

Strategic Revitalization: New Haven's Starr Street

Jim Paley, executive director of Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven, says their Starr Street investments in Newhallville have exceeded expectations. Their comprehensive development strategy involves renovating clusters of blighted houses simultaneously, in targeted neighborhoods. This maximizes the impact by stimulating private investment, increasing homeownership rates and strengthening the market.

“These spacious homes are large enough to make a statement, setting an example for the whole block. They are designed to serve as motivators for private re-investment, creating a positive picture of dramatically safer neighborhoods. That’s what makes me feel good.”

To ensure the stability and success of the effort, Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) waited until they achieved site control with a cluster of adjacent properties, then renovated several historic houses at once. They are two-family houses, so there is the potential for rental income to help defray the cost of the mortgages. NHS also provided prospective homeowners with training in how to be landlords.

Success: Rosalie was referred by a friend, and she drove around to check out the neighborhood. She fell in love with the brickwork and front porch of a beautiful two-family home. She applied for a mortgage and became a self-described “big coupon-er” thanks to an NHS class on budgeting. She also enjoyed the landlord class that taught her how to do background checks and screen prospective tenants.

“When you own it, you take better care of it. I’m grateful for this program because I always wanted to own a home. I love the kitchen and the neighbors, but the best part is having my own backyard with a fence for privacy, so it’s safe for my kids.”



Rosalie

Success: Chanelle had been on active military duty and chose to return to New Haven when she went on reserve status, thanks to friends and fond childhood memories of growing up nearby. When she saw the renovated house and how the neighbors maintained the block, she knew it was right for her.

“The neighbors look out for each other. They helped me with groceries and with parking when I was new here, knocking on my door to warn me so I wouldn’t get towed. I’ve moved a lot with the military and haven’t seen that. I know this was the right choice. The living room view is so relaxing, and the house has room for the family I want some day.”



When and where:

The houses are located at 153 and 157 Starr Street in the Newhallville neighborhood of New Haven and were renovated by Neighborhood Housing Services in 2014.

What:

Both houses were dilapidated and boarded up, creating an eyesore and discouraging re-investment by other neighbors. Each is a two-family home with three or four bedrooms in the owner's unit and two in the rental unit.

Why and how:

LISC provided a capacity building grant to help NHS hire a project manager to oversee the renovation of these homes. LISC has provided six such grants over several years to help NHS expand their capacity for real estate development and property management so they can continue to stabilize targeted low-income neighborhoods that have experienced blight and foreclosures.

Who:

Funding for this development was provided by the Connecticut Department of Housing, the City of New Haven, Historic Home Rehabilitation Tax Credits, Connecticut Housing Tax Credit Contribution Program, and lines of credit from Webster Bank and from the Greater New Haven Community Loan Fund.

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75 Charter Oak Avenue, Suite 2-250, Hartford, CT 06106
(860) 525-4821 Fax (860) 525-4822