

## **Agenda Item Summary**

**To:** Policy Board

**From:** Elizabeth Sanderson, Grants Coordinator/Principal Program Manager

**CC:** Matt Hart, Executive Director; Pauline Yoder, Chief Operating Officer

**Meeting Date:** September 24, 2025

**Subject:** Acceptance of Financial Assistance from the State of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development for the Clay Arsenal Wealth Creation Initiative

**Background:** The State of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) recently closed Round 22 of the Office of Brownfield Remediation and Development's Brownfield Program. Representatives from the San Juan Center (SJC), a nonprofit community development corporation in the City of Hartford, asked CRCOG to sponsor their application, which requests \$200,000 in funding for a Brownfield Area-wide Revitalization (BAR) Planning Grant. Funds will be used to undergo a planning process in the Clay Arsenal neighborhood of the City of Hartford, developing a priority list of known and/or suspected brownfield sites that will be targeted for redevelopment.

**Benefit to Member Towns/CRCOG:** The project, known as the Clay Arsenal Wealth Creation Initiative, seeks to revitalize a 15-18 block area of Hartford's north end, within the Clay Arsenal neighborhood. Developing a plan to assess, clean up, and renovate existing (or build new) affordable and energy-resilient homes will help advance several local, regional, and state goals. Additionally, increasing home ownership will help improve economic mobility and opportunity in the Clay Arsenal neighborhood, helping the city and surrounding region achieve greater economic stability.

**Financial/Operational Impact:** If awarded, existing CRCOG staff will administer and manage the grant from DECD. CRCOG would receive \$10,000 (or 5% of the requested funding) to serve as the pass-through entity. SJC will cover the required 10% match/cost share using local funds.

**Project Schedule:** SJC has outlined a 12-month project timeline, which will commence following the execution of a financial assistance agreement with DECD.

**Recommendation:** Staff recommends that the Policy Board approve the attached resolution to accept financial assistance from the State of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development for the Clay Arsenal Wealth Creation Initiative.

### **Attachments:**

- Proposed Resolution
- Transmittal and Project Narrative

**RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOR THE CLAY ARSENAL WEALTH CREATION INITIATIVE**

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to C.G.S Section 32-763, the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development is authorized to extend financial assistance for economic development projects; and

**WHEREAS**, the San Juan Center, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located in the City of Hartford; and

**WHEREAS**, it is desirable and in the public interest that the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) make an application to the State for up to \$200,000 in order for the San Juan Center to undertake the Clay Arsenal Wealth Creation Initiative and for CRCOG to execute an Assistance Agreement.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) Policy Board

1. That it is cognizant of the conditions and prerequisites for the state financial assistance imposed by C.G.S Section 32-763;
2. That the filing of an application for State financial assistance by CRCOG in an amount not to exceed \$200,000 is hereby approved and that Matthew W. Hart, Executive Director, is directed to execute and file such application with the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, to provide such additional information, to execute such other documents as may be required, to execute an Assistance Agreement with the State of Connecticut for State financial assistance if such an agreement is offered, to execute any amendments, decisions, and revisions thereto, and to act as the authorized representative of CRCOG.

**CERTIFICATE**

I certify the above is a true copy of a resolution adopted by the Policy Board at its meeting held on September 24, 2025.

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
Jason Bowsza, Secretary

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

September 9, 2025

Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development  
Office of Brownfield Remediation and Development  
450 Columbus Blvd, Suite 5  
Hartford, CT 06103

**Re: Transmittal Letter – DECD BAR Planning Grant Application for the Clay Arsenal Neighborhood**

Dear Review Committee,

The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) is sponsoring this application by the San Juan Center (SJC), a 501(c)(3) corporation in Connecticut, to the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) for a Brownfield Area Revitalization (BAR) Planning Grant. We respectfully request funding in the amount of \$200,000 to support the Clay Arsenal Wealth Creation Initiative, a community-driven effort designed to identify potential properties to be assessed and acquired for cleanup and redevelopment into safe, quality homes to meet peoples' needs in Hartford's Clay Arsenal neighborhood.

The Clay Arsenal neighborhood, located in the City of Hartford's north end, faces disproportionately high rates of poverty, unemployment, and environmental burden—making it a strong candidate for targeted planning and revitalization. The City of Hartford is a DECD-designated distressed municipality and is therefore eligible for this funding. CRCOG is sponsoring this application and supports SJC in their effort to leverage existing staff capacity and strong relationships with community stakeholders to implement the planning process effectively and inclusively.

The project is aligned with the Connecticut Conservation and Development Policies Plan (2023–2028), CRCOG's Regional Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), and the City of Hartford's POCD. It advances key state, regional, and local policy goals related to transit-oriented development (TOD), environmental justice, affordable housing, and smart growth by focusing investment in an underserved, transit-accessible neighborhood. The Clay Arsenal neighborhood is located near Hartford Union Station, multiple CT Transit bus lines (Routes 40 and 42), and major highway corridors (I-84 and I-91), making it a priority area for sustainable, walkable, mixed-use redevelopment.

The Clay Arsenal Wealth Creation Initiative is fully aligned with the objectives of the BAR Planning Grant Program:

- **Brownfield Identification and Assessment:** The project will review existing brownfield inventories and local knowledge to develop a plan of priority brownfield sites within the Clay Arsenal neighborhood to be assessed and prepared for future reuse.
- **Community-Led Planning:** The planning process will be inclusive and collaborative, ensuring that residents—particularly those most affected by environmental risks—have a voice in shaping redevelopment priorities.

- Equitable Revitalization: By addressing long-standing environmental, economic, and social inequities, the project will lay the groundwork for future investments in affordable housing, job creation, and green infrastructure.
- Historic and Cultural Preservation: Several historic sites in the area, including the Clay Hill Historic District, Mather Homestead, and Engine Company 2 Firehouse, will be evaluated for adaptive reuse and integrated into the revitalization strategy.

SJC will meet the required 10% match through direct contributions from local funds dedicated to planning and development activities. Documentation of this match is included in the full application package.

The proposed BAR Project Area within Clay Arsenal meets the criteria outlined in Section III of the RFA. The neighborhood contains a cluster of underutilized and contaminated properties, many of which are adjacent to residential areas, schools, and historic landmarks. As a designated Environmental Justice Community, Clay Arsenal experiences cumulative environmental stressors from industrial activity, air and soil contamination, aging housing stock, and legacy infrastructure issues.

With over 39% of households earning below \$25,000 and homeownership rates under 11%, Clay Arsenal also faces serious challenges related to housing affordability and economic opportunity. This planning effort will coordinate strategies to stabilize naturally occurring affordable housing, support new development without displacement, and explore green, climate-resilient redevelopment models.

This grant will allow our community partner, SJC, to develop an actionable, equitable, and environmentally responsible plan for transforming brownfield liabilities into community assets. A resolution authorizing CRCOG to apply for and subsequently accept this financial assistance will be reviewed by CRCOG's Policy Board at their next regular meeting on September 24, 2025. We thank you for your consideration of our application and look forward to advancing this critical work in partnership with DECD.

Sincerely,



Matthew W. Hart  
Executive Director

Cc: CRCOG Policy Board

Enclosures:

1. Schedule B - Certification by Applicant
2. Project Contacts

**CERTIFICATION BY APPLICANT**

It is hereby represented by the undersigned, that to the best of my knowledge and belief no information or data contained in the application and attachments are in any way false or incorrect and that no material information has been omitted. The undersigned agrees that the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are hereby authorized now, or anytime in the future, to give the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) any and all information in connection with matters referred to in this application. Your application and the contents of your application and our discussions with you are subject to public disclosure. We may communicate with the municipality, regional agencies, state agencies (including the DEEP, the CT Department of Housing, the CT Office of Policy and Management, the CT Department of Public Health), the EPA, and the general public. You or the owner may be requested to enroll in the DEEP Voluntary Remediation Program, and to cooperate with DEEP and the EPA. Projects funded under this program may be subject to the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA), as well as other environmental regulations, and DECD regulations related to procurement and bidding procedures. State funding may require placement of a lien on project property. In addition, the undersigned agrees that any funds provided pursuant to this application will be utilized exclusively for the purposes represented in this application, as may be amended and agreed to by the DECD. DECD reserves the right to amend or cancel this Request for Application (RFA), to modify or waive any requirement, condition or other term set forth in this RFA or the Application, to request additional information at any time from one or more applicants, to select any number of applications submitted in response to this RFA, or to reject any or all such applications, in each case at DECD's sole discretion. DECD may exercise the foregoing rights at any time without notice and without liability to any applicant or any other party. Applications to this RFA shall be prepared at the sole expense of the applicant and shall not obligate DECD to procure any of the services described therein or herein from any applicant. DECD shall not be obligated to any applicant until a final written agreement has been executed by all necessary parties thereto and all applicable approvals have been obtained. As such, any funds expended by the applicant prior to these approvals will be done so entirely at the risk of the applicant.

**Campaign Contribution Restriction Notice:** This is a notice in case you are successful in receiving a grant award. For all State contracts, defined in section 9-612 of the Connecticut General Statutes as having a value in a calendar year of \$50,000 or more, or a combination or series of such agreements or contracts having a value of \$100,000 or more, the authorized signatory to any Agreement with DECD represents that they have received the State Elections Enforcement Commission's notice advising state contractors of state campaign contribution and solicitation prohibitions, and will inform its principals of the contents of the notice.

**Name/Title:** Matthew W. Hart, Executive Director

**Signature/Date:**  9/10/25

**Clay Arsenal Wealth Creation Initiative  
Hartford, CT**

**Project Contacts**

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# Clay Arsenal Wealth Creation Initiative

## Hartford, CT

### Section 1 – Project Need and Purpose

The Clay Arsenal neighborhood in Hartford, Connecticut, is home to approximately 6,687 low- and moderate-income households, predominantly composed of Black and Latino residents. This historically marginalized community faces entrenched economic and social challenges, with 37.6% of households living in poverty—significantly higher than Hartford’s citywide poverty rate of 29.1%. Furthermore, 39.1% of households earn less than \$25,000 annually, contributing to widespread financial instability and limiting residents’ capacity to invest in property maintenance or environmental mitigation. Educational attainment is low, homeownership rates are under 11%, and decades of redlining, industrial decline, and disinvestment have further eroded economic opportunity in the area.

The San Juan Center’s (SJC) Clay Arsenal Wealth Creation Initiative will revitalize a 15 – 18 block area going north Main Street and west on Albany Avenue through a neighborhood planning process to identify abandoned and blighted properties with the goal of conducting environmental evaluations and assessments to identify potential contaminants and plan for the safe remediation and reuse of properties; create healthy, safe homes; provide an opportunity for residents to create and build wealth through homeownership opportunities and increasing the affordable homeownership housing stock in the city while at the same time improving the physical infrastructure of the neighborhood.

Residents of Clay Arsenal bear a disproportionate burden of environmental and public health hazards, reflecting long-standing environmental concerns. The neighborhood is surrounded by multiple industrial facilities and polluting infrastructure, including a regional landfill, a sewage treatment plant, a trash-to-energy incinerator, and several electrical generation stations. Notably, the incinerator alone contributes 56% of non-traffic-related air pollution in the region. These emissions, combined with proximity to two major interstate highways (I-84 and I-91), have led to persistently poor air quality and a high prevalence of asthma and respiratory issues, particularly among children.

The public health risks are further intensified by the community’s aging and deteriorating housing stock. Nearly 74% of Hartford’s homes were built before 1970, and 37.6% before 1939, placing Clay Arsenal residents, especially children at high risk of exposure to lead-based paint, asbestos, mold, and other indoor environmental hazards. Hartford ranks as the fourth highest city in the nation for childhood lead poisoning, and children of color are disproportionately impacted. Exposure to lead is associated with irreversible developmental and behavioral disorders, including ADHD and cognitive impairments. Insect infestations and poor ventilation further degrade indoor air quality, compounding health disparities in an already vulnerable population.

In addition to these indoor and ambient environmental risks, Clay Arsenal contains several underutilized, potentially contaminated parcels linked to its industrial past. While one successful EPA-funded brownfield cleanup in the early 2000s (Main & Pavilion Shopping Center) demonstrated the potential for transformation, many sites remain unassessed and undeveloped due to contamination concerns, funding limitations, and the complexity of remediation. These brownfields contribute to neighborhood blight, suppress economic activity, and deter private investment. Given the neighborhood’s limited tax base and deep socio-economic challenges, local capacity to fund environmental site assessments or long-range planning is severely constrained.

SJC’s revitalization initiative will address these intersecting challenges by improving housing conditions, reducing environmental exposure, and engaging the community in the planning and redevelopment process. Funding from the BAR planning grant will support a comprehensive analysis to identify priority brownfield sites, and the development of an inclusive, community-driven revitalization strategy. The overarching goal is to foster safer, healthier, and more energy-efficient housing; expand economic opportunity; and advance environmental justice in a neighborhood long burdened by

inequity. BAR Planning Grant funds will help reduce health disparities, address environmental contamination, and create a sustainable path forward for the Clay Arsenal community.

**Section 2 – Project Description and Vision**

BAR planning funds will be used to conduct targeted environmental site assessments (ESAs) as part of a broader neighborhood revitalization strategy. Focused on a 15–18 block area stretching north along Main Street and west on Albany Avenue in Hartford, Connecticut, the program aims to identify, assess, and plan for the safe remediation of underutilized and potentially contaminated properties. These environmental evaluations will inform a comprehensive plan to transform blighted, vacant, and environmentally distressed sites into healthy, affordable housing opportunities—contributing to neighborhood stabilization and economic empowerment through homeownership.

Clay Arsenal is a historically marginalized community grappling with persistent poverty, health disparities, and environmental injustice. The project area is location within “distressed municipality” and a Federal Promise Zone. Decades of redlining, industrial activity, and disinvestment have left the area with numerous brownfield sites and a deteriorating housing stock that exposes residents, particularly children to lead, asbestos, mold, and other environmental hazards. The program will fund Phase I, Phase II and Hazardous Materials environmental assessments to determine the extent of contamination and develop strategies for safe reuse. These assessments are foundational to restoring community trust, attracting reinvestment, and advancing a community-driven vision for equitable redevelopment. Ultimately, the project seeks to reduce environmental and public health risks, expand the affordable housing stock, and create a pathway to wealth-building through homeownership for low- and moderate-income residents.

Hartford, Connecticut, is a historically under-resourced city shaped by decades of economic decline, environmental degradation, and systemic disinvestment. Once a prominent industrial center, Hartford suffered the long-term impacts of redlining, discriminatory lending practices, and urban renewal policies that displaced communities of color and entrenched people into poverty in specific neighborhoods. These trends have left a visible mark on the city’s environment: aging infrastructure, a surplus of vacant and blighted buildings, and a high concentration of brownfield sites that pose serious environmental and public health hazards. The city’s economic challenges are reflected in current data. Hartford has a population of approximately 119,669 and an unemployment rate of 6.6%, nearly double the Connecticut state average of 3.6% and above the national average of 3.7%. The poverty rate in Hartford stands at 25.5%, significantly higher than both the state (9.8%) and national (12.4%) averages. The city’s median household income is \$45,000, well below Connecticut’s median of \$90,213 and the U.S. median of \$75,149.

	<b>Municipality/Region</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>National</b>
Population*	119,669	3,617,176	334, 914,895
Unemployment*	6.6%	3.6%	3.7%
Poverty Rate*	25.5%	9.8%	12.4%
Median Household Income (in 2019 dollars), 2015-2019*	\$45,000	\$90,213	\$75,149

*\*Data obtained from U.S. Census Bureau – [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov); Quick Facts; Population estimates, July 1, 2023*

Within this broader context, the Clay Arsenal neighborhood faces some of the most acute challenges in the city. Home to approximately 6,687 residents, the area is predominantly composed of low- and moderate-income Black and Latino households. Roughly 37.6% of households live below the poverty line, and 39.1% earn less than \$25,000 annually. The neighborhood struggles with limited access to quality housing, health services, and economic opportunities.

Much of Clay Arsenal’s housing stock is aging and poorly maintained, exposing residents, particularly children, to hazardous environmental conditions, including lead-based paint, mold, asbestos, and poor indoor air quality. Proximity to former industrial operations and contaminated sites further increases exposure to environmental risks. These cumulative burdens contribute to disproportionate rates of asthma, lead poisoning, and other health disparities that severely impact the quality of life for residents.

Through targeted Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs), this project aims to identify environmental contamination that has long hindered redevelopment in the neighborhood. These assessments will not only inform safe and equitable reuse strategies but also serve as a foundation for restoring community trust, stimulating reinvestment, and building a healthier, more resilient future. This project will help advance SJC’s long-term goals of expanding access to affordable housing and catalyzing community-led redevelopment, which in turn will improve economic mobility, neighborhood stability, and environmental justice.

Historic and cultural assets such as the Clay Hill Historic District, the Mather Homestead (circa 1835), Spring Grove Cemetery (established 1845), and the 1910 Engine Company 2 Fire Station, coexist with vacant, underutilized, and environmentally compromised properties. The area is not in a FEMA-designated flood zone but lies adjacent to the Connecticut River levee and Amtrak corridor, which raises future considerations for climate resilience and green infrastructure planning.

Clay Arsenal is well connected by public transit, with CTtransit bus routes 40 and 42 running through the neighborhood and Hartford Union Station, a commuter rail and intercity transit hub, less than ½-mile away from many properties in the neighborhood.. These multimodal assets present significant opportunity for equitable and transit-oriented redevelopment if environmental and structural barriers can be addressed.

### **Approach & Vision; Long-Term Goals and Objectives**

The vision for this initiative is to empower residents to achieve wealth within the Clay Arsenal neighborhood by creating 10 affordable homeownership opportunities for low-income families over 5 years. To do so, SJC is proposing to identify brownfield sites and/or buildings that are either city owned, foreclosed and/or at risk of being abandoned for acquisition to reposition these properties for resale to low-income families. Prior to selling these properties, SJC intends to comprehensively renovate and/or build new construction to address the environmental conditions of the property, preserving the historic identity of the neighborhood, and restoring these properties into their original use.

### **Approach & Objectives:**

To accomplish these goals, the following steps will be taken:

- Schedule kick-off meeting with stakeholders (Clay Arsenal Community Development Corporation and Clay Arsenal Neighborhood Revitalization Zone).
- Implement community engagement strategies to inform site prioritization, historic preservation, and redevelopment planning.
- Conduct an inventory of brownfield sites in the neighborhood.
- Identify 3-4 sites for potential redevelopment and enter into an access agreement with current owners to conduct comprehensive environmental assessments.
- Develop renovation plans that include equitable remediation strategies integrating energy-efficiency upgrades, healthy housing improvements, and green infrastructure.

- Preserve and highlight historic landmarks as anchors of cultural identity and revitalization.
- Leverage BAR planning outputs to secure implementation funding and catalyze economic redevelopment.

### **Expected Outcomes & Impacts**

This project will produce a comprehensive, implementable set of outcomes and deliverables to include:

- Comprehensive understanding of existing conditions, contamination issues, and redevelopment challenges;
- Community-driven planning process with documented engagement and feedback;
- Inventory and prioritization of brownfield sites with environmental summaries;
- Market and feasibility analyses for prioritized sites;
- Equitable and actionable reuse strategies tailored to local housing, health, and economic needs;
- Identification of infrastructure needs and climate considerations;
- Public/private investment strategy aligned with long-term redevelopment goals;
- Formation of a local advisory/steering committee to sustain planning momentum.

### **Ongoing Brownfield Planning Efforts & EPA/DEEP PREPARED Workbook Progress.**

While there is not yet a formal PREPARED Workbook in progress for Clay Arsenal Wealth Creation Initiative, the area benefits from regional brownfield coordination through CRCOG’s Brownfields Program, which has conducted over 34 assessments and remediation plans across Hartford-area municipalities<sup>1</sup>. Notably, the Main & Pavilion Shopping Center cleanup (2000–2005) in Clay Arsenal serves as a local brownfield success example, conducted under EPA’s RLF program and resulting in 36 jobs and a new grocery anchor<sup>2</sup>.

### **Identify any known Brownfield Sites—Identification & Description**

The Clay Arsenal neighborhood contains several known brownfield sites, including both remediated and currently contaminated properties. Notable remediated sites include the former paint store site at Chestnut and Edwards Street, which was transformed into a 1.74-acre greenspace through a lead-contamination phytoremediation project, and the Main and Pavilion Shopping Center, now the Metro Center, where significant petroleum contamination was addressed.

Other identified brownfield sites remain in need of assessment or remediation. A city-owned brownfield sites with unknown or unspecified contamination located at 202–230 Albany Avenue, and the removal of petroleum impacted soil from a former fuel distribution site located at 175 Mather Street Hartford, Connecticut. These sites highlight the ongoing environmental challenges in the area and underscore the need for targeted assessments to guide future revitalization and redevelopment efforts.

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<sup>1</sup> CRCOG.org

<sup>2</sup> US EPA

## Maps & Boundaries

The following map provides a visual boundary of the proposed Project Area, incorporating key streets, landmarks (e.g., Main Street, historic district boundaries), and rail corridor. Key features include:

- Neighborhood boundaries
- Historic resources (Clay Hill Historic District, Old North Cemetery, Engine Company 2)
- Transit infrastructure (bus lines, proximity to Union Station, rail corridor)
- Parks and green spaces (Keney Park, Riverside, Bushnell Park)
- Major roadways (I-84, I-91 and Main Street)
- A 15-18 block area located within Hartford's North End.



Figure 1: Site Map, HartfordInfo.org

## Section 3 – Project Work Plan

The Clay Arsenal Wealth Creation Initiative will consist of a comprehensive set of coordinated activities designed to identify, assess, and plan for the safe, equitable, and sustainable reuse of brownfield sites within Hartford's Clay Arsenal neighborhood. These activities will be conducted through a collaborative process led by the San Juan Center (SJC), local stakeholders, and residents, with support from CRCOG.

The proposed activities are designed to meet the BAR program objectives and will focus on six key components:

### Brownfield Site Inventory and Prioritization

Objective: Review existing data to develop a priority list of known and/or suspected brownfield sites within the Clay Arsenal neighborhood that will be targeted for redevelopment.

Activities:

- Gather existing data from city records, CRCOG, and DEEP databases.
- Conduct windshield surveys and community-based mapping to identify additional candidate sites.
- Collaborate with the Clay Arsenal NRZ and local residents to validate site information and prioritize properties based on community need, potential for redevelopment, and level of environmental risk.
- Identify ownership status, current use, and redevelopment constraints.

### Environmental Assessment Planning

Objective: Prepare high-priority sites for future Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs).

Activities:

- Develop a scope of work for environmental assessments.
- Coordinate with property owners to gain site access.
- Evaluate reuse potential of sites based on assessment results and land use compatibility.

Community Engagement and Visioning

Objective: Ensure meaningful community participation throughout the planning process.

Activities:

- Partner with Clay Arsenal NRZ to design and host community engagement sessions, including multilingual outreach.
- Facilitate visioning workshops focused on land reuse, affordable housing, open space, economic development, and public health.
- Develop culturally appropriate materials to educate residents about environmental hazards, planning concepts, and redevelopment tools.
- Ensure resident feedback is incorporated into planning decisions and site reuse recommendations.

Infrastructure, Housing, and Land Use Analysis

Objective: Analyze physical and regulatory conditions that impact redevelopment feasibility.

Activities:

- Assess infrastructure capacity (water, sewer, energy, broadband), flood risk, and transportation access.
- Conduct a housing conditions survey and assess displacement risk.
- Evaluate zoning, historic preservation status, and regulatory barriers.
- Identify opportunities for transit-oriented development (TOD), green infrastructure, and resilient upgrades.

Development of a Brownfield Revitalization Plan

Objective: Create a community-informed, actionable Brownfield Area-Wide Revitalization Plan for the Clay Arsenal neighborhood.

Activities:

- Summarize site assessments, infrastructure analysis, and community visioning findings.
- Develop conceptual reuse plans for high-priority sites, with visuals and cost estimates.
- Identify potential funding and implementation partners (e.g., DECD, DOH, CHFA, EPA).
- Align the plan with the City of Hartford's planning goals, the NRZ Plan, and regional resilience strategies.

Capacity Building and Partnerships

Objective: Build capacity among local stakeholders and lay the groundwork for future implementation.

Activities:

- Facilitate training for community leaders and NRZ members on brownfield redevelopment, environmental health, and funding pathways.

- Establish formal partnerships with government agencies, educational institutions, and private sector entities to support plan implementation.
- Coordinate with DEEP and EPA to position sites for future cleanup and redevelopment grants.

These proposed activities will result in a comprehensive BAR plan that identifies actionable strategies to remediate, reuse, and reinvest in the Clay Arsenal neighborhood. The plan will reflect the priorities of the community and lay the foundation for future redevelopment that supports environmental justice, affordable housing, economic opportunity, and neighborhood resilience.

Please see the project timeline and deliverables outlined below:

#### Project Initiation and Site Identification (Months 1–4):

- Launch coordination and planning activities with the Clay Arsenal NRZ, and partners to establish a shared project timeline and engagement strategy.
- Build upon existing Brownfield Site Inventories through data collection, field surveys, and resident-led mapping efforts to identify and document known and suspected brownfield sites.
- Create a Site Prioritization Report that evaluates redevelopment potential, environmental risk, ownership status, and community priorities to select high-impact focus sites.
- Start preparation for environmental assessment activities by engaging consultants and initiating access agreements with property owners.

#### Community Engagement, Assessment Planning, and Analysis (Months 5–8):

- Facilitate a series of multilingual Community Visioning Workshops and outreach sessions, with accompanying educational materials tailored to local cultural and language needs.
- Produce a Community Engagement Summary that documents outreach efforts, community priorities, and public input on land reuse, housing, health, and economic development.
- Complete an Infrastructure and Land Use Analysis Report assessing physical, regulatory, and housing conditions—including displacement risk, zoning barriers, and TOD potential.
- Finalize Environmental Assessment Scopes of Work for high-priority sites to prepare for future Phase I and II ESAs.

#### Plan Development, Capacity Building, and Closeout (Months 9–12):

- Draft the Brownfield Area-Wide Revitalization Plan, integrating findings from environmental planning, infrastructure analysis, and community visioning. This deliverable will include conceptual site reuse plans, visuals, estimated costs, and redevelopment scenarios.
- Create a Funding and Implementation Strategy that identifies key partners and future grant opportunities (e.g., EPA cleanup funds, state housing programs).
- Deliver Capacity-Building Materials and Training Sessions for community leaders and NRZ members on brownfield redevelopment and funding pathways.
- Finalize and submit the Completed BAR Plan to DECD and relevant stakeholders, including a project close-out summary and recommendations for next steps.

#### **Section 4 – Applicant Capacity and Capability Organizational capability**

The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) is sponsoring SJC for this grant application. Elizabeth Sanderson, Grants Coordinator/Principal Program Manager, will be the point of contact for CRCOG. In her role, Elizabeth will conduct administrative tasks related to managing this grant from DECD, and reimbursing SJC for eligible activities.

CRCOG will subgrant the DECD funding to the San Juan Center (SJC), a Latino-led nonprofit community development corporation. SJC will conduct all activities outlined in the Project Work Plan, with support from local stakeholders. With over 50 years of experience in affordable housing development, asset management, and neighborhood-based services, SJC has deep roots in the North Hartford community. The organization has successfully developed 76 units of affordable housing, and currently manages 119 units, with 74 units in its development pipeline.

Fernando Betancourt, Executive Director of SJC, will serve as the Project Lead, providing strategic oversight and ensuring that the planning process centers equity, environmental justice, and community voice. A well-respected advocate and former Executive Director of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission, Mr. Betancourt has grown SJC's operating budget from \$500,000 to \$1.8 million and has expanded staff capacity and housing development significantly.

Eddie Perez, Real Estate Development Manager at SJC, will serve as the Project Manager, leading day-to-day coordination of the BAR planning initiative. With a track record that includes the revitalization of over 1,200 housing units, leadership of a \$220 million public-private neighborhood revitalization partnership (SINA), and deep experience in environmental justice communities, Mr. Perez will oversee environmental consultants, community engagement activities, and strategic planning. Additionally, Mr. Perez will help identify opportunities for affordable housing, public space improvements, and small business development within the project area, aligning the project with broader goals of environmental justice and equitable growth.

To enhance its capacity, SJC has engaged HousingSmarts, LLC, a minority-led real estate development consulting firm led by Elizabeth Torres. With a strong background in affordable housing and community development, Liz has built a statewide reputation for helping nonprofit organizations and cooperatives plan and implement equitable housing initiatives. Her firm brings both technical expertise and a deep commitment to community-centered planning, making it an ideal partner for guiding the strategic direction of the BAR initiative.

HousingSmarts, LLC will play a key role in shaping the revitalization strategy by conducting redevelopment planning, facilitating inclusive stakeholder engagement, and building the capacity of SJC and its partners. The firm will lead community outreach efforts to ensure local voices, particularly those from historically underserved populations, are prioritized in the planning process.

#### **Section 5 – Partnerships, Collaboration, and Leverage Establishment of advisory/steering committee**

A central strength of the proposed Clay Arsenal Wealth Building Initiative is the longstanding relationship between SJC and the Clay Arsenal Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) and the emerging Clay Arsenal Community Development Corporation (CACDC). This partnership serves as the foundation for a community-led, equity-centered, and results-driven approach to environmental planning and neighborhood revitalization.

The Clay Arsenal NRZ is a City-recognized, resident-led planning body that plays a formal role in shaping neighborhood development priorities. It brings together residents, property owners, business leaders, and local stakeholders to collaborate on community improvement efforts, aligned with Hartford's Neighborhood Revitalization Zone ordinance. The NRZ is

deeply engaged in identifying blighted properties, advocating for infrastructure investments, and ensuring that any redevelopment supports long-term community interests and avoids displacement.

SJC, as the lead developer and convening organization for the BAR planning project, has been an active and trusted partner of the NRZ for many years. SJC's leadership regularly participates in NRZ meetings, co-hosts community events, and coordinates closely with NRZ members on housing development, neighborhood safety, and environmental justice initiatives. This partnership is grounded in shared goals: to restore neighborhood vitality, protect vulnerable residents, and create equitable pathways to health, housing, and economic opportunity.

The Clay Arsenal Community Development Corporation (CACDC) is a newly established community development corporation with a mission to help guide the economic development of the Clay Arsenal neighborhood and develop a strategy to reduce the high poverty levels in our community. CACDC is committed to serving the people of this community to improve the economic and social condition of the low- and moderate-income of its residents.

Together, the SJC, the Clay Arsenal NRZ, and Clay Arsenal CDC will leverage their complementary strengths to accomplish the BAR project's goals:

- **Resident Engagement & Legitimacy:** The NRZ's formal neighborhood-based structure provides a built-in mechanism for community outreach, feedback, and decision-making. This will ensure that residents most affected by environmental hazards and blight are meaningfully engaged in planning activities, site selection, and visioning.
- **Local Knowledge & Site Identification:** NRZ members have deep knowledge of the neighborhood's history, vacant properties, informal uses, and community priorities. Their insight will be crucial in identifying key brownfield sites, understanding past land use, and shaping realistic reuse strategies.
- **Community-Led Planning:** The partnership will co-host community workshops, visioning sessions, and informational meetings that integrate the NRZ's grassroots organizing capabilities with SJC's planning and development experience. These events will help ensure transparency and build community buy-in throughout the BAR planning process.
- **Leverage of Existing Plans & Investments:** The NRZ's existing Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, which has been officially adopted by the City of Hartford, provides a policy and planning framework that aligns directly with the BAR project goals. This alignment will allow the BAR Plan to build upon prior NRZ work, reinforce existing community priorities, and support coordination with City agencies.
- **Capacity for Implementation:** While the NRZ provides neighborhood-level governance and planning guidance, SJC brings the technical and financial capacity to implement complex development and environmental projects. SJC's current housing pipeline, organizational infrastructure, and successful grant management experience will enable it to carry the BAR planning vision into future phases of environmental remediation and redevelopment.

## **Section 6 – Relation to State Policies, Programs, Initiatives and Projects**

Hartford is a DECD-designated as a distressed municipality. Clay Arsenal, in particular, exhibits high poverty, unemployment, and vacancy rates. This project supports the state's goals for equitable development and investment in high-need areas by improving land use planning, attracting investment, and building local capacity for sustained redevelopment.

The proposed Clay Arsenal Wealth Creation Initiative directly supports several key Connecticut state policy goals, particularly those related to transit-oriented development, environmental justice, affordable housing, and equitable revitalization in distressed municipalities.

Parts of the Clay Arsenal Neighborhood are located less than ½-mile from Hartford Union Station, which is served by the Hartford Line commuter rail, Amtrak, and multiple CT Transit bus routes, including *CTfastrak*. The neighborhood is also near the I-84 and I-91 corridors and lies along key local bus lines (Routes 40 and 42). With a Walk Score of approximately 62 (“Somewhat Walkable”), a Transit Score of 58 (“Good Transit”), and a Bike Score of 50 (“Bikeable”), the area has a strong multimodal foundation that can be further leveraged. By identifying and prioritizing brownfield sites near existing and planned transit infrastructure, the Clay Arsenal Wealth Creation Initiative will help catalyze mixed-use, walkable redevelopment that supports the state’s TOD goals to reduce car dependency, reduce traffic, improve air quality, and increase equitable access to jobs and services.

This initiative also aligns with the Greater Hartford Mobility Study (GHMS), which outlines transformative strategies for improving connectivity, mobility, and land use around Union Station and the I-84/I-91 corridors. By coordinating with GHMS priorities such as enhanced multimodal access to Union Station, improved bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and better integration of highway corridors with surrounding neighborhoods, the project will strengthen both local and regional transportation networks. Most streets in Clay Arsenal already include sidewalks and streetlights, and areas closer to Main Street reach Walk Scores in the 90s. Strategic investments informed by GHMS can further elevate walkability, bikeability, and first-/last-mile access ensuring equitable, climate-resilient redevelopment for current and future residents.

The revitalization of contaminated and underutilized properties will unlock opportunities for construction jobs, environmental remediation employment, and long-term economic development through new commercial, residential, and community-serving uses. This initiative aims to engage local residents in workforce development and job training initiatives linked to housing rehabilitation and green infrastructure, supporting both short- and long-term employment growth.

Clay Arsenal is a designated environmental justice community, burdened by cumulative environmental stressors including exposure to industrial emissions from a landfill, sewage plant, trash-to-energy incinerator, poor air quality, aging housing stock, and lead contamination. This project will improve environmental resilience by assessing and mitigating these hazards while promoting climate-adaptive design, such as green infrastructure and energy-efficient housing retrofits. The BAR planning process will be guided by strong community engagement, ensuring that residents most affected by environmental risks shape and benefit from future redevelopment.

With over 39% of households earning under \$25,000 and homeownership rates below 11%, Clay Arsenal faces critical housing insecurity.

The project aligns with the state’s affordable housing objectives by supporting the preservation and rehabilitation of naturally occurring affordable housing, improving environmental safety, and exploring infill opportunities for affordable, energy-efficient homes. BAR planning will help coordinate future funding (CHFA, DOH) to support housing development that prevents displacement and promotes long-term affordability.

Clay Arsenal includes several important historic assets, such as the Clay Hill Historic District, Mather Homestead, Engine Company 2 Firehouse, and Spring Grove Cemetery. These sites contribute to the neighborhood’s cultural identity but face deterioration and potential loss. The BAR planning process will help identify adaptive reuse opportunities, incorporate preservation goals into redevelopment planning, and seek funding through programs like the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to protect and reuse these historic structures.