



Lauren Garrett
Mayor

TOWN OF HAMDEN OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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February 6, 2023

Commissioner Alexandra Daum
Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD)
450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 5
Hartford, CT 06103

**RE: Community Investment Fund Round 2 Capital Project
Town of Hamden – Community Campus**

Dear Commissioner Daum,

The Town of Hamden respectfully requests \$15M in funding from the Community Investment Fund 2030, Round 2 for the development of a Community Campus in the Highwood-Newhall neighborhood. We appreciate that this is a significant request. As you have seen, however, so is the project.

The Community Campus is to be located on a 21.2 acre town-owned site, which is a remediated brownfield within an Environmental Justice Block Group as defined by the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). The site is currently the home of the former Hamden Middle School campus which has been abandoned for 20 years and fallen into disrepair, as the attached photographs show (and as you saw). A new Community Campus on this site will transform the neighborhood and create safe, accessible places with services and amenities, not just for residents of the Highwood-Newhall neighborhood, but for the entire Hamden and adjacent New Haven community.

The Town's 2019 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) identifies the Highwood-Newhall neighborhood as an "opportunity site". It names the existing Keefe Community Center as "a facility not expected to be adequate for community needs to 2030" and tasks the Mayor with "decreasing the overall footprint of municipal facilities through consolidation of functions and repurposing facilities not needed for other public or private uses". Community support is unanimous for razing the deteriorating former Middle School. The Town will continue to engage the community throughout the planning and development process.

As set forth below, the anticipated costs to complete Phase I of the Community Campus is \$38M. The Town of Hamden is committing \$23M in capital, in-kind, and other funding resources for this phase, resulting in the current request for \$15M in CIF funding. Phase II of the project is estimated to cost \$21 million and involves further planning and community engagement, construction of recreational space,

athletic fields, and connection to the Farmington Heritage Canal Trail. The Town is not currently seeking funding for Phase II in this round.

Our Vision: A Community Campus for Hamden Residents

Create a bustling and sustainable “Community Campus” that will be transformative to the Town of Hamden, consisting of a Community Center, Arts and Cultural Center, public open space and linked recreational and athletic fields.

A. Location

Located in the Highwood-Newhall neighborhood of Hamden (Census tract 1655, Block 1) on the site of the former Hamden Middle School, this community has been devastated by the dumping of industrial, hazardous waste from the Winchester Firearms Company (Olin Corporation). The effects of redlining and discriminatory housing policies have resulted in racial segregation, lack of investment in infrastructure, housing and business development, and higher poverty rates.

Town wide	Highwood-Newhall Neighborhood
Housing: 62% owner-occupied	Housing: 44% owner-occupied
Race: 44% persons of color	Race: 87% persons of color
Poverty rate: 9.3%	Poverty rate: 19.2%
Median per capita income: \$39,286	Median per capita income: \$27,230

The Community Campus will complement Rochford Field and Millrock (Villano) Park that have already been remediated and rebuilt. Rochford Field includes two baseball fields in a public-private partnership with Albertus Magnus College along with a drainage and irrigation system. Villano Park includes playground equipment, a splash pad, an area for entertainment and performances, two basketball courts, tennis courts, and lighting and security features.

B. Project Phases

Phase	Description
Phase I	Planning and Conceptual Design, Demolition of Middle School Buildings, Construction of Community Center Estimated Total Cost: \$38 Million
Phase II	Further community engagement and planning. Construction of recreational space, athletic fields, and connection to the Farmington Heritage Canal Trail Estimated Total Cost: \$21 Million

Phase I

The Community Center will be the centerpiece of Phase I of the project, and serve as a hub for the community, improving the quality of life for Hamden's 62,000 residents, and house essential government services:

1. Childcare and elderly services
2. Recreation services for after school, summer, and sports
3. Social services
4. Library with educational programs, job training, and digital access
5. Warming/cooling center
6. Food Pantry
7. Health and Wellness Center developed through public-private partnerships with Quinnipiac University and Hartford Healthcare

A public-private partnership with Quinnipiac University will help the Town expand services offered by the Community Campus as described in the attached letter of support.

Phase I also includes the development of The Arts and Cultural Center and will provide art classes and education, exhibition space, performance space, artists' studios, workshops, and a gallery embracing the historical background of the surrounding community.

The completion of Phase I of the Community Campus will spur economic opportunities, and be a catalyst for further revitalization efforts in the Highwood-Newhall Neighborhood. The economic benefits will be achieved through connectivity between the Community Campus to Dixwell Avenue, and the expansion of the existing public transportation network to include Bus Rapid Transit. This will not only provide for greater pedestrian friendly access to the major commercial corridor serving the neighborhood, but the necessary pedestrian traffic to retain and attract businesses within the corridor. Completion of Phase I will result in a Community Center and Arts and Cultural Center that is usable by town residents and operates as a hub for distribution of services.

Phase II

Phase II of the Community Campus will involve construction of recreational space and athletic fields on the property, and a connection to the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail. The conceptual plans for the recreational space include a 400 meter turf track; a regulation turf football field, and separate fields for soccer, cricket, pickleball and other sports. The Town anticipates forming partnerships with local institutions to develop these facilities. Once developed, the track and football fields would be home to collegiate sports teams. (Alburtus Magnus's baseball and softball teams currently use Rochford Field for their home games).

At completion, the Community Campus will be a preferred destination for events, performances and competitions in southern CT. This will create a sense of place, and provide the shopping, dining and entertainment opportunities to meet the community needs.

Request for Funding

As noted, to realize the vision for the Community Campus, the Town will employ a phased approach and will dedicate significant local resources at every phase. The Town is requesting \$15,000,000 in funding in this application cycle to supplement the implementation of Phase I.

Milestones:

Complete community engagement process to ensure that services and programs are consistent with current and future needs

Complete architectural and engineering design process

Complete the demolition of the existing middle school buildings

Complete the construction of the Community Campus buildings

Create 250 - 275 construction jobs

20% of the project will be awarded to local and Socially Economically Disenfranchised Individuals (SEDI) businesses

Catalyze private investment in the Highwood-Newhall neighborhood and other parts of southern Hamden

Anticipated costs to complete this of the development plan are \$38M. A \$15M funding commitment from DECD represents 39.5% of the total project cost, with \$18.5M coming from the Town of Hamden (ARPA, CDBG, Administrative costs) (48.7%) and \$4.5M in other sources (CT State Library, Congressional Community Funded Projects appropriation) (11.8%).

Operational Sustainability

The Town will relocate certain administrative offices and programs to the new Community Campus at the completion of Phase I. The operation of the Community Campus will be sustained through an allocation of existing personnel and operating costs associated with the services provided.

Combining the functions of other existing town buildings into a more energy efficient building with lower operational footprint will reduce the town's operating budget. The Town will be able to sell older building stock removing operational costs and returning property to the Town's Grand List as suggested in the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Conclusion

The requested funds are in alignment with the CIF program goals. Hamden is committed to the implementation of this project and is committing to providing both the funding and operating support required. The Town is committing \$18.5M in capital and in-kind resources to this redevelopment effort.

The proposed Community Campus will be a transformative project for the Town. It will remove a 21.2 acre environmental blight in an underserved and under-invested part of the Hamden community. It will

catalyze investment and development in Southern Hamden, driving economic growth. The project has the support of Hamden's State Delegation.

Our communities, our neighborhoods and our residents face challenges every day. Most times those challenges are difficult and sometimes even impossible to address. The Hamden Community Campus will be a center of opportunity for all. It will transform the heart of a neighborhood long associated with blighted buildings, sinking homes, and toxic ground to an emblem of pride that brings the community together for service, support, entertainment and enrichment.

Thank you in advance for your partnership and support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Lauren Garrett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lauren" and last name "Garrett" clearly distinguishable.

Lauren Garrett, Mayor