

**Strong School District**  
**Community Criteria for Economic Development**  
January 2020

The “Strong School District” is defined by its residents, business owners, and nonprofit leaders as Grand Avenue from Atwater Street to Quinnipiac Avenue, including the Grand Avenue Bridge, as a prime area for economic development and essential to the health of the immediate neighborhood and broader community. This is a summary of the community planning process underway since February 2018 and the recommended next steps that emerged from this process.

Over the course of 2018 and 2019, all District residents, business owners, and nonprofit leaders were welcomed to four inclusive, bilingual planning sessions, which brought together nearly 150 people: a) Future of the District Brainstorm at River Run Apartments on February 27, 2018 with 54 participants; b) Community Planning Process at Atwater Senior Center on April 22, 2018 with 46 people; c) Planning Report Out and Next Steps Conversation on September 27, 2018 with 44 participants; and d) the Chatham Square Annual Planning Retreat on January 27, 2019, with 38 participants. Participants included residents from throughout the District and beyond, State Representative Al Paolillo, former Alder Kenneth Reveiz, former Alder Aaron Greenberg, and representatives of the Fair Haven Community Management Team, Fair Haven Branch Library, Fair Haven Community Health Center, Orlando’s Barber Shop, Grand & Atwater Deli, Patriquin Architects, Mary Wade Home, River Run Apartments, Elm City Montessori, Cityseed, New Haven Land Trust, and Church of God Prophecy, among others.

These efforts followed a mural project on the former Strong School in July 2017, with 109 participants; two unsuccessful proposals to redevelop the former Strong School, one from an out-of-town developer in July 2017 and one from our community in July 2014; an online petition in October 2016 to give Fair Haven a voice in the Strong School Proposal Review Committee, with 146 signatures; and an ongoing conversation among neighbors, business owners, and nonprofit leaders around the future of the District’s most significant asset, the now long-vacant former Strong School, since 2010.

At the January 2019 session, former Alder Reveiz presented findings from the April 22, 2018 planning meeting – organized as Strengths, Resources Needed, and Barriers – and our community reached consensus on the criteria essential for the redevelopment of the former Strong School as the key property within the Strong School District. In order to build upon existing strengths, bring in needed resources, and overcome barriers to the development of this section of Fair Haven we must work with the City and with a developer on the redevelopment of this key property. Therefore we respectfully request that these criteria serve as the basis for a future Request for Proposals issued by the City of New Haven for development of the former Strong School:

1. Enrich social and cultural life
2. Drive economic development
3. Facilitate growth of local businesses and entrepreneurship
4. Serve diverse neighborhood constituencies
5. Host continuous activity, daytime and evening, for safety

6. Provide revenue to the City of New Haven
7. Include businesses and organizations working in the arts, education, health and wellness, food, and/or youth services, encouraging shared space and co-leases
8. Include public-interacting business on Grand Ave., such as shop or restaurant
9. Include housing only as part of mixed-use concept, with emphasis on affordable housing and, where possible, supporting creatives who already live here.
10. Integrated into a responsible development plan for the Strong School District and the broader Fair Haven community, and reflective of the City's Vision 2025 Plan.

Among the most prominent barriers identified in our planning sessions was collaboration with the City of New Haven. Residents, business owners, and nonprofit leaders are eager to transform that dynamic by working collaboratively with City officials on not only the redevelopment of the former Strong School, but also the responsible development of the Strong School District and broader Fair Haven community.

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Request still pending from our August 2019 meeting with Michael Piscetelli and Aicha Woods:

1. Development of a comprehensive plan for the Strong District
2. New RFP for former Strong School building