



# UNION SQUARE

CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS TRANSFORMATION PLAN



City of  
**NEW HAVEN**



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# Executive Summary





# Introduction

The Union Square Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan represents a pivotal moment for the Union Square neighborhood (aka The Hill) in New Haven, Connecticut.

This plan is a bold, collaborative vision to revitalize Union Square into a thriving, welcoming community where residents can achieve their full potential. It builds upon decades of history, leveraging the neighborhood's rich cultural fabric while addressing long-standing challenges such as economic disparity, outdated housing infrastructure, and limited access to essential services. By integrating housing, education, and employment opportunities into a cohesive strategy, this plan sets the stage for transformational change.

This transformation plan is a direct response to community engagement efforts and reflects the aspirations of Union Square's residents and stakeholders. It outlines a comprehensive roadmap for revitalizing the area, emphasizing sustainable development, enhanced educational attainment, employment opportunities, and youth development.

***The Union Square Choice Neighborhoods Transformation Plan is a comprehensive strategy aimed at revitalizing the Union Square community. Developed through extensive community engagement, the plan focuses on three core goals:***

**Housing:** Replace the distressed Robert T Wolf Public Housing development with high quality mixed-income housing that is well managed and responsive to the needs of the surrounding neighborhood.

**People:** Improve educational outcomes and intergenerational mobility by providing services and support directly to residents and their families.

**Neighborhood:** Create conditions necessary for public and private investment in the Union Square neighborhood. Offer amenities and assets, including enhanced safety measures, excellent schools and commercial activities, all of which are important to families' choices regarding their communities.





CNI  
Boundary

Elm City  
Communities /  
Glendower Office

YALE OLD  
CAMPUS

DWIGHT

DOWNTOWN

Town Green District  
(New Haven BID)

WOOSTER  
SQUARE

HILL NORTH

Yale New  
Haven Health

Evergreen  
Cemetery

John C. Daniels  
Campus

Amistad  
Park

Columbus Ave (Rt 1)

St. Bernard  
Cemetery

Roberto  
Clemente  
Park

Trowbridge  
Square  
Park

ROBERT T.  
WOLFE

LONG  
WHARF

HILL SOUTH

Kimberly Ave

Kimberly  
Field

ROBERT T.  
WOLFE

CHURCH ST  
SOUTH SITE

S ORANGE ST

COLUMBUS AVE

CHURCH ST S

UNION AVE

UNION  
STATION

TARGET SITE ENLARGED MAP

With this plan, Union Square will evolve into a vibrant and resilient neighborhood, offering opportunities for all.



# Planning Approach

The planning process is custom-tailored to meet the needs of the Union Square community. It promotes maximum participation, community ownership, and optimal collaboration. Robert T. Wolfe residents, residents of the Union Square community, businesses, employers, local leaders, educators, the City of New Haven, and the State of Connecticut will be engaged in this community-driven process.

## **Phase I: Mobilize - Project**

- This phase involves organizing the team, developing a comprehensive outreach strategy, and inviting stakeholders to serve on committees and task forces.

## **Phase 2: Needs Assessment & Analysis**

- Phase II focuses on identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This phase also involves conducting a Needs Assessment and Market Analysis.

## **Phase 3: Visioning**

- Once data from the Needs Assessment and Market Analysis are analyzed, the focus shifts to exploring strategies to address the issues identified in these analyses.

## **Phase 4: Draft Transformation Plan**

- Phase IV focuses on creating a vision for the Transformation Plan based on the preferences of the community residents expressed during the Visioning Phase.

## **Phase 5: Final Transformation Plan**

- During this phase, the task forces will revise the Plan based on feedback from the community and HUD.

## **Phase 6: Implementation**

- The final phase of the process focuses on turning ideas outlined in the Plan into action.

## Organization

**Lead and Co-Applicants, Elm City Communities and The Glendower Group,** created an organizational structure that maximized stakeholder participation and ensured transparency and progress. To assure that residents of the Targeted Population and Neighborhood, as well as other stakeholders, were meaningfully engaged in the planning and implementation process, ECC and Glendower, in cooperation with residents of the Target Project, established a **Union Square Transformation Committee.**

**The Transformation Committee was composed of:**

- **The Steering Committee**
- **Housing Task Force**
- **People Task Force**
- **Neighborhood Task Force**
- **Resident Advisory Committee**
- **Needs Assessment Teams**
- **Early Action Committee**

## Teams & Task Force Contributions

### Steering Committee:

A Steering Committee composed of community leaders, local government officials, and representatives from various task forces and committees provided guidance throughout the assessment process. This group ensured alignment between the assessment findings and the broader goals of the Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan.

### Resident Advisory Committee:

A Resident Advisory Committee, consisting of Robert T. Wolfe residents, played an essential role in shaping the assessment process by ensuring that the voices of those directly affected by the transformation efforts were represented. The committee reviewed survey results and focus group insights, helping to refine priorities and action items based on real-time feedback. The Committee also helps residents to participate in outreach to residents to ensure maximum participation.

### Early Action Committee:

The Early Action Activities focus on improving Trowbridge Square Park and the surrounding Historic District, which is historically significant as one of the city's earliest planned residential neighborhoods.

### People Task Force:

The People Task Force, which included representatives from local social service providers, healthcare organizations, educational institutions, and residents, helped identify the community's social and economic challenges. The Task Force conducted meetings December 2023 and February, March, May, June, July, and October 2024.

### Housing Task Force:

The Housing Task Force included Robert T. Wolfe residents and key stakeholders in the community. The Task Force focused on identifying goals and creating strategies to deliver high quality affordable housing to Union Square.

### Neighborhood Task Force:

The Neighborhood Task Force focused on how the Plan can provide strategies for improving safety, health, housing, and economic mobility in the larger Union Square (The Hill) Neighborhood.

### Needs Assessment Teams:

Between June 6 and August 2, 2024, The Inclusive Economic Development Lab at the Yale School of Management conducted the Resident Assessment of the Robert T. Wolfe and former Church Street South resident as part of the Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan. Principal Investigator Kate Cooney led the survey. The Neighborhood Assessment was conducted under the auspices of the Yale Urban Design Workshop with Adrei Harell serving as the principal investigator.

### Focus Groups:

Focus groups with business owners, youth, and community leaders highlighted a range of concerns, including overcrowded housing, limited youth engagement opportunities, and the need for economic development initiatives.

**The Neighborhood Needs Assessment and the Resident Needs Assessment combined with the SWOT Assessments conducted by the Planning Team, quantitative data analysis and qualitative community engagement, ensure that the findings reflected the realities and aspirations of the neighborhood's residents. The process also involved collaboration with several key committees and task forces to ensure stakeholder input.**

# People Plan

## Vision Statement:

*An engaged and thriving Hill and Union Square community with quality education, ample employment opportunities, social interactions, and excellent health care for all.*

## Goals & Strategies

### 1. Enhance the quality of education to all residents in the neighborhood.

Enhance educational attainment by providing comprehensive resources and programs for early childhood learning, youth, and adults. This includes digital access, technology training, and strengthened partnerships with schools and higher education institutions to foster lifelong learning opportunities.

- 1.1 Improve K-12 Educational Outcomes.
- 1.2 Increase access to early childhood programs for children aged six months to five years old.

### 2. Ensure excellent health care for all residents in the neighborhood.

Improve the health outcomes of Union Square residents by expanding access to healthcare, promoting mental health services, and encouraging healthy lifestyles through enhanced public spaces, recreational facilities, and community health programs.

- 2.1 Improve housing conditions, including implementing lead abatement and mold remediation programs.
- 2.2 Increase access to healthy food.
- 2.3 Address transportation barriers that prevent access to healthcare facilities and other critical services.
- 2.4 Promote health literacy and positive community engagement.
- 2.5 Strengthen mental health and substance abuse support.
- 2.6 Incorporate health and wellness programs into local youth programs.

## Goals & Strategies Continued

### 3. Strengthen community engagement and participation.

Foster an welcoming and transparent process where residents are active partners in shaping and implementing the neighborhood's transformation. Empower resident leadership, encourage collaboration with local organizations, and ensure accountability through ongoing feedback and transparency.

3.1 Enhance Community Engagement and Partnerships.

### 4. Support Youth Development.

Empower young people to thrive by offering robust programs that build leadership, provide mentorship, and expand access to extracurricular activities, job training, and career pathways that prepare youth for success.

4.1 Promote leadership skills, social skills, social development and mentoring for Union Square.

4.2 Enhance family engagement and community building.

4.3 Promote youth employment programs.

### 5. Foster job creation and economic development.

Increase access to meaningful job opportunities by connecting residents to workforce training, career counseling, and partnerships with local employers, while promoting entrepreneurship and small business development within the community.

5.1 Expand higher education and vocational training opportunities to enhance opportunities for employment.

5.2 Expand employment opportunities for elderly individuals and persons with disabilities in Union Square.



*Stakeholder Meeting at High School in the Community*



*Resident Meeting at Robert T. Wolfe*



# Neighborhood Plan

## Vision Statement

*A strong, stable neighborhood where residents can learn, grow, and stay healthy; with safe, easy connections to the City and region; and a strong community that residents can afford to stay in for years to come.*

## Goals & Strategies

### 1.0 Calm traffic, ensure pedestrian and bicyclist safety, and improve connections within and outside the Hill.

Enhance transportation infrastructure by implementing traffic-calming measures, creating safer pedestrian crossings, and expanding bike lanes. Strengthen connectivity within the neighborhood and to surrounding areas through improved transit options and available pathways that promote mobility for all.

- 1.1 Coordinate action at key intersections, streets, and destinations.
- 1.2 Calm traffic through design, enforcement, and programming.
- 1.3 Improve pedestrian amenities to make the neighborhood safer and more comfortable to cross on foot.
- 1.4 Complete the bicycle lane network. Prioritize protected bicycle lanes connecting major destinations, especially along high traffic roads.
- 1.5 Improve high volume transit stops with shelters, benches, and other amenities.



Neighborhood Community Engagement

## Goals & Strategies Continued

### 2.0 Make sure the neighborhood's public places support wellness, safety, and economic mobility.

Support a thriving community by investing in parks, indoor recreation spaces for all ages, community gardens, and safety initiatives in all of these places. Additionally, invest in initiatives to empower residents and continue neighborhood planning.

- 2.1 Support community gardens to expand local food access.
- 2.2 Improve neighborhood safety by assisting vulnerable populations, managing problematic locations, and building relationships and safe places.
- 2.3 Invest in parks, indoor recreational spaces, and the environment to help the community stay healthy, have fun, and gather together.
- 2.4 Build local resident and nonprofit capacity to organize the community, care for neighborhood spaces, host programs and events, and/or provide services.

### 3.0 Encourage neighborhood-serving retail, food, services, and activities that support basic needs and community life.

Promote local commerce by attracting businesses that cater to the community's needs, such as grocery stores, healthcare services, and recreational spaces. Create a dynamic environment where residents can access everyday essentials while enjoying spaces for gathering, connection, and cultural enrichment.

- 3.1 Focus on key neighborhood commercial hubs in both Hill South and Hill North to establish them as central community gathering places and mixed-use destinations. Especially focus at Kimberley Square, along Congress Avenue, and at the intersection of Washington, West, Button and Hurlburt.
- 3.2 Make public space and commercial corridor improvements so these spaces are more inviting to residents.
- 3.3 Strengthen business services and attraction to sustain businesses residents love and attract new ones they want.
- 3.4 Ensure that hubs have an appropriate level of day-to-day management for their needs.
- 3.5 Establish management structures to support business corridor functions and make sure these strategies do not fall by the wayside.

### 4.0 Increase the supply of affordable and high quality homes for the homeowners and renters who want to stay here.

Expand housing options by prioritizing the development and preservation of affordable, high-quality homes. Ensure that long-term residents can remain in the community by supporting varied housing types and mixed-income developments that reflect the needs of all residents.

- 4.1 Connect low income homeowners and renters with resources to lower their housing costs and keep their homes in good condition.
- 4.2 Promote new housing development for all ages and family types, especially on underutilized land and at neighborhood hubs.



# Housing Plan

## Vision Statement:

*A thriving and supportive community where quality affordable and mixed-income housing is a foundation for security and growth for a vibrant community for all.*

## Goals & Strategies

### 1. Right to Return for Current Wolfe residents and former Church Street South Residents.

Prioritize impartial development by guaranteeing that displaced residents have the opportunity to return to the community. Provide resources and support to ensure a seamless transition back to a revitalized neighborhood.

- 1.1 Maintain a Transparent Process.
- 1.2 Incorporate resident feedback into the Housing Plan.
- 1.3 Create a viable phasing and transition plan.

### 2. Provide affordable, safe, and high-quality housing choices.

Develop housing options that meet the needs of varied residents while maintaining affordability. Focus on creating safe, sustainable, and attractive living spaces that enhance the quality of life for all.

- 2.1 Provide housing options: townhouse-style homes and tall apartment buildings.
- 2.2 Offer private, secure outdoor space for residents with elevated courtyards in the apartment buildings.
- 2.3 The new development will be up to date with modern amenities including air conditioning, ADA-compliant units, new security systems, etc.
- 2.4 Design walkable, pedestrian friendly streets for a safer neighborhood.
- 2.5 Use a variety of public and private funding sources to maintain housing affordability for current residents and add affordable housing to the neighborhood.

## Goals & Strategies Continued

### 3. Provide New Infrastructure for flood resiliency, pedestrian connectivity, parking, and access to public transit.

Invest in resilient infrastructure that protects the neighborhood from flooding while improving pedestrian safety and mobility. Expand parking options and enhance access to public transit, creating a more connected and sustainable community.

- 3.1 Design buildings above Base Flood Elevation and use green infrastructure to absorb stormwater and runoff.
- 3.2 Connect the site back to the Hill Neighborhood and Downtown with new pedestrian crossings and bike lanes.
- 3.3 Provide attractive and ample lighting in public open spaces to increase nighttime safety.
- 3.4 Plant street trees to shade sidewalks and plazas for a better pedestrian experience.
- 3.5 Provide parking in the lower levels of each building and shield parking with liner retail, amenity, and housing.
- 3.6 Coordinate with the new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route.
- 3.7 Use traffic calming measures such as raised crosswalks, bump outs, and alternative paving.
- 3.8 Utilize sustainable energy systems.

### 4. Provide amenities for community gathering, social support, and recreation.

Create shared spaces that foster connection and well-being, including parks, community centers, and recreational facilities. Provide opportunities for residents to engage socially and access essential support services in the heart of their community.

- 4.1 Create a Central Public Open Space for the community to use day-to-day and for events.
- 4.2 Offer a variety of open spaces to give people options between lively public space and quiet areas.
- 4.3 Design play areas for kids of all ages where caregivers can oversee play.
- 4.4 Allocate space in the ground floor of residential buildings for community rooms and community services, such as daycare.

### 5. Design space for retail and commercial development.

Promote economic growth by incorporating retail and commercial spaces into the neighborhood design. Encourage local businesses, services, and dining options that meet the community's needs while creating jobs and attracting visitors.

- 5.1 Surround the Central Green with retail and amenity.

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*"This process has truly given our community a voice. For the first time, I feel like our ideas, concerns, and hopes are being heard and turned into action."*

- RESIDENT

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# Next Steps & Implementation

## Moving Forward

By prioritizing education, health and wellness, youth development, and employment alongside housing revitalization, the Union Square Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan lays the groundwork for a holistic renewal. This comprehensive approach will not only honor the neighborhood's rich history but also position it as a model for sustainable urban revitalization that prioritizes the people who call Union Square home.

### *Implementation will be a collaborative effort:*

#### Elm City Communities

As the **public housing agency** serving the City of New Haven, and the prime applicant for the Choice Planning Grant, Elm City Communities will continue serving the residents that reside in their properties.

**ECC will be instrumental in partnering with local non-profits to implement the proposed strategies in the People Plan.** Additionally, ECC will be the key party **overseeing the relocation and transition of Robert T. Wolfe residents.**

#### The Glendower Group, LLC

As the **development arm** of Elm City Communities, The Glendower Group will be especially instrumental in implementation of the Housing Plan. Glendower, with Elm City, has a robust history of major public housing redevelopments. They have leveraged RAD conversions, CHFA tax credits, and other funding sources to deliver significantly improved affordable housing to over 2,500 families. They will continue to act in a development capacity and will be the **primary developer across the new buildings.**

#### The City of New Haven

The Union Square Transformation Plan is made possible through the support and coordination of the City of New Haven - particularly the offices of **City Plan, Economic Development Administration, and Engineering.**

Engagement from the City has been essential in **identifying priorities** throughout the Plan. The City is a key facilitator in the **zoning and entitlement process** of the Union Square site and in **delivering Neighborhood Improvement Strategies.**

Transformation  
Planning Process

1.5 Years

Submit  
Plan

We Are Here

Implementation  
Preparation Process

1 - 2 Years



### Partner Non-Profits

Partner Non-Profits will be instrumental in the **implementation of the People Plan**. Elm City Communities operates numerous different programs for residents to access opportunities and services, but without endless resources, there is a limit to their scope.

Partnering with local organizations will **help expand the services and opportunities** that residents have access to. Key areas of focus for these partnerships are: education, economic opportunities and health outcomes.

## Implementation Preparation: What Are the Next Steps?

- Plan to Relocate Robert T. Wolfe Residents
- Acquire Complete Site Control
- Hire a Civil Engineering Firm for Site Abatement and Grading
- Apply for a PDD and/or Rezone
- Confirm the Program and Funding for the Initial Development Phase
- Confirm leverage commitments from Stakeholders
- **Apply for a HUD Implementation Grant**

**Worth up to \$50 million, the Implementation Grant is a competitive application process.** The \$50 million can be used towards housing construction costs to replace distressed public housing.

## Implementation: What Does the Future Look Like?

### Initiate First Housing Phase

- Glendower will issue an RFP to **select an architecture and engineering team** to design and oversee construction of the first building(s).
- **Apply for CHFA 4% and/or 9% Low Income Housing Tax Credits** to support the financing of the project.
- **Design and construct Phase 1**

### Rinse & Repeat

- Due to the large scale of goals of the Transformation Plan, the delivery of units will take numerous cycles of funding, designing, and construction.

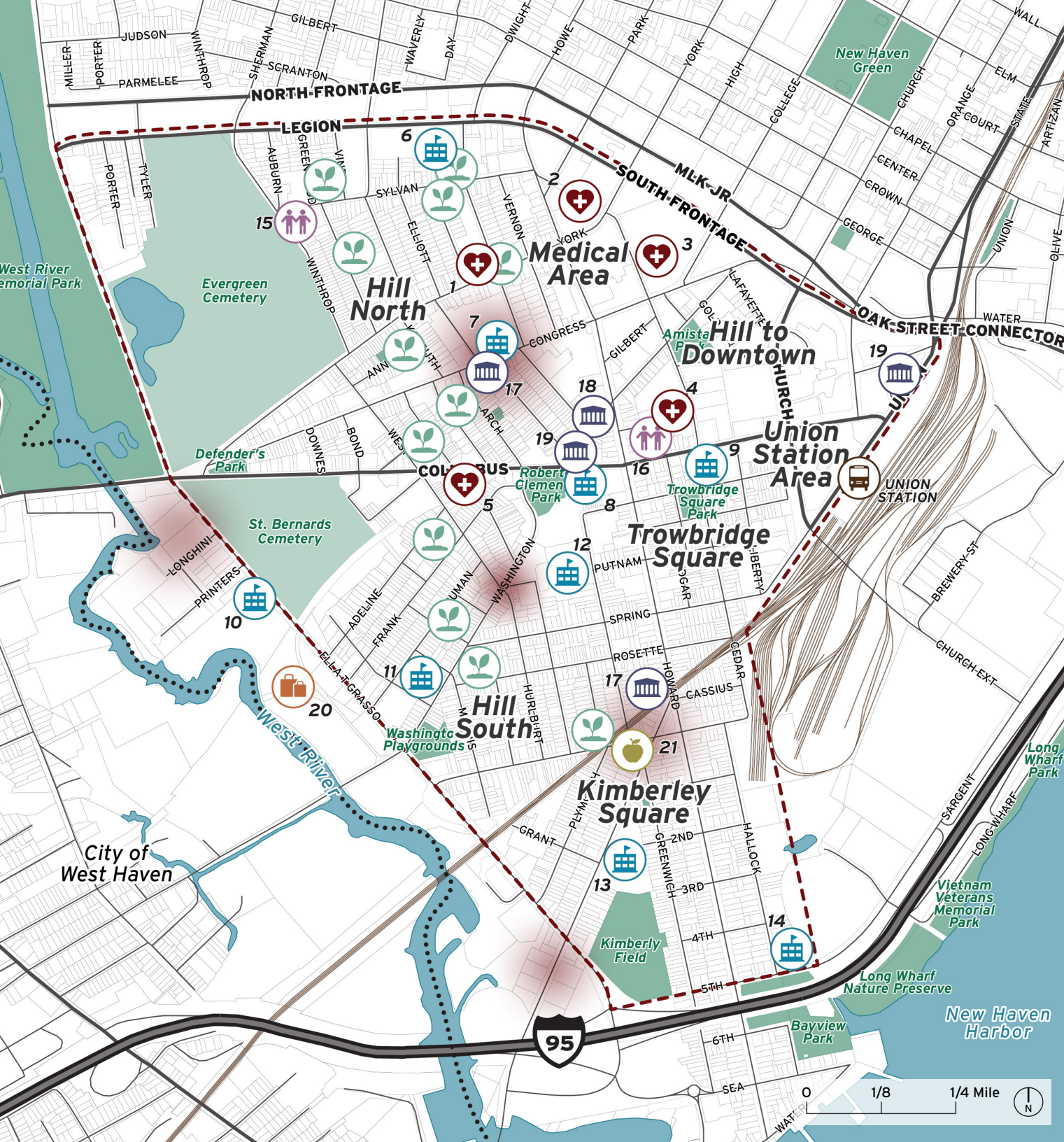
### Neighborhood & People

- Neighborhood and People initiatives identified and confirmed in the Implementation Grant will commence.

## Union Square Implementation

8+ Years





- CNI Neighborhood Boundary
- Hospitals/Health Center
- School
- Community Center
- Government Buildings/ Civic Services
- Shopping
- Grocery Store
- Community Garden
- Transportation
- Commercial Area