

# Union Square Choice Neighborhood Planning Handbook



Elm City Communities  
The Glendower Group

Karen DuBois-Walton, Ph.D.  
*President*



# Table of Contents

What Is Choice Neighborhood?	1
Why Create a Neighborhood Transformation Plan?	1
The Planning Process	2-7
Explore Options and Alternatives	8-11
Develop the Preferred Plan	12
Baseline Data	13-16

# What Is Choice Neighborhood?

The Choice Neighborhood Initiative will transform distressed neighborhoods into viable and sustainable mixed-income neighborhoods by linking housing improvements with appropriate services, schools, public assets, transportation, and access to jobs. The Choice Neighborhoods Planning grant will build upon the success of the Hill-to-Downtown Plan to spur the revitalization of the Union Square community and the preservation of public and assisted housing within the context of a broader approach to reduce concentrated poverty.

# Why Create a Neighborhood Transformation Plan?

A Neighborhood Transformation Plan (NTP) is a tool for making your neighborhood the best place it can be. The NTP will help Elm City Communities/The Glendower Group, city officials, private property owners, and lenders/investors understand neighborhood values and priorities. The NTP can help maintain things you treasure and direct changes you would like to see in your area.

Elm City Communities (Applicant), along with The Glendower Group, Inc. (Co-Applicant), received a \$500,000 Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant from The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to create the NTP for Robert T. Wolfe (Target Project) and the surrounding Union Square community (Target Neighborhood). HUD requires the Applicant to conduct a comprehensive and inclusive planning process over 24 months to develop a NTP.

This Planning Handbook is intended to serve as a roadmap to help guide the planning process. Using HUD's three core goals as a point of departure, the Team will engage the community to develop the NTP to help foster this ideal condition. The Team will focus on answering these questions:

- What are the characteristics of this perfect community?
- What kinds of opportunities for achieving stability and self-sufficiency are available?
- What resources are available for the members of the community?

This activity provides a framework for constructing long-range community goals that point us in the right direction.

***First, imagine creating a community where people's problems and needs are addressed effectively. Next, devise a strategic plan to guide the community toward this ideal vision.***

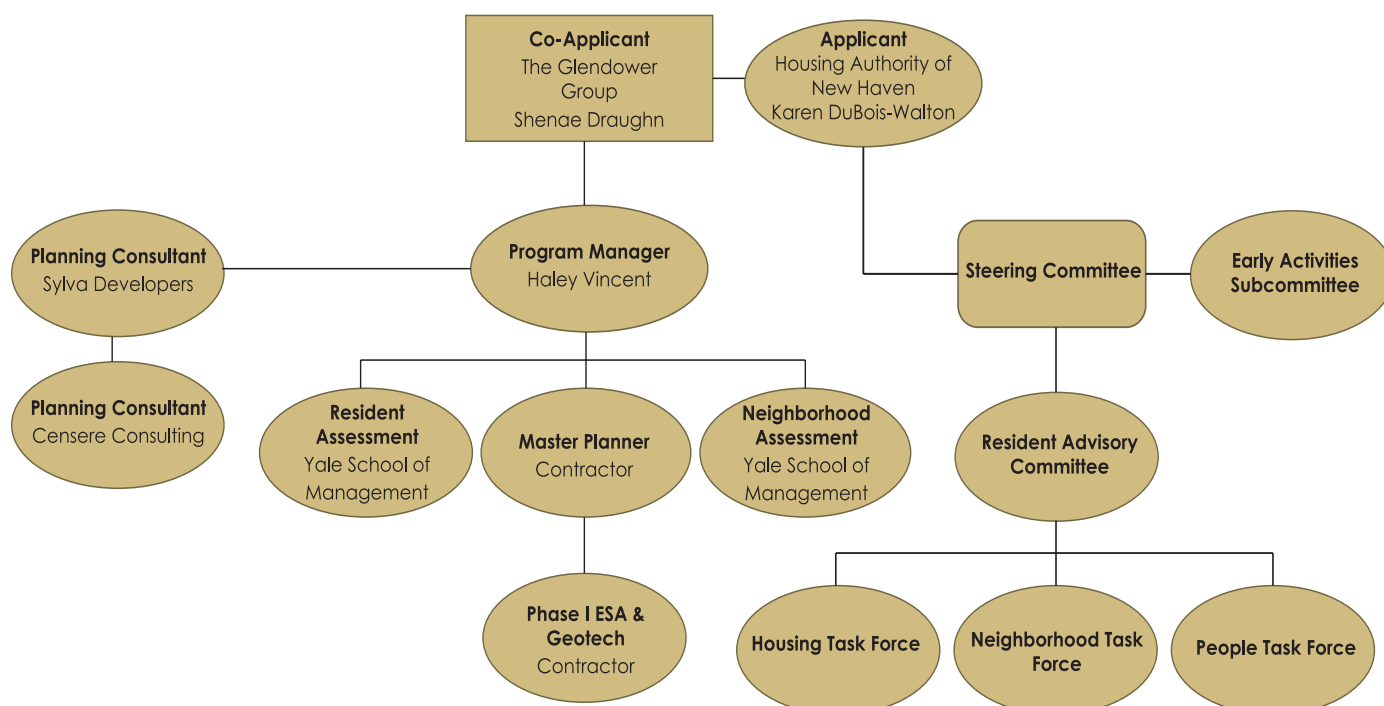
# The Planning Process

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.

## Organization

Before we can create a plan that HUD will approve, we need to create an organizational structure that will maximize stakeholder participation and ensure transparency and progress. To assure that residents of the Targeted Project and Neighborhood, as well as other stakeholders, are meaningfully engaged in the planning and implementation process, ECC and Glendower, in cooperation with residents of the Target Project, will establish a Union Square Transformation Committee. This Transformation Committee will be composed of a Steering Committee, three task forces: the Housing Task Force, the People Task Force, and the Neighborhood Task Force, as well as a Resident Advisory Committee and an Early Action Committee. These working groups will focus on adult education, early childhood education, health and wellness, crime and safety, recreation and green space, and economic development.

## Union Square CNI Planning Grant Organizational Chart



# The Planning Process (*cont'd*)

The task forces, Resident Advisory Committee, and Early Action Committee will develop, create, and refine strategies to address neighborhood needs. The Steering Committee will prioritize these needs before sending them to the Master Planner, who will be responsible for preparing the NTP. Once the draft plan is completed, recommendations will be reviewed, and experts will develop financing strategies for The NTP, which the Steering Committee will review before plan completion. Once The NTP is adopted, the process will move to implementation.

## **Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee will guide the overall development of a forward-looking, visionary, yet achievable plan for revitalizing the Union Square community. The Steering Committee will receive input from the task forces and other committees, review the progress and recommendations of the task forces and other committees, and provide guidance as needed.

## **Task Forces: People, Housing and Neighborhood**

As stated above, three task forces are established to guide the development of the core elements of the NTP. Generally, the task forces will meet monthly. The task forces are comprised of Robert T. Wolfe and neighborhood residents, members of local agencies and various service providers, business owners, non-profit organizations, and local leaders.

## **Resident Advisory Committee**

This members of the committee consist of Robert T. Wolfe residents. Their role is to conduct a thorough review of the task force's findings and recommendations. Their objective is to ensure that the strategies and actions proposed align closely with the challenges and opportunities faced by the residents, and to identify any potential gaps in the Plan.



# The Planning Process (*cont'd*)

## Early Action Committee

HUD requires that grantees undertake specific Early Action Activities that must be completed

### 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 and Analysis

Phase 2 focuses on identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This phase also involves conducting a Needs Assessment and Market Analysis.

### Phase 3. Visioning

After analyzing the data from the Needs Assessment and Market Analysis, the attention turns to examining strategies aimed at resolving the identified issues.

### Phase 4. Draft Transformation Plan

Phase 4 focuses on creating a vision for the Transformation Plan based on the preferences of the community residents expressed during Phase III - 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.

# The Planning Process *(cont'd)*

within the two-year planning grant timeline to demonstrate progress toward neighborhood transformation. The committee will develop the scope of the selected activities that, when implemented, are considered to have the most significant positive impact on the neighborhood.

The planning process will consist of the following six phases, designed to ensure the development of a plan based on the community's needs and desires.

## **Resident Assessment**

HUD requires Planning Grant recipients to undertake a resident assessment of the targeted public housing development (i.e., Robert T. Wolfe). The survey aims to gather information about how residents feel about their services, neighborhood, and community. There may also be data related to the physical revitalization component that will be critical to obtain (i.e., bedroom size or housing amenities). A survey is just one tool for understanding neighborhood conditions and neighbors' experiences. The survey can also be used as a community engagement tool – an opportunity to engage one-on-one with residents, provide a vehicle for their voices to be heard, and provide information about the planning process.

Once this assessment is complete, the Team will work with the community to design solutions to reduce or eliminate the identified problems. It is better to generate as many ideas as possible through focus groups and other community brainstorming methods. The ideas will directly address the issues to overcome and become the basis for the NTP. Preparing the problem statement is a critical part of the project planning process as it demonstrates that the proposed project is feasible.

## **Neighborhood Assessment**

The Target Neighborhood, which we have labeled "Union Square," has historically been called "The Hill." The neighborhood is geographically separated from other city neighborhoods by several major arterial roads, including Interstate 95 and the Route 34

# The Planning Process (cont'd)



UNION SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD CNI  
NEW HAVEN, CT

corridor. Its other boundaries include the Union Station train yard and the West River. The Target Neighborhood, which falls almost entirely within zip code 06519, is recognized by the City of New Haven as a distinct neighborhood. Union Square's strategic location in a transportation hub, proximity to the Central Business District (CBD), availability of vacant land, and nascent signs of a willingness on the part of the private sector to invest, combined with a local population with significant employment, education, and health care needs, is a prime candidate for a CNI Transformation Plan.

A **Hill-to-Downtown Plan** developed in 2012-13 under a federal Sustainable Communities Grant sought to reconnect the Union Square (Hill) area to downtown New Haven, proposing new housing, public space, and retail amenities and expanding job opportunities for the neighborhood. Our Union Square CNI Transformation Plan will build on that previous effort, forging consensus around an improved plan with a renewed emphasis on people-oriented programs as well as housing and neighborhood improvements.

**Why Union Square?** Named for New Haven's intercity rail terminal, the Union Square (aka The Hill) neighborhood is the gateway to the city and is immediately adjacent to the city's Central Business District. Designed in beaux art style by famed architect Cass Gilbert, who



# The Planning Process *(cont'd)*

also designed the U.S. Supreme Court, Union Station is the busiest terminal in Connecticut and the 10th busiest in the nation, serving the Boston to Washington, DC corridor. Its 2,000 daily passengers board Amtrak and Metro-North New York City-bound commuter trains. Once shuttered, the station was remodeled and reopened in 1985 and is now on the National Register of Historic Places. A second central facility within the neighborhood is the Yale New Haven Hospital, the fountainhead of Connecticut's leading healthcare system offering comprehensive family-focused services in more than 100 specialties.

Yet, most of the neighborhood remains stubbornly plagued by poverty and disinvestment. The population of the Target Area in 2020 was 11,741 persons, 1.37% of the county population. The county household median income was \$71,370. In CT 1403, near the Hospital, income was 57.6% of the county's median. In contrast, the median household income in CT 1402, the census tract in which our Target Project is located, was just \$15,192 (21% of the county median). The target area's poverty (or ELLI) rate is almost 50%. Just over 87% of the neighborhood is non-white. Householders without a high school degree total 19.9% compared to 8.6% for the county. Rentals account for just 38% of all occupied units in New Haven County and 76% in the Target Area. Over 55% of Target Area renters devote 35% or more of their household incomes toward gross rents; in two of the census tracts, the rate is over 62%. In contrast, the county rate is 43.5%.

The neighborhood is also challenged by substandard housing, vacant housing, and vacant lots. Unoccupied units in our Target Area amount to 17.9% of all housing units in our Target Area and 9.6% in New Haven County. Much of the occupied housing, including the Robert T. Wolfe Apartments, our Target Project, composed of 93 public housing units, is in distressed condition. In some cases, the substandard housing has been torn down, leaving vacant but developable lots. For example, until recently, a 300-unit, federally assisted community called

# Explore Options and Alternatives

the Church Steet South Housing Complex housed low-income residents of the neighborhood. The project was in such poor condition that it was condemned and demolished. Fortunately, however, the complex's owner, one of our community partners, was able to retain the

Neighborhood	People	Housing
Create the conditions necessary for public and private reinvestment in distressed neighborhoods to offer the kinds of amenities and assets, including safety, good schools, and commercial activity, that are important to families' choices about their community	Improve outcomes of households living in the target housing related to employment and income, health, and children's education	Replace distressed public and assisted housing with high-quality, mixed-income housing

project's Section 8 Project-based contract. It, therefore, remains a viable site for new affordable or mixed-income housing.

## Determine the Project Goals

HUD Neighborhood Choice is focused on three core goals:

### Select a Project Approach/Strategy

The Team will use these goals to develop a project approach or strategy with the residents and stakeholders. The goal is to create a list of possible strategies for addressing community problems and achieving the community's goals. Then, select strategies that represent the best method for implementing the redevelopment efforts.

### Develop Project Objectives and Activities

Once we have determined to implement the project, we will develop **specific, measurable outcomes** to address the stated problems and attain project goals. An objective is an endpoint, not a process, to be achieved within the proposed project period. Completion of objectives must result in specific, measurable outcomes that benefit the community and directly contribute to the achievement of the stated project goals.

Both the community and funding sources seek a clear picture of what will be accomplished by the project, how it will be performed, and the criteria for determining its completion. A

# Explore Options and Alternatives

## *(cont'd)*

project may only have one goal, but there can be several objectives to achieve that goal. For a multi-year project, this can mean having one objective yearly or a myriad of objectives running throughout the project period.

Once the objectives have been developed, activities are written to provide a logical sequence of measurable milestones that move the project closer to attaining the objective.

The activities are both building blocks that will lead to accomplishing an objective and yardsticks used to determine how efficiently and effectively the project is completing its objectives and achieving its goal.

The Team will break down each specific objective into activities that will be performed in a logical progression, in a satisfactory time frame, and with the resources available. Activities describe the significant tasks to be completed for each objective, but not everyday work tasks. These Action Plans will detail the major activities in the logical sequence that will lead to achieving each of the community's objectives. These activities will also include benchmarks referring to quarterly results.



### **Identify Potential Challenges and Develop a Contingency Plan**

Every project has the potential to encounter challenges that can impede progress and prevent or delay successful completion. A contingency plan will be developed to identify and prepare for potential challenges that may cause the project to be late starting up, fall behind schedule, and/or go over budget.

Developing a contingency plan as a fallback position, or “just in case,” will leave us better prepared to handle any challenges. By identifying potential challenges and planning, we will be more likely to overcome challenges with minimal disruption and cost to the project.

The team will identify potential challenges and develop a contingency plan.

This section of project strategy planning requires that we be prepared for any issues that may cause the project to start late or fall behind schedule. The first step in preparing a contingency plan is to develop a list of assumptions, the challenges that result if the assumption is not realized, and the risk associated with each challenge.

Assumptions include filling or retaining staff positions, contributions from project partners,

# Explore Options and Alternatives (cont'd)

licensing requirements, internal procedures, etc. Next, identify the challenges that will be faced if the assumed contribution, outcome, etc., are accomplished differently than planned. Finally, factor in the potential risk the challenge will pose to the implementation of the project.

## **Develop an Objective Work Plan**

An Objective Work Plan (OWP) describes how (through what activities), when (within what time frames), and by whom (assignment of responsibility) the project will be implemented, as well as the expected outcomes or benefits.

## **Develop a Project Evaluation Plan**

A Project Evaluation measures the effectiveness and efficiency of a project and determines the level of achievement of the project objectives.

The findings of an assessment will also help an organization plan for the future, as it can identify additional or persistent problems that need to be solved. This is why the project cycle is a continuous process.

Outcomes are the measurable changes that can be observed due to the project's successful completion. These quantifiable results and benefits will be observable within the targeted population once the project is complete, determining the extent to which the identified problems were reduced, resolved, or eliminated.

The results and benefits measure the progress toward achieving project objectives. Outcomes are the short-term and medium-term effects of the project on the community. Outcomes include new knowledge, increased skills, understanding, and participation in after-school activities, etc.

Impacts differ from outcomes in that they are the lasting effects of the project, as seen years down the road from the project's completion. Impacts measure the change that can be specifically associated with a project's implementation and after project completion. In other words, they measure the extent to which the project achieved its goal. Examples of impacts include increased quality of life, decreased incidence of disease or infection, and higher numbers of students completing post-secondary education.





# Explore Options and Alternatives

## *(cont'd)*

An Evaluation Plan is the next key element for successfully implementing and managing a project. It describes the process and provides the tools to measure progress in implementing the project; it also assesses how effectively the project addressed problems and achieved its objectives.

It is essential to develop an Evaluation Plan during the project planning process before implementing the project and to include it in our Implementation Grant application. This will show the application reviewers that a system is in place to measure the level to which the project addresses the identified problems, ultimately determining its cost-effectiveness.

No perfect or minimum number of measurements must occur to evaluate a project's success properly and thoroughly. Instead, each project component must be analyzed, and decisions must be made based on the findings. The evaluation should be designed to track progress on each objective, completion of activities, and completion dates.

### **Develop a Sustainability Strategy**

A sustainable project can and will continue without additional Federal funds and will, therefore, contribute to long-term success and impacts within the community. However, sustainability is not simply about generating new grant dollars; it also involves outlining a specific strategy and action plan for continuing the project.

This section of our NTP receives significant attention because the funding source does not want the project to fail once support is complete. Some projects lend themselves more to sustainability strategies; however, all projects include benefits to the community that can be continued after implementation is complete.

A sustainability plan describes how we plan to continue the project after Federal funding is complete. Perhaps the first questions to ask are:

- How can we use existing resources to continue our project's benefits and achieve our long-term vision?
- Will other outside funding be needed, or can the project processes be absorbed into the organization's daily operation without burdening the staff?



# Develop the Preferred Plan

We will consider our network of supporters and potential funders in our area. If our organization has had previous success in funding projects after their initial funding is complete, we will describe these accomplishments as a background for our sustainability plan. This will show the funder that we have a pre-established method for sustainability.

Finally, a firm's long-term commitment to leveraged funds can be a very effective strategy for building a project sustainability plan, even for projects that "will be completed" at the conclusion of federal funding.

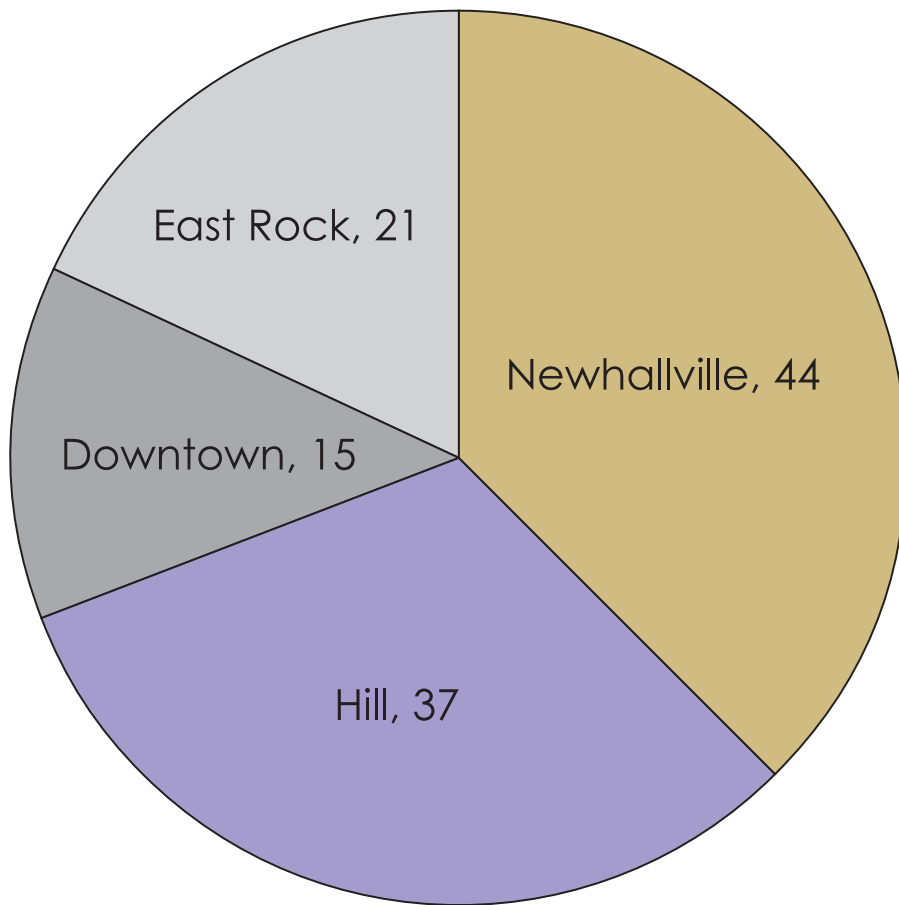
Once the planning process is culminated, the Team will prepare an abstract and a comprehensive NTP. The abstract speaks for the master planning process and NTP when separated from the process and the Plan. It will provide the first and last impression for ECC/Glendower, stakeholders, lenders, investors, and residents. It will summarize the need for the redevelopment efforts, the vision, goal, and objectives of these efforts, and the potential outcomes of these efforts.

The creation of the NTP is the culmination of the planning process. The NTP is the guiding document for revitalizing Robert T. Wolfe and the Union Square community. The planning process will help galvanize community support for its development and implementation.



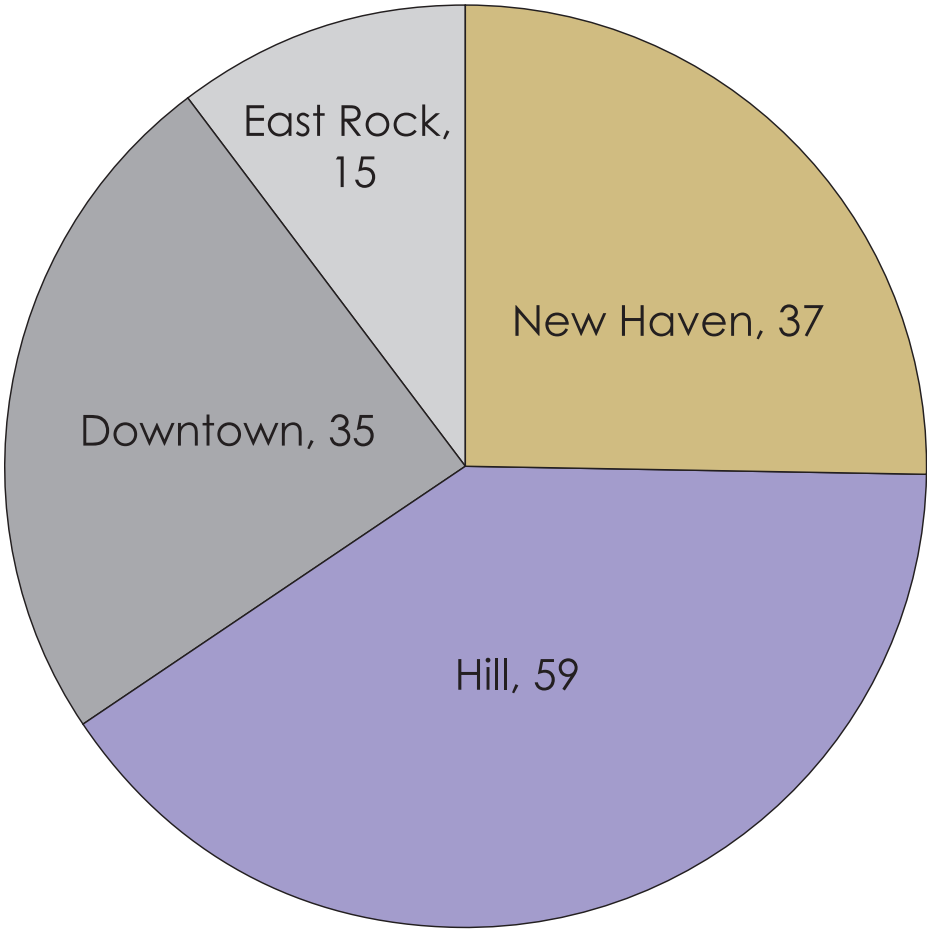
# Baseline Data

## High Blood Pressure Rate



# Baseline Data

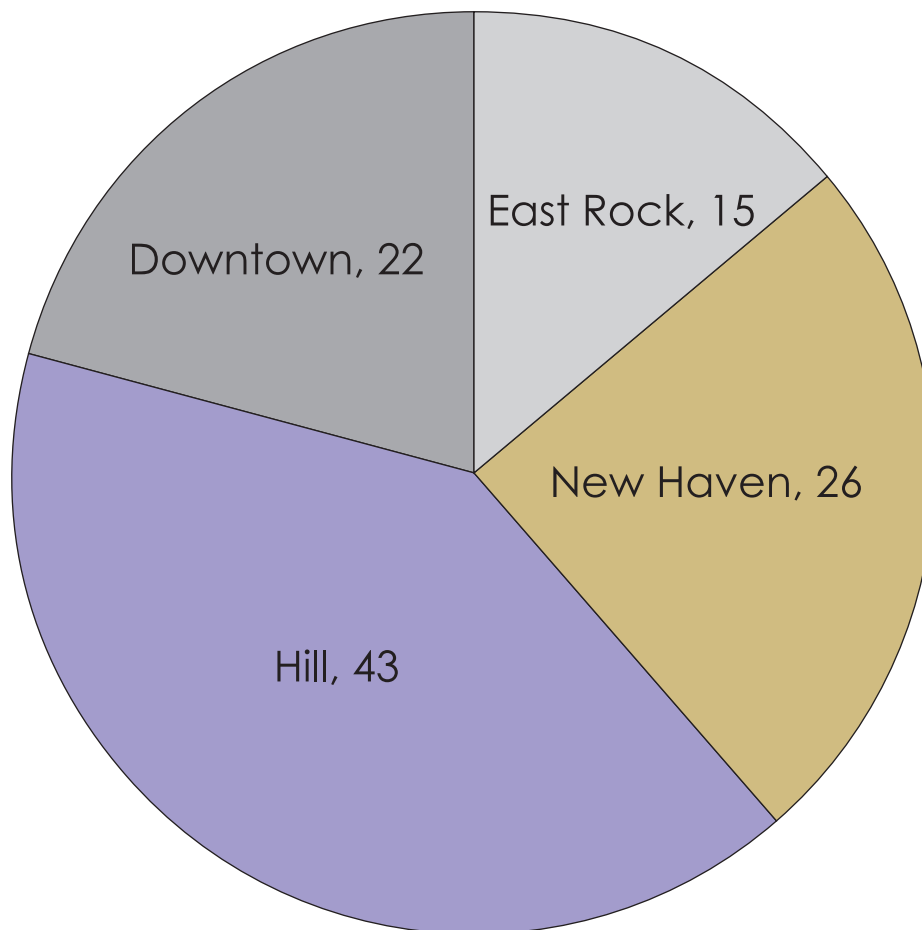
## Child Poverty Rate





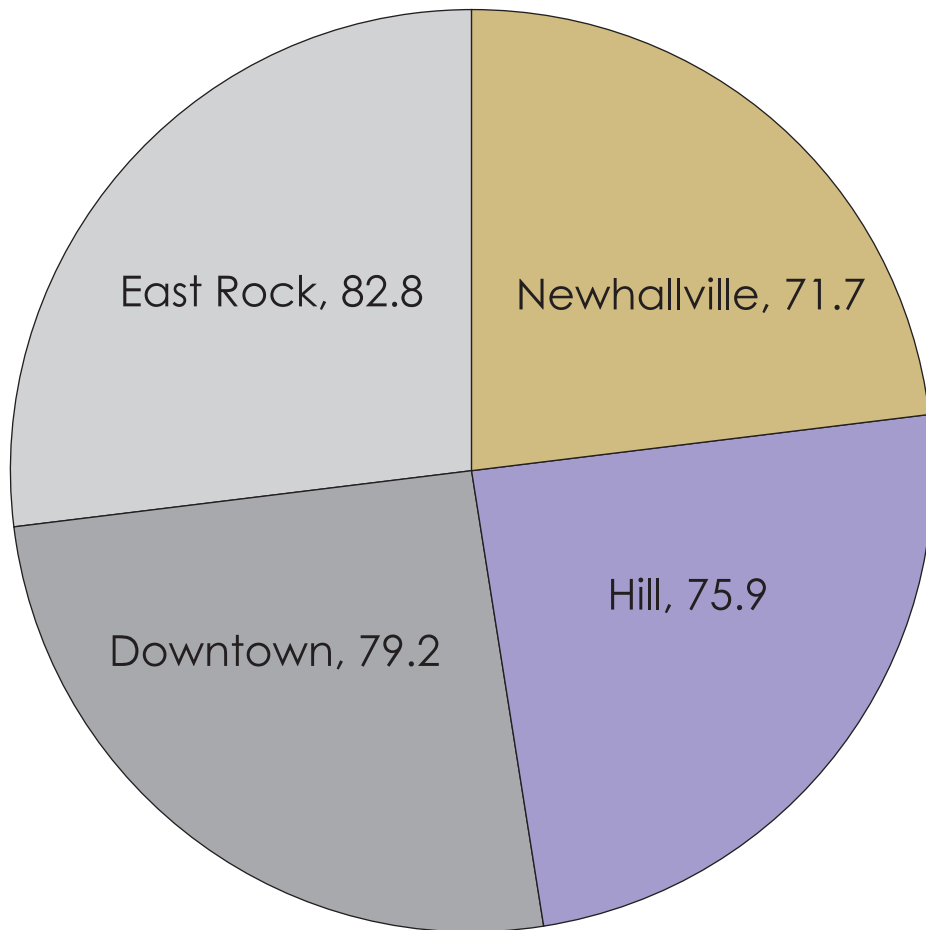
# Baseline Data

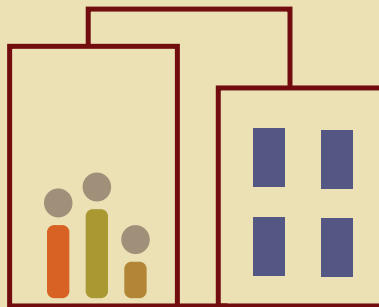
## Poverty Rate



# Baseline Data

## Life Expectancy





# UNION SQUARE

A CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD

[www.UnionSquareChoice.com](http://www.UnionSquareChoice.com)

Elm City Communities  
The Glendower Group

Karen DuBois-Walton, Ph.D.  
*President*

