, and employment information.

The decennial census has been conducted since 1790, in years ending in "0" as required by the U.S. Constitution. Article I, Section 2 states that:

Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers... The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.b.).

Accordingly, a census is taken every 10 years. U.S. marshals conducted the enumeration from 1790 to 1870. Specially trained enumerators then carried out the census, beginning in 1880. The earliest decennial censuses were conducted under the authority of the Secretary of State, but in 1849, the Department of the Interior assumed responsibility. Finally, in 1902, the Department of Commerce and Labor created a U.S. Census Bureau, which has been overseeing the work since (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.b.).

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey that collects and processes information on demographics, social, economic, and housing characteristics about the U.S. population annually. This is an important tool for communities, to see how they are changing (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). After 2000, the long form used in the decennial census became the ACS, which will continue to be used to collect long form-type information throughout the decade (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Using ACS estimates from 2006 to 2010, which provide more specific and detailed information, the researcher obtained estimates of annual data. This allowed the comparison of this information to the baseline of the 2000 Census, and identifying changes in the categories previously obtained.

The ACS also provided data collected during and after the urban development projects. The 5-year estimates from the ACS in the Frog Hollow neighborhood illustrated more accurate

changes on socioeconomic conditions. Looking at annual data provided a closer look at the annual changes in the neighborhood, as related to the yearly progress of the urban renewal project.

**Key stakeholder interviews.** The third source of data came from 15 qualitative interviews with key stakeholders in the neighborhood. Those interviewed were divided into three groups: five conducted with developers and city leaders representing the political class; five conducted with business owners and local, community-based organization leaders representing the business sector; and five conducted with key community residents and activists, who were able to comment on the process of the urban renewal projects, and give their perspectives on the conditions of the neighborhood before and after the urban revitalization projects. These categories represent the three main areas of involvement, and sources of possible impact for the Frog Hollow neighborhood revitalization projects. Each category of stakeholders was seen as able to provide a different perspective on the revitalization process, including the different levels of involvement, interest, and impact.

These 15 stakeholders were selected after reviewing archival data from key informants, to determine the persons that could provide the best information and who were willing to be interviewed. None of the people chosen refused to participate, although several required a pre-interview meeting to understand the details and the purpose of the project, to get acquainted and more comfortable with the researcher, and to discuss the issue of consent.

These interviewees provided a rich account into the process of the urban revitalization projects that helped to focus, or personalize, the economic data and determine the levels of community participation with the projects. This included the way different groups were impacted by the different projects' outcomes. The interviews also helped to determine the

perception of the projects by various groups both prior to implementation and following completion.

A non-random sampling method, called purposive sampling, was used to recruit participants for the interviews. Padgett (2008) described purposive sampling as the deliberate process of selecting respondents based on their ability to provide the necessary information. Therefore, this type of sampling was used in this project to identify groups of stakeholders who are important for the social fabric of the neighborhood. Within the purposive sampling method, the researcher used criterion sampling, which is the process of selecting cases that exceed some criteria or norm (Padgett, 2008).

For interview selection, the researcher focused on participants who fit into the three categories of stakeholder and could give different perspectives on the revitalization projects. These three categories included: (a) local politicians or developers representing the political class; (b) key business owners, leaders of business associations, or directors of social service agencies located in the neighborhood, representing the business/service sector; and (c) neighborhood revitalization group members, or community activists and organizers, representing the residents. The researcher also relied on nominations sampling, where knowledgeable persons or key informants named or selected eligible participants based on the criteria put forward by the researcher (Padgett, 2008). This included the categories mentioned above, and the level of involvement and position within the neighborhood leadership structure.

## **Data Collection**

**Archival data.** Visits to the archives in the Hartford History Room at the Hartford Public Library and the archives at the Connecticut State Library were made, to obtain information about Frog Hollow and the process of revitalization. A variety of reports and

articles, as well as some historical documents, were obtained, including magazine and newspaper articles. These helped provide a narrative of the neighborhood, both from its long industrial history and its transformation due to multiple development projects over the last decade. About 90 newspaper articles and historical documents were uncovered, dating back to the 1960s, with more specific articles concentrated between 1996 and 2000, the era of revitalization efforts.

Over 60 different reports and planning documents were obtained, copied, and cataloged directly from the archives of several of the neighborhood developers. These documents were also concentrated between 1996 and 2000, when the issue of revitalization was dominant in Frog Hollow. Planning reports, development studies, as well as monthly and annual progress reports were obtained from the Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (SINA), one of the key developers of projects in Frog Hollow over the last two decades. According to their own reports, over its 30-year history SINA evolved to become a trusted partner and a highly-effective force for positive change in Frog Hollow, where it is located. These reports also claimed that its success had brought SINA national recognition as a model for community revitalization (Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance, n.d.).

Planning documents and project reports as well as proposals for projects were obtained from Broad-Park Development Corporation (BPDC), one of the key development corporations in the neighborhood. Since 1978, BPDC has developed multiple affordable housing and commercial revitalization projects in the Frog Hollow and South Green neighborhoods of Hartford (Broad Park Development Corporation, n.d.).

Planning documents, proposals, and project presentations were also obtained from the Spanish American Merchants Association (SAMA), a business association that offered key financial and political support for many of the developments in Frog Hollow. SAMA formed in

1982, after recognizing the potential of the Hispanic business community in Hartford and the need to be organized and able to represent its interests before the government and private sectors. They incorporated in the State of Connecticut and created a non-profit organization (a *501(c)(3)*) aimed at developing a business network that would provide the Hispanic community with cohesion and strength (Spanish American Merchants Association, n.d.).

Planning documents, proposals, and presentations were also obtained from the City of Hartford Planning Division, the city entity through which any proposed development project in any of Hartford's neighborhoods must pass. The Planning Division builds neighborhood-city connections by actively listening to and engaging with Hartford's citizens, leaders, developers, and stakeholders; by working with neighborhood revitalization committees to plan for the future and ensure the success of Hartford's communities; and by using planning tools and the best practices to make Hartford a better place to live and do business (City of Hartford Department of Development Services, n.d.).

The researcher also attended several meetings of the Frog Hollow Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Committee, otherwise known as the NRZ, and obtained archived meeting minutes and notes, plans, proposals, and reports. Copies of two of the committee's Strategic Plans, one from 2001 and one from 2009, were also obtained; both of these were important because they helped drive the NRZ's work and agenda. The NRZ is a group of concerned stakeholders working together to revitalize Frog Hollow. It was created by state statute in 1995 and then enabled by municipal ordinance in 1998. The NRZ is a political entity more than a geographical one, because although its name comes from the Frog Hollow neighborhood and includes that neighborhood as defined by the City of Hartford Planning Division, the NRZ also includes portions of the Barry Square, Behind the Rocks, Downtown, and South Green.

Originally, there were two separate NRZs, the North Frog Hollow and Frog Hollow South NRZs, with borders of Zion and Ward Streets. Both NRZs took the name "Frog Hollow" because residents of both NRZs considered themselves to be living in Frog Hollow, regardless of what the city's Planning Division believed. In 2008, the two NRZs merged and created a new strategic plan for the new Frog Hollow NRZ (Frog Hollow Neighborhood Revitalization Zone, n.d.).

All records, reports, brochures, proposals, meeting minutes, planning documents, articles, and other materials obtained were properly stored, indexed, and categorized by source and by year. Altogether, this information provided an extensive narrative of Frog Hollow, including the state of the neighborhood prior to, during, and after the development projects of the 2000s. The archival materials were also used to corroborate information provided by participant interviews and/or found in the Census analysis.

**Census data.** The census data initially was obtained from the United States Census Bureau website, and specifically from the American Fact Finder data tool. Using the American Fact Finder, data was reduced to census tract levels, which are small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county (or equivalent entity). These are updated by local participants prior to each decennial census, as part of the Census Bureau's Participant Statistical Areas Program (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.a). The primary purpose of the census tract is to provide a stable set of geographic units for the presentation of statistical data. The researcher used the census tracts because they provided a small-sized area of analysis. Census tracts generally have a population size of between 1,200 and 8,000, with an optimum size of 4,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.a). A census tract usually covers a contiguous area; in the case of Frog Hollow, the entire neighborhood is covered in three tracts - 5028, 5029 and 5030. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.a.), one benefit of the census tract boundaries is that they are delineated with



the intention of being maintained over a long time period. This is so that statistical comparisons can be made from census to census, which is precisely the type of analysis that this researcher wanted to conduct for this study.

Census tract boundaries generally follow visible and identifiable features which in Frog Hollow, allowed the researcher to clearly determine where the boundaries of one tract began and where they ended, delineating clear features, streets, and buildings, like we can see in Figure 2.1:

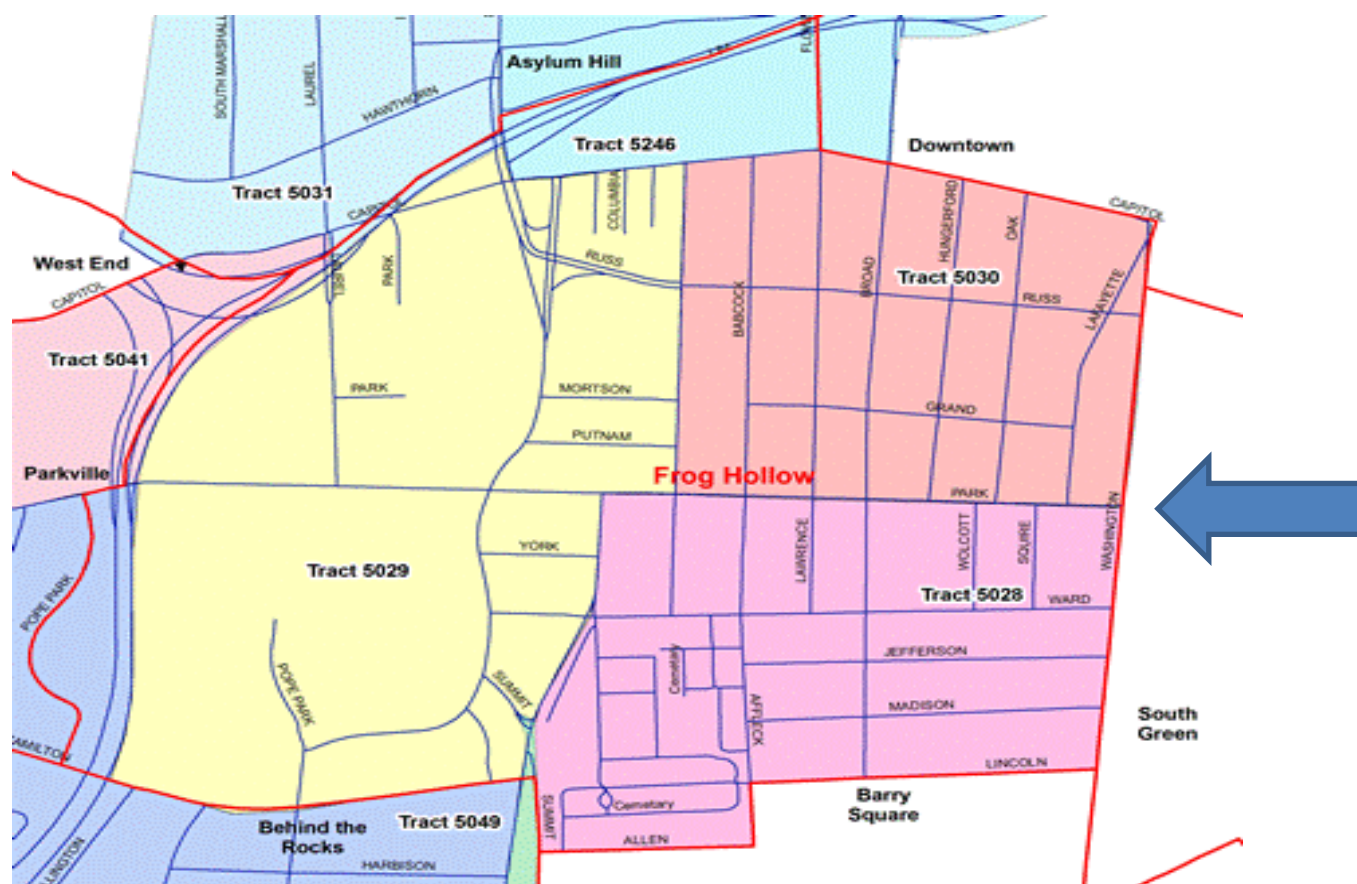


Figure 2.1 - Frog Hollow neighborhood map with census tracts. Park Street runs horizontally in the middle of the map, dividing census tracts 5028 from 5030 and splitting 5029 into two halves.

Once the census tracts were clearly delineated, data was obtained for each Frog Hollow tract, from both the 2000 Census and the ACS 2006-2010, 5-year estimate. Besides obtaining data at the census tract level, data was also obtained from the city of Hartford as a whole, to

provide a comparison between Frog Hollow and the rest of the city. This allowed the researcher to identify any trends that may have occurred. Data obtained for both the census tracts and the city overall included:

- population levels during the decade of development,
- educational attainment of residents,
- unemployment levels and employment availability,
- categories of employment available, including white and blue collar jobs,
- median household income, and its relation to the type of jobs available and educational attainment of residents,
- levels of individuals and families in poverty, and
- housing availability, including both homeownership and rental units.

**Key stakeholder interviews.** Qualitative data consisted of 15, in-depth interviews with community stakeholders, divided in three categories: the developer sector, the business sector, and the resident sector. Using purposive sampling, based on information from key informants and an analysis of the archival data, key stakeholders were identified in each category to offer vital information on the process of development. In the developer sector category, participants were recruited from the several agencies that were actively redeveloping the neighborhood, among them SINA, Broad Park Development, Billings Forge, and Mutual Housing. Key figures from the political establishment, including City Hall and the Planning Department, were also considered for this category. For the business sector category, there was a recruitment of key figures from established businesses around the Park Street commercial corridor, and people affiliated with SAMA, which represents the business sector in the neighborhood. Key figures from the social service sector including municipal services and private non-profits, were also

recruited in this category. In the resident category, recruitment was made among members of the NRZ, or other groups that have been involved in neighborhood activism, including Hartford Areas Rally Together (HART), a community organizing group, and Vecinos Unidos, originally the Latino arm of HART but now an independent community organizing group.

Interviews were confidential and private, and conducted at locations where the participants felt comfortable and safe. These included private offices or in public spaces offering private rooms, such as the branch of the local library. The community non-profit agency Billings Forge, located in the neighborhood, provided office space, which allowed for a secure yet local place to conduct interviews. All participants signed Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved consent forms. The interviews were recorded digitally, then copied to an encrypted computer, for transcription and analysis. Detailed notes were taken during the process and compared with the recorded interview for corroboration. Transcriptions were also protected and encrypted on a computer, and participants were de-identified in all subsequent analysis or documentation. Participants from the developer sector category have been identified using the letter (D) and are numbered one through five; participants from the business sector category have been identified with the letter (B), also numbered one through five; and participants from the resident sector category have been identified with the letter (R), and are also numbered one through five. Participants were offered incentives to compensate them for their time, in the form of a \$20 dollar gift card to a local neighborhood business.

### **Data Analysis**

**Archival data.** Once documents and articles were collected and read, a thorough content analysis was conducted. This was done through an interpretative approach to uncover patterns of activity, action, and meaning, and to develop a narrative story of the neighborhood prior to and

during the development process. According to Krippendorff (2004), content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts on the context of their use. The author argued that it offers new insights, increases researcher understanding of particular phenomena, and/or informs practical actions. Berg and Lune (2011) described content analysis as a careful, detailed, systematic examination, and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings. Furthermore, the authors claimed that by using an interpretative approach, the material could be seen as containing layers of meaning waiting to be interpreted and analyzed (Berg & Lune, 2011).

The prevailing method in content analysis is thematic analysis, where the data is categorized and coded by themes that surface as the data is read, or comes from a theoretical approach by the researcher (Lichtman, 2013). The author proposed that, depending on the goal of the researcher, an alternative approach to thematic analysis - which can be considered reductionist - is the point of finding a narrative, which can be considered more of an interpretative approach for meaning (Lichtman, 2013). In the narrative approach, the researcher develops ideas about the information found, the patterns that emerge, and the meaning that seem to be conveyed (Berg and Lune, 2011).

Since the goal of this study was to examine the historical aspects of the neighborhood and determine how community development impacted Frog Hollow at large over a specific time period, a narrative approach was used to make sense of the volume of archival materials. What emerged was a story of how the neighborhood developed, how it changed over time, and how it was able to arrive at where it is today. The process used to analyze the data included:

- collecting and indexing it by origin,

- organizing and distributing it by time periods, developing a narrative of the neighborhood,
- sorting it by themes, patterns, and commonalities, and
- identifying patterns that analyzed for meaning in light of the literature review.

**Census data.** Once the census data was obtained from both the 2000 Census and the ACS 2006-2010, 5- year estimate, they were compared to one another, to determine changes that might have occurred in the data before and after the development projects. Using the percentage formula  $\frac{\text{new value} - \text{old value}}{\text{old value}} \times 100\%$ , the researcher was able to calculate the percentage change for each category, including education, income, homeownership, employment, and poverty, among others. Some of the analysis included

- population levels during the decade of development that allowed the researcher to see if there were any changes, for both the neighborhood and the city,
- a look at the human capital of residents, including a comparison of those with less educational attainment to those with college degrees, and an analysis of any changes between these groups,
- unemployment levels for all three neighborhood census tracts, during the decade of the development, to see if the development had an impact on employment availability,
- type and categories of employment, including the availability of both white- and blue-collar jobs, which are directly tied to income levels and accumulation of wealth,
- median household income and its relation to types of jobs available and educational levels of residents,

- levels of poverty for individuals and families in all three tracts, related to median household income and availability of better-paying jobs, and
- housing, including homeownership and availability of rental units, to determine possible trends and any effects of displacement.

**Key stakeholder interviews.** The interviews were transcribed and uploaded to NVIVO 10 qualitative software, where they were reviewed using phenomenological analysis. According to Moustakas (1994), the phenomenological approach includes synopses of each participant experience; an examination of the context and setting of these experiences; and a condensation, or summary, of major themes, with related excerpts from the interviews. The interview questions drew from the common theme of community development. Participants were asked to identify when they first learned about the project, what their involvement was, what they thought about its results, who they believe benefited, and who they thought was in control of the projects, among others. The questions required participants to explain their experiences from their own unique points of view, whether it was a developer, business person, or resident.

Once the interviews were uploaded, the analysis included coding the text, to look for the emergence of themes. According to Padgett (2008), coding involves the close and repeated reading of the text, to develop “meaning units” or codes that serve for broader conceptualization. In this study, the development of codes meant looking for significant statements or quotes that provided a clear understanding of how participants experienced the issue of community development in Frog Hollow. Once the codes were obtained, the researcher developed themes of what the participants experienced, and the context that influenced their unique experiences. Some of the developed codes, or units of meaning, were homeownership, displacement, outside forces, business interests, and government control.

## Strategies for Verification

In case study analysis, the strategies that ensured trustworthiness, or rigor, include credibility, transferability, auditability, and conformability, as alternatives to the quantitative concepts of validity and reliability. The biggest threats to the trustworthiness are reactivity, researcher bias, and respondent bias (Padgett, 2008).

Padgett (2008) defined reactivity as the potential distorting effect of the researcher presence on the beliefs and behaviors of participants. The fact that the researcher worked in this neighborhood and was considered an insider was a challenge. The fact that he personally knew some key stakeholders from his neighborhood involvement could have limited the residents' willingness to be interviewed. Additionally, the researcher's long exposure to the neighborhood and insider status could have exposed the study to researcher bias, where observations and interpretations are clouded by preconceptions and personal opinions (Padgett, 2008).

Respondent bias is another threat that was also present. Padgett (2008) described respondent bias as the questioning by participants based upon distrust of the researcher or too much comfortability. Previous experiences or feelings about the concepts could cloud responses. In Frog Hollow, the urban renewal projects were full of controversy, media attention, and political mishaps. Corruption was alleged, and favoritism and power battles were all part of this lengthy process, resulting in the former mayor being convicted of corruption charges related to the projects. Although this research was not interested in any of these issues, it must recognize that the issues might have affected how the residents and key participants felt about the subject.

Several strategies were used to ensure trustworthiness in this study. Prolonged engagement was one, as the researcher spent almost two years in the neighborhood doing research. This strategy was used to combat reactivity and respondent bias. The researcher's

continued presence helped build trust with the residents of Frog Hollow. Another strategy to ensure trustworthiness was the methodological triangulation of the case study approach. By using multiple methods, including archival materials, interviews, and census data, the researcher achieved a comprehensive picture of the neighborhood and mitigated all three threats to trustworthiness.

Member checking was defined by Padgett (2008) as seeking verification of preliminary findings by going back to study participants. This technique was used to confirm information provided by key informants who were not interviewed and to re-question some participants if questions arose while analyzing data. It was also used if new information emerged while interviewing new participants. Peer debriefing is defined by Padgett (2008) as a process in which findings are discussed with academic advisors or research partners to ensure reflexivity and analyze data. In this study, discussions were held regularly with committee members to discuss and reflect on findings. Finally, a clear audit trail of all data was made, including the sources of all archived materials and the tools and formats used to access census data.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Approval was obtained from the University of Connecticut IRB as human subjects were invited to participate in the key informant interviews. Some residents met the criteria for being part of the population of those considered economically vulnerable, and this was cause for concern. Regardless, the residents interviewed were all leaders and activists in the community, even if they were part of an oppressed population. In regard to language, interviews were conducted in the preferred language of the participants, since the researcher speaks both Spanish and English. None of the participants interviewed were living in the U.S. illegally, which could have been another type of vulnerability. Significant efforts were made to help all participants



feel comfortable and to protect their status after they chose to participate in this study. Efforts were taken to protect their identities in the recording, transcribing, and analyzing stages, using codes for their names.

## **Summary**

This chapter provides an overview of the methodologies employed in this study. A case study method was utilized in order to explore and understand the socioeconomic impact of community development in the neighborhood of Frog Hollow in Hartford, Connecticut. Three different data sources were utilized to obtain information: archival methods, census data, and key stakeholder interviews. The collection of archival material included newspaper and magazine articles, brochures, project proposals and reports, maps, planning documents, development studies, and others. These materials helped situate the neighborhood in time and place, allowing the story and narrative of the neighborhood's revitalization efforts to surface. Census data was obtained from the United States Census Bureau website and, more specifically, by using the American Fact Finder data tool to obtain and access information. The data was reduced down to census tract level, which are small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county or equivalent entity, allowing for more detail about Frog Hollow. The stakeholder interviews consisted of 15, in-depth interviews with community stakeholders, divided in three categories: developer sector, business sector person and resident sector.

The different type of data was analyzed separately, using separate techniques. Content analysis was used for archival data, using an interpretative approach to uncover patterns of activity, action, and meaning. Census data from different decades were compared (2000 and 2010), to look for changes during the decade of analysis. The interviews were transcribed and

uploaded to NVIVO 10 qualitative software, where they were analyzed using phenomenological analysis.

One of the study's limitation was the fact that the researcher previously worked in this neighborhood and was considered an insider, which might have limited who was willing to be interviewed and the responses obtained. Furthermore, the researcher's long exposure to the neighborhood could have exposed the study to bias, where observations and interpretations may have been clouded with preconceptions and personal opinions. Several strategies were used to mitigate these limitations; among them, prolonged engagement and methodological triangulation were employed to achieve a comprehensive picture of the neighborhood.

### **Chapter Three: Historical and Archival Research**

It is important to consider the history of Frog Hollow; its unusually well-preserved, urban factory village character; the close relationship between the development of its industrial, residential, and commercial districts; its valuable ethnic history; its architecture; and its place in industrial and postindustrial Hartford. The neighborhood alone is a worthwhile subject for study. When considering the lessons to be learned from its unique yet also general experience of community revitalization, Frog Hollow is even more valuable for research. Accordingly, this chapter presents a historical and archival view of community development in Frog Hollow.

A selective, historical overview of newspaper archives was conducted, to piece together and situate the community development narrative of Frog Hollow during the 2000s. This allowed for an analysis of community change and development over time, and an observation of the high and low points of the different revitalization projects during the decade. The newspaper articles were supported by additional archival materials, including proposals, meeting minutes, plans, and reports from a wide array of community projects. Since all archival records have biases, especially if they were presentations or promotional materials, the narrative constructed in this chapter will be juxtaposed with the census and interview data from other method chapters of this case study. This will present a better-verified and more complete analysis of events and outcomes.

#### **The History of Frog Hollow**

The Frog Hollow neighborhood gets its name from a marsh hollow formerly located near the corner of Ward and Broad streets. Part of the Park River system, this marsh was a breeding place for a rather large and substantial frog population (Pawlowski & Dollard, n.d.). Frog Hollow was mostly farmland, and it lagged behind the rest of Hartford for the first 200 years of

the city's history. All of this changed in 1852, when the Sharps Rifle Manufacturing Company built its factory on what is now Capitol Avenue, on the outskirts of Frog Hollow (Frog Hollow Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Committee, 2009). The advantage of a nearby railroad line and water power from the Park River were attractive qualities to the Sharps Company, making the river an important factor in the future of the neighborhood (Campbell, 2014).

The rifle company arrival marked the first step towards the development of the Frog Hollow/Capitol Avenue industrial district. It also established the character of the type of industrial development that would follow: the production of complex mechanisms, utilizing precision machine tools and gauging systems, rooted in Yankee armory practice (Pawloski & Dollard, n.d.). This industrial development, which reached its peak between 1890 and 1910, was key to the early development of the neighborhood, as it sparked major housing development with the construction of houses and other structures designed to serve the needs and interests of Frog Hollow's growing population of factory workers. This housing development changed the neighborhood physically and many of those factory workers, who were newly arrived immigrants, lent North Frog Hollow a "diversity that continues into the present day" (Frog Hollow Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Committee, 2009, p. 9).

Other industrialists followed Sharps into Frog Hollow, including the Billings & Spencer Company, a maker of tools and sewing machines, as well as aerospace manufacturer Pratt & Whitney. The latter was critical in the development of the neighborhood as an industrial district because in addition to being based there, Pratt & Whitney also provided capital and factory space for several other companies to join the neighborhood, including the Weed Sewing Machine Company, which took over the Sharps factory in the 1870s. (The Gombach Group, 2015).

Weed then branched out into other products, including the Columbia bicycle, which Colonel Albert Pope contracted them to produce.

Pope, often called the father of the bicycle in America, then bought the Weed Company, in 1889, and expanded his operations throughout North Frog Hollow and into neighboring areas. Pope became Hartford's premier industrialist of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Frog Hollow Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Committee, 2009). Pope converted Weed into Pope Manufacturing, devoting all efforts to bicycle production. He soon became one of the largest bicycle manufacturers in the country, employing over 3,000 workers. In 1895, Pope expanded production to include automobiles, with the Pope-Hartford model produced in 1896, and the Columbia electric car in 1897 (Pawloski & Dollard, n.d.).

In 1894, Pope donated to the neighborhood what became and remains one of its most important assets, Pope Park (Loomis, 1953). The former Bartholomew Farm was converted into a recreational park for Pope's workers, as well as for city residents. Pope proposed that if the city bought adjacent land, he would give the farm to Hartford for the construction of the park. Despite some opposition at the time, the city government agreed to the proposal and the neighborhood found itself with an 89-acre park, one the city's liveliest and finest of that period (Loomis, 1953).

### **The Neighborhood Industrial Era**

Pope manufacturing went bankrupt by 1916, after an automobile patent dispute with Henry Ford. This resulted in the future American automobile industry shifting from the Pope Automobile Company in Hartford, to Henry Ford and his company in Detroit. After the bankruptcy, Colonel Pope sold his property to Pratt & Whitney, which continued its preeminence in the neighborhood. In 1925, Pratt & Whitney established a nascent aircraft industry,

supporting Frederick Rentschler, an emerging aircraft engine designer, who brought managers and engineers to Hartford. As the company grew, it moved out of Frog Hollow to its present East and West Hartford locations (The Gombach Group, 2015).

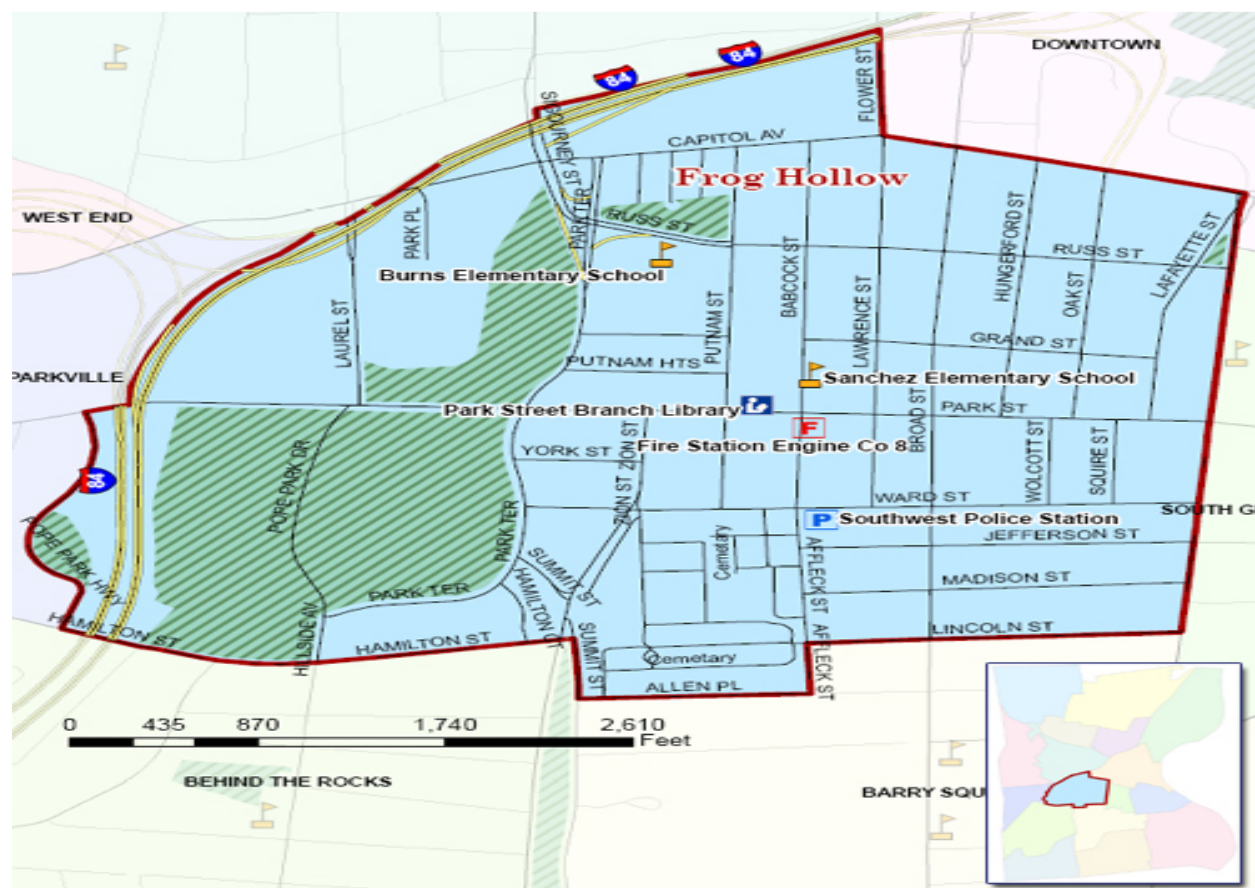


Figure 3.1 - Frog Hollow neighborhood map. Park Street divides the neighborhood horizontally.

The massive industry along Capitol Avenue between 1880 and 1920 stimulated the rapid development of residential property in the area immediately south of it. Long-established families sold their farms or estates for building lots (Pawlowski & Dollard, n.d.). These factories brought an enormous number of workers to live there and many of the buildings in Frog Hollow today were built for these workers (Frog Hollow Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Committee, 2009). The Babcock Farm was subdivided to make way for multi-unit housing, while the

Hungerford and Russ estates became Russ and Hungerford streets respectively. The 1880s saw the emergence of Frog Hollow's most characteristic residential type: three- or six-family units, divided horizontally into flats. Putnam Street, Morston Street, and Park Terrace continue to have these classic family structures today. In 1889, the noted Hartford architect George Keller designed the attractive row houses on Columbia Street for the Weed Sewing Machine Company (Campbell, 2014).

The variety of ethnic churches, schools, and clubs, which still remain, suggest the diversity of immigrant laborers who were drawn to Frog Hollow to find jobs in the industrial district. Initially Danish, Swedish, German, Irish, French Canadian, Lithuanian, and Polish immigrants came to Frog Hollow. More recently, Puerto Rican, Portuguese, Greek, and South and Central Americans are making Frog Hollow socially and culturally rich (Campbell, 2014). This ongoing ethnic history has resulted in nearly all recent immigrants having a predilection for Frog Hollow, as it has become a key entry point for immigrants to Hartford and the region.

Pawlowski and Dollard (n.d.) described the commercial importance of Frog Hollow. Park Street was always the commercial backbone of the neighborhood. The street derived its name from Barnard Park, which in 1821 was the only park in Hartford (Hartford Architecture Conservancy, 1975). The commercial buildings on Park Street were small in scale and, although they started out as residences, storefronts were added quickly, as commercial opportunities in the street grew. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many buildings were constructed with storefronts at street level and apartments above. The street became one of Hartford's most desirable retail districts.

To properly understand the recent community and economic development of Frog Hollow, the impact of the massive industrial development by Pope, Pratt & Whitney, and

Rentschler needs to be considered. These projects defined the neighborhood through the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and turned it into a hub for manufacturing and innovation. This gave Frog Hollow its early vitality and success. However, when the industrial era came to an end in the 1950s, it left the neighborhood with economic instability and infrastructure challenges. The result of massive unemployment, poverty, and segregation still heavily impact residents today. An area that developed as a residential neighborhood for the city's best skilled workers, became known for its abandoned and deteriorated buildings, as well as for high levels of poverty, unemployment, and homelessness.

The demise of industry raises one of the key questions of this study: How do you revitalize an area like this? Do you improve the living and economic conditions of the people that currently reside there or do you displace them and bring new residents to create a more stable economic situation? Each of these options led to different visions of revitalization analyzed in this study.

### **Neighborhood Deindustrialization and Tensions through the 1980s**

By the late 1950s, the loss of nearby industry and the trend toward suburbanization and white flight sapped much of the city's vitality (Walsh, 2013). That trend continued into the 1960s, as populations of Greeks, French Canadians, Lithuanians, and other white ethnic groups migrated away from the city. Hartford remained an industrial center during the 1950s, providing more than 30,000 manufacturing jobs, but by the 1970s, the city had lost over 10,000 jobs. Another 5,000 were lost by 1975, and by 1990, almost all of them had disappeared, creating a dramatic shift that affected the population citywide (Walsh, 2013).

Walsh (2013) indicated that people arriving in Hartford after World War II entered an economic market where traditional manufacturing jobs were drying up. This changed the



demographic of those arriving in Hartford, from skilled blue-collar workers to the unemployed poor, who settled there despite shrinking economic opportunities. This erosion of industry dramatically influenced Hartford's industrial districts, such as Frog Hollow, which lost factory after factory in the 1960s and 1970s. This rapid deindustrialization period in the neighborhood coincides with the arrival of a large wave of immigrants and other newcomers, predominantly Puerto Ricans, who were impacted negatively because of a lack of employment opportunities or chances for upward mobility.

The deterioration caused by the deindustrialization process resulted in the neighborhood's steep decline, and in dire need of redevelopment and revitalization. By the late 1970s, Frog Hollow had been a home to generation upon generation of immigrants, creating a yeasty mixture of different ethnic strains that was still vital. Unfortunately, "the neighborhood was richer at the time in history than in income" (Palm 1978, para. 3). Palm underscores the serious problems in the neighborhood during the late part of the decade, "with families desperately needing housing, food, and educational opportunities, with residents complaining that the city was doing very little to help them out" (Palm 1978, para. 7). Data from the 1980 U.S. Census (Institute for Community Research, 1991) shows 36 percent of families living in poverty in Frog Hollow, with the median household income \$8,861. This confirms Palm's description of the high concentrations of poverty in the neighborhood at the end of the 1970s.

Despite all the challenges, groups like BPDC and HART persevered and continued to advocate for the neighborhood and its residents (Pawlowski, 2005). BPDC took the position of providing more rental units for low-income residents, in the midst of a proposed release of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding to redevelop Frog Hollow, going as far back as the late 1970s and early 1980s. The organization "focused on revitalizing abandoned buildings

on Park Street, refurbishing them and putting them back in rental usage for both business and residents, in order to revitalize the area businesses and maintaining a concern for the need of affordable housing” (Smith-Muñiz, 1980).

Despite the good intentions of some entities to bring the neighborhood back, fear from residents that the urban revitalization projects of the 1980s would drive people away is evident in the archival literature. Martin (1982, para. 5), for example, wrote in the *Harford Courant* how residents expressed fear that, the “developers’ interest in Frog Hollow would force many working class families, minorities, and elderly already living in the neighborhood to leave”. Many revitalization projects were not proposed for Frog Hollow itself, but for the edges of the neighborhood, including South Green and Downtown, where the city was looking to reclaim and redevelop land, including for the expansion of the Superior Court, which needed more legal offices.

These tensions and fears were not new, and many were carried over from the previous decade from the controversy surrounding the Greater Hartford Corporation “Process Memo.” The Greater Hartford Corporation was an organization formed in 1969 by large and powerful Hartford corporations, including United Aircraft, Connecticut General Life Insurance and Casualty, and Travelers Insurance, whose corporate executives were called the “bishops” because of their influence and power in the city (Cruz, 1998). These corporate elites united to address and solve the urban problems in Hartford. By 1972, there was an ambitious, 15-year, \$800 million dollar plan to renovate the city by the late 1980s, called the Greater Hartford Process (GHP). There were many Puerto Ricans in leadership positions with the GHP because the elites at the top included in their planning group many of the most vocal minorities.

In a controversy that became known as the “Process Memo,” Eugenio Caro, one of the Puerto Rican leaders recruited by the corporate elites, leaked an internal memorandum from GHP to the media. Although the memo’s main scheme was to disperse some of the minorities in Hartford to rural and suburban towns, it also contained a plan first to control and later to ultimately end Puerto Rican migration; segregate and marginalize Puerto Ricans away from downtown; and included the possible removal and displacement of African-Americans and Puerto Ricans from desirable areas of the city, including Frog Hollow (Simmons, 2013). When the plan became public and Puerto Rican leaders organized protests, GHP disavowed it. The approach and politics of the “Process Memo” left many neighborhood residents even more fearful, but justifiably so, following the proposals for redevelopment around Frog Hollow.

The distrust of developers by residents is mentioned in an early 1980s *Hartford Courant* article about perceived threats to the neighborhood. The residents constantly expressed fear of any proposal to develop any area in or on the outskirts of the neighborhood, such as the “proposal for the western end of the neighborhood, to redevelop the old Underwood typewriter factory” (Martin, 1982, para. 9). The deterioration of housing in the neighborhood into the 1970s had many residents concerned about the need for improvements and quality housing. Even by then, the “constant stream of people moving into the neighborhood increased the demand for housing, but mostly for low income housing, since around 65 percent of the neighborhood households in 1979 had income of lower than \$10,000 dollars a year” (Martin, 1982, para 16).

The city government and groups including BPDC and HART “worked together to accommodate the housing needs of the poor, including the rehabilitation of buildings around Broad and Park Streets, the central crossroads of the neighborhood, to provide rental units for

low income people” (Martin, 1982, para. 17). But tensions that had dominated Frog Hollow since the 1970s were evident again when developers were caught wanting to develop luxury housing, and not affordable rental units, in areas considered historically significant, like the Putnam Heights sector. The plans were thwarted by the redevelopment of low-income rental units by community agencies like HART and the Hartford Architectural Conservancy. These organizations were key in preserving and maintaining the historical and working class character of the neighborhood (Billello, 1982).

Other efforts that helped sustain the neighborhood by bringing in workers and creating new jobs, for both service and white-collar workers, were those of insurance giant Aetna Life and Casualty, otherwise known as Aetna, with its global headquarters located in the neighborhood adjacent to Asylum Hill. Aetna decided to expand and accommodate their growing workforce in the mid-1980s. The company bought and developed many old factory buildings on Capitol Avenue, including Nos. 410, 450, 470 and 490 Capitol Avenue, which are directly across the northern border of Frog Hollow. This had a positive impact on the neighborhood by revitalizing and using empty industrial buildings, and by bringing new workers to the neighborhood.

### **The Making of a Puerto Rican Community**

The first Puerto Ricans are said to have trickled into Hartford in the early 1940s, when a few Puerto Rican women came here with their American servicemen husbands. Pawlowski (1990) contended that there is no early pattern that fits Puerto Rican migration to Harford, since the first people came for a variety of reasons, and from various parts of the island. However, by the mid-1950s a distinct pattern began to emerge, which swelled the Puerto Rican population from the hundreds to about 3,000 by 1957. Political and economic changes set the pace, with

labor changes in the Hartford area precipitating what was to become a major migration that lasted more than two decades and continues today (Radcliffe, 1998). Around the same time that Puerto Rico was undergoing rapid industrialization with Operation Bootstrap, which forced thousands to leave the island, the tobacco industry around Hartford was in need of farm labor. With strong economic ties between the U.S. and Puerto Rico, the tobacco growers were encouraged to fill their labor needs with Puerto Ricans rather than West Indians (Cruz, 1998).

The demand for tobacco laborers reached its peak from 1965 to 1975. According to Pawlowski (1990), Juan Roman, one of the top recruiters for the tobacco growers at the time, estimated that he alone recruited close to 96,000 during his career. The Hartford Puerto Rican population jumped from about 9,000 at the end of 1965 to about 30,000 at the end of 1975. The first visible Puerto Rican community in Hartford began to grow around what is now referred to as the tunnel area of the Clay Arsenal neighborhood, at the intersection of North Main Street and Albany Avenue. The major center of that Puerto Rican community was Sacred Heart Church. That first settlement did not last long though, because the area was rocked by racial disturbances tied to the civil rights movement at the end of the 1960s, including the Hartford Riots of 1969 that pitted blacks against Puerto Ricans.

Puerto Ricans fled the violence, moving to the South Green neighborhood on the southern edge of downtown, and making it the new center for Puerto Rican settlements. A redevelopment plan in the 1960s precipitated a movement out of Frog Hollow by older white ethnic residents, opening up opportunities for Puerto Ricans who wanted out of Clay Arsenal (Radcliffe, 1998). By 1973, the city's redevelopment agency had acquired much of the property north of South Green and started relocating low-income families away from there, displacing Puerto Ricans in order to bring in other residents, to create a buffer zone around downtown.

Despite the fact that the efforts of the “Process Memo” had been defeated, Pawlowski (2005) claimed that political and economic interests were forcing Puerto Ricans into Frog Hollow. The author explained that although the plan to create a buffer zone to downtown had been in place years prior to the GHP plan, the departure of most of the Puerto Ricans from South Green into the Frog Hollow neighborhood occurred around the same time as the “Process Memo” controversy. Among many in the Puerto Rican community, this created the impression that the plan was always to relocate low-income people, despite what the community was told.

Radcliffe (1998) detailed that this migration into Frog Hollow in the late 1970s was not without its problems. The Puerto Ricans felt they were pushed into Frog Hollow by what they perceived as the GHP plan. They faced much resistance, from the then residents of Park Street, who were mostly of white ethnic descent. These white settlers had established literal lines they did not want Puerto Ricans to cross, namely Washington Street and Broad Street. They used personal connections at City Hall to prevent the move of Puerto Ricans past those streets (Radcliffe, 1998). However, neither line of demarcation succeeded for long. Aided by subsidized housing and groups like HART, Taíno Housing and Development Corporation, BPDC, and La Casa de Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans started settling in peace. It was a tough issue for HART because its constituency was made up of French Canadian, Greek, Irish, Lithuanian, Polish, and Portuguese people living around the Park Street corridor. HART used its Latino arm, Vecinos Unidos, to calm tensions. With the help of this agency and its up-and-coming leadership, the Puerto Rican community developed a stable foothold in Frog Hollow, which they had not had elsewhere (Pawlowski, 1990).

For the Puerto Rican community in Frog Hollow, the 1980s would be one of great political gains, despite poverty and a lack of employment in the neighborhood and city. The

Park Street festival was organized in the late 1970s to try and change the image of the neighborhood and community. When the *Hartford Courant* wrote a negative article about the end of one such festival in 1978, Puerto Rican leadership in the neighborhood struck back with determination, demanding a retraction and apology, which they paper gave them (Pawlowski, 2005). The festival continued on and off, sometimes lacking funding during the 1980s and 1990s, and other times drawing crowds of up to 100,000. It was during this period that Puerto Ricans won some political seats: Maria Sanchez was elected to the Hartford Board of Education; Antonio Gonzalez was elected to the Hartford City Council; and Maria Sanchez later ran for and won a seat as a Connecticut State Representative (Cruz, 1998).

### **Neighborhood Challenges and Resilience, 1990-1995**

By the beginning of the 1990s, the constant influx of migrants and other groups during the 1970s and 1980s made efforts like the “Process Memo” all but impossible in places like Frog Hollow (Cruz, 1998). More importantly, displacement plans against the community became unattainable following the political gains made by Puerto Ricans during the 1980s. Despite poverty and the deindustrialization of the area, some stability was created by the commercial strength of the Park Street corridor, and by the Puerto Ricans that migrated to Frog Hollow. The diverse ethnic and specialty shops located in the commercial strip, frequented by a steady ethnic customer base, gave a measure of economic power to the community that resulted in some political clout.

The historical significance of the neighborhood was consistently present in urban development plans. For example, the Local Historic Properties Commission proposed to develop a sector of Putnam Heights, Columbia Street, and Park Terrace, just blocks from the Broad and Park intersection, as the George Keller Historic District (Local, Historic Properties Commission,

1994). Although that proposal did not come to fruition, there was growing interest in the neighborhood, especially in what was becoming a regionally vibrant commercial district. This was reflected in the ongoing proposals and projects planned for the neighborhood, as it was central to Hartford's past and present, and it was geographically close to state government and downtown businesses.

The importance of the Park Street commercial district remained despite poverty, unemployment, and crime challenges to the neighborhood. According to Spitzer and Baum (1995) in the early 1980s, the leaders of Hartford community development corporations began discussing the idea of starting a food market in one of the city's poorest neighborhoods. The recent closure of several inner-city supermarkets had sparked concern that nearby residents were losing access to affordable fresh food. The BPDC thought Frog Hollow was the perfect location. It argued that a new stability brought by political gains and renewed economic interest in the neighborhood during the early 1980s made the demand for retail space in the commercial corridor strong. Furthermore, many Puerto Rican-born residents had a cultural connection with public markets, which was vital for future development.

The initial decision to create a market was made in 1983, but no market opened until 1991. As planned, El Mercado would not only provide fresh, affordable, healthy food to residents, but would also serve as an incubator for small business to cultivate and grow, while providing jobs to neighborhood residents. During the eight-year development process, the project strained the resources of the BPDC, becoming the most complex project the organization had ever undertaken. Its patchwork of funding, as well as constant interventions from politicians, caused numerous delays and complications (Spitzer & Baum, 1995). The public market eventually opened in 1991 and became a pillar for the neighborhood, both commercially



and culturally. It was a new era of investment in the neighborhood for both commercial and housing initiatives.

Almost simultaneously, Mutual Housing, another neighborhood community development corporation, developed the Park Terrace I housing initiative in Frog Hollow. This development consisted of seven, six-family contiguous "perfect sixes" to be converted into 14, one-bedroom and 28, two-bedroom flats (Mutual Housing Association, 2014). Although many of the properties surrounding the development deteriorated during the economic downturn of the 1990s, Park Terrace I is a testament to the power and persistence of residents' efforts, as well as those of the Mutual Housing staff. Completed in 1991, Park Terrace I "has had a stabilizing effect on a neighborhood better known for its ups and downs" (Mutual Housing Association, 2014, para. 1).

Despite these development efforts, the neighborhood continued to be plagued by crime in the early 1990s. Gang activity and violent crimes related to drug dealing and drug warfare, such as shootings, were at an all-time high in Frog Hollow. The neighborhood seemed to hit bottom in 1994, as "a brutal battle raged between the city's two largest gangs, *Los Sólidos* and the *Latin Kings*" (Keating, 1999, para 1). Homicides in the city climbed to a record 58, which was amazing given that there were only 22 homicides two years prior. A turning point came in early 1994, with the drive by shooting of Marcelina Delgado, a 7-year-old who was killed outside her grandmother's apartment in the Charter Oak Terrace complex, contiguous to Frog Hollow. The girl's murder caused the state to declare war against the gangs; local and federal law enforcement joined forces to lock up and disband the gangs (Keating, 1999). Two years later, more than 50 gang members were convicted in federal court of weapons and drug charges, immediately lowering crime rates. It was this new wave of peace and stability that began to attract more interest in redeveloping the neighborhood.

The industrial history of Frog Hollow began to play a big role in this new era. The entire former industrial complex of companies like Weeds Manufacturing, Pope Manufacturing, and Sharps Rifle Company, north of Capitol Avenue, survived previous demolition efforts when Aetna purchased the complex in the 1970s. The company needed additional building space for its employees and because the former industrial area was very close to its headquarters, the company considered it central to their expansion plans and proceeded to refurbish the whole complex (Ryan, 1996).

In early 1995, the State of Connecticut, pressed for adequate space for its workers, bought that same old huge factory complex from Aetna, thus preserving the industrial past of the neighborhood. Some 1,100 state workers relocated: the Department of Mental Health moved to 410 Capitol Avenue; the Office of Policy and Management to 450 Capitol Avenue; and the Department of Mental Retardation to 460 Capitol Avenue (Ryan, 1996). This development on the northern periphery of the neighborhood brought in an enormous number of people to Frog Hollow, mostly state employees. This helped both businesses and residents and furthered new hopes for the area.

### **Redevelopment and Renewed Interest in Frog Hollow, 1995-2000**

The neighborhood's momentum from the arrival of state workers continued into the later part of the 1990s. Several massive projects continued to be developed, which helped to define Frog Hollow. The Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (SINA) was originally formed as a committee with representatives from three major founding institutions: Hartford Hospital, The Institute of Living, and Trinity College, in late 1976. Named SINA in 1977, the committee worked on issues of mutual concern with a variety of activist community organizations (SINA, 2014). Among those issues were several housing and commercial projects. SINA participated in

a wide variety of other neighborhood revitalization efforts during the 1980s and early 90s, which included anti-gang and youth leadership projects, commercial revitalization planning, employee mortgage assistance program, and a comprehensive housing study, among others. This contribution was critical to the improvement of the Latino community in the 1980s.

Some of the SINA member institutions wanted to improve the neighborhood primarily for their own self-interest. Trinity College wanted to improve the area that bordered its campus, as did Hartford Hospital, but SINA focused more broadly on the welfare of everyone who lived or worked there, thus immediately becoming an important player in the future of Frog Hollow.

Although not within the boundaries of Frog Hollow, the Learning Corridor project was one of the most important projects for SINA. The \$175 million redevelopment in the adjacent Barry Square neighborhood was hailed by the *Hartford Courant's* editorial board as ambitious, and the kind of innovative project that could spell the difference between continued urban decay and revival in one of Hartford's poorest and primarily Latino districts (A grand example of thinking big, 1996). Including the redevelopment of a former bus depot designated as beyond remediation, the Learning Corridor partnership spanned a broad spectrum of public and private stakeholders including local residents and community groups such as 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 (A grand example..., 1996).

The Learning Corridor project was started in the summer of 1997 and completed in the fall of 2000. It called for a Montessori Magnet School, a Hartford Middle School, a high school resource center, and an Allied Health and Technology Center. It was to be situated on a 10-acre

site between Broad and Washington streets. From its inception, Trinity College, a small, elite, and private liberal arts college, claimed it wanted to avoid gentrification and the displacement of poor people, intending (in theory, at least) to integrate the poor with people from other economic classes (Swift, 1996). The college president at the time, Evan Dobelle, in discussing his vision and plan, explained how Trinity College wanted to build on the strengths of the neighborhood and its residents in order to build a better environment that surrounded the college, but that the college did not intend to displace the people already living there (Dobelle, 1996). It sought to help them prosper by promising local funding and services intended for the residents and their families. Trinity College claimed that SINA was looking to invest in the neighborhood and its residents and create benefits for all neighbors and neighborhood institutions (Dobelle, 1996). Dobelle further stated that SINA wants to challenge the old assumptions of urban renewal, that is, building with the community, not for it (Dobelle, 1996). The idea was that SINA wanted more than just to change the appearance of the area, they wanted to change lives. The Aetna Foundation was one of the first local corporations to commit to the project, with a “\$1 million donation to establish a family resource center in the neighborhood that would benefit local families and their children” (Pied Pipers of Frog Hollow, 1997, para. 2).

There were many parties, both commercial and political, that wanted to improve several sectors in the adjacent Frog Hollow neighborhood, after the Learning Corridor plan was approved. The Capitol District Coalition, formed in the late 1980s to combat blight and crime in the northern part of the neighborhood, wanted to develop an area of Washington, Zion, Ward and Summit streets, including Park Terrace and Pope Park (Mason, 1997a). The plan excited many in the neighborhood and residents and community organizations shared their wish list of projects,

including a playground for the Maria Sanchez Elementary School, and the reopening of the Lyric Theatre as a cultural center (Mason, 1997b).

First opened in 1923, Hartford's Lyric Theatre was designed by architect Edward T. Wiley as a 1,000-seat movie theater, and owned by the Park Street Investment Company (Broad Park Development, 2006). Presenting a combination of film and live shows, it became enormously successful in the 1920s and 30s. Adopted by the Latino community upon their arrival in the 1960s, it became a staple of the community. In the mid-1970s, it closed and was acquired by the city, after which it sat vacant and gradually deteriorated. In the late 1990s, plans for its reopening and transformation within five years were enthusiastically received by the community (Mason, 1997b).

SINA pushed for the redevelopment of several dilapidated homes into homeownership opportunities around several sectors in Frog Hollow. Included in the Learning Corridor plan, and at the forefront of this entire redevelopment proposal, was the original Cityscape project, which sought to create and develop an area of new homes close to Trinity College and name it "Trinity Heights" (Mason, 1997c). SINA's intention was to create housing that would complement the Learning Corridor project, which would benefit residents, as well. It is important to note here that the whole push from SINA and the Learning Corridor project, including its Cityscape plans, banked on homeownership as one of the key means to redevelop the neighborhood. This was a turning point away from the previous strategies of BPDC and HART to revitalize the neighborhood by improving the availability of residential rental units and redeveloping existing affordable housing for the poor. Although SINA was not arguing against rental unit redevelopment, Cityscape moved away from the model that community development corporations like Mutual Housing and BPDC had championed, which always pushed for "low

income and affordable rental development as their primary goal” (Broad Park Development, 2004, p.1).

One example of this shift in the development model was the Lawrence and Grand Streets project in 1997, which was initially heavily supported by HART. As long as they saw things as beneficial for neighborhood residents, HART was supportive of many of SINA’s proposals and plans. In the Lawrence and Grand Streets project, several two-family homes were built in a once-dilapidated section of the neighborhood, offering homeownership opportunities at affordable rates. HART was one of the key organizations behind the project, and chose a local contractor to build them. The project attempted to mix homeownership with rental housing, and revive sections of the neighborhood in disarray (Owens, 1997). The goal was to develop nice homes that were affordable and accessible to first time homeowners from the same neighborhood. HART proposed to identify residents who could bid on the homes from its pool of residents, instead of opening the bidding up to outsiders. The goals of the project were local home ownership and local investment. SINA’s selection of Northern Enterprise Home Manufacturing as the builder upset many at HART, because they wanted BPDC to be the developer. Also, because they were so committed to residents, BPDC, like HART, proposed homes that were more affordable than other plans. Despite disagreements over the schedule of construction between the chosen developer, activists from HART and the Park-Capitol Revitalization coalition, the project was completed and opened in the spring of 1999 (Mason, 1999).

Tensions were abundant between residents and developers over the nature of projects in Frog Hollow. Conflicts were especially evident when projects were green-lighted without the consent or approval of residents, like the proposed development of a CVS pharmacy on the busy

intersection of Park and Washington Streets. Residents argued that, if developers did not properly present, discuss and talk to the revitalization committees, residents would feel excluded and the full interests of the neighborhood would not be represented (Don't ignore Frog Hollow's voice, 1998).

The Learning Corridor archival articles show a constant sense of wonderment and hope around the neighborhood as to what was what was happening with the development of schools, the Girls and Boys club and so forth, but residents were cautious about how changes to the neighborhood would impact them (DeJesus & Mason, 1999). Continuing the trend toward homeownership, realtors were showcasing the Learning Corridor development as a way to sell homes in the neighborhood. Trinity College touted the project as a way to increase applications to the college. However, many were afraid existing residents would be excluded from enjoying the results of the development - the very things that the developers promised would benefit them.

SINA's efforts and plans are evident in their Strategic Plan for Renewal (Urban Strategies Inc., 1999), which attempts to build on the progress that had been made with the Learning Corridor. The plan claimed that the Learning Corridor was attempting to address education, while controlling for middle-class flight and a declining population base. The strategic plan and study were the results of a group called the Inter-neighborhood Collaborative, formed to enhance communication, reduce redundancy, and make better plan revitalization efforts (Urban Strategies Inc., 1999). SINA's whole effort behind the Inter-neighborhood Collaborative was probably to be more inclusive of residents than the Learning Corridor had been, while building on the progress made.

The strategic plan was built on an analysis of strengths and weaknesses. Among the strengths was the presence of many local agencies that already supported the neighborhood,

including churches and resident organizations. The proposed plan also saw the strong merchant's association in the Park Street corridor as an asset and claimed that "the closeness of Frog Hollow to downtown might work in consortium with all the many developments occurring there" (Urban Strategies Inc., 1999, p. 8). When it came to the negatives, the SINA strategic plan explored some of the worst problems in Hartford, and their perception of these problems guided SINA's approaches over the next decade. The plan's authors claimed that a competition for resources and the failure of residents and businessmen to work together created social isolation among the neighborhood residents. The report also points directly to what could be considered the after-effects of the Hartford "Process Memo," or "continued distrust of institutions and the fear of gentrification and displacement" (Urban Strategies Inc., 1999, p. 10).

One of the biggest problems the strategic planners found was middle-class flight, which for them created "a downward spiral of neglect and abandonment, leading to continuous disinvestment which leaves buildings vacant, leading to deterioration and blight" (Urban Strategies Inc., 1999, p. 10). This created negative equity for the few homeowners the neighborhood had. Hartford already had a stressed tax base, and the study argued that the city did not have the ability to provide for the neighborhood, which would then lead to trash in the streets, insufficient resources, petty crime, gang activities, and a weakened urban environment. This would also lead to a negative perception of the neighborhood, and the lack of a common vision for the future. Among the offers of a solution, the plan proposed "to create better connections with other neighborhoods and maintain gateways, maintain open spaces and parks, create a pedestrian friendly retail corridor, opportunities of employment and more housing" (Urban Strategies Inc., 1999, p. 12). The housing issue plan continued to emphasize new, homeownership projects and market-priced housing to bring new residents into the



neighborhood. The study reinforced the importance of Park Street's commercial activity, and recommended the development of more retail opportunities, including destination and entertainment (Urban Strategies Inc., 1999).

Another component of the expansion model was the proposal to develop Washington Village as a mixed-use, mixed-income, pedestrian-friendly village, connecting the Learning Corridor to New Britain Avenue. Again, the project advocated for renovating current housing, and marketing units to empty nesters in search of an urban experience. The plan hoped to reach a more diversified group of people and families, as the schools improved. The plan also called for SINA "to buy and renew as much of the housing around the corridor as possible, to improve the area gradually" (Urban Strategies Inc., 1999, p. 32).

### **New Developments and the Revitalization of Park Street, 2000-2005**

The Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Committee, otherwise known as the NRZ is a group of concerned stakeholders who continue to work on revitalizing Frog Hollow. All members are volunteers. The committee was created by a state statute in 1995, and then enabled by municipal ordinance in 1998; the first meeting was held in August 2000. By law, their primary focus was deteriorated properties, which were considered blighted. Their secondary focus was on the problems that flow from persistent blight (Frog Hollow Neighborhood Revitalization Strategic Plan, 2009). Wanting to have a voice regarding community development, the NRZ sought to be a partner in decision-making.

The first decade of the 2000s proved to be a very active decade for Park Street and its surrounding areas. Following the strategic plan from SINA, Urban Strategies was hired to conduct an extensive review, and develop a strategic plan for the Park Street corridor. A very popular study was produced, referenced as the "Greenberg Report" because of the involvement

of famed national urban planner Ken Greenberg. Greenburg was a consultant with Urban Strategies, one of the liaisons for the report in Frog Hollow. He met with local leaders and agencies, and represented Urban Strategies locally. The report recognized Park Street as “the main shopping district for the southern part of the city, a cultural home for the Puerto Rican community and stabilizing influence around the city” (Hamilton, Rabinoviz & Alschuler, 2000, p. 1). Utilizing regional analysis, it recognized that the flight to the suburbs had caused great damage to the neighborhood especially to the Park Street corridor and its immediate surroundings. The report also addressed the segregation of the Latino community, which was more prevalent but less well economically than non-Latino residents, with a per capita income of \$4,600 compared to \$13,500 for non-Latinos in Frog Hollow (Hamilton et al., 2000). The merchants argued that those who were more affluent were not part of their customer base and did not shop in the district out of fears about safety, and cultural xenophobia. The need for the district to expand was important and necessary, according to the report, as some of its own community residents had done better after moving out. The district also needed to look for new residents, because the constant loss of customers was threatening for some of the businesses. The report also understood that “Park Street had an enduring scale, variety of uses and pedestrian friendly characteristics and recognized the commitment that landlords, citizens, and retailers had shown to the street and the community around it” (Hamilton et al., 2000, p. 10).

Despite concerns, the Greenberg report understood the street’s identity as a Latino cultural and commercial center, and recommended maintaining it to ensure its vitality. The study proposed to “preserve Park Street as a retail center, preserve its Latino identity, foster inclusivity, and eliminate negative perceptions and advanced incremental growth” (Hamilton et al., 2000, p. 17).

The study recommended creating new housing, to increase the residential population of the neighborhood; working with the folks at the Spanish American Merchants Association (SAMA), an organization representing Latino businesses in the Park Street area; and working with SINA to renovate abandoned buildings. It also recommended increasing access to culture and arts, and bringing outsiders in by marketing its Hispanic culture. The report continually expressed that the commercial district should cater to middle-income and high-income Latino shoppers from outside of Hartford. It recommended, in strong terms, that they “had to address their negative image and bring more affluent customers, improve the livability of the surrounding residential areas, and develop new boutiques to cater to middle income shoppers” (Hamilton et al., 2000, p. 20).

It was obvious that although the Greenberg report emphasized protecting Latino identity, it consistently recommended improving housing and businesses, to attract more middle- and high-income residents and customers. Altogether, but without using alarming words, it seems that the Greenberg report was calling for some of the same things that the SINA strategic plan was recommending: (a) displacing of some of the poorer residents; (b) attracting more homeowners and people with higher incomes; and (c) maintaining a Latino cultural and business space, with fewer poor Latinos.

Following the trend of developing new homeownership projects in the late 1990s, the new millennium saw a partnership between BPDC, SINA and SAMA. First developed was a homeownership project on Affleck Street, for co-op-housing. Based on the aforementioned push from some neighborhood developers to move away from renters and more towards homeowners, the project was considered an early showcase for BPDC’s new direction into homeownership projects. It converted five apartment buildings into 26 co-op units, which BPDC had purchased

“for future development back in the late 1970s and 1980s when the push was for developing low income rental units” (Hart, 1998, para. 4). However, by the beginning of the 2000s, leaders and organizations, SINA and others among them, “had begun to push for more homeownership in Frog Hollow to increase neighborhood stability and property values, and in response to this need, Broad Park began to look for a way to convert properties into homeownership projects” (Hart, 1998, para. 4). The completion of the project was to be through a combined effort of residents working together with BPDC.

The perception of positive change was having a good impact on local businesses. A report by Mason (2001b) in the *Courant* about the neighborhood restaurant Pizza Plus, emphasizes the owner’s reinvigoration of his business, as he was betting on the neighborhood improving its image. The restaurant had been open for 31 years, and the current owner, who had inherited the restaurant from his parents, was excited about opportunities and decided to expand and redevelop his establishment (Mason, 2001b). Being located close to all the SINA institutions, including the Connecticut Children’s Medical Center and the Learning Corridor, Pizza Plus represented what SINA wanted to see - good energy and good opportunities expanding to others in the neighborhood.

Despite the new era of optimism, tensions between residents and developers continued when projects approved did not fit the vision most residents had for the neighborhood. In the *Hartford Courant*, Mason (2001a) reported about residents being opposed and pretty upset at what became one of the biggest and most controversial developments in the neighborhood, the expansion of the juvenile court, located in the heart of Frog Hollow. The project, proposed by the governor and the State of Connecticut, looked to create a 70,000 square foot addition to the juvenile detention center (Mason, 2001a). Not only were the residents upset at the short notice

of the project, which was apparently a done deal, but they were upset about the fact that the state was proposing expanding the detention center for youth, instead of expanding prevention programs for the same population that could avoid them ending detained in the first place (Mason, 2001a). The state argued that the space was needed, though agreeing that there was also a need for new prevention programs. “A community group survey of at least 50 business owners and residents showed that over 70 percent were not even aware of the expansion to the state facility, and almost all opposed it” (Mason, 2001a, para. 14).

Many residents believed that a detention center evoked a negative perception for the Frog Hollow, and would detract from economic development projects like the Learning Corridor. Even the *Hartford Courant* editorial board expressed concern at the manner in which the project was appraised, stating that despite knowing about the need and proposal for expansion for quite several years, the state did not do a good job of communicating with the neighborhood residents to explain the project need and find common ground instead of alienating them (Include neighbors in state plans, 2001). Yet, the state eventually expanded the detention facility, showcasing a disdain that powerful government actors had for community residents and their processes.

Some development projects continued around the old residential housing in Frog Hollow, close to the old industrial sector and now occupied by state offices, like the Mortson Street / Putnam Heights project. Condon (2001) praised the new developments on Mortson Street, pointing that the area was full of history, built around 1910, when the “perfect six” apartment buildings were Hartford’s signature architectural style. The original purpose was to house all the workers from nearby factories; these workers could then walk to Billings Forge, Royal Underwood Typewriter, Pratt & Whitney, Pope Manufacturing, and other factories in the

industrial sector. The neighborhood became derelict after all those factories closed down or moved out of town in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the neighborhood fell into disrepair in the decade of the 60s, 70s and 80s, becoming a victim of bad landlords, gangs, crime and vandalism; it was exciting the efforts to transform the area back to what it once was (Condon, 2001).

The city initiated a development project with Mortson Street / Putnam Heights Ventures, a consortium of two, for-profit and two, non-profit groups, including BPDC. “The goal was to create 53, owner-occupied single and two-family housing units in an area that was considered an important gateway to the commercial district, Park Street and Trinity College” (The Travelers Insurance Company, 2001, p. 3). Funding came from Travelers Insurance and Citigroup. The *Hartford Courant* expressed support for the plan to develop downtown. The paper’s editorial board stated that Frog Hollow was an extension of downtown Hartford, since it is an adjacent neighborhood and the project presented the redevelopment of historic buildings and districts, instead of demolishing them (Miracle on Mortson Street, 2001).

Within six months, with suburbanites moving in, the Mortson Street / Putnam Heights project attracted even more attention when the *Hartford Courant* ran the article showcasing the first few families moving in on page one of the newspaper (Budoff, 2002a). Demand for apartments soared and city officials seemed pleased, expressing excitement about people moving back into the city, especially to an area where just several years prior people had to stay up all night to protect the buildings from arson; it was a good sign of change for the city (Budoff, 2002a). Part of the developer contract of the Mortson St. / Putnam Height project, where units were selling from \$99,000 to \$120,000, required potential buyers to stay for up to 7 years before selling the property again. There were some grumblings from politicians like State

Representative Minnie Gonzalez, who complained that Hartford residents were not having first bids on the new properties and instead suburbanites were being targeted and chosen, bringing back fears of displacement and gentrification (Budoff, 2002a, p. A1).

By the early 2000s, there was momentum from the Learning Corridor project, in addition to the new housing units. The new executive director at SINA, Luis Cabán, proclaimed that, “rising property values, a decline in crime, expansion of business among and near Park Street and an increase in homeownership opportunities had made Frog Hollow more attractive in recent years” and that “the neighborhood was on an upswing, despite some challenges” (Mason, 2002b, para. 4). Though the Learning Corridor had to give up on the retail component of its project and had run into some debt upon its completion, SINA leadership was adamant that everything was on an upswing (Mason, 2002a).

Meanwhile, small business owners on Park Street were proposing a controversial, special services district - a mile-long strip where property owners would pay higher taxes for things like cleaner streets, better marketing and promotion, and improved parking. This idea came from SINA in the 1990s, when the organization was under the leadership of Eddie Perez, who was later elected mayor of Hartford. The district would extend from Main Street to Park Terrace, following suggestions from the Greenberg report. Documents from SAMA (Spanish American Association 2002a, 2002b) documented that the goal was to organize the business community to work more effectively to promote economic development by providing services in addition to those already provided by the city to benefit the district. According to the proposal and other archival material, a special service district is defined as a special public/private partnership in which property owners within a district pay an additional real estate tax, collected by the city, for use in promoting and improving the business area (Spanish American Association 2002a).

According to Budoff (2002b) the special services district was critical because even though the street in question had a Latino flavor and many of its businesses were doing well, it still looked ragged and dilapidated, and suffered from a bad image and reputation.

With the support of Perez, a friendly mayor of Puerto Rican decent and one of the architects of the proposal a few years prior, the City Council approved the special service district ordinance on April 22, 2002. The ordinance was created to promote the economic and general welfare of the residents of Hartford. It was aimed at helping property owners and tenants of the district through the preservation, enhancement, protection, and development of the economic health and vitality of the district (City of Hartford, 2002). The ordinance also stated that a Commissioner Board of nine elected members would manage the district. Businesses and property owners inside the special service district would elect the board members.

The energy and vitality on Park Street, which was on the verge of proper and exciting renewal, was palpable. The *Hartford Courant* decided to produce a special section about it, with multiple articles on all the changes. It is interesting to see the different points of view that emerge from the media and other city leaders related to Frog Hollow and its redevelopment potential. One article suggested that Park Street was actually saved by neglect (Smith, 2002). Recall that Park Street is lined with tightly spaced, three- and four-story brick structures, with shops and restaurants at street level and apartments above. The Street is interspersed with churches and ethnic social clubs, and retains a vitality of strong Latino dominance. The article's author, an architect based in Hartford, claimed that Park Street's design saved the neighborhood from the urban renewal efforts of the 1960s, which destroyed the Front Street and East Side neighborhoods in downtown. In other words, neglect left Park Street with plenty of potential for true revitalization. The author was congratulating the merchants for helping pass the special



service district and recommended following the Greenberg report, because it would strengthen the stability and economic base of the neighborhood, with homeownership attracting non-Latinos of higher incomes (Smith, 2002).

In the same special section, a long article by the editorial board of the *Courant* (Calle del Parque, 2002) focused on “the history of the neighborhood and its main thoroughfare, articulating a vision and documenting all the efforts to make it an inviting destination. It summarizes all the efforts by different players, including the Greenberg report, SINA, the Mortson Street / Putnam Heights project, Mutual Housing and BPDC (Calle del Parque, 2002). The article also showcases the Park Street Streetscape project, an effort to use federal transportation money to the tune of six million dollars to finance the streetscape design advocated initially in the Greenberg report (Calle del Parque, 2002). The plan was to dress Park Street with ornamental street lights, trees, signs, benches, new sidewalks, decorative paving, and traffic calming devices that would make the street safer for pedestrians and consumers. It highlighted how a merchant, Angel Sierra, received money from a grant from Neighborhood Economic Development to revitalize an abandoned building that had become an eyesore, and turned it into a vibrant retail store called Hispana Vision (Calle del Parque, 2002).

Of course problems and challenges remained, including dealing with dilapidated and abandoned buildings, the lack of employment, and the impression of a lack of safety because of the presence of crime (Calle del Parque, 2002). The constant reminder by the media of crime in the neighborhood attempted to bring to the attention of city leaders that Frog Hollow was not yet deemed safe. The media continued to report that crime was still an issue that impacted the image of the neighborhood - an image that development projects were trying to change. Articles discussed the entrance to the neighborhood and the need to create one gateway at Park and Main

Streets and another at the entrance to Washington and Park streets. The newspaper editors advocated and recommended the removal of the Immaculate Conception shelter, a wet shelter which used the harm reduction model to work with addicts (Calle del Parque, 2002). Wet shelters use a harm reduction model instead of a sobriety model, which means it allows addicts to stay even when they are under the influence. Here we see again the suggestions for and interest in improving the neighborhood by dealing with safety, and controlling its image through the removal of homeless and criminal elements, in order to bring in new residents. The newspaper also advocated for more police and anti-drug programs, saving the Lyric Theatre, and developing better restaurants to bring in new audiences (Calle del Parque, 2002). Again, the strategy remained consistent: bring in people with money from the outside, instead of investing in those already there and dealing comprehensively with the social problems impacting existing residents.

Meanwhile, Park Squire was another project in the works, developed by a consortium between BPDC and La Casa de Puerto Rico, a social service agency whose goal was to advance the social, economic, and political well-being of Hartford's Puerto Rican community. La Casa de Puerto Rico was now interested in the development of properties and together with BPDC they were attempting to develop a key area in the middle of Park Street. The idea was to develop buildings with rental apartments on top and retail on the bottom, following the recommendations of the Greenberg report. This new housing project was designed to conform to the neighborhood's low rise architecture. It was to be made up of 25 residences and six storefronts and was promoted by the *Hartford Courant* (Sign of energy of Park Street, 2003). The City of Hartford's Planning Department had redevelopment plans for the Park Squire project, which included the need to preserve housing, based on the city's 1985 ordinance that protected existing

housing (Redevelopment plan for Park-Squire Project, 1990). The final result from developers was the creation of approximately 44 new units and upgrades to the existing units. There would be opportunities for a combination of homeownership, affordable rental units, and room for commercial space on the lower floors facing Park Street. Plans provided by BPDC underscore the desire for buildings facing the Park Street corridor with housing on top and retail at the street level (Park Squire Associates Partnership, 1994).

The Mortson Street / Putnam Heights project was again regaining traction with new development and investment on Putnam Heights, after being put on hold due to the state budget crisis of 2002. As documented by Oshrat (2003b) the tenants that had already started to live there saw the new development as positive, since they were concerned about the project's completion and considered the Putnam Heights area as one of the anchors of the whole development project.

The *Hartford Courant* maintained the position that homeownership was the key to the neighborhood revitalization. Claiming support from the city, the Chamber of Commerce and other leaders, the editors stated that Park Street suffers from insufficient investment, both emotional and financial and needs initiatives to increase affordable ownership for some residents, between \$100,000 and \$120,000 and for merchants to own the properties that they have their business on (Housing provides the spark, 2003, p. A6). They were against absentee landlords that exploited the neighborhood, but did not address how to raise the income and buying power of residents so that they could afford to own the properties.

Mayor Perez brought the Pride Block Initiative to one of the blocks in Frog Hollow in 2003 (Oshrat, 2003c). The Pride Block Initiative sought to infuse a block with cash, to make it a beacon of neighborhood pride. The idea was to make neighborhoods enticing to possible

homebuyers, since at 25 percent, Hartford had a very low number of residents who were also homeowners. The mayor and the supporters of Pride Block claimed that such low percentages were not because of a lack of interest homeownership, but rather due to the lack of people who were willing to buy homes in the city out of fear and concerns about safety. The Pride Block Initiative was trying to fight this issue by making blocks more attractive and safe (Oshrat, 2003b).

In 2003, the National Register of Historic Places designated a portion of Frog Hollow, approximately five blocks, as a Historic District, which benefited the neighborhood (Oshrat, 2003a). This new designation was close to the Learning Corridor project, and it included Lincoln Street, Allen Place, and parts of Affleck and Broad Streets. The plan was not only to have the historic designation raise property values, but allow residents to be able to qualify for a historic tax credit, and be able to repair their home appropriately (Oshrat, 2003a). This effort was led by the Hartford Preservation Alliance, the city's leading preservation group.

In 2004, the expansion to the juvenile detention facility was going full speed ahead, and was still not sitting well with many in the community. The developers wanted it to have a softer look and were considering different ways to blend the building in better with the rest of the community. But several leaders, among them HART, Vecinos Unidos and the NRZ, were still upset about the development and demanded some compensation from the state. In an attempt to appease the community, the state issued a \$1.7 million bond for the rebuilding of Mi Casa, a youth services organization on Park Street. The construction of Mi Casa was intended to help the community, but even the executive director for the proposed Mi Casa Youth Center was not happy with the expansion of the juvenile facility (Davis, 2004).

The streetscape project for the main thoroughfare in Frog Hollow finally took off in early 2004. The \$6 million, city-approved project included the reconstruction of street lighting, roads, and sidewalks on Park Street. The construction was to begin at the intersection of Park Street and Park Terrace and continue through Park Street to the corner of Park and Main, at the beginning of the South Green neighborhood (Pionzio, 2004). The project included partners like SINA, SAMA and the City of Hartford. Mayor Perez, in his excitement, claimed “that the project is a big thing for Park Street, it has the goal of making the area a destination point, open to everyone” (Pionzio, 2004, para. 4). This indicated hope that the Latino businesses and culture would attract outsiders who would spend money there, and possibly change attitudes towards Frog Hollow for the better.

Details of the project indicated that construction crews were to dismantle two to four blocks of Park Street at a time over the upcoming year, replace cracked, uneven sidewalks with decorated paving, raise crosswalks, extend curbs to prevent illegal parking and protect pedestrians, install elaborated medieval style lampposts, plant plenty of trees, and install new trash receptacles and flower beds (Pionzio, 2004). It was a whole renovation to the look of Park Street, gambling that the improvements would bring those who lived outside the neighborhood onto the street. Many of the business owners were very excited, expressing hope for change about the image of the street, and also hope for the overall problems of the neighborhood. SAMA’s director, Julio Mendoza, believed that this physical change, along with the funds generated from the Park Street special services district ordinance, would help sustain the changes made to the area (Pionzio, 2004). The editorial board of the *Hartford Courant* expressed excitement about the beginning of the project. It claimed that the makeover of the street should

be important for the whole district and emphasized that reopening the Lyric Theatre would be essential for the neighborhood (Park Street makeover begins, 2004).

The *Hartford Courant* continued to advocate for more Park Street renovations, with another editorial recommending development around the state-owned building at the corner of Hudson and Park Street (Park Street's promise, 2004). SAMA had long wanted to develop around the property, to reinvigorate the commercial area of Park Street. The plan was to build a multilevel garage, to compensate for the loss of parking space when 505 Hudson Street was opened for state office usage. Conversations with state officials took place but never progressed enough to move the project forward, demonstrating a lack of connectivity that exists at times between state and local officials. Hartford has always had an ongoing problem with the state's actions regarding land use, which contributes to the city's fiscal problems. There are multiple state offices that do not generate any property tax income, and also do not connect to their local environments. This seemed to be the case in several areas of Frog Hollow, and is best exemplified by the juvenile detention facility, which produced strong community opposition.

### **Redevelopment Efforts Continue, Expand, 2005-2010**

Residents encountered problems after the completion of the housing units in the Mortson Street / Putnam Heights development (Poland, 2005). One person who bought an apartment a few years earlier in the earlier phase of the project, had not noticed any divide between homeowners and renters, but he complained about absentee landlords, which he thought were a problem. He argued that absentee landlords did not care for the properties or their residents, which brought its own set of problems (Poland, 2005). The apartment owner thought investor owners needed to do more for the properties and their renters. These observations support the premise of developers such as Mutual Housing and BPDC - that it was not just a matter of

expanding homeownership, but also creating affordable rentals that were properly managed and well-maintained. Such housing creates better conditions for both the residents and neighbors. When a new homeowner complains not about there being too few other homeowners, but rather about bad landlords and rental property managers, this contradicts plans by developers to push for rapid expansion of homeownership. The rush to sell units has no consideration for developing attractive rental properties that are properly managed. The homeowner described the challenges of owning on Mortson Street / Putnam Heights, but claimed it was worth living in the neighborhood and contributing to its revitalization.

In an effort to demonstrate that homeownership efforts were not enough for revitalization, and to respond to clamors from the community to develop more rental opportunities, SINA and BPDC decided to jump into the rental market in 2005 (Cohen, 2005). Luis Cabán, the executive director of SINA, explained that one of the things they did early on was buy as much vacant property as possible, allowing them the flexibility to decide what to develop (Cohen, 2005). The new initiative involved 13 diverse properties, purchased for \$10 million. Fannie Mae was going to put down \$7 million, while BPDC and SINA were to finance the remaining \$3 million. The effort was to try to create affordable rental units in order to stabilize the critical mass of rental needs.

In September 2005, then-Governor M. Jodi Rell, not known for her interest in urban development, went to Park Street to talk about the state contributing more money to the streetscape effort. The proposal included a \$4 million grant, with \$300,000 allocated for parking meters; \$3 million for facade improvements, and \$ 340,000 for video cameras in the street (Park street gets another lift, 2005). Continuing the investment in the neighborhood, the State of Connecticut issued a 2005 press release about a loan made to Braun Investments, LLC, for the

rehabilitation of 13 contiguous properties in Frog Hollow, located on Zion Street. These were 13 “perfect sixes” that would be converted from two-bedroom to three-bedroom apartments, with affordable rents. Additions to projects like Mortson Street / Putnam Heights, City Scape Homes, Parke Terrace II, Washington Court, and Park / Squire / Wolcott Street demonstrate the investment of the state through its Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) funds. This investment totaled more than \$11 million towards renovating blighted housing. There were more funds for new construction in Frog Hollow, including approximately \$5 million in state bonds, and over \$6 million in DECD federal HOME dollars (State of Connecticut Executive Chambers, 2005). The diversity of investments by the DECD demonstrates that the state was not investing exclusively in either homeownership or rentals, but in a mix of both, thereby allowing developers and local partners to decide the nature of their investment.

At the same time, the *Hartford Courant* editorial board called for the development and renovation of Pope Park, as a vital area of the neighborhood (Pope Park restoration key, 2005). Revitalizing the park, the editors argued, would go along with the revitalization of Frog Hollow, and with the closeness of the recently developed Park Terrace II and other developments, the park area was one to invest and develop (Pope Park restoration key, 2005). The editors called the park a diamond in the rough that could be key to the neighborhood revitalization and wrote that landscape architect plans had already been submitted to the Planning Department at City Hall for the park’s renovation (Pope Park restoration key, 2005).

In December 2005, the governor delivered a \$1 million grant, out of her \$4 million dollar commitment, in appropriations for the Phase II aspect of the Park Street Streetscape (Another Lift for Park Street, 2005). SAMA responded with two reports (DuBose Associate Architects,



2006, n.d.) both of which explain in detail the goals of the façade program and its rules of finance and implementation. The governor's funding would be used as seed money to pay for 50 percent of the facade renovations for a business, the other half to be paid by the business owner. Architectural archival records show the plans were to have the façades look like the old, traditional Spanish colonial style found in old San Juan, Puerto Rico, which are very colorful and lively (DuBose Associate Architects, n.d).

One of the most significant proposals was an attempt to develop the Lyric Theatre into El Centro Cultural “in order to serve as the restorative economic and social transformation of the Frog Hollow area of Hartford into a commercially and culturally vibrant center and regional venue for Latino culture” (BPDC, 2006b, p. 2). According to the plans, Phase I “involved the preservation, modification and interior reconstruction to adaptively use the Lyric Theatre and convert the facility into a neighborhood public library and cultural center to house arts and community revitalization organizations” (BPDC, 2006b, p. 3). This development plan showcased a massive and complex rescue of an historical building. This new type of development focused not on housing and commerce, but instead on using the arts as a neighborhood cultural revival. Enthusiasm from most of the community was universal, as residents expressed great interest in developing a cultural center in Frog Hollow (Landmark eyesore, 2007). The businesses community, however, was not as enthusiastic, as they thought that it would not benefit them or other developers committed to traditional business and housing models.

The housing projects on York Street and Zion Street, called Brick Hollow and Park Terrace II respectively, continued attracting attention, and demonstrated that the neighborhood was moving forward. Mutual Housing was working on renovating Park Terrace II on Zion

Street, and Braun was renovating the Brick Hollow project on York Street, both preserving the “perfect sixes” style distinctive to the neighborhood. Commenting on this topic, Palm (2006a) commented on the preservation and the challenges of it, but mentions the importance of preserving as well the industrial aspect of the neighborhood in any renovation. Similarly, Tasker (2006) contended that the character of the neighborhood has always been one of people with modest incomes, having a stake in good quality affordable housing that did not have to be owned.

Nevertheless, the problem with empty and dilapidated properties continued to be a problem in Frog Hollow. These old buildings had multiple problems including unclear ownership, delinquent taxes, and boarded and abandoned appearances, all of which created blight (Palm, 2006b). The article highlighted properties like the one at 900 Broad Street (located next to the juvenile court that had just been approved for expansion) which demonstrated the difficulty that this and other problem buildings presented in a neighborhood that was still revitalizing. The author explained how difficult it was to do anything about that property and underscored the serious problem that many of these old and abandoned buildings represented to the neighborhood (Palm, 2006b).

Increasingly, commentators such as the *Hartford Advocate*’s Bulger (2007) portrayed the darker side of urban renewal projects, including shoddy work that ended up dragging projects to the ground, and damaged the perceptions and finances of those who invested. Several investors in the 200 Mortson Street / Putnam Heights project later regretted their decision. One couple claimed that “the contractors failed to meet their obligations, with cheap construction and shoddy work and things that were never repaired properly” (Bulger, 2007, para. 12). Water was leaking through ceilings and windows were not properly installed. This was an area that was previously

blighted and abandoned, and the Mortson Street / Putnam Heights project was supposed to erase that, with homeownership being the vanguard of revitalization. Although many other owners interviewed for the article were happy with the neighborhood progress and changes, “many were disappointed with the structural housing problems and the lack of response to them by the city and developers” (Bulger, 2007, para. 15). Bulger mentioned other serious, ongoing problems, such as speeding cars and drug dealing in the area.

Just outside of the neighborhood but also part of SINA’s expansion was the development on Colonial Street, where 18 homes were being built for new homeownership. This was very close to Trinity College (Perez, 2007) and showcased the power and plans of Trinity and SINA in building new opportunities for homeownership. But even residents there raised concerns and talked constantly about rents going up and having worries about unintended effects of revitalization in their own situation (Perez, 2007). The mistrust and disappointment with the development by many residents continued unabated.

To address some of these problems, the Frog Hollow NRZ committee developed a strategic plan. Begun in 2005, the 10-year incremental plan called for crime reduction; more employment opportunities; traffic calming; the revitalization or demolition of blighted and abandoned buildings; and a constant investment by the city and the state, which owned many public building in the neighborhood (Frog Hollow Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Committee, 2009). There are similarities to many of the other plans. The NRZ plan specifically called for the increase of homeownership as one of the main solutions to neighborhood problems, to have a diversity of residents’ incomes. With lots of power and influence, the NRZ supported most of the development projects outlined in their strategic plan. Unfortunately, though, after its inception in 2000 and a diverse membership for the first five years, the NRZ’s

membership diversity declined. It was unable to reflect the neighborhood ethnic composition and this generated distrust by most residents, particularly Latinos. Comprised mostly of home and property owners who had invested in the future of Frog Hollow, the NRZ lacked renter representation, which then manifested as a lack of diversity in its membership, especially in terms of race and ethnicity.

In 2007, Billings Forge Community Works, an agency dedicated to community work and participation, began investing heavily in Frog Hollow, but with a unique model for revitalization, different from the SINA and NRZ models (Wheaton, 2009a). Billings Forge Community Works, an enterprise of the Melville Charitable Trust, came to Frog Hollow in 2005, and began a farm-to-table cooking movement at its Fire Box restaurant. Billings Forge collaborated with others through a self-sustaining partnership with the Center for Community Partnerships, which offered music and cultural programs to the community, through the Studio at Billings Forge. The city largest farmer's market and community garden were located there, and had become a center for sustainable agriculture in the community. Billings Forge's stated goals were to develop and manage programs that improve the conditions to fight poverty, promote a healthy quality of life and provide economic redevelopment opportunities in the neighborhood (Wheaton, 2009b). The complex sits on the northern periphery of the neighborhood. Discussing the significance of Billings Forge, a *Hartford Courant* article showcased the Billings Forge initiative and its history (Derek, 2009). The first step of the Melville Charitable Trust was to buy the old building known as the Lyceum, in 2002, and established it as the headquarters for the Partnership for Strong Communities, its affordable housing policy arm. After buying the whole Billings Forge complex in 2005, the Trust decided to invest in the community, rather than displace the current residents and bringing in outsiders (Derek, 2009). The Trust revitalized the apartments it had, and

improved them for residents. It employed many locals at the Fire Box and The Kitchen, a new bakery coffee shop endeavor. The restaurant was quickly considered one of the best in the city. Investing heavily in the whole block had immeasurable benefit for many of the residents. The violence and drugs subsided, and it became a desirable place to live. The establishment of a farmer's market and services for the community was vital. Although the complex and most of the commercial enterprises, such as the restaurant and bakery, were not marketed toward Latinos *per se*, it employed many Latinos. The restaurant was designed as upscale, which fits into the overall plan to have outside residents come in and spend some money, and hopefully help to change impressions about the area.

In the summer of 2008, the beloved coffee shop, La Paloma Sabanera, returned, located on the northern border on Capitol Avenue, close to the former industrial sector (Fillo, 2008.) The coffee shop had become a “gathering place, a “third space” for neighborhood residents to mingle, talk and socialize (Fillo, 2008). La Paloma Sabanera, originally owned and managed by the Cotto family, sold Spanish books, promoted jazz concerts and poetry readings, and quickly became a cultural icon. Despite the change in ownership, many of the residents were happy it was returning. For some residents it was a strong indicator that the neighborhood renaissance was back, which encouraged many supporters of local enterprises.

In late 2009, groundbreaking began on Casa de Francisco, a 50-unit, four-story apartment complex located at the corner of Hungerford and Park Streets (Wierbicki, 2009). Owned by the Immaculate Conception Shelter and Housing Company, the new project included apartments for low-income residents and chronically homeless individuals, based on a supportive housing model. This demonstrated progress in both trying to deal with one of the eyesores of the neighborhood according to many- the wet homeless shelter run by the Immaculate Conception

church - and at the same time solve the serious community problems of drug use, poverty and homelessness. Wet shelters can be controversial, especially to neighbors and the communities that surround them. In Frog Hollow, the supportive housing project was seen by many as an attempt to get rid of the shelter and its occupants.

Problems surfaced in 2009 for one of the developers committed to the neighborhood. BPDC was handing over its property management to Mutual Housing, in order for them to focus instead on real estate and revitalization (Rivera, 2009). However, it was widely known around the neighborhood that the collaboration between La Casa de Puerto Rico and BPDC to develop the Park / Squire Street project had been problematic. Despite completing the project, neither organization fared well, with La Casa de Puerto Rico closing its doors and BPDC in financial trouble, trying to survive. Things were not going too well for the long-standing neighborhood development corporation. It remains unclear whether it was the impact of switching focus from the affordable rent development to homeownership or the economic recession that caused BPDC's troubles, as the archival sources are vague. But their decline was another indicator of problems with community development in Frog Hollow.

By 2010, after completion of all street and building renovations, the Park Street commercial corridor drew praise. Gosselin (2010) showcased all of the changes in the street, pointing out the mix of restaurants, clothing boutiques, bodegas, jewelry shops, and grocery stores, all partly the result of planning by SAMA. The neighborhood felt a resurgence of energy after the completion of the streetscape project, which helped bring new surfacing for many of the buildings, traffic calming, benches, lighting, and sidewalks. Gosselin (2010) also pointed out the fact that the region was not only dependent on the local Latino community, but also on Latinos within a 35-mile radius, who came to the ethnic shops and restaurants in Frog Hollow because

such establishments did not exist other places. While Park Street had indeed suffered during the recession and lost some shops (including Gitano Supermarket, which tried to expand in the midst of the recession, but ended up closing after more than 20 years), the street had not lost its vitality. Despite the negative impact of the economic downturn, empty storefronts were still being rented quickly (Gosselin, 2010).

In the *Hartford Courant*, Haar (2010) praised the model used by the Melville Charitable Trust, which is a philanthropic community-building model of development. While not the most popular, it worked as a catalyst and stabilizing force. The article compared what Melville and Billings Forge had done with what another philanthropic organization, the Hollander Trust, was doing with a building in downtown Hartford (Haar, 2010). The Hollander Trust, partnered with the non-profit Common Grounds, developed community-oriented housing for mixed-income residents and provided services for those in need. This helped stabilize the tenants and, in turn, the area, as much as Billings Forge had done in Frog Hollow.

Concluding the decade of development between 2000 and 2010 and showcasing the indifference to ideas that could have been successful, the Lyric Theatre was lost to demolition in 2010. Plans for its redevelopment were never fully embraced by the government, business establishment or SINA; it just never had a champion behind it. Ubiñas (2010) explained how preservation and community groups have hoped to save the theater, with big plans for the once grand structure, a public library, a regional cultural center. But it was not meant to be as city employees determined the building to be structurally unsafe and ordered a hasty emergency demolition on a Saturday morning, when groups could not even protest (Ubiñas, 2010). Emergency meetings were attempted, but by noon that day it was too late. Funding was the main issue, as the total cost of development had risen to nearly \$20 million, causing the project to stall.

However, the support was never there from the SINA institutions or the government to push for ideas on how to obtain funding. Ubiñas (2010) described that the Park Street side of the complex was still standing, with several groups and city council members attempting to rescue the portion that remained. Interestingly, the reporter referenced that if the Park Street portion also comes down, the one building that will be clearly visible from the commercial strip would be the juvenile detention center.

### **Summary**

Through archival materials, this chapter illustrated the history of the Frog Hollow neighborhood, showcasing its industrial background and its economic relevance to Hartford at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It also presented a dramatic deindustrialization process that transformed the neighborhood from the 1950s through the 70s, which coincided with the arrival of a large number of Puerto Ricans to the area. The exodus of industry and employment combined with the migration of an ethnic and segregated population resulted in the social exclusion and marginalization of these new neighborhood residents. This also became the catalyst for the concentrated violence and crime that exploded the neighborhood in the mid-1990s. As a response to this period of urban deterioration, different projects were developed in Frog Hollow starting in the late 1990s and up through the 2000s, including projects that succeeded in creating some changes to the neighborhood. However, none of the development projects seemed to cause a seismic shift in neighborhood conditions, since they did not properly address the underlying issues of poverty and unemployment, which are at the root of most of the neighborhood problems.

A lot of the development projects were focused on housing, demonstrating that housing was believed to be the stabilizing force in Frog Hollow. Yet, the archival materials showed an



ideological division between those that developed new homeownership opportunities and those that developed affordable rental units. Those in favor of homeownership claimed that it properly stabilizes a neighborhood; those developers advocating for renovating existing units into affordable rentals claimed what Frog Hollow really needed were decent and clean places to live, to create community. Both types of development had successes, but the archival materials show that, for the most part, homeownership opportunities were accessed by people from outside of the neighborhood. This resulted in some displacement of local residents who were not able to meet the income requirements to actively participate in these new homeownership opportunities.

The archival materials also show revitalization and development projects that were predominantly focused on the areas surrounding the powerful SINA institutions, supporting the business district in Park Street. The commercial corridor received some of the most visible and substantial development efforts, including the beautification of the sidewalks, traffic-calming efforts, and the improvement of businesses' facades. This focus on Park Street demonstrated the commercialization of the Latino identity of the neighborhood, displayed by the support for businesses catering to Latinos in the community. However, much of the work around the business district and many of the new housing projects demonstrated some ambivalence, with shoddy and poor construction efforts that seem to question the commitment of those who supported development for real and sustainable change.

This chapter also showcased a community that distrusts governmental and large institutions, and witnessed the completion of large projects that brought outsiders into the area, causing the further displacement of locals. The materials do not show significant efforts to bring in alternative development models, or those that would include workforce development, to create better job opportunities, or culturally oriented plans that could have had long-term effects for

neighborhood residents. These alternative efforts never received the support they needed from the government, business, or institutional sectors. Yet, throughout the whole era of development and revitalization, one sees a neighborhood that remains resilient, with a vibrant commercial strip dependent on a specific ethnic clientele, and an ethnic clientele that is dependent on the businesses. This creates a symbiotic relationship, which keeps the neighborhood moving along. Despite all of the development projects, it was interesting to see how much Frog Hollow has changed in the past 15 years, and yet how much it has stayed the same.

## **Chapter Four: Demographic Analysis**

A demographic analysis of Hartford neighborhoods indicated that between 2000 and 2010, the multiple community development initiatives in Frog Hollow produced some changes for residents, although none of them seem to be substantial. Of note is the fact that one of the census tracts, 5029, was an outlier in most demographic categories analyzed. One of the possible explanations for this is the residential apartment complex developed in 1986, the Park Place Towers, which is located in this tract. These two, 25-level apartment towers, with 480 units, were advertised as “luxury apartments” and appealed to those with a high socioeconomic status. The amenities included a pool, tennis courts, a private gym and a park.

Another explanation for tract 5029 being an outlier could be the presence of the George Keller Historic District, an attractive set of row houses on Columbia Street and Park Terrace, designed and built between 1889 and 1895 respectively, by noted Hartford Architect George Keller (City of Hartford Local Historic Properties Commission 1994; Campbell, 2014). The people who occupy this highly-valued, housing development today have higher socioeconomic statuses than typical neighborhood residents. The demographic differences of the residents of the tower complex and those in the historic district appear to have a distorting effect when comparing the data of census tract 5029 to the one from 5028 and 5030. Some of the most meaningful findings:

- The Frog Hollow neighborhood lost population during the decade of community development, while the city gained population. While Hartford overall was attractive to new residents, community development projects did little to attract them to the neighborhood.

- Despite losing overall population, the neighborhood remained predominantly Latino, with an overwhelming majority of its residents identifying as Puerto Rican specifically. The dominance of this ethnic group is displayed culturally and economically in the business sector.
- No meaningful change was seen in the human capital of the residents, although there seems to be some trend in the retention of those residents with less educational attainment and a trend in the increase in those with college degrees, which is typically associated with gentrification.
- The unemployment rate increased in all three tracts neighborhoods during the decade of the community development. The community development did not seem to have a positive impact on the availability of employment.
- Of those employed, the majority of jobs held were predominantly in the service industry, which tend to be low-paying. Adding to the trend, there was a slight decrease in white-collar jobs. If the community development had an impact on job availability, it was on the increase of service- oriented jobs.
- The median household income followed the same trend as the increase or decrease of white-collar jobs, as it is related closely to the type of jobs available. It decreased in tracts 5028 and 5030, and increased in 5029, the only tract where white-collar jobs increased.
- There was a substantial increase in the number of families living in poverty in all three tracts, which may be related to the lack of any substantial increase in median household income during the decade, as well as to the lack of availability of better paying jobs.

- Regarding housing, there was a substantial increase in homeownership in tracts 5028 and 5029 and a small change in tract 5030. This was accompanied by a substantial decrease of renter-occupied units in tracts 5028 and 5029 and no change in tract 2030. This is one of the biggest impacts of the decade of community development. The displacement of rental properties and the increased availability of homeownership opportunities is a sign of limited gentrification.

This data answers some of the research questions of this study, including determining the impact community development projects had on the socioeconomic conditions of residents, such as homeownership, income, employment, density, and education. Overall, the data described above indicate that the fear of intense gentrification by some residents and NRZ members during project planning did not occur. In fact, the neighborhood economic conditions deteriorated and did not improve overall for most residents during the decade. Despite not seeing a significant increase in the socioeconomic well-being of residents, there were higher rates of homeownership and the loss of low-cost rental units, two trends typically associated with gentrification. The rise in unemployment is notable since the later part of the decade was a period of relatively high unemployment, during the 2008 economic recession. This rise in unemployment is related to the downward change in the income levels of residents.

## **Population**

Between 2000 and 2010, the Frog Hollow neighborhood experienced an overall population loss of approximately 13 percent, from approximately 9,300 to a little more than 8,000 (see Table 1). Of the three census tracts studied, all lost almost 10 percent of their populations, with one, tract 5030, losing 16 percent, more than the other two combined. Interestingly, when compared to the rest of Hartford, we see an opposite trend, as the city gained

population during the decade. That gain, although only 2.6 percent, turned out to be almost 3,000 residents, but very few of those new to the city decided to settle in Frog Hollow (see Table 4.1).

While Hartford's efforts to stabilize and stem the exodus of residents from the city in the decade of the 2000s seem to have been somewhat effective, this was not the case in Frog Hollow, where the community development efforts did little to attract new residents. The data shows that all three census tracts lost residents (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

*Total Population in Frog Hollow*

	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>% Change</u>
<u>Census Tract</u>			
5028	3,065	2,775	- 9.4 %
5029	3,077	2,678	- 12.9 %
5030	3,181	2,644	- 16.8 %
Neighborhood Total	9,323	8,097	- 13.1 %
Hartford City	121,578	124,760	+ 2.6 %

Source: U.S. Census, 2000; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, 2006-10

### **Latinos in Frog Hollow**

As indicated in the literature review, Frog Hollow remains predominantly Latino (see Table 2), with Puerto Ricans the most dominant group (see Table 4.3). The data shows that following the same pattern as the total population of the neighborhood, Frog Hollow lost residents that identified as Latino from 2000 to 2010. All three tracts show a decline in Latino population, with tract 5029 showing the largest. However, Hartford overall gained Latino

residents, indicating either that Latinos moved from Frog Hollow to other parts of the city or that Latinos chose to move to Hartford but not to Frog Hollow specifically.

Despite the decrease of Latinos in each census tract and in the neighborhood overall, Frog Hollow remains predominantly Latino, with almost 70 percent of residents identifying as Latino, as of 2010 (see Table 4.2). Throughout the decade, they have remained the most dominant group culturally and economically, which is reflected in the business district, which is predominantly Latino-owned and operated.

Table 4.2

*Latinos in Frog Hollow*

	<u>2000</u>			<u>2010</u>			
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Latinos</u>	<u>Percent Latinos</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Latinos</u>	<u>Percent Latinos</u>	<u>Percent Change</u>
<u>Census Tract</u>							
5028	3,065	2,395	78.1 %	2,775	2,067	74.4 %	- 13.6 %
5029	3,077	2,012	65.3 %	2,678	1,384	51.6 %	- 31.2 %
5030	3,181	2,276	71.5 %	2,644	2,134	80.7 %	- 6.23 %
Neighborhood Total	9,323	6,683	71.6 %	8,097	5,585	68.9 %	- 16.4 %
Hartford City	121,578	49,323	38.1 %	124,760	52,364	41.9 %	+ 6.16 %

Source: U.S. Census, 2000; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, 2006-10

Table 4.3

*Ethnic Categories among Latinos*

<u>Census Tract</u>	<u>2010</u>						
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Latino</u>	<u>Mexican</u>	<u>Puerto Rican</u>	<u>Cuban</u>	<u>Other Latinos</u>	<u>Not Latino</u>
5028	2,775	2,067	127	1,607	0	333	708
5029	2,678	1,384	0	1,275	0	109	1,294
5030	2,644	2,134	0	2,007	0	127	510
Neighborhood Total	8,097	5,585	127	4,889	0	569	2,512

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate 2006-10

**Educational Attainment**

The data shows no substantial change in the human capital of residents. However, there is a decrease in the amount of those with less education in at least in tracts 5028, categorized here as high school only graduates, and a substantial increase in those with college degrees in all three tracts. While this could be considered a general reflection of rising educational attainment nationwide, the gain in college graduates in one of the tracts, 5028, is higher than the national trend.

The rate of high school only graduates decreased very sharply in 5028, but in the other two tracts, 5030 and 5029, there were increases in the number of high school only graduates residing in each, with 5029 experiencing an increase of over 30 percent, which is substantial (see Table 4). Although all three of Frog Hollow's tracts had fewer numbers of high school only graduates when compared to the city during the two data points of this analysis, two of them, 5029 and 5030, both saw a substantial increase in the number of high school only graduates.



When looking at college graduates (see Table 4.5), all three tracts show meaningful increases, with 5028 experiencing the most substantial increase of over 200 percent. It is important to note that this neighborhood tract is the closest to Trinity College and the Learning Corridor development in the adjacent neighborhood, which was intended to increase the accessibility of Trinity to the neighborhood and vice versa. Perhaps the involvement of Trinity and its overall effect encouraged more college graduates to move to the Frog Hollow neighborhood. Census Tract 5029 again showed a concentration of graduates far above that of Hartford overall, possibly reflecting the likely result of the Park Place Towers, which appeal to young professionals and recent college graduates (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.4

*High School Graduates Rate<sup>1</sup>*

	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>% Change</u>
<u>Census Tract</u>			
5028	43.4 %	35.8 %	- 17.3 %
5029	35.3 %	47.7 %	+ 29.9 %
5030	36.7 %	42.2 %	+ 6.6 %
Hartford City	48.4 %	54.6 %	+ 17.6 %

Source: U.S. Census, 2000; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, 2006-10

<sup>1</sup> Percentage of population 25 years & older with a high school degree or higher, but no Bachelors.

Table 4.5

*College Graduates Rate<sup>2</sup>*

	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>% Change</u>
<u>Census Tract</u>			
5028	3.6 %	11.2 %	+ 211 %
5029	21.0 %	27.3 %	+ 30.0 %
5030	5.9 %	7.6 %	+ 28.8 %
Hartford City	12.4 %	13.3 %	+ 7.25 %

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Source: U.S. Census, 2000; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, 2006-10

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**Employment and Occupation**

The unemployment rate increased in all three tracts during the decade of the development. This indicates that development initiatives and projects did not have a positive impact on the availability jobs (see Table 4.6). It is significant to note that the economic recession that hit the U.S. in 2008 fell within the decade that this analysis is focused on, which means we need to consider the fact that this recession could have impacted Frog Hollow's residents. When compared to the rest of Hartford, unemployment was about even with the three neighborhood tracts in 2000, and, except for tract 5030, remained even in 2010. Neither development projects nor city-wide efforts were able to make a difference in the neighborhood unemployment rate.

Of those individuals working in Frog Hollow, the majority worked predominantly in the service sector (see Table 4.7) which, according to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, tends to be made up of lower-paying jobs. In tract 5030, the percentage of service jobs is comparable to the

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<sup>2</sup> Percentage of population 25 years & older with a bachelor's degree or higher.

city. In tract 5028, however, the percentage is substantially higher, with over half of all jobs being in the service sector. It is substantial that the amount of low-paying jobs increased by over 25 percent in that same tract during the development decade. Again, if any jobs were generated by the development projects, most were service-orientated. Since the U.S. Census considers construction jobs to be part of the service industry, one can speculate that the higher availability of construction jobs during the many projects might have played a role in the percentage increase.

In other parts of the labor market, the data indicate moderate to substantial changes in the area of white-collar jobs in two of the tracts; 5028 had a 4.54 percent increase while 5030 had a 38 percent decrease, compared to an increase of less than 1 percent for the city overall (see Table 4.8). The exception was tract 5029, with a 13.9 percent increase of white-collar jobs. Again, the effect of the Park Place Towers seems to differentiate this neighborhood tract from the other two. The neighborhood-wide development seems to have increased the availability of service-oriented jobs. One can speculate that as community development sustained the commercial viability of the district, job were created in retail and other service-related industries, including construction.

The unemployment rates also reflect the 2008 recession that impacted the service sector, though far less than the white-collar sector. This corresponds with the latest information from the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, which indicates that since the recession, the largest increase in jobs has been in the typically low-paying service industry. Changes in the larger labor market seem to have fueled the process of keeping Frog Hollow's work force in stagnant, low-paying jobs, results that development efforts in Frog Hollow were not able to mitigate.

Table 4.6

*Unemployment Rate*<sup>3</sup>

	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>% Change</u>
<u>Census Tract</u>			
5028	9.2 %	11.6 %	+ 26.0 %
5029	6.6 %	10.0 %	+ 51.5 %
5030	9.4 %	17.4 %	+ 85.1 %
Hartford City	9.1 %	10.7 %	+ 17.5 %

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Source: U.S. Census, 2000; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, 2006-10

Table 4.7

*Service Sector Employment Rate*<sup>4</sup>

	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>% Change</u>
<u>Census Tract</u>			
5028	27.7 %	53.1 %	+ 25.4 %
5029	20.2 %	6.1 %	- 14.1 %
5030	28.8 %	33.2 %	+ 4.4 %
Hartford City	26.5 %	30.7 %	+ 15.8 %

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Source: U.S. Census, 2000; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, 2006-10

Table 4.8

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<sup>3</sup> Percentage of male and female civilian labor force considered unemployed.

<sup>4</sup> Percentage of employed persons 16 years or older working in service occupations: healthcare support, protective services, food preparation, building and grounds cleaning & maintenance, personal care.

*White Collar Sector Employment Rate<sup>5</sup>*

	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>% Change</u>
<u>Census Tract</u>			
5028	13.2 %	12.6 %	- 4.54 %
5029	28 %	31.9 %	+ 13.9 %
5030	19.2 %	11.9 %	- 38.0 %
Hartford City	21.6 %	21.8 %	+ 0.9 %

Source: U.S. Census, 2000; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, 2006-10

**Income and Poverty Levels**

The income levels seem to follow closely the trend of scarce white-collar, higher-paying jobs and the abundance of service industry, lower-paying ones. The two tracts that had a decrease in median household income, 5028 and 5030, were the same two tracts that had an increase of low-paying jobs and a decrease of white-collar jobs (see Table 4.9). When compared with the whole city of Hartford, the three tracts and neighborhood overall showed a lower median income at the beginning and the end of the decade. However, the trend of a decrease in median income per household was the same for the whole city and for tracts 5028 and 5030. Again, it was tract 5029 that went in a separate direction, with an increase of nearly 16.9 percent in income. It was also the same tract that had the only decrease of low-paying jobs and increase of higher paying ones. A relationship clearly exists between the type of employment and income levels in Frog Hollow.

Despite the differences in income levels, there was a substantial increase in the number of families living in poverty in all three tracts, which appears to be related-to the lack of any

<sup>5</sup> Percentage of employed persons 16 years or older working in white-collar occupations: executive, administrative, managerial; professional specialty; arts and media; and, technicians.

substantial increase in median income during the decade (see Table 4.10). The concentration of income seems to be in play here, because despite the median income in tract 5029, there were still 25 percent of families living below the poverty line. The concentration of poverty in the neighborhood overall is evident when compared to the rest of Hartford, which only saw an increase of 2.8 percent of families and households living below the poverty level. Again, the development efforts were not able to make a difference in one of the most significant problems in the neighborhood: a high concentration of poverty. The inability of the development efforts to increase the number of better paying jobs evenly in all three tracts is related to the increase in poverty levels.

Table 4.9

*Median Household Income Rate<sup>6</sup>*

	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>% Change</u>
<u>Census Tract</u>			
5028	\$ 21,553	\$ 16,759	- 22.2 %
5029	\$ 25,015	\$ 29,130	+ 16.4 %
5030	\$ 19,150	\$ 12,194	- 36.3 %
Hartford City	\$ 31,429	\$ 28,970	- 7.8 %

Source: U.S. Census, 2000; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, 2006-10

Table 4.10

*Families/Households below Poverty Level<sup>7</sup>*

<sup>6</sup> All dollar figures adjusted to 2010 values using the standard Consumer Price Index (CPI).

	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>% Change</u>
<u>Census Tract</u>			
5028	43.4 %	56.5 %	+ 30.1 %
5029	36.0 %	45.3 %	+ 25.8 %
5030	46.2 %	60.5 %	+ 30.9 %
Hartford City	28.2 %	29.0 %	+ 2.8 %

Source: U.S. Census, 2000; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, 2006-10

### **Homeownership and Rental Rates**

When looking at homeownership and renter occupancy levels, there was a substantial increase in homeownership in all three of the neighborhood tracts, accompanied by a substantial decrease of renter-occupied units (see Table 4.11). This is one of the biggest impacts the decade of community development had, since there was a concerted effort by developers to offer more homeownership opportunities and less affordable housing, which, according to the U.S. government's definition, is housing that costs no more than 30 percent of total monthly household income (Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2015).

Changes in the housing market provide some of the strongest evidence that although there was not widespread gentrification of the neighborhood, there appears to have been some concerted efforts by developers to increase the amount of owners, and decrease the amount of renters. The increase of homeownership and the dramatically reduced inventory of rental units were accompanied by a substantial increase in the cost of rentals. Thus, from 2000 to 2010, all

<sup>7</sup> Following the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 14, the Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty.

three Frog Hollow census tracts experienced an increase in median rent (in inflation-adjusted dollars) of 9 to 16 percent (see Table 4.12).

As a result, the percentage of private rental units that were affordable for low-income households fell substantially (see Table 4.13) in all three tracts. In 2000, at least 35 percent of available units were affordable to poor renters in tract 5028; in tract 5030 that number was 50 percent. However, by 2010 only one census tract, 5029, had at least 35 percent of its rental housing priced affordably for low-income renters; the level for the other two tracts was reduced to barely 25 percent.

The loss of housing that can be identified as affordable indicates that those low-income households remaining in Frog Hollow had to compete for a shrinking pool of low-income housing. As a result, many low-income and poor families were forced to spend in excess of 30 percent of their monthly income just for shelter. In fact, by 2010 the majority of the poorest renters in two of the census tracts spent more than 30 percent of their household income on rent. In those same tracts, low-income renters were forced to spend in excess of 40 percent of their monthly income on rent (see Table 4.13).

Table 4.11

*Housing: Home Owner vs. Renter*



	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Occupied</u>		<u>Renter</u>	<u>Occupied</u>	
	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>% Change</u> <u>Owner</u> <u>Occupied</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>% Change</u> <u>Renter</u> <u>Occupied</u>
<u>Census Tract</u>						
5028	10.8 %	13.4 %	+ 24.0 %	89.2 %	86.6 %	- 2.9 %
5029	4.9 %	7.2 %	+ 46.9 %	95.1 %	92.8 %	- 2.4 %
5030	6.6 %	7.0 %	+ 6.1 %	93.4 %	93.0 %	- 0.4 %
Hartford City	24.5 %	25.8 %	+ 5.30 %	75.4 %	74.1 %	- 1.7 %

Source: U.S. Census, 2000; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, 2006-10

Table 4.12

*Median Rent*<sup>8</sup>

	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>% Change</u>
<u>Census Tract</u>			
5028	\$ 742	\$ 801	+ 9.4 %
5029	\$ 863	\$ 914	+ 12.9 %
5030	\$ 541	\$ 620	+ 16.8 %
Hartford City	\$ 709	\$ 805	+ 2.6 %

Source: U.S. Census, 2000; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, 2006-10

Table 4.13

*Affordable Rental Units*<sup>9</sup> - Available Rental Units Affordable to Low-income Households

<sup>8</sup> Figures are for median gross rent. All dollar figures adjusted to 2010 values using the standard Consumer Price Index.

<u>Census Tract</u>	<u>2000</u>			<u>2010</u>			
	<u>Available Units</u>	<u>Affordable Units</u>	<u>Percent Affordable</u>	<u>Available Units</u>	<u>Affordable Units</u>	<u>Percent Affordable</u>	<u>Lost Units</u>
5028	807	293	36.3 %	823	213	25.9 %	80
5029	1,167	562	48.1 %	1,108	432	38.9 %	130
5030	1,049	576	54.9 %	1,017	256	25.1 %	320
Neighborhood Total	3,043	1,431	47.0 %	2,948	901	30.5 %	530
Hartford City	33,934	16,639	49.0 %	34,183	13,384	39.1 %	3,255

Source: U.S. Census, 2000; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, 2006-10

### Summary

When examining the demographics data on the results are mixed. Despite initiatives of homeownership, the development projects did little to attract a substantial number of new residents to the neighborhood; subsequently Frog Hollow lost residents. Despite this, the neighborhood retained a Latino ethnic character, which was displayed in the business sector. One positive outcome is that the neighborhood saw an increase of residents with college degrees, either through the completion of a degree by existing residents or through the arrival of new residents with degrees. The majority of the population, however, did not possess any higher education.

<sup>9</sup> Figures are based on occupied rental units only—they do not include vacant units. These calculations are based on several sources. I use the federal government's definition of housing affordability: housing that costs no more than 30 percent of household monthly income (Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2015). The calculations for the percentage of affordable units available to low-income renters may be an overestimate. Rent amounts in census data are grouped in increments of \$100 in 2000 & 2010). Finally, these calculations do not include the small amount of renters who paid "no cash rent" (U.S. Census, 2000, ACS 5 Year Estimate 2006-2010).

The redevelopment projects did not seem to have a positive impact on the availability of employment for residents, with unemployment rates increasing throughout Frog Hollow during the key development years. The majority of those employed were working low-wage jobs, predominantly in the service sector. Failing to attract better jobs and higher rates of employment, Frog Hollow showed a slight decrease in the number of white-collar jobs held by residents. This created a downward trend in median household income, which is related to the type of jobs available. Following the low-paying jobs and the lack of improvement in income opportunities, there was a substantial increase in the number of families living in poverty in all of Frog Hollow. Despite all the fanfare of improving the neighborhood, Frog Hollow retained high levels of poverty and offered few good paying jobs.

Finally, one of the biggest impacts of the decade of development was a substantial increase in the number of homeowners in Frog Hollow, accompanied by a substantial decrease in the number of renters. The displacement of rental properties and the increased availability of homeownership opportunities was a sign of the development model used during the decade. For a neighborhood that remained poor and could not develop better income opportunities for its residents, the loss of affordable rental units is an alarming sign of a lack of economic progress and of localized gentrification.

## **Chapter Five: Stakeholder Interviews**

The following chapter contains the analysis of 15 interviews with neighborhood stakeholders. The interviews were divided in three categories of community involvement: five informants were from the development or political sector; five were from the business or social service sector; and five were from the resident sector. All participants were 35-65-years-old and were U.S. citizens. Five of the informants were white; the rest were Latino. Five informants were female, while ten were males. All informants spoke fluent English, but one of the Latino informants specifically requested to have his interviews conducted in Spanish. The other nine Latino informants switched between Spanish and English with ease during their interviews.

This chapter will explore the themes that surfaced during the interviews regarding community development in the Frog Hollow neighborhood. The themes and sub-themes capture aspects identified by the informants as being relevant to understanding the impact of the multiple community development projects that took place in the neighborhood.

### **Frog Hollow's Importance**

Frog Hollow has always been important to the city of Hartford. The vitality of the neighborhood comes from two of its most important characteristics, its bustling commercial strip and its strong ethnic culture.

**Commercial strip.** Frog Hollow's retail corridor on Park Street is one of the most economically viable in Hartford. This neighborhood brings in large tax revenues for the city, at times more than downtown Hartford itself. It is one of the most vital commercial strips in the city, full of restaurants and retail shops and could be compared to the commercial corridors on both Maple Avenue and Franklin Avenue. One informant with the political sector, commented on the importance of the commercial activity of the neighborhood for politicians at City Hall:

When you think of the commercial activity in here, this district does better than the central district at times....because of so much activity. You have to keep it going. There is a lot of day-to-day business and a lot of entrepreneurs. The vacancy is low, and is hard to find a good location to do anything. It's always full. Not only in the Latino section, the Parkville section benefits, too. Park Street is the most effective on terms of economic activity...that is big for them. If our activity continues to be bigger than other strips, that is good for the city and the neighborhood. People pay their taxes. The city can spend less on crisis and more on prevention. Invest properly. Something will happen on Park and Main because of everything we are doing.

The commercial activity on Park Street, however, is tied to the cultural and ethnic aspects of the neighborhood. As stated in the previous chapter, Latinos make up the majority of people residing in Frog Hollow (U.S. Census 2000, ACS Survey, 2006-2010), with Puerto Ricans continuing to have an overwhelming majority, despite the arrival of other groups during the last decade. This gives the neighborhood an ethnic flavor and an ethnic distinction that others commercial areas in the city do not have. A social service provider commented on the unique relationship that the businesses in the commercial strip have with neighborhood residents, who benefit by having their cultural needs met:

One of the things is that when you come to Park Street here on the weekends, you see people shopping for things that you can only find here, like "calderos" [pots] for rice. Or people looking for "guayaberas" [men dress shirts]. Where else would you find that? And then the people who live here tell me that they are concerned about things, but they love it. The school is close, the stores are close... they can find things easily. So the businesses play a huge role on why the people stay here. Things are easy to find.

Another social service provider also pointed out that the commercial corridor not only meets the cultural and ethnic needs of local residents, but of an even larger group of regional Latinos:

Yes, and it is an important one. This corridor here is unique, not only locally, but regionally and in other states. People come here from all over to buy things. We were trying to project that to bring more [people] from the outside. It was important and 95 percent were Puerto Ricans, which has changed. That was attractive. Here you can find products, fashions... all kind of things. Still is important because it makes the community distinctive.

The key aspect here is the connection between the commercial and ethnic components, which have created a unique relationship, making Frog Hollow such an asset for the city. These vital connections are what has made Frog Hollow so resilient commercially, able to withstand economic problems like the recession of 2007-08. One business owner pointed out that the commerciality of the street was related to the Latino culture of the neighborhood. This culture gave the neighborhood an identity, on which the business owners were able to capitalize:

It's a great street... anything Latino based, you can find. We are a city within the city. We have our own banks, our own restaurants, our own markets, tailors, party stores. Not too many neighborhoods can say they have all these specialty stores... it is thriving, yes it is. It may be lower class, but it is thriving. Park Street brought more people in than any other neighborhood. It is that the money, for example, in downtown you can charge more for being there. On a day to day, we bring in tons of revenue. On a Monday or a Sunday, it does not matter.

**Latino identity.** The commercial district caters to the needs of the ethnic community, with shops and restaurant unique to the city. The Latinos are very dependent on it, because it not only provides them with a sense of home and/or a connection to the communities that they left behind when they migrated, but it also provides them with essential things that they need to prepare their food, to cloth themselves and their families, or to identify themselves as Latino. This dual need has created a symbiotic relationship, one that connects the district and its residents spatially. That Latino flavor is actually international, as a social service provider indicated, underscoring the diversity among Latinos now residing in the neighborhood:

Lots of immigrant groups from many different parts of the world. Dominicans, Guatemalans, Mexicans, Puerto Rico, African-Americans. The whole Latino experience might get clumped together, but it is not all the same. When I started here there was tons of Puerto Rican activity, but that has changed... when I started working here I noticed a lot of the Puerto Ricans who were entrepreneurs or business owners were leaving. And a lot of the Latino businesses were becoming more diverse in their ethnicity as more Mexican and Dominican-owned businesses. A gentleman who owned a record shop past El Mercado was in the middle of selling his business to a Mexican, who was specializing in Latino magazines and other things.

Interestingly, there are some residents aware of the connection and benefit of the Latino culture and the commercial corridor, but they question whether this is too one-dimensional. The Latino identity is important to all aspects of the neighborhood, not just to the commercial district. One of the informants, a resident and an activist with neighborhood organizations, pointed out that the issue of the Latino culture of the neighborhood always comes up when discussing

neighborhood needs; just having the businesses around did not mean that the people automatically were a part of them:

Oh yeah, I remember in community meetings talking about the Latino flavor. Just because you have the businesses does not mean you have the people in your pocket. We still have a lot of Latino businesses; we still have an identity. But we need to watch out when they use it for their own behalf.

This indicates that some residents knew that the Latino nature was an asset, but didn't think it should be relegated to the commercial strip. Interestingly, it was not only residents that questioned how the Latino identity was being used by neighborhood businesses. Despite understanding its economic benefits, one of the informants from the business sector (who also argued for more homeownership for local residents) discussed the fact that Latinos were a commodity, but did not have enough power beyond being consumers:

If you want a successful area you have to have both [renters and homeowners]. We have very little homeownership. One of the problems that we had is that Latinos did not own things. If you look now, a lot of the properties now are owned by Latinos or by organizations that have to do with the Latino community. If you look at a lot of the property that have been remodeled around the side streets, a lot of is homeownership. You have to. Because how do you say... is this our area when it is owned by someone else? We have good families that want to raise their kids around Park Street. To us is a good combination. You cannot forget the renters.

**Cultural component.** It is important to discuss the Latino ethnic component and its importance as a cultural marker, something that pulls all of the residents together. That culture was what many in the business sector used for economic gain. But there were also residents and



leaders who thought that the cultural component could be used more significantly, not only to sell products but to build character and unite the neighborhood in the search for solutions. An informant who, as a resident and a previous business owner, was an advocate for more cultural development talked openly about the Latino identity and what could it be used for:

We need the development of a creative element. That is why I push for like the creation of a Latino cultural entity on Park Street, because it would solidify the Latino identity of the neighborhood, like Plaza Mayor or Paseo Boricua [in Chicago]. It solidifies it as a Latino space.

The informant was comparing Frog Hollow to the Puerto Rican neighborhood in Chicago, which has several cultural centers and uses the culture to build activism, community and leadership, and has become important both regionally and nationally. Interestingly, another resident informant who had been in the neighborhood for a longer period, explained that the cultural development around the Latino identity was an old one, from as far back as the mid-1990s:

So we start seeing our power as a Puerto Rican community. Then SAMA starts evolving. In the 1990's the idea of a commercial strip on Park Street that has a specific Latino identity. That is when the idea of developing a merchants association to train and educate the owners on how to care for the stores. We started talking about the facade. We created the Center Without Walls [a cultural organization] to start using empty spaces for other community uses and to project a different vision of the community and Park Street. We started developing the idea of a cultural center.

Despite a lack of development of that cultural component, the neighborhood remains vibrant and has been resilient against problems like gangs, poverty, drugs, and corruption. One

of the developers saw a great deal of potential in the neighborhood, and commented on some of the things that had sustained Frog Hollow through all these difficult times:

It is a vibrant neighborhood, a great environment. This probably would not happen many other places. There is a willingness to try and engage once trust is built. It's a great neighborhood with great architecture. Building real community. People from the legislature, neighbors, families, people from all over invest, get involved. Natural connections are happening. People want to take part, and it makes us more successful.

### **Neighborhood Conditions**

Frog Hollow received much interest in redevelopment for several reasons: its constant poverty and gang problems had made national headlines (Nieves, 1996); it was too important a commercial district to let things deteriorate; and there had been a rise in the Puerto Rican leadership during the 1980s, as documented by Cruz (1998).

**Bad conditions.** One of the development sector informants described conditions back in the 1990s, when the gang wars in Frog Hollow made national headlines, prompting many in the city and the neighborhood to fight back:

In the 1990s the area that we're talking about was devastated. To me, it really seemed worse than the area that I grew up in, the South Bronx. As you probably know the South Bronx made national news. This part of Hartford was very similar to that, the major difference was for me is that the population density was considerably less. At that time, in the very early 1990s, was a period of high gang activity. As a matter of fact there was big law enforcement effort on that end. A lot of folks went to jail during that time. There was prostitution. There was literally no place for young people to go and pass the time.

No recreational opportunities for young people in this area at all. There seemed to be some fear [from people] of being out in the streets.

The economic slowdown in the early 1990s had impacted the commercial district and prevented it from reaching its full potential. The business community was concerned about the effect it was having on their livelihoods and what further deterioration of conditions would mean to them. The physical condition of the strip was not optimal, which was not good for attracting customers. An informant with the business sector stated:

The sales were not there despite this being a place for Latinos. We were just starting to get out of the bad economies of the 1980s, and the 1990s were not that good either. The streets were bad; the sidewalks had holes.

Interestingly, responses to the neighborhood problems were not focused on the commercial strip or business development. Social service leaders were aware of the gang problems and the structural poverty issues that had brought all these issues about. They were thinking of ways to solve the problems with models of development that had more of a social service approach, as this service provider in the neighborhood stated:

In the early 1990s, there was a gang war going on here. It was among Puerto Ricans themselves, which is sad. This was a battle zone. There was almost a real curfew.

Innocents died. It was difficult to walk around. The colors identify them. We had kids in our agency from both gangs, which was a challenge. We had to negotiate that our agency was going to be a sanctuary, where neither gang could do anything. That does not exist anymore. Gangs are around, but more quietly and sophisticated. Back then we wanted a more humane a social services approach to the problem. But they [the ones in power] just wanted a law enforcement approach.

However, gang violence made it difficult to focus on efforts that were more comprehensive or that moved away from law enforcement efforts. One of the residents, who described their involvement in developing an art and cultural center that would possibly collaborate with the social services approach reported above, indicated the problems that the criminal and economic crisis presented for this vision:

During the 1990s the gang violence did not help in these [cultural development] efforts, because people were scared of the neighborhood. There was a negative image that was going against what we were trying to do. We did some gang prevention programs, working with the judicial system to get kids from prison and rehabilitated.

**Revitalization.** The difficult, deteriorating situation in Frog Hollow urged neighborhood leaders to look towards solutions that were bigger in scope. This critical situation brought in institutions, located either within the boundaries of the neighborhood or on the outskirts, that were therefore highly interested in improving the conditions. Several institutions formed a group called Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (SINA), and were intent on making some changes, because they perceived the status of the neighborhood as being tied to their status. One development informant who at the time worked closely with the institutions stated:

SINA had decided at that point to get involved in a very comprehensive revitalization of an area of Hartford which was part of Frog Hollow, part of Barry Square, part of South Green. It's an area of the city that is home to three, at that time, four [major] institutions and they were involved in wanting to revitalize the neighborhood in which they live and those institutions were Trinity College, Hartford Hospital, The Institute of Living and Connecticut Public Television and Radio. The Connecticut Children's Medical Center as

well... the children hospital moved out of Newington into the neighborhood, and they became part of the conversation.

The institutional conversation around community development fostered hope and brought about ideas for community development models. An informant associated with a local development corporation believed at that moment that there was spirit of collaboration, a spirit of change and hope that made many think changes were possible. The different ideas were coalescing and creating a grand vision for the neighborhood. The informant stated:

That was the other thing that was exciting, the fact that everybody understood or realized, even though, that probably it didn't materialize all together, but everybody understood that it was not just about housing, that it was not just about economic development, it wasn't just about education, but that it was a holistic approach that we needed to take, that it needed to be a combination of all the aspects that affect people. That is [if] we wanted to attract more people into the neighborhood we have to have a good base, services, and for schools, and for places that people can go out and shop, and you know, if they didn't have a car. All of that everybody got it, that it was an approach that needed to cover all the areas and it wasn't just housing, so that it's all I'm going to care about. I think that it was a good thing, that it was about the community, and that it was a general approach in all areas.

This grand vision was not only noticeable among developers, but it seemed palpable among residents, too. One local resident described their excitement with the large proposal by SINA to develop the Learning Corridor, an educational campus that was to connect Trinity College to Hartford Hospital and the Institute of Living:

But the whole Learning Corridor thing was, I mean, it was a totally new thing for an institution of higher education to do something, to really look beyond its borders and see that it was a citizen, a resident of Hartford, a citizen of Hartford. That, I mean the buy in at the college at the time was that we had, there was some values where moral responsibility to be engaged in the neighborhood, to be a good neighbor, and to bring some value added to Hartford. And that sort of idea permeated, not only Trinity but a lot of the places in Hartford that would, whether it was the other SINA partners, but in general, I mean, it was, there was this vibe that Hartford was on the rise.

The Learning Corridor and other grand visions in the late 1990s spilled into the 2000s, which was full of development projects. However, despite these grand visions, some projects disappeared when certain social service providers and residents stopped “seeing eye-to-eye” with some of the SINA institutions. This marked the beginning of an ongoing fight for control that was evident in many of the informants’ responses. A social service provider described his disappointment with Trinity College and their intentions:

In the late 1990s comes the interest of Trinity College to develop in a 15-block radius around campus. They wanted to buy properties and start rehabilitating, to create a community that responds to their interest. That is where Cityscape comes from. However, in those 15 blocks, Park Street was not included. I disagreed and fought to include Park Street.

### **Development Models**

The main model used to develop the neighborhood revolved around the issue of housing. According to an informant from the political sector who knew the neighborhood’s history:

The biggest economic development in Frog Hollow has been around housing. Once upon a time Frog Hollow was the first source of homeownership for teachers, Latino teachers. There was initial homeownership neighborhood. I saw the impact back in the 1960s. Two pockets of Puerto Rican concentration were in South Green and Frog Hollow. They move here in the early 1970s. La Casa de Puerto Rico was in the North End and then moved here.

With housing as the driving force, two models were used for redevelopment: homeownership and rentals, respectively.

**Homeownership development.** Homeownership was pushed by several of the SINA institutions that, in wanting to increase the number of homeowners, argued that more home owners would result in greater stability and a better neighborhood. One development informant who worked close with these institutions stated:

First of all, one of the issues we saw in terms of neighborhood stabilization is that there were almost... you could not identify more than a handful of resident property owners [laughs]. And that is both in terms of residents, residential housing, and in terms of businesses, as well. A key ingredient I think that has been and it's still an issue in the community. So we thought that it was important to do that. So we thought that residents, that homeownership housing was an important component of this whole thing.

From the beginning there seemed to be some support for the homeownership program and an understanding from the developers of the stability that homeownership could bring. But there were concerns as to who would qualify for these opportunities, and what would happen to residents that could not afford these homes. One of the social service providers expressed an understanding of the concept but cautioned about results:

Well I think [it] is important for the thoroughfares. I think when you spread out to the side streets where you need to have strong residential developments of, you know, mixed or different levels of density, some homeownership was definitely important because people who own their home typically care more about the neighborhood. But you have to be able to support that. If people who live in the neighborhood, if you do not want to drive them out, then you have to get them the type of housing that their credit history and income level supports.

A main concern was that any new housing was not being developed for the local residents, since it did not seem to consider the economic status of the locals at the time. Some of the programs targeting homeownership were not doing enough to raise the purchasing power of local neighborhood residents. And, those that were able to purchase were predominantly outsiders of the neighborhood, something that many noticed and were concerned about during this period. A neighborhood resident and activist, when commenting on the capacity of local residents to buy properties, expressed:

We supported homeownership with Broad Park. That is a good thing... homeownership is good. What we did not support is displacing the people in the neighborhood. People in the neighborhood cannot afford homeownership.

There were some attempts to make some of the homeownership opportunities available to low-income residents. Neighborhood associations got involved and advocated for developments that considered blue-collar or low-income residents as part of the applicant pool. Some of the SINA institutions were already considering that, as stated by an informant from the development sector:



Oh yeah, and there has always been an interest on that. And you know our agency was always thinking, 'Well maybe later on if we can develop programs that could help people be prepared to buy,' that was one thing. And I know that, because that was also my dream, when I was a property manager, because I would see people that were almost there, people that had the ambition to become home owners, they wanted to, but they needed to get to that level. It was not even about taking the classes to be a homeowner, they were like one step lower. They actually needed to know how much they needed to actually, you know, what kind of job they needed to have, to earn the amount of money that they would need for a house. You know, how much they needed to save. You know, learn to budget, learn to save money, learn to manage their money in such a way that they could get to where they wanted to be, to get to be a home owner.

Although this indicates that the issues of poverty and the low economic position of residents was something which developers were aware of, there were questions and concerns about how developers would actually help locals and what kinds of programs and efforts would be pursued. One of the social service providers pointed out:

Cityscape was a project to create housing accessible to the community. But it was not. The requisite to purchase a home was not for our community. Who qualified? The employees of the five [SINA] institutions. They are being exclusive. They were developing homeownership projects in a very poor neighborhood, according to federal poverty guidelines. So how can these poor families buy a home of \$100,000 or \$120,000?

This issue about affordability is evident not only between developers and service providers, but also among business owners. The owners wanted stability, but they wanted local

residents to be able to afford the new homes, since they were interested in the residents staying in the neighborhood regardless of whether they owned or rented. One of the business owners explained:

I'm for it, especially when it is affordable housing and they give priority to the people who live here to purchase their homes. Not to kick them out to make it comfortable for others. Because those others come and change the neighborhood. You want it to change, you want it better, but at what cost? We have to care for your things, care for your businesses.

There was evident tension between those that had interest in local residents owning a stake in the neighborhood compared with new owners, who had come from outside Frog Hollow and were invested in continued development. One local resident commented about the Mortson Street / Putnam Heights project:

It kind of benefits everyone. Even some of the absentee landlords would benefit from the stability. Owners cleaning and maintaining help even the slumlords who don't do anything but reap the benefits. They put no effort and still get nice properties around them... I feel like they benefit in like they become invested in something, they have the value of their own home. Although ownership also brings costs and headaches associated with it. The homeowners have the most lasting benefit.

**Rental unit development.** The reservations that existed for service providers, business owners and residents were also evident for some of the developers, who were not all that interested in furthering homeownership and continued to create rental units. They expressed skepticism about homeownership in such a poor neighborhood. One of the developers, who had been involved in building rental units in the area expressed:

We always seem to have the need to find a silver bullet to solve the problems. In Hartford, the silver bullet seems to be homeownership. Which is fine, but it's always been so low in Hartford... I get the homeownership thing, but some people cannot afford a home, some people do not want one. Some people do not want the responsibilities and risk. The recession proved some of that as people bought more than they could afford. There needs to be alternatives for the people that want to live here.

Another developer stated that there were real tensions between the SINA institutions and developers regarding the issue of owning versus renting. There were concerns about supporting projects and securing financial support that made consensus building and collaboration difficult. This developer stated:

They did not want any more rentals, so to some extent they would say yes, but we were... the last rental project that we were trying to build they were very [unsupportive], they [said], 'Why we can't start looking at homeownership opportunities more?' So they gave us some support for the last one, but that [their opposition for more rental units] was at the table. 'This is not what we want' [they would say], you know, going forward... 'we want more homeownership.'

The support for rental development was strong enough that it continued, becoming the second front in development efforts pertaining to housing in Frog Hollow. This social service provider statement captured the goal of expanding affordable rental housing to sustain and maintain a healthy area of the neighborhood:

I think having cleaner safe neighborhoods breeds homeownership because they are more likely to invest in it if they feel good about a neighborhood, but if you have constant drug dealing and deteriorating apartments, you know, you can't sell those houses high enough

and you do not attract investment to get that homeownership if there is all this deteriorating conditions around. I think that comes out of a healthy community, homeownership comes out of a healthy community and not sure if it leads it.

If properly done, rental development can lead to the stability and improvements, things that all the parties were interested in. This resident explained what can happen when rental housing is done right, which means good materials, good planning, good design, good effort, and good intentions:

The residents would benefit from those developers that were more responsible and develop nice areas for the residents, not just crappy rental property, or so enclosed that it does not look like community... there are examples like Billings Forge or Mutual Housing who have raised the quality of life of those that live or rent there.

Some developers believed in models of rental housing that were transformative, not only to the physical status of the neighborhood, but also to residents, possibly helping them to become future leaders. Physically and environmentally, salvaging abandoned and derelict buildings alleviates and stops the deterioration of a neighborhood. These developers did not believe that homeownership was the only way to invest in Frog Hollow. Residents, instead, believed that the development of rental housing could be as effective if done well. Commenting on their model for development, one of the informants with a local development corporation provided an example of the benefits of working with physical conditions as well as social ones:

We did lose one building, but we saved so many. We like to develop and get families that would be attracted to live there for a long time. We turn some of the perfect sixes into three families instead of six, making it more attractive for families. They have more space to grow. We like to go the extra mile to develop things that will be used for a long

time and marketable for long time...They may want to purchase or might want to rent.

All the new developments cannot be one idea. To have vibrancy we need a diversity of development ideas. In our model the residents have more control. Half of them are on our board. We engage our residents in leadership programs to make effective decisions. Even if they do not build equity you can develop a stable community with renters. We have very little turnovers. Our residents are invested in their community.

There were buildings redeveloped as rentals that had been dilapidated and rundown, which many would claim ended up being the best developments in the neighborhood when compared to some of the homeownership projects. Developing an area with a clean environment for people to rent is positive and improves the relationships of people to their environment. These types of developments saved many buildings from demolition and generated long-term relationships with tenants and local residents. Another developer explained how investing in people pays off for the developers:

I'm not sure, I guess it was funding related, but I'm not sure what else was happening with that. So then most of what we did was affordable housing. For us, every time we looked at the income levels of the people that were renting from us, that were coming to us looking for apartments, they were not at a level that they could buy a house...and some people I tell you, they were not interested. And I saw... second generation doing the same thing, you know. 'My mom rented with you and I want to continue, we want to rent with you and we want to continue to do that'...it's always a combination. I think it's always a combination of both [renters and homeownership]. You always have people that are not interested in being a homeowner... sometimes people just don't care about being homeowners, they want to be renters.

## **Alternative Development Models**

All of the development projects in Frog Hollow were similar: they were trying to revive homeownership or maintain and refurbish rental properties, and they were focused on the revitalization of the commercial district for the benefit of those retailers and business owners trying to attract new customers to the neighborhood. The key point here is that there were very few developments that had any type of alternative model to make another kind of impact in the neighborhood.

**Arts and culture development.** The proposal to develop a cultural center at the Lyric Theatre, including moving the Park Street Branch of the Hartford Public Library to the site, was an option that never completely took off. It could have been an opportunity to do what Wherry (2011) described in the Philadelphia barrio, or what Puerto Ricans did with Paseo Boricua in Chicago (Flores-Gonzalez, 2001): strategically use the “Latino-ness” of the neighborhood in a positive light, to develop arts and cultural institutions. The idea of developing the cultural elements of the neighborhood and turning them into something that the community could benefit from, with art and performances as the driving forces, although popular in the community, was not a new idea. This resident described being involved directly in plans as far back as the mid-1990s:

Yes. We had a plan to develop a cultural center at the Lyric Theatre. It was discussed in a business plan of how it was going to operate. We paid for feasibility studies with a \$25,000 grant. Architect Dollard did the study of how it was going to be; how was it still usable and viable for renewal. We wanted to have pavilions of the history of groups in the community. We wanted a showcase of arts, plays, shows for the community to display its culture.

Some of the suggestions were not only to develop the arts, but to come up with ways to employ and support the artists. This other resident talked about using models that were already in use in northeastern cities such as Boston, New York, and New Haven, which combined housing development (both rentals and homes for sale) with artists' needs:

Having homeownership, I always felt that the city, it could focus homeownership on artists. Not ownership of a single dwelling, but like a three-family. Like owner occupied. You live in one and rent two out. You have a lot of artists in Hartford that struggle with housing. Like an artist village or something like it... imagine a musician can own a two or three family home? It will free them to take advantage of opportunities and live off your art because you do not have to worry about income. Having arrangements like this would make artists look at Hartford as an option for things like this. I would do a big cultural development in the center of Park Street and home incentives for the creative class.

Other ideas that came from the social service sector were to combine the arts and cultural center with direct services for the community, to be developed jointly to address the lack of resources in the community and the needs of the poor. It was an integrative concept that wanted to bring the Hartford Public Library into the mix. This social service provider explained:

Sure. Broad Park Development wanted to develop the Lyric Theatre and even connect it to this building. So this agency would be the key agency to serve Latinos in this neighborhood. Even to bring in the library. It was a comprehensive plan to create a cultural campus. The local businesses would even provide employment and services. It was all integrated and well thought out.

This idea was not only popular with residents and service providers, but it had the support of developers. It was not a new idea but one that had been incubating for quite some time. Even moving the Park Street Branch of the Hartford Public Library was mentioned multiple times as a key opportunity for the community, as explained by this developer:

The Lyric Theatre is also a location that has been in discussion with the [officials at] City of Hartford and people in the community for many years. We have been in discussion to develop it and have it become more of a cultural center. The library has been part of those discussions because they wanted the library as a tenant in that cultural center.

However, a more tepid response arose from the commercial sector. The business community was not in opposition to an arts or culturally oriented project, but they were not enthusiastic about it, either. They wanted something that had more obvious commercial elements. For them, the commercial district was a source of revenue, as there were limited possibilities about what could be done there. This statement from a business sector informant shows that:

I think it is good. The mayor has put it upon himself to do the Lyric Theatre. They have funding and to move the library and build a cultural center. We just want a business in that corner. We do not know when it will happen.

The cultural aspect was conceptualized by the business community as a potential source of income, not a celebration of culture. The potential for economic development around a celebration of culture was not well- received by some in the community. This resident commented on receiving a cold reception to his idea for an establishment with a cultural and arts component, after he went to SAMA for a business loan:



Now social and cultural entrepreneurship is celebrated, but back then it was not. We went to SAMA to ask for a loan, and we have decided to go very business. They proceeded to tell us everything that was wrong with it with our art and culture business model. They did not support it.

**Jobs development.** An alternative development preference, different from the cultural model, came from those who wanted to address directly the source of problems for the neighborhood. They specifically wanted to address poverty and the concentration of low-income residents by developing job opportunities. Neighborhood organizations and residents were aware of the problem and aware of the lack of proposals to address it, as stated by this resident:

If you do not want to have prostitution, drug dealing... let's create employment opportunities or training so we can have these [SINA] institutions hiring people from the neighborhood.

Other residents viewed job training not only as something that could help develop income, but as something that could help residents build the skills needed to budget, save money and increase their buying power. As this resident informant stated:

They actually needed to know how much they needed to actually, you know, what kind of job they needed to have, to earn the amount of money that they would need for a house. How much they needed to save... learn to budget, learn to save money, learn to manage their money in such a way that they could get to where they wanted to be, to get to be a home owner.

Several of the community service providers agreed with residents that developing a job strategy would increase positive changes in the community. This social service provider had seen high unemployment in Frog Hollow:

To me I think it is core mission. I believe that jobs [are] one of the reasons people are homeless. If that is the case, why do you want to stick it to the business community? It is working against yourself. If there are no businesses, there are no jobs. We need jobs here, and you have to be business-friendly to create those jobs. We need to work with the businesses.

Another social service provider liked the idea of hiring and training the local community residents to fill the employment needs of the local businesses. They also saw building a comprehensive system of support as complimentary to this idea:

I remember having meetings and proposing a workforce in the same community [so that] it benefits the residents. Why employ people from the outside when we have a workforce here? Let's take the people and train them here. Turn agencies in training places. We want to develop responsibility, work ethics... we could do that ourselves [in] the community. We could give them a system of support, with social workers, case management.

Responding to this need, there were also several institutional attempts to deal with unemployment, which was a severe problem. Efforts to address the issue through some type of workforce development were made, as stated by this development sector informant:

And as part of that effort we worked with the [SINA] institutions and developed what we called a first source agreement, and the first source agreement was for the institutions to identify employment opportunities that could be built, that could be filled by folks who

were coming to this job center for help in finding jobs and developing employability skills, you know, doing job searches on computers and all that kind of stuff. And we had this first source agreement, when we got... a good number of folks who went to work, entry level positions, in the hospital in particular, because the hospital, as opposed to the college, had more opportunities like that... service-oriented, entry-level stuff. There were a number of jobs created that opened up for folks in the neighborhood that we were able to send over. Unfortunately the national dollars dried up. HART was unable to continue that program.

The lack of funds to sustain the initiative brought negative consequences. The workforce development efforts were limited and some residents felt that nothing was achieved. The lack of jobs remained one of the key needs in Frog Hollow, as explained by this resident:

There is no plan to help increase the income of the people who are living in the neighborhood right now. In terms of jobs, how can we help people who live here for years to become homeowners? We know what we need. Put together a plan to help people in the neighborhood to increase their buying power. Instead, the solution [seems to be], ‘Well there is too many poor people and we need to get rid of some.’

**Philanthropic development.** The final model, which was actually explored, was philanthropic development, which has been called a “game changer” in efforts to build civil society and enhance sustainability (Knight, 2012). In Frog Hollow, the Melville Charitable Trust, a philanthropic organization, developed a site with a progressive ideology and a specific goal to fight homelessness, naming it the Billings Forge Community Works. The Trust decided to invest in the neighborhood, without much input from the community. Lower-priced rental units were kept and mixed with units renting for market rate. Restaurants and coffee shops were

all built around these, to diversify both the resident and consumer bases. It had a positive impact, and changed the image of the neighborhood. A farmers' market and a community garden were brought into the area. A development sector informant who worked closely with the agency explained about the Trust:

They were looking at a better model for philanthropy. They were looking at targeted investment and see if that would really move the needle for a community, if there were support in that way. They wanted to build a model that was multidimensional that included housing and jobs and new assets for families, whether it was education or access to healthy foods. That all those pieces would help raise people who needed that kinds of assistance.

Interestingly the Billings Forge project has also tried to deal with poverty and unemployment, by developing a job training center and employing many of the same residents living in their complex. Again, this informant stated:

The restaurant has created about 45 jobs and retain some folks from the neighborhood. But there has been some friction, no doubt about it. [The agency] opened The Kitchen about four years ago, as a job training program in the culinary field. It trained about 20 people a year that have barriers to employment. It has created between the two about 80 jobs. The building is more stable, much lower vacancy rate, people stay longer and invest in the community.

Despite animosity from some community members for not receiving their input, many local residents see Billing Forge as a positive initiative. One of the residents expressed a very positive attitude towards the project and the changes they have made.

I think, again as imperfect as the Billings Forge is, I mean, holy shit, what they have done over there, in so many ways is kind of amazing, when you think about.... when I think about what was there when I first moved to Hartford. Even when I first moved to the neighborhood, and what is there now, is really pretty amazing. You got the farmers' market, you got the Firebox, the Firebox is not for my demographic, but the Firebox is there, the farmers market, the studio, with all the different programs they did. And the housing is definitely much more of a mixed-income housing that it used to be. So there [are] lots of youngish professional types, not making big money, but there is sort of... they wouldn't have probably been in the neighborhood otherwise, [people] who now come to the neighborhood, and I think that diversified things a bit.

### **Project Control**

The study participants were asked about their thoughts regarding control of the project. Stone (1989) introduced four types of urban governing regimes: corporate, caretaker, middle-class and lower-class. Corporate regimes exist to defend the interests of large corporations and caretaker regimes are concerned with those of small businesses. According to Simmons (1998), these regimes are easier to assemble when focused on development rather than social service issues. In Frog Hollow, different elements and interests remain in competition. Corporate concentration protects the larger SINA institutions and the caretaker emphasis protects the small business interests in the commercial district of Park Street.

**Political class.** This resident mentioned the constant presence of the political establishment from City Hall in the neighborhood:

You have government officials. I do not want to beat down on the government, but government officials who, like they come and go, and every one of them has a different

agenda, and some of might be good, some might be bad, but regardless, you know, they are new and they do not know a lot about what is going on.

The resident talked about how the different agendas of those in the political establishment impacts what can be done about a specific issue. One of the social service providers, concurring on the issue of multiple agendas and interests, talked about this when mentioning the possible move of the library to the Lyric Theatre, which 20 years after being proposed had still not been accomplished:

It is multiple interests and multiple agendas. Even with the process of moving the library branch to the location of Lyric Theatre, you have conversations with multiple interests and multiple agendas. If we already have a location and this is something that there are steps that are going to take us in that direction, and we know that this neighborhood is one of the poorest in the city with two schools performing at the lowest levels... looking at investing in a new branch of the public library, it would be an awesome thing, it would be great. There should not be even a debate. But here we are debating, should it be across the street, or here or there, because every building has an agenda. This baffles me. I look at the kids around here with multiple needs, and it is like, forget it. You know you have the money, or can find the money or the locale, push for it and do it.

**Business class.** The fact that the commercial strip is extremely important not only for Frog Hollow but also for Hartford makes businesses and their merchants' associations powerful players in development, controlling the agenda of what and when to develop. One of the residents confirmed this, but also felt that businesses, despite needing customers from the community, in fact pushed them away:

SAMA has absolute control of the decision-making of Park Street. They don't really count on some of us. They have a lady that comes to the neighborhoods, and they use that as a representative of the views of the neighborhood, which is not true. Because she comes out to meetings they say they are involved in the community. Or claim to be a community group. They are an isolated island and look out for themselves. Because they are Latino, they also claim that they represent the Latinos in the neighborhood, which is also not true.

Some service providers also see the merchants as powerful, and always concerned with their own self-interests. They do a good job of maintaining the vitality of the commercial sector of the community but this social service provider sees them as power players:

SAMA plays a big role in a lot of the development that happens here on Park Street. So do a lot of others, but SAMA does play a big role in a lot of them. The streetscape, the facade, they were huge. They were not the only players in the facade. We were supposed to get into the facade. There were many businesses in this side of Park Street that wanted the facade. SAMA had a say in all that.

The way that the merchant's association sees it, they have to take control of the commercial strip for their own benefit. Their belief is that if they maintain the vitality of the commercial strip, all other problems will solve themselves. This business sector informant who worked closely with SAMA stated:

We took control of the commercial district. We did not want to step in other people's shoes. They were doing good work. Broad Park with housing, Mi Casa with the youth. They were all instrumental in working with the community at large but helping us as partners. So it had been an effort of many organizations... what we always thought was

that if we strengthen the commercial district and do the special services district it says, 'This is our area. We are not going anywhere.' Whether is homeownership, rental, Section 8, we are not going anywhere. This is our area. Its [success] will grow to the side [streets] and strengthen our district. We have rental, ownership, all of them have been good.

The point of "not stepping on each other's shoes" or "we do our thing, you do yours" is the one that most frustrates the social service sector informants. The frustration emanates from the fact that although they were powerful players in the development and the sustainability of the commercial district, the merchants and business owners are incapable of seeing the community as anything other than a way to make money. This leads to low support or hesitancy on their part to back models of development that target social services or culture. A social service provider expanded on the issue:

For example SAMA, who provides good service for its clients, has different interests to protect. They protect the businessmen, while we protect families. It was very difficult in meetings with them that we can bring up the topics of families and youth, which at the end of the day are the ones that move the economy... we have to help them to develop. If you benefit from the community, then you have to give something back. But SAMA always had issues understanding that. Still they do not understand it. That was a factor that held us back.

**Developers.** The developers were in the midst of all of this, but had no substantial power. They were dependent upon the government to look at them favorably and give them the funding they needed to develop projects. It was always a struggle to gain support among so



many players and power brokers. One of the informants with a local development corporation explained their approach:

If there was going to be housing you need a developer, a contractor, a manager. So, you know, our organization was always trying to reach out to everybody else that was interested in doing whatever they wanted to do. 'Hey, we have the capacity to be your developer, we have the capacity to do this.' We were always upfront about saying, 'The experience is here, you've seen it, you can see our projects, our developments are all around you' and some people said, 'Yeah, you know?' ... and that made it possible to fund the different partnerships that we needed. Some people thought, 'Well you are not the only game in town' and you shouldn't be the only one game in town. And that was fine with us, too. So depending on who was the executive director and how they were negotiating and how the partnership was going to work, things got established. At the end it worked out. I think the conversations at the table were about, really, there [were] good intentions, and it was about the community at the end you know.

Among the push and pull of forces trying to control projects and development, the collaborative and communal approach by some of the CDCs was always appreciated by members of the community, who believed that they were the easiest to approach and reach out to. This resident commented on the local development corporations:

We talked to the CDCs, we fought, we argued, but they worked with us. Mutual Housing talked to us. They were more neighborhood-oriented. They were developing rentals. So we had a relationship. Our concerns have been the displacement of poor people.

**Institutions.** The SINA institutions understood collaboration and community involvement differently, seeing it all as a balancing act and an issue that required navigating with

care. They were always looking for support and funding at the same time, but not always from the same people. One development informant who worked closely with the institutions explained:

You know of course sometimes folks had ideas about what should happen and sometimes those ideas had no support in the community, you know. And vice-versa. Sometimes the community had ideas that could not be supported by the [SINA] institutions, you know. And of course this is where the balancing act came because for the most part in order to do something at SINA you have to have not just the support but more importantly the financial support of the institutions.

Because of their influence and backing by large institutions, SINA was seen as an extremely powerful player in development and decision-making. This power was not only financial but political. One of the social service providers explained how he saw the role that the SINA institutions were playing in development:

I think SINA was one of the key players. They had resources and were able to bring people to the table because they were funded and founded by the hospital and Trinity College. I think they were able to get people involved in ways that [is] hard, many times, for smaller players. Even though they were not huge themselves, they had the power of major institutions behind them.

Others saw this institutional power and involvement as a necessary tool. The SINA institutions were part of the community and it was for the benefit of the community that they were involved. One of the political sector informants, expressed it this way:

The [SINA] institutions are physically here. They cannot pick up and leave. So they have no choice. When the neighborhood had gangs, drugs, prostitution, it affected the

institutions. You had to go through all this to get there. So they were interested. They came up with the money and things improved.

**Resident involvement and the NRZ.** Despite the power and control of the SINA institutions, they were not revered and many in the community refused to do just whatever the institutions wanted. One of the social services providers who clashed many times with institutional powers put it this way:

We protested and argued against their plans to create an exclusive community. They [institutions] had to integrate into the community, not separate themselves [from it] with fences. That was not viable. For example, when they do the Learning Corridor, SINA - a consortium of five powerful institutions - proposed that it would benefit the community, not just them.

Resident involvement was minimal and was comprised mostly of NRZ members which, despite being in a mostly Latino neighborhood, had Latino representatives only in its first few incarnations. After some time, it became mostly white and homeowner-controlled. One of the residents expressed the following:

What local voices? That was a model that really was not meant to be. Is a way of not to deal with the community, just to get them out of the way. There really is no accountability there. The NRZ are not accountable to people in the neighborhood. They do not have the colors of our neighborhoods. You see the homeowners, they want to stay away, wash their hands. They are only there for themselves. They do not represent the Latino community or the poor people from our neighborhood.

Other neighborhood leaders complained that the NRZ was just another political machine, with politicians claiming participation in the community but in reality, only rubber stamping projects that the regime wanted. One of the social service providers stated:

I deactivated myself from the NRZ. I was non-profit... that is who I represented. I was disillusioned because the NRZ was just representing politicians. They were created by the state and given to the cities. The city develops the public policy of the NRZs. They have just become a rubber-stamping entity for the city. Anything the city wants, they just say OK. Just to say that the community is in agreement.

Interestingly people working closer with the NRZ saw things differently, or at least claimed that the rules establishing the NRZ included the participation of many in the community, to have a voice in the development of the neighborhood. One such resident informant explained:

Part of the purpose of the NRZ was to bring together all these stakeholders, to work together for the betterment of the neighborhood. So that includes residents and tenants and institutions and business owners. Business owners are a huge part of this potentially.

Despite this, it seemed that the NRZ had failed to represent the community that it was trying to develop and protect. Although some social service providers understood the value in the original concept of the NRZ, they were still critical of its composition. A social service provider, who worked closely with the NRZ stated:

The NRZ plays a big role in this neighborhood, but it needs to be more diverse. They are aware they are in a neighborhood 70 percent Latino, but they are all white. They need to be more welcoming. The meetings are not friendly. They talk about properties, and very interesting processes, but it's all in English. A mother who only speaks Spanish... [she is] busy... she is not going to a meeting like that. We need more voices in there.

The lack of representation within the NRZ and the disappearance of organizations that involved more residents affected the voice residents had over the control of projects and development. One resident reminisced about a previous organization that had a more grassroots approach to development:

The organizations that were supposed to advocate for the people have been disappearing or absorbed by the big [SINA] institutions. There is no real voice for the people in the community. The TV stations now do the organizing. You have an issue, call the TV and decide if it is worthy of news. No more grassroots organizing for the people. The frustration mounts and little by little, we lose the ability to organize. We do not have money, no funding.

This sentiment was shared by a social service provider, who stated that there used to be more grassroots organizations that were far more inclusive than the NRZ. This social services provider stated that organizations like HART and Vecinos Unidos did better outreach and got neighbors involved:

I think it depends on the organization that is doing the outreach to the community. I remember HART. There used to be north and south Frog Hollow. HART used to be involved in bringing the community in, but it also depended on the politics. I think it depended on the entity that is pushing for that development. For example in the conversation of moving the Hartford Public Library, we have the NRZ, HART and the City of Hartford. We held a community meeting in this place, which brought many people from the community, many who use our services. We were able to get many users. I think it depends on the project. It depends on the entity, who is for or against it, and whether they want the community or not at the table [laughs].

In the end, control of the project went through many hands, but the political engine of the city was always interconnected with the many players, including the SINA institutions and business class. One of the social service providers spoke about the role the city played and how it worked:

I think the role I've seen City Hall play, and this is the way it has always been in the city, not just now, the way I understand it is that if the city really wants a certain project or development to go through, they are going to make it happen. They will move whatever players they need to in that chess board to make it happen. If it's not that [they] do not want it to happen, but if it's not a priority, something that the city cannot do in a certain time frame... they would go to meetings, they would send representatives and would continue to talk and talk... and the players in the chess board would not be as frequent, would not be as quick [laughs] for development to happen.

Another social service provider commented not only on how the city government operated, but how it had its hands on everything that had to do with the development and related projects, including the NRZ, business organizations or SINA institutions:

Well, this town is highly political. So, the politics permeates not only in politicians but those outside too. And things that are not political become so. So if I'm a developer I end up close to the developers or the [SINA] institutions, for example, so they can defend me and I can defend them. It is hard to fight these huge economic powers.

## **Project Results**

In the end, the results of all development projects have been mixed, with some good results combined with some disappointing ones.

**Good results.** There were claims that the neighborhood is nothing like it was back in the 1990s, and that the decrease of crime and urban decay were evident, as expressed by a business owner who witnessed the blight and fear of that era:

I think there is a lot better housing than there was. Some of the real bad stuff has been torn down. Residents have gotten some of the benefit. I think there is a more developed line of thinking. I think people understand better. People can research things better, with the Internet, and it has allowed people to understand better what a healthy and vibrant community really is. I think the city leadership understands better what a vibrant community is. I think they understand better what urban planning needs to be.

The commercial strip was cleaned up and after many renovations, it is more pedestrian friendly, and creates a more welcoming atmosphere.

**Disappointing results.** But there are signs of deterioration and cheap construction in some places, especially in the main commercial district, less than 10 years after the completion of the project. One of the residents points it out best:

I think a lot of it is kind of half way, I think. For example, if we look at the streetscape project....quite an idea and I think in some ways Park Street looks better, but parts of it were done really badly, and they have to go back and fix those mistakes. And the money is not there. The money was already spent. Did that have something to do with potentially all these relationships?

Some of the construction materials used seem to have been very cheap, resulting in a poor physical development. Things are falling apart far sooner than expected with no money for repairs or reconstruction. Again, one of the social service providers, who works close to the commercial strip, stated:

The contractor clearly did not do a good job, because every winter when the plows go through they are pulling the brick out and creating these huge holes in the intersections. They cost money to replace. The city is just covering the holes with concrete or asphalt. The idea to do the cobblestones and streetscape was to make it look like Old San Juan, which was an awesome idea. I do not know if it was the person they chose or the politics behind it, that we got crap. The development idea was great, but we got crap.

And it is not only service providers or residents, but business owners who also think the results of the project were really bad. This business owner, who is located right on the strip, summarizes the feelings of many:

Putting all that money into Park Street would have been great. But they used the cheapest labor and materials they could find. That would not have happened downtown. They could change the facade, paint something pretty, but if you don't change peoples' mindset... obviously not as good. The street was really nice when it was finished, but the upkeep has not been there. If you look at the crosswalks, the brick on the crosswalks is pretty much non-existent anymore as they all fallen off or whatever. They tried to do the cobblestone look, like Old San Juan, but with the snow it deteriorates. The shovels come by and rip them up. The light posts looked nice, but then the posters and announcements they posted started damaging them, graffiti, paint... all that damages them. The trash cans cast in iron were looking nice but then cars would hit them and damage them. The upkeep has not been there. Everything with a new paint looks nice, but it has to be maintained. I do not think it was well thought out.

**Gentrification and displacement.** There were also signs of gentrification and displacement, despite claims that it was not the intent of the developers. In some of the



homeownership projects, the people that ended up moving in were not locals but outsiders. A resident and activist stated:

What I always see was a slow gentrification on top of what was already there, in places like Columbia, Russ, Mortson... so many whites in there. The project has been successful in bringing the gentrifiers in, who are the newcomers to the neighborhood. Look at Mortson Street / Putnam Heights... who benefited? The white outsiders. Even Billings Forge, you have market-base apartments and affordable-base. Who is moving into the market-base stuff? The white demographics. It's word of mouth between them. These are the people who go to meetings and then make decisions for the majority.

In other areas, the homebuyers were employees of the large SINA institutions and were not indigenous to the neighborhood. This meant that the buyers of some of the homes developed by the institutions were people who were already working for the institutions. One development sector informant, who had been associated with the SINA institutions, confirmed:

We have people who have moved in, who worked at the institutions now, which is really important. How important is it to an employer to have somebody who can walk to work, when it's snowing?

These signs of displacement and gentrification were seen by many as a sign that the Hartford "Process Memo" from the 1970s - the removal of poor people from desirable places - had been accomplished after all. In the words of one resident:

Since the 1970s, with the Hartford Process, all the way to today... we are still dealing with the Hartford "Process Memo", which is to remove poor people from the center of the Hartford area. The way we look at it, they went and put the plan together, it was a long-term plan... and some people in the community even buy into that! Well, these

[SINA] institutions are trying to help, let's see what they have to say. No, let's increase the people's buying power. We are talking about replacing people. Getting rid of poverty by removing poor people is not the answer... and you can see the families that were displaced, you can see it all over... displacement, lots of displacement. We have been replacing poor people for people with higher incomes. That is what has been happening. Homelessness is higher. Young people are homeless. How can we say we have done all these beautiful things, but yet we have all these young people in pain and poverty? You see it on their faces. Nobody cares.

**Distrust.** For many residents, this had increased their level of distrust for the SINA institutions and city government. Some of them felt besieged by powerful entities that were trying to drive them out. Another resident commented:

You see Crescent Street, Vernon Street, Allen Place, all these streets were taken over by Trinity College. The lawyers are coming from the other side, from the court. They keep kicking us out... and the NRZ does not speak for us, we have no voice, the whites there do not let us speak or stand for our needs and interests...Why do they have to continue to bring people from the outside when you have so many people displaced from the neighborhood? Why do we have to go into the suburbs to hire police officers when we have people here that are capable of performing those duties? What is happening is an outright takeover by corporations. They are using the NRZ, because they are the mechanism to recommend to City Hall. If we do not have a voice at the NRZ level how are we going to express our views?

This distrust, combined with the shoddiness of some of the projects, the broken promises, and the slowdown of many of the activities has created hopelessness and despair, not only for the

average resident but for some who worked closely with the NRZ, one of whom expressed the following:

Unfortunately I reached the point now where I'm completely... ah... I'm... I feel I'm disenchanted, I don't feel I can do anything. I mean, I'm at the total other end of the spectrum, where I don't see where I fit in anymore in all this stuff. So it's... a... I feel like a drone. I lost touch with a lot of these things that I used to know a lot more about... I think things are pretty fucked up and I don't see... I don't have a lot of hope, and I don't see anyone in the halls of power. And I just think that at the end of the day, it ends up all being about politics. And who is screwing who, and who is not getting screwed, and you know, I don't see a whole lot getting done.

### **Beneficiaries**

To close this chapter, the researcher considered an essential question of this study: Who benefited from the development? Different groups of people representing various sectors of the neighborhood were asked.

**Institutional benefit.** A common response was that the SINA institutions benefited. One of the informants, a development informant who was associated to the institutions at the time, did not deny that the institutions were some of the major beneficiaries of the development projects:

I mean there is no question that the [SINA] institution benefited. There is no question about that. And they are still benefiting today.

But it was the SINA institutions that were primary proponents for developments, to improve the quality and image of its surrounding areas. So, if they were in control of the projects, then it was obvious they would benefit. The institutions had people in the community

advocating for what they were proposing. One of the residents agreed that it was the institutions that benefited the most:

Trinity College. The Institute of Living. SINA. SAMA. Those [institutions] have been protecting their jobs and their images for so long.

**Business benefit.** Another beneficiary was the business sector. The commercial development, specifically the streetscape project that improved Park Street, brought some relief to many of the business owners. One of the informant from the development sector stated that the benefits for business owners should not be surprising, because the neighborhood is very dependent on the status of the commercial district:

Look, again, it all works together. The residents benefit from the services, and or their ability to go shop, and then the businesses benefit from that kind of economic activity.

(D1)

**Political benefit.** The political sector also benefited. They were able to claim that progress had been made and that they were doing something for the community. They said that they were the key players in getting everybody together, to do what was needed. One resident thought that the politicians aggrandized their powers and showcased their achievements:

Institutions and politicians. Politicians get positions, more power and prestige. They use the achievements to keep us quiet.

Some business owners were not very trustful of politicians, either. They claimed that the politicians took too much credit for what happened in the community but actually did not do much. Now that there is a need for more money to sustain the projects, the politicians do not want to do much. This business owner stated:

The politicians? They will pat themselves on the back and say what a great job we did on Park Street. I think the politicians benefited. They did a great job... 'look at what we did,' ... it looks nice and now we are asking for more funds because we need more money to finish this project. Where did the money go? I do not know.

**Resident benefit.** Residents benefitted, but meagerly. Some buildings that were abandoned and in disrepair were renovated. One of the development sector informants pointed this out, recalling where the community was 20 years ago:

I say the community [benefited] because this community could have wound up just falling through the wayside, all right. We could still be in a community today that is still bombed out. I mentioned before that we saw a reinvestment in the community and therefore there were businesses that decided, that I knew had intentions to move, and decided not to [laughs].

Some residents were able to move to brand new apartments. Even if it was controversial, some low-income families were able to purchase homes. One resident informant did admit to some successes:

Some people were able to get better apartments. We fought to gain some rentals and get better rental properties. We have been able to protect some communities from displacement... some organizations have worked with us.

Some CDCs that developed rental properties for community residents also claimed success in providing many of the neighborhood families with decent places to live. This developer with a local development corporation stated:

[We helped] mostly working poor families. People that might not qualify for poverty level programs but don't have the finances to purchase a home. We use the low-income tax credit to develop our properties.

One of the development sector informants, who was involved with an alternative development model, claimed that their project has been one of the most beneficial in the community. Responding to a question about who benefited, this informant stated:

The people we have created jobs for. The people we have trained, which we have about [an] 85 percent success rate in finding jobs after. The residents that have been involved have benefited immensely. Some with jobs, some with leadership roles, some connecting with programs for their kids and their families and is a more stable living situation.

## **Summary**

Overall, residents' reactions varied about the seven themes discussed in this chapter. One theme is the relationship and tension that exists in Frog Hollow between its commercial and cultural viability. This commercial importance, which is crucial for the whole city, was one of the catalysts for rescuing the neighborhood from one of its darkest periods. Business owners depend on residents, and residents depend on the businesses and the cultural products that they sell.

The chapter also illustrated the differing development models used, and how the constellation of institutions, business, and government partners controlled and financed the agenda. Although homeownership was the model pushed by the large SINA institutions, other developers believed that affordable housing was the way to go, to create stability in the neighborhood. The residents expressed a deep distrust of the institutions and government, and saw very clearly that the homeownership projects were not intended for them but for outsiders to

come into the neighborhood. The one place that encouraged residents to be part of the development projects, the NRZ, was not an entity that most residents trusted, or believed represented them well.

Another theme explored is the failure of alternative models of development that had proven to be successful in other places. These alternative models could have been successful in Frog Hollow, but because of a lack of political participation and the marginalization felt by residents, the powerful actors were not supportive of those efforts. Not only could the further development of culture have had a long lasting impact on Frog Hollow, but it could have been developed around jobs. The lack of decent employment, which is the one thing that all agreed is needed in Frog Hollow, is something that would not only bring immediate relief but would raise the purchasing power of residents, who might then aspire to homeownership.

A final point in the chapter is that the one alternative development in existence was developed with private funds and was not under the control of the regime that dominates the neighborhood. All of those interviewed expressed, one-way or another, support for this project. Despite the lack of input from the community, this alternative development seems to be the one with the greatest community-wide impact.

## **Chapter Six: Discussion**

### **Revitalization History**

Frog Hollow is a historic, industrial urban neighborhood that had its initial wave of development at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when a diverse group of factories, including Sharps, Pratt & Whitney, Billings, and Pope manufacturing companies moved to the area and established a manufacturing center (Pawlowski and Dollard, n.d.). These factories contributed to the first wave of housing, which was created for the many workers who lived there. Industrial manufacturing provided jobs and housing opportunities, and shaped an era of stability and prosperity for the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, similar to the story of many industrial centers in the U.S., the industrial nature of Frog Hollow dramatically decreased in the span of 20 to 30 years. By the 1970s, barely any industrial manufacturing was left (Walsh, 2013).

The departure of industry and employment opportunities coincided with the migration of Puerto Ricans to Frog Hollow from the northern part of Hartford, where they had first settled after their original migration from Puerto Rico in the 1950s and 1960s (Pawlowski, 1990). The arrival of a new population, combined with lack of employment opportunities, established extreme levels of poverty, marginalization, and urban decay in Frog Hollow. These deteriorating conditions eventually gave rise to a wave of gang violence and crime unprecedented in the history of the neighborhood. In responses to this deterioration, the first initiatives emerged to develop and revitalize the neighborhood.

Despite significant poverty and crime, the neighborhood remained a valuable commercial district for Hartford and, hence, Frog Hollow became a neighborhood worth rescuing from the depths of urban decay and violence. It was a viable candidate for revitalization. Powerful



institutions located within the neighborhood - including Hartford Hospital, Trinity College, The Institute of Living, and Connecticut Public Television - became concerned about the neighborhood's deterioration. They mobilized and developed plans to improve and revitalize conditions. During the 1980s, the Puerto Rican population reached a new high of political activism and participation (Cruz, 1998). Being that Frog Hollow was the hub of the Puerto Rican population and culture at the time, these newly-elected officials became a significant force in advocating for changes in the physical and social structure of the neighborhood.

The major neighborhood institutions, referred to also as the SINA institutions, used their position and power to engage the community and political structures to advocate for changes that attracted the attention of many in the neighborhood and beyond. In the mid-1990s, the Learning Corridor project, an educational campus that would connect Trinity College, The Institute of Living and Hartford Hospital together, impressed many in City Hall and the surrounding community (A grand example..., 1996). Once these institutions invested in development projects for Frog Hollow - a neighborhood coming out of a literal war between rival gangs for the control of the drug trade - interest from government officials, social service agencies, and community organizations was mobilized. This ambitious project included housing, education and physical improvements to the area.

### **Development Models**

Frog Hollow had not had any significant investment for quite some time, before the upsurge of development in the mid-1990s. El Mercado, a Latino marketplace concept that combined the issue of ethnicity and culture with commercial enterprise, was one of the few projects that succeeded. Started by a local community development corporation in 1983, El Mercado was one of the early success stories of neighborhood development in the post-industrial

era. Though it eventually was completed in 1991, it paved the way for many projects that came later in the 1990s (Spitzer & Baum, 1995). This marketplace project proved that one could develop in Frog Hollow and it gave attention to the commercial district. The link between the Latino culture and the merchants represented an important characteristic of Frog Hollow and served as the model for the development that followed in later years.

The commercial district, a constant source of stability and value during the good and bad times in Frog Hollow, became an important source of revenue for Hartford in the 1980s. Consequently, the merchants in the district and their business association, SAMA, became powerful players in the neighborhood, particularly around development models and ideas. Many in the local CDCs saw remodeling and improving the commercial district as an essential aspect of restoring the neighborhood. They hired consultants to develop a comprehensive plan for neighborhood revitalization that used the district as a central component (Urban Strategies, 1999; Hamilton et al., 2000). Many development proposals incorporated Park Street improvement into their projects, and considered that aspect essential.

New homeownership was another focus of development projects from the SINA institutions, which believed that developing these areas of opportunity would bring more stability to the neighborhood (Urban Strategies Incorporated, 1999). With the power that these institutions had, home ownership was a model pushed for in many areas of the neighborhood. It promised to beautify and improve many of the most troubled sections and turn them around with renovated housing and homeownership opportunities. Assuring everyone that neighborhood residents would be given priority when choosing new occupants, these institutions received financial, political, and community support to develop many projects in the community.

However, the clamor for homeownership was not universal. Local CDCs also pursued the development of rental properties with the intention of revitalizing the neighborhood. These developers were committed to improving the look and conditions of the community through the development of affordable rental units, believing that homeownership was not the only way to revitalize Frog Hollow (Informant D2, personal communication, June 18, 2014; Informant D4, personal communication, November 24, 2014). These developers did not believe that affordable rental units were synonymous with absentee landlords, dirty apartments, dilapidated buildings, or poor living conditions. Having a broader understanding of the financial situations of community residents, which consisted mostly of people with low incomes and limited job opportunities, these proposals for affordable rental units and their developers were more favorably received by community residents (Informant R3, personal communication, November 7, 2014).

While the residents were not opposed to homeownership initiatives, they were somewhat distrustful of the SINA institutions (Informant R3, personal communication, November 7, 2014; Informant R5, personal communication, February 23, 2015.). The distrust is understandable, as archival research reveals past incidents resulting in people being displaced, including a specific plan that called for the removal of Puerto Rican people from areas close to downtown, called the Hartford "Process Memo." (Simmons, 2013). Even though this plan dated back to the 1970s, it left a deep legacy of distrust of institutional representatives and members of the political class by community residents. Fears of displacement and gentrification were prominent in the responses and reactions of residents interviewed (Informant R3, personal communication, November 7, 2014; Informant R4, personal communication, November 9, 2014; Informant R5, personal communication, February 23, 2015).

## **Latino Identity**

Latino neighborhood identity played a critical role in the redevelopment of Frog Hollow, however not the one expected. The development projects gained an advantage from the important, spatial relationship between Latino identity and the business sector, such as the one Dávila (2004) studied in El Barrio, in New York City. In this type of spatial arrangement, residents depend on the commercial strip to purchase goods related to their ethnicity and identity, and businesses depend on the residents to purchase such goods to maintain their income and survive economically. The business owners are very proud of the Latino products that they carry and sell, but they cannot deny that there is an important economic interest intertwined with these products. In a similar vein, Wherry (2011) describes a Latino neighborhood in Philadelphia that uses its cultural identity as an essential aspect of representation to the entire city. The residents and businesses in Hartford's Frog Hollow seemed very aware of the economic advantages of their identity when redevelopment was being discussed, but they weren't able to use it to build a complex space in which residents could also develop the community politically and artistically.

Similarly, Flores-Gonzalez (2001) describes the development of the Paseo Boricua district in Chicago. There, the urban community was able to use their Latino identity, in this case Puerto Rican, to claim an economically viable and independent space with a strong cultural identity and organized political structure. The economic arrangement between the businesses and residents created a viable commercial corridor in which the neighborhood population was able to advocate for a space that was culturally their own. Based on this accomplishment, they were able to expand into a political movement that was able to take on different, powerful actors, including a response to gentrification and the myopia of a growth regime. In Chicago, community leaders focused on three aspects to impede gentrification: maintain the economic

viability, develop affordable housing, and sustain a strong cultural space (Flores-Gonzalez, 2001).

In Frog Hollow, the Latino identity was a central theme of repairing and investing in the commercial district, but much less so elsewhere in the neighborhood. In fact, there were opportunities to develop other areas of the neighborhood using a Latino identity, including the development of a cultural arts center that would cater to and serve the locals. But these opportunities were ignored due to a lack of interest by both local power brokers, including the mayor's office and other local officials, and the business sector, which only supported proposals that were focused on economic development. Unfortunately, the business sector failed to grasp the benefit of developing around the Latino identity beyond financial and economic gain, and protected newly created economic spaces only for the development of more business and revenue opportunities. The concept of the Puerto Rican nation, as studied by Ramos-Zayas (1998) in Chicago and Small (2002, 2004) in Boston, helped unite community activists and residents in those cities by using ethnic identity for political and cultural gains, but it did not materialize in Hartford.

Why did the Latino identity fail to translate into political and cultural gains in Frog Hollow? According to Cruz (1998), Puerto Ricans managed to penetrate the structures of power in Hartford using an access-to-political-power model, but only a few members of the community benefited from the system overall. The political model of accessing power failed to improve the conditions of the Puerto Rican community as a whole or build any type of sustainable grassroots power. Ramos-Zayas (1998) described in Chicago a very nationalist, political militancy that surfaced with the arrival of Puerto Ricans to that city in the 1950s and 1960s. This influenced community organizing strategies at the time and continues in current neighborhood activism. It

is that type of militancy that allowed the development of a sense of solidarity based on Puerto Rican nationalism, which was then used to develop the neighborhood beyond commercial benefits. This type of Puerto Rican militancy, although present in Hartford in a smaller variety, never materialized into broad economic or political power.

### **Socioeconomic Impact**

Despite all the development in Frog Hollow during the decade of analysis, the neighborhood population failed to grow and instead lost residents (see table 4.1.). While Hartford gained population overall, Frog Hollow, despite all the new housing development projects, actually lost population. Some of the resident informants mentioned the displacement of some in their community (Informant R3, personal communication, November 7, 2014; Informant R4, personal communication, November 9, 2014; Informant R5, personal communication, February 23, 2015). Another interpretation is that Frog Hollow is the entry place for new immigrants; yet once these people start doing better economically, they leave the neighborhood. The census data supports these observations and interpretations when we see that the neighborhood had fewer residents at the end of the decade (see table 4.1.).

Regarding ethnicity, the neighborhood remained predominantly Latino, with an overwhelming majority of its resident identifying themselves as Puerto Rican specifically (see table 4.2). While some reported that new Latino groups were arriving in the neighborhood, this was difficult to assess because the 2000 Census did not count the different Latino groups at the census tract level. The dominance of Latinos in Frog Hollow continued to be displayed culturally and economically in the business sector, although as described earlier in this chapter, it has failed to materialize into any type of substantial political power.

Despite developers promising to deal with poverty and improve opportunities for residents, especially in education, no meaningful changes were seen in the human capital of the residents (see table 4.4 and table 4.5). The data suggests a trend in the retention of those with lower educational attainment and an increase of those with college degrees. This trend is typically associated with gentrification, in which the neighborhood pushes out the less-educated residents and gains more educated ones. These data support other data collected in the archival and interview sections of this study (Informant B2, personal communication, September 8, 2014; Informant R4, personal communication November 9, 2014). What is new in Frog Hollow is the arrival of more-educated people, (see table 4.5) which informants reported and commented on in this study (Informant R4, personal communication, November 9, 2014).

While poverty and unemployment were among the main issues that created the most concern and kick-started efforts of revitalization and development, the unemployment rate increased in Frog Hollow during the decade of the development (see table 4.6). Despite all the investment, renewal, and new housing developments, these projects did not have a positive impact on the availability of employment. As stated by several informants, the development addressed many cosmetic issues, but ignored the most prescient (Informant B2, personal communication, September 8, 2014; Informant B3, September 17, 2014). If people got jobs, the majority of those were in the service industry, which tends to be lower paying than other sectors. These service jobs fail to help increase the buying power of residents (see table 4.7). Adding to the trend, there was a slight decrease in the area of white-collar jobs, which are typically higher paying and could make a significant improvement on a person's financial situation (see table 4.8). If the developers intended to have an impact on job availability for residents in Frog Hollow, it seems to have increased the availability of more service-oriented jobs.

The data indicates that median household income decreased in the majority of the neighborhood households. Since household income is closely related to the number and type of jobs available, the residents of Frog Hollow seemed to have fared less well following the commercial development projects. In fact, the median household income improved in only one of the census tracts analyzed (see table 4.9), which interestingly happens to be the one tract where white-collar employment seems to have increased. Overall, during the development decade, the data demonstrates a substantial increase in the number of families living in poverty. This is most likely related to the decrease in median household income, as well as the lack of better-paying jobs. Despite all the best intentions, plans, and promises, the community development did little to help the residents of Frog Hollow financially and did not alleviate neighborhood poverty.

Most of the development projects that were situated away from the commercial strip involved some type of housing, either supporting the development of new homes or of affordable rentals. While homeownership increased in the majority of the neighborhood, the availability of renter-occupied units substantially decreased, despite all efforts to expand new rental opportunities (see table 4.11 & 4.13). The displacement of rental properties and the increased availability of homeownership opportunities appears as one of the most significant consequences of the decade of community development. This follows a clear pattern towards gentrification.

### **Resiliency, Stability and Benefits**

A large portion of the new development was focused on the commercial strip, which was a source of stability and resiliency for the neighborhood. Despite dealing with a serious national economic recession beginning in 2007-2008, no substantial losses affected the business corridor on Park Street. Over the next decade, new businesses opened, which helped offset the closing of



others. The end result was very low vacancy rates and very few empty storefronts in the corridor (Informant B5, personal, personal communication, February 23, 2015). Improvements to the commercial corridor helped Park Street maintain the image of a vibrant Latino district with active foot traffic and customers.

Despite some limitations of the development - no significant change or solution to major issues like poverty and unemployment - Frog Hollow has not returned to the decaying, crime-ridden zone that it was 20 years ago. The fact that the majority of the residents are still Latinos who depend on and use the commercial corridor in the neighborhood has ensured the vibrancy and economic viability of the area. The spatial relationship between the residents and the commercial strip continues to be vital for the sustainability of Frog Hollow. This jibes well with what Flores-Gonzalez (2001) described in Chicago, Dávila (2004) described in New York City, and Wherry described (2011) in Philadelphia.

The benefits that the multiple development projects brought to the neighborhood were uneven, benefiting some more than others depending on their power status in the community. The SINA institutions were the major beneficiaries of the stability that resulted from the development. These new initiatives curbed the urban decay of the 1990s and increased safety. The new projects helped to decrease the negative image that was affecting the comfort levels of community participants, whether they were patients at Hartford Hospital or wealthy students at Trinity College. Although improvements in the neighborhood were not sufficiently dramatic to completely change the problems affecting Frog Hollow, they did stop further decline and helped these institutions better manage their immediate surroundings (as they are not able to pick and leave the area). This finding is congruent with Stoutland's (1999) model in which the

community development model was refined to emphasize the economic side of development, with business related brick and mortar projects.

The political class claimed success in development efforts and proclaimed an interest and concern for the residents of the neighborhood, hoping it would turn into electoral success. These development efforts are aligned with the neoliberal approach, which regards local economic development as a mechanism for integrating poor communities into the global capitalist culture (Midgley & Livermore, 2005). The mayor who oversaw most of these projects was reelected three times during the period of the development. Although he had to resign because of scandals associated with some of the development efforts, he remains a popular figure in Frog Hollow. Many residents continue to credit him with going the extra mile in helping the neighborhood and the district while he was in City Hall. However, the reality, as explained to this researcher by an informant formerly associated with the municipal government (Informant D3, personal, personal communication, September 19, 2014), was that the neighborhood and its economic power were too important to the city, and the administration could not let it fall into decay and disrepair again.

Because of their position as the economic engine of the neighborhood and even the city, the business owners were the beneficiaries of the “lion’s share” of attention and development from the projects. This demonstrates the neoliberal emphasis on the bottom line of economic success, which transformed community development from a focus on community-based organizations and empowerment, into a model that focuses on entities such as small business and investment projects (Stoecker, 2012). Unfortunately, the economic success seems to be of a short-term nature. Signs of deterioration are beginning to reappear and some of the same business owners are complaining about problems of sustainability. It is one thing to be the

beneficiary of millions of dollars of physical and structural developments, but it is another to be able to maintain, upkeep and sustain the initial investment, especially in New England where exposure to the weather makes physical maintenance a challenge for urban areas.

The benefits residents received were sporadic, better in some pockets of the neighborhood than others. The residents that reaped the largest benefits were those that moved into new rental units or were lucky enough to qualify and purchase new homes. Those that lived close to the commercial district or near one of the large SINA institutions were able to share in the outdoor improvements. As an example, the residents who lived in Billings Forge, through no direct action of their own, benefited from new and improved housing, job training, a farmer's market, and a community garden. However, none of these benefits were deeply rooted or comprehensive for the rest of the residents in Frog Hollow. Poverty remains high, unemployment is soaring, and crime, although enormously reduced, remains a persistent threat, especially crimes related to substance abuse. This clearly confirms the problems described by Sites et al. (2012) wherein the economic development model did not lift the neighborhood out of poverty or preserve it from gentrification while it struggled to sustain grassroots participation and accountability.

### **Regime and Growth Coalitions**

There was ample evidence that different facets of urban regimes were present in the development projects in Frog Hollow, as seen previously in other areas of the Hartford (Neubeck & Ratcliff, 1988). The data helps identify aspects of two types of regimes at play in Frog Hollow, as described by Stone (1989): the corporate regime and the caretaker regime. The corporate regime is evident in the alliance between the political class and the SINA institutions. This alliance permitted the complex intricacies of development projects to flow with ease,

including obtaining permits, tax liens, property documents, and many other things that were necessary. The ability to influence the bureaucratic machine was key to be able to complete massive and complicated development projects in the neighborhood. Concomitantly, the political class understood the enormous value in collaborating and assisting these institutions in developing the neighborhood, helping them solve the enormous problem of crime, and tackling the issue of urban decay. In addition, they could not ignore the potential credit they would receive from projects like the Learning Corridor.

The caretaker regime, described by Stone (1989) as a collaboration between government and small businesses, is evident in the alliance between the political officials and the small business owners in the commercial corridor. In order to facilitate the physical and commercial development that they wanted, the merchants association perceived a great opportunity and aligned themselves with the politicians. They wanted a hand in the planning and development of the project, especially since they perceived they were going to benefit. The commercial district was valuable to the officials at City Hall, so managing costs and negotiating the pace of improvements was something they wanted to control and facilitate. The commercial district was too important to the city for them to have a project of such magnitude exist out of their sphere of influence.

Regime theory, however, does not completely account for what happened in Frog Hollow. A competing urban theory sheds light on what happened. Growth coalition theory, introduced by Molotch (1976), proposed that virtually all cities are dominated by a small, parochial elite whose members have business or professional interests linked to local development and growth. Thus, these business elites use public authority and private power as a means to stimulate economic development (Molotch, 1988). The difference between the two

theories lies in the fact that regime theory is derived from political science, and theories of growth coalitions are derived from sociology (Domhoff, 2005). Hence, regime theory begins with government and then examines how elected officials find coalition partners in the private sector. Growth coalition starts with the private economic sector and explains why and how it corrals government (Domhoff, 2005).

Based on these formulations, it is necessary to identify where the community development efforts began in Frog Hollow, in order to determine the presence and position of a growth coalition interacting with a shifting urban regime. The data indicates that the deterioration of the neighborhood concerned all parties, including the SINA institutions, private businesses, and local government. The institutions were concerned because they were located within the neighborhood. Local government was concerned because the viable commercial district in Frog Hollow needed to be preserved. Interestingly, it was the SINA institutions and business associations who put forward plans of action to develop the neighborhood (Urban Strategies, 1999; Hamilton et al., 2000). This means that although one can argue the government officials were involved throughout the process, which growth coalition theory does not deny, the ones that actually initiated, pushed and control the community development process were the SINA institutions and business owners.

One can describe what transpired in Frog Hollow as an example of the presence of a growth coalition in the context of business-dominated, neoliberal economic development, as described by DeFilippis, et al. (2010). This is where the market is the principal arbiter in the allocation of goods, services, wealth, and income in society. This same neoliberal form of capitalism is what Elkin (1987) described as providing economic investment and development for cities controlled privately by business people. In Frog Hollow then, we see clear evidence of

the connection between theories of neoliberalism and ones of regime and growth coalitions, with a public estranged from economic activity and a local government heavily dependent on the institutional and business sector to accomplish the complex policy tasks required for effective governance of the city. This means that the local government had to submit to the growth models, project proposals, and expectations of those that controlled the market, mainly the business and corporate sector. This left very little room for alternative models not proposed by neoliberal market forces.

This dissertation offers a modest revision of neoliberal theory, in cities where all stakeholders are heavily affected by economic bottom line. Even though not all are members of the business or corporate sector, like medical and educational institutions, all are focused on the same rules and logic.

### **Contested Community and Marginalization**

It is important to examine what happened in Frog Hollow through the concept of contested community, introduced by DeFilippis et al. (2010). According to the authors, several aspects of what defines a community get constantly shaped and transformed, under a paradigm of neoliberal forms of capitalism; this depends upon the economic context and the community's positionality towards the status quo (DeFilippis et al., 2010). This makes it challenging to determine the appropriate level of response needed to organize such communities. A variety of forces were at play in Frog Hollow, with multiple elements of community competing with one another to define the neighborhood and best determine how to deal with challenges and problems. From the residents' position, this is a poor, segregated and marginalized community, which indicates the need for a more political activist approach, with a focus on restructuring power (Fisher, 1994). However, it is also a Latino community, which brings to the fore the issue

of identity politics, which can complicate community organizing by presenting its own advantages and limitations (Cruz, 1998).

Studying a Latino neighborhood in Boston, which is smaller but similar to Frog Hollow, Small (2004) discussed how neighborhood poverty and marginalization relate to social capital, creating isolation and despair, and affecting community participation. Community residents distrust leadership and fail to develop the proper networks needed to solve their problems. However, Small (2004) posits that each neighborhood can have its own critical mechanisms that impact how poverty affects their social capital. In the case of Frog Hollow, the neighborhood is not completely isolated or lacking in resources, as many social services agencies are located within. But it has developed a deep sense of distrust of local officials and institutions, based on its history of broken commitments and promises, and reinforced an identity politics model that failed to create access to all or develop a grassroots leadership model for the future. On this basis, it may be argued that the community is in need of an identity based political activist model to come out from its malaise.

DeFilippis et al. (2010) explained that there are two forces of neoliberalism pertaining to community-based efforts: the primacy of the market and the decentralization of the state. The state has been weakened by decentralization, and market-based community development has been given primacy. These trends are evident in the case study; a community development with an economic focus and controlled by institutional and business actors is dominant. This indicates a community that needs to deploy a neighborhood maintenance model of organizing to counter institutional and economic forces of control.

Finally, the decentralization of government and the devolution of services to the community have undermined the whole provision of public services (DeFilippis et al., 2010).

This creates a third stakeholder contesting for space, which is the social service community. The community-organizing model used by the social service sector is the social work approach, which focuses on social problems and issues, and on delivering social services and advocating for resources (Fisher, 1994). In Frog Hollow, social service providers used the wave of development to expand or offer better services, and consciously used Latino identity to connect more effectively with those in the community, to better serve those in need. Advocating for resources, they proposed comprehensive programs that used business and even cultural components in their delivery, but had limited support in changing deep-rooted social problems. The small service providers who used culture and arts were few; they received indifferent treatment from the larger political and economic structures and had limited ability to impact the overall community.

Amidst the contesting and competition between these communities, the neighborhood residents were the ones least involved in the various facets, details, and pace of development. While residents were supposed to have their voices heard through the NRZ and participated during the early part of the decade, they disengaged over time. Currently, the NRZ does not represent the makeup of the community and residents feel isolated and rejected by the committee. The NRZ does have some say over decisions and projects approved in the community, but the city uses its power to control the agenda. One source of involvement some residents had was working with grassroots organizations on a political activist model, which allowed them to access decision-making and project development; they were able to access to loans for homeownership projects on a few occasions and have input in the development of some affordable rental projects.



### **Alternative Development Possibilities**

Using solely commercial economic development resulted in a limited vision and scope of the changes possible in Frog Hollow. Despite this being an historic point in time for a neighborhood attempting to recover and reinvent itself from the worst kind of problems, and despite having a political and institutional regime ready to invest in their future, the neighborhood was not able to capitalize and create effective and long-lasting change. The focus was mostly on housing, and home-ownership overshadowed the possibility of investing in workforce development, job training, or expanding and collaborating with social service providers to adequately meet the neighborhood's needs. A better understanding of the social problems affecting Frog Hollow might have resulted in projects with a wider vision that could have offered better, more comprehensive solutions. If homeownership was the primary concern, then investing in long-term job growth to improve residents' purchasing power would have had far better results. Instead, homeownership in a poor neighborhood without a broader economic vision resulted in the displacement of residents and some levels of gentrification.

None of the development projects elicits more regrets than the failure to develop the Lyric Theatre. The opportunity to redevelop a long-closed theater in the community with a theme of Latino culture and arts and turn it into a cultural performance space (with branches of the public library and other social service agencies included) would have brought the type of real change that has benefited other Latino districts around the country. These cases of mixing arts, culture and activism, described earlier in this chapter, were chronicled by Wherry (2011) in Philadelphia, and Flores-Gonzalez (2001) in Chicago. It is staggering how the leaders in Hartford, as well as the SINA institutions and the business sector, could fail to see that potential.

To view the Latino district in Frog Hollow only as a source of revenue indicates a narrow scope and a lack of creative thinking around something that could have changed the entire community.

### **Summary**

The community development in Frog Hollow did not achieve all that was expected. Some projects were unfinished and failed to generate the widespread impact that was promised. Many projects fell into disrepair very quickly, leaving a good number of residents disappointed and distrustful of institutions, City Hall officials, and developers. Depending on who is asked, opinions vary, but one can see some similarities in the ambivalence about results. While some business owners seem to be happy with the development of the commercial district, many are disappointed about the lack of upkeep since. Generally, the feeling is that things were done cheaply and not with the full commitment that was required to have an impact that would improve the image and reality of the community, and its future.

Many of the resident groups in the neighborhood do not have a positive opinion of what happened in Frog Hollow and feel that the SINA institutions and other project developers just wanted to move them out of the neighborhood. The fact that some residents see the developments as a reminder of the Hartford “Process Memo” informs a great deal about the deep-rooted level of distrust that exists in Frog Hollow. Additionally, the fact that the data does indicate displacement and some gentrification validates the opinions of residents.

The SINA institutions and the political class claim the entire project a success, especially compared to where things were back in the 1990s, when the neighborhood was in a downward spiral of decay and despair. Focusing on fixes and developments that are tangible and visible - the Learning Corridor, new homes, and rental units - makes it easier to claim success and

progress, because they are obvious. Focusing on solving deeper rooted problems is more difficult, but the effort has the potential for longer lasting effects.

The community development that occurred in Frog Hollow during the 2000s was too narrow to have created a significant and comprehensive impact on neighborhood conditions. Although the improvement of the commercial district did create some stability, its focus was too narrow to transform the neighborhood. Focusing only on housing, many other possible areas of development were left out, including workforce development, social services and arts and culture. A holistic approach to development would have had a more comprehensive impact on Frog Hollow.

Thinking of the possibilities if a visionary project had been completed, and seeing the opportunity squandered by Hartford's political and institutional actors, is frustrating to many residents. The lack of participation, isolation, marginalization, and feelings of being ignored by powerful actors who did not take the effort to listen to the residents they were trying to help, is disheartening to many in the community. The need to involve residents in more significant leadership roles in community development is essential.

## **Chapter Seven: Study Implications**

This case study focused on the impact of urban revitalization projects in the neighborhood of Frog Hollow, an impoverished but vibrant Latino enclave in the center of Hartford, Connecticut. Despite a highly publicized series of revitalization projects during the 2000s, not much has been written about the socioeconomic impact these projects had on the residents, business owners, social service providers and institutions. This chapter will discuss the implications of the study, including its limitations and its relevance and contributions to the profession of social work. The chapter concludes by providing suggestions for future research on marginalized Latino populations in urban neighborhoods.

### **Study Limitations**

This case study has various limitations, some coming from the methodology itself and others coming from decisions made during the research processes. Because this case study was conducted on one neighborhood in one city, it is limited to the experiences and intricate situations of the Frog Hollow neighborhood. However, as Padgett (2008) indicates, a study of this nature has the capacity for transferability and resonance, which are outward circles of inference using localized knowledge to get to a larger meaning. While discussing case studies, Flybjerg (2012) indicates that the general is grounded in the particular, and what is learned from a particular case can be transferred to similar situations. This means that despite this study having been conducted in one neighborhood in one city, results can be applied to the analysis of other urban Latino enclaves.

The archival research was also limited in scope, as the study only focused on community development during a specific period of time, and not throughout the entire history of the community's development. Yet, a historical perspective was needed to situate the context of the development of Frog Hollow for the time period in question. The available historical documents

about the neighborhood were limited, as were the documents on the history of the Puerto Ricans in Hartford, with a few historians having chronicled Puerto Rican migration, incorporation, and ongoing contributions to Hartford. When focusing on the development projects, most of the sources of archival materials, including plans, reports, meeting minutes, and proposals, were written by the organizations themselves. This means that much of the material failed to have a critical scope of the projects and plans, and instead tended to present many of the development plans and proposal strategies in a very positive light, with limited discussion of negative or opposing ideas. The few critical points of view were those obtained from the media, mostly from the *Hartford Courant*; these were also limited, as the media often acted as a booster for many of the projects.

Researching an oppressed and vulnerable population is a limitation that created design problems. Many neighborhood residents suffer from poverty and segregation, which presented challenges that could have affected participation and bias responses. Perhaps there was a sense of being antagonized when answering questions about issues that they felt strongly against or if issues were broached that they typically felt intimidated by or powerless to discuss. The decision to separate the interview participants into three sectors - businesses, political and residential - allowed different voices to emerge and offered different points to be represented in the study. However, each sector had very specific views about the revitalization projects and the development process, which varied depending on their participation and perceived benefits from the project. The fact that interviews were focused on events that took place up to 15 years prior might have clouded and distorted memories.

Finally, the fact that the researcher has worked in this neighborhood for quite some time, presented both an important benefit as well as a significant challenge. The researcher knew

some key stakeholders because of periods of work in the neighborhood over the years. All this made the researcher an insider, which, according to Labarre (2002), offered a distinct advantage in terms of accessing and understanding the culture. But these advantages were not absolute, and came with limitations. The researcher had to exercise great caution and professionalism when interviewing participants he knew from prior work in the community, remaining aware of positionality, disclosure, and shared relationships. The researcher has a deep empathy for this neighborhood and its residents, so he had to carefully monitor his own research bias throughout the process.

### **Relevance to Social Work**

Learning from the Frog Hollow experience has profound relevance generally for community organizing and development, and specifically for urban renewal and revitalization. Clearly, community development can lead to the improvement or deterioration of a neighborhood, depending on the model of development that is supported by the developers, and the form of community organizing that residents use to engage with developers and other project actors. This case study expands theoretical knowledge as it examines the relationship between economic development and revitalization outcomes for urban communities, especially Latino communities. The study contributes to the literature on growth regimes within neoliberal community development, and how they might operate in ethnic neighborhoods. Members of the community interact with regime actors to achieve their own goals, weakening any possible resistance that the community might present. Social workers need to recognize regime actors and their interests, and find better ways to organize the community to deliver a more effective response.

This study also contributes to the debate within social work explored by Sites et al. (2012) between proponents of the two models of community development: one that sees economic development as the most important dimension of community development, and the other that views community building as the most essential aspect. This study should be situated within that debate, as it clearly shows the limitations of using one model over the other. The results of this study demonstrate that Frog Hollow underwent mostly an economic focused community development. One wonders what could have been if a more grassroots model of community building would have been used to develop the Frog Hollow neighborhood, instead of a purely economic one with the commercial district as the primary focus, homeownership pushed for by institutions and political agents, and gentrification as the result.

Furthermore, this study examined the type of community organizing that existed in the neighborhood, and the role that organizing did or did not have in opposition to the development regimes that dominated Frog Hollow during the decade covered by this study. DeFilippis et al. (2010) proposed that community organizing, despite the impression conveyed by the literature, is not intrinsically progressive in nature and its politics depend on a wide variety of factors, including the reason for organizing, the ideology of members and leaders, and the social movement of the time. DeFilippis et al. (2012) further contended that the concept of community itself is constantly contested, depending on the economic context that shapes how that community defines itself based on issues of class and income. Taking the contested community concept a step further, not only do we have a complex and differentiated economic context in Frog Hollow, we have a community context further complicated by culture and ethnic identity. There is not a homogenous Latino identity, but one that is in constant fluctuation in a neighborhood with constant immigrant arrivals, which redefines its “Latino-ness” constantly.

This makes the task of organizing such community very challenging, but it also underscores how this study can contribute to debates in the literature regarding the homogeneity assumed in much community theory and practice. Frog Hollow was and remains a complicated community.

Regarding the literature on models of community organizing, Fisher (1994) portrays three types of neighborhood organizing: social work, political activism, and maintenance. This study enables us to not only see all three types of organizing at play in Frog Hollow but to analyze the position that each took towards the community development projects and how they interacted with these diverse community groups. For example, regarding the social work model, many social services in Frog Hollow have always been dependent on governmental and foundation funding (Cruz, 1998). These neighborhood agencies provide services to youth, families and the homeless, among others. These type of organizations, some of whose members contributed interviews to this study, have always been very keen in pointing out what was wrong with the neighborhood, while coordinating and complementing services with social action (Fisher, 1994). In Frog Hollow, these organizations provided services and support, recognizing need and posing solutions. But since their primary goal is to respond to their boards and investors, they were unwilling or unable to offer substantive changes or proper opposition to the development that impacted the neighborhood. In fact, several benefited with new resources and physical structures during the development period, while they continued providing services.

The other type of neighborhood organizing that played a major role in development in Frog Hollow was the neighborhood maintenance approach, which Fisher (1994) described as improving the neighborhood while opposing external and internal threats to the commercial value of the neighborhood. As clearly documented by this study, this was the dominant form of community organizing in Frog Hollow. The alliance between the political leaders and the



business sector was used to maintain a viable and important commercial district without “rocking the boat.” Additionally, more progressive elements of community organizing or development were not pursued, as in the case for supporting the cultural center.

The last type of organizing according to Fisher (1994) is political activism, which seeks to restructure power. Some degree of this was shown in Frog Hollow, for example, with HART and Vecinos Unidos, two of the older political activist organizations in the neighborhood. They engaged the pro-growth development apparatus on several occasions, including getting residents to qualify for loans for homeownership opportunities, developing better affordable rental opportunities, and advocating to improve the economic and financial situation of residents. These political activist-type organizing efforts were also the ones that advocated for alternative models of development, including an arts and cultural center. The long-term sustainability of this type of organizing proved weak and failed to present itself as a sufficiently powerful antagonist to developers and institutions that were supporting economic development.

Overall this study specifically contributes to the social work profession by analyzing the effects that different economic models of urban revitalization have on community development efforts in similar neighborhoods with similar conditions. It also portrays how different types of organizing in the neighborhood can offer alternative solutions to community development. Additionally, this study’s focus on a Latino community will add to the small but growing literature on Latino community development in social work, and the impact of culture and ethnicity when pursuing development in these communities.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

There is still a need to continue the empirical study of the effects of urban revitalization projects in many Latino communities in the United States, including the Frog Hollow

neighborhood, and the role of Latino identity in the revitalization process. Other neighborhoods similar to Frog Hollow should be explored, to compare, contrast and discover what worked and what did not, and for whom and why. Comparing Hartford to other Latino urban centers, like those in Chicago, Boston, and Philadelphia would provide an opportunity for comparative analysis. For example, Flores-Gonzalez (2001) portrays the development of the Paseo Boricua in Chicago, in the urban neighborhood of Humboldt Park, which is very similar to Frog Hollow. However, in Humboldt Park the community was able to create a Puerto Rican space that is not only economically viable and independent, but has a strong political activism and cultural organization. In her study, Flores-Gonzalez (2001) describes and analyzes the community's response to gentrification and a growth regime; the community resisted gentrification, maintained its economic viability, developed affordable housing, and sustained a strong cultural space. An intriguing issue for future research is discovering why this did not happen in Frog Hollow. What prevented the creation of a sustainable, political activist movement and a cultural / artistic one? A hypothesis can be made that in Frog Hollow, the Latino movement abandoned a long-lasting, grassroots building campaign when it decided to pursue access to power politics (Cruz 1998). This move furthered them from the difficult, day-to-day grind of community activism. But ultimately the grab for political power caused a failure to connect with and be involved in local issues critical to residents. There was also no path to build grassroots leadership for the future.

Looking for alternative outcomes based on different forms of community development, Small (2002) explored a different Puerto Rican community in Boston, and focused on the rise, decline and sustainability of a community that was able to fight gentrification and established its own Latino space. He explored the relation between social organization and social capital,

linking structural conditions to social disorganization and the role of culture in the organizing process (Small, 2002). His approach opens an important avenue for comparative research about Frog Hollow, centered on the following questions: (a) what caused the decline of the political activist movement in this Puerto Rican community?; (b) was the decline related to the lack of strong social capital and the rise of disorganization caused by poverty and urban decay?; and, (c) were there other factors that limited the growth of such organizing efforts? Included in comparative study of this nature would be the analysis of the broader contextual differences between Boston and Hartford, including the power of growth machines in each city, as well as their different histories of successful neighborhood activism. Using social organization theory, it would be very interesting to explore, in comparative perspective, the factors that caused a decline in politically motivated community organizing among the Puerto Rican population.

### **Summary**

Much has been documented and discussed about the revitalization and development process in Frog Hollow and what the City Hall and other developers did or did not do for the neighborhood. Speculation has fluctuated between how the project benefited or harmed the neighborhood and its residents. The relative absence of a more grassroots type of development, combined with the hegemony of a constellation of public and private institutions and government, resulted in resident displacement, outsiders being brought in to combat poverty, and the development of an economic corridor over the investment in the totality of residents' lives. This study documents the results of the development controlled by a growth regime in a marginalized and oppressed community, and underscores that as social workers, there is a need to develop more effective community organizing efforts to combat these regimes, and offer residents development models that truly impact their lives in a positive manner. Given the value

base of the social work profession, there is a need to offer clear community-based and participatory alternatives, grounded in social justice and social change, and not initiatives reflective of the neoliberal priorities of the first decade of the new millennium.

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## Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



University of Connecticut  
*Office of Research Compliance*

**DATE:** July 24, 2013

**TO:** Robert Fisher, Ph.D.  
Reinaldo Rojas, MSW, Student Investigator  
School of Social Work

**FROM:** Deborah Dillon McDonald, RN, Ph.D. *DDM/RSW*  
Chair, Institutional Review Board  
FWA# 00007125

**RE:** Protocol #H13-169: "Community Development and Its Socioeconomic Impact"  
*Please refer to the Protocol# in all future correspondence with the IRB.*  
Funding Source: Investigator Out-of-Pocket  
***Approval Period: From: July 24, 2013 Valid Through: July 24, 2014***  
"Expiration Date"

On June 27, 2013, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the above-referenced research study by expedited review and determined that modifications were required to secure approval. Those requirements have been met, and the IRB granted approval of the study on July 24, 2013. The research presents no more than minimal risk to human subjects and qualifies for expedited approval under category #7: Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. Enclosed is the validated consent form, which is valid through July 24, 2014. **A copy of the approved, validated consent form (with the IRB's stamp) must be used to consent each subject.**

All investigators at the University of Connecticut are responsible for complying with the attached IRB "Responsibilities of Research Investigators."

**Re-approval:** It is the investigator's responsibility to apply for re-approval of ongoing research at **least once yearly**, or more often if specified by the IRB. The Re-approval/Completion Form (IRB-2) and other applicable re-approval materials must be submitted **one month** prior to the expiration date noted above.

**Modifications:** If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, the investigators, or funding source, please submit the changes in writing to the IRB using the Amendment Review Form (IRB-3). All modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB **prior** to initiation.

*An Equal Opportunity Employer*

438 Whitney Road Extension, Unit 1246  
Storrs, Connecticut 06269-1246

Telephone: (860) 486-8802  
Facsimile: (860) 486-1044  
web: [compliance.uconn.edu](http://compliance.uconn.edu)

## Appendix B: Institutional Review Board Re-approval Letter

**DATE:** July 10, 2014

**TO:** Robert Fisher, Ph.D.  
Reinaldo Rojas, MSW, Student Investigator  
School of Social Work

**FROM:** Megan Ehret, Pharm.D.  
Vice-Chair, Institutional Review Board  
FWA# 00007125

**RE:** Protocol #H13-169: "Community Development and its Socioeconomic Impact"  
*Please refer to the Protocol# in all future correspondence with the IRB.*  
Funding Source: Investigator Out-of-Pocket  
***Re-approval Period: From: July 24, 2014 Valid Through: July 24, 2015***  
"Expiration Date"

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) re-approved this protocol on July 10, 2014. The research presents no more than minimal risk to human subjects and qualifies for expedited approval under category #7: Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. Enclosed is the validated consent form, which is valid through July 24, 2015. A copy of the approved, validated consent form (with the IRB's stamp) must be used to consent each subject.

All investigators of the University of Connecticut are responsible for complying with the "Responsibilities of Research Investigators" attached to this letter.

**Re-approval:** It is the investigator's responsibility to apply for re-approval of ongoing research at **least once yearly**, or more often if specified by the IRB. The Re-approval/Termination Form (IRB-2) and other applicable re-approval materials must be submitted **one month** prior to the expiration date noted above.

**Modifications:** If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, the investigators, or funding source, please submit the changes in writing to the IRB using the Amendment Review Form (IRB-3). All modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to initiation.

**Audit:** All protocols approved by the IRB may be audited by the Post Approval Monitor.

*Please keep this letter with your copy of the approved protocol.*

**Attachments:**

1. Validated IRB-2 Re-approval Form
2. Validated Recruitment Message
3. Validated Consent Form
4. "Responsibilities of Research Investigators"

## **Appendix C: Interview Guide**

Interviews will be conducted with 15 participants divided in three areas: five with developers and city wide leaders that will represent the political class; five with business owners and local community based organization leaders that would represent the business sector; and five with key community residents. All are expected to comment on the process and implementation of the urban revitalization project, their level of involvement with it and their opinion of the conditions of the neighborhood pre and post project.

### **Background Information**

- Name and address
- How old are you?
- What type of work do you do?
- How long have you lived/worked/own business/politically involved in Frog Hollow?

### **Questions**

- When you first learned about the project?
- What did you think of it?
- What did you think would be its results?
- Who did you think would be the major beneficiaries?
- Did you think it would benefit you?
- What was your involvement during the planning stages?
- What was your involvement during its implementation?
- Who do you think was in control of the project?
- What do you think of the model used?
- Were there any alternative models proposed?
- How was the communication with developers?
- What was the level of participation of political class/business class/resident class?
- Was the Latino identity of the neighborhood considered?

From the vantage point of today, please answer these questions.

- What do you think of the project results?
- If your opinion changed or developed, what happened to make that change occur?
- Who did you think benefited the most?
- What were the benefits to you?
- How long were you involved?
- Who do you think was in control?
- What do you think of the model used?
- Do you think an alternative model would have been better? Why?
- What is the communication today with those involved?
- Who participated around the community?
- How has the neighborhood changed?

## Appendix D: Consent Form



University of Connecticut

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study

Principal Investigator: Robert Fisher, Ph.D.

Student Researcher: Reinaldo Rojas, MSW

Study Title: Community Development and Its Socioeconomic Impact

### Introduction

You are invited to participate in this interview because you are a resident of Frog Hollow and familiar with the revitalization project. I am a doctoral student at the University of Connecticut, and I am conducting this interview as part of my doctoral dissertation. I am interested in finding out about your opinion, experience and involvement with the Frog Hollow revitalization project.

### Why is this study being done?

This study is one of the requirements of the student's doctoral dissertation. This study will analyze the socioeconomic impact of the urban revitalization project in the neighborhood of Frog Hollow and its residents.

### What are the study procedures? What will I be asked to do?

You will be interviewed once. The interview will take place at a time and location of your choice. Each interview will last approximately 45 – 90 minutes.

### What are the risks or inconveniences of the study?

We believe that the risk presented to you by these interviews is minimal. The student researcher will focus on a range of topics, but may discuss previous experiences involving social or emotional conflict. You may choose not to answer any of the questions. A referral list of agencies that may be helpful to you will be provided, upon request. The only inconvenience is the amount of time the interviews take.

### What are the benefits of the study?

You may not benefit directly from participating in these interviews. This case study will give us a deeper and richer sense of what happened during the revitalization process and what were the effects of that revitalization on the neighborhood conditions, both in social and economic terms. It will be beneficial to the student interviewer because it will be part of the completion of his doctoral dissertation.

### Will I receive payment for participation? Are there costs to participate?



There are no costs to you. You will be paid \$20.00 dollars for participating in these interviews.

How will my personal information be protected?

With your permission, the interviews will be audiotaped to obtain complete and accurate information. The tapes will be transcribed by the student investigator, and all identifying information will be removed. Only the PI and student investigator will have access to the transcripts. The tapes will be destroyed after they have been transcribed.

You should also know that the UConn Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Office of Research Compliance may inspect study records as part of its auditing program, but these reviews will only focus on the researchers and not on your responses or involvement. The IRB is a group of people who review research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research participants.

Can I stop being in the study and what are my rights?

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate.

Whom do I contact if I have questions about the study?

Take as long as you like before you make a decision. We will be happy to answer any question you have about this study. If you have further questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the principal investigator, (Robert Fisher at 860-570-9298) or the student researcher (Reinaldo Rojas at 860-916-7239). If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact the University of Connecticut Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 860-486-8802.

Documentation of Consent:

I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement and possible hazards and inconveniences have been explained to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. My signature also indicates that I have received a copy of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person  
Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

Contact Information: If you have any questions about this study, you may contact Karen D'Angelo at 203-640-7473 at any time.

### **Appendix E: Recruitment letter**

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a doctoral student at the University of Connecticut in the School of Social Work. I am conducting dissertation research on the socioeconomic impact of the urban revitalization project in the neighborhood of Frog Hollow and its residents. I am interested in finding out about your opinion, experience and involvement with the Frog Hollow revitalization project. It would be very helpful to my work to learn more about these issues and any other opinion or comments you might have had regarding the project. I welcome any insights you have into the project, prior and after its implementation and completion. Would you be interested in participating in this project by agreeing to be interviewed? The interview will take 45 to 90 minutes of your time and we can meet at a place that is convenient for you.

Please email me at [reinaldo.rojas@uconn.edu](mailto:reinaldo.rojas@uconn.edu) if you have any questions. I would also be glad to share with you via email or in person a copy of the research information sheet that provides more information about the research project.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Reinaldo Rojas  
Doctoral Candidate  
University of Connecticut  
School of Social Work  
[Reinaldo.rojas@uconn.edu](mailto:Reinaldo.rojas@uconn.edu)