

## ZoneHartford: Hartford's new zoning code

After more than a year of intense meetings and thoughtful discussion, Hartford finally has an all-new zoning code. It replaces the 50+ year old use based code that has been amended so many times it became an impediment to both development and enforcement.

The new code is referred to as “form based” which is a way of saying that how a building looks on a street or in a neighborhood is at least as important as what it’s being used for. A building that is perfectly acceptable in one location can be a disaster in another, and disasters tend to bring down property, discourage investment, lower tax revenue,



make government more expensive, and those are just the obvious results.

For a neighborhood like Asylum Hill this becomes even more important. This is a neighborhood that has been severely challenged in terms of new development especially in the housing sector for almost as long as the old code was in force. With so few owner occupied homes, much of the rental property has been in the hands of corporations with out of state owners and then through foreclosure out of state banks. It’s an understatement to say that their first priority has not been the long-term health of the neighborhood. And with 90% of the housing in Asylum Hill being rental; poorly managed and maintained apartment buildings can have an outsized impact on the surrounding properties, no matter how well they are kept up.

Like any building code, it cannot prevent or undo the sins of the past, it can only stop the damage from continuing. In a neighborhood like Asylum Hill, where so much of our “wealth” is in the great historic building of the past, being able to carefully control future development will add value over time to everything that survives. That’s what encourages both preservation and compatible development.

For a look at the new regulations go to:

[http://www.hartford.gov/images/Planning/FINAL\\_Hartford\\_Zoning\\_2016.1.19.pdf](http://www.hartford.gov/images/Planning/FINAL_Hartford_Zoning_2016.1.19.pdf) as

well as the new zoning map at:

[http://www.hartford.gov/images/Planning/ADOPTED\\_zoning\\_map\\_011916.pdf](http://www.hartford.gov/images/Planning/ADOPTED_zoning_map_011916.pdf)