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Watershed Moment: North Hartford Designated a Federal Promise Zone

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With this designation comes unparalleled recognition from the federal government, and more importantly, a public pledge to support ambitious plans for neighborhood revitalization.

Today, at the site of the former M. Swift & Sons gold leaf factory, Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra and Deputy Secretary Nani A. Coloretti of the U.S.

Department of Housing

and Urban Development [announced the designation of the North Hartford area as a federal Promise Zone](#)

<http://cmtysolutions.org/in-the-news/hartfords-north-end-designated-federal-promise-zone>.

With this designation comes unparalleled recognition from the federal government of the area's pressing needs, and more importantly, a public pledge to support ambitious plans for neighborhood revitalization through an all-hands-on-deck mobilization of federal programs and resources.



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The news is especially significant for Community Solutions – our plan to revitalize the Swift factory as a hub for job creation, quality healthcare and fresh food access, is a centerpiece of the local Promise Zone plan.

Being named a Promise Zone means that Hartford will become one of 20 high-poverty communities across the nation – and the first community in New England – to receive priority consideration when applying for existing federal grant programs. The neighborhood will also be specially assigned a group of federal staffers at various agencies along with five full-time AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers, who will be tasked with identifying federal grant opportunities and navigating the often complicated processes of applying for funding to catalyze job creation, increase economic activity, improve educational opportunities, reduce violent crime, and improve health outcomes throughout the community.

Launched in 2013 by President Obama, [the Promise Zone program \(http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/economicdevelopment/programs/pz\)](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/economicdevelopment/programs/pz) is extremely competitive. Bringing the designation to the North Hartford area is a major win for a local team made up of partners from virtually every level of government, business and nonprofit leadership, including Mayor Segarra and U.S. Senator Chris Murphy. Community Solutions helped to develop the North Hartford plan, sitting at the table with city agencies, businesses, other community organizations, and resident leaders to put together a comprehensive proposal aimed at radically disrupting a cycle of economic failures that has propelled the deterioration of the neighborhood's social and physical landscape for over ten years.

Central to the North Hartford proposal is our shovel-ready vision to transform the old Swift factory into a hub for job creation, healthcare and healthy food access. The plan

proposes to create more than 50,000 square feet of new community space, including a fully functioning commercial kitchen, a community healthcare center, incubator space for new food-related businesses, and a new branch of the Hartford public library. The Promise Zone designation could open new doors to the support and resources that Community Solutions and its partners need to make this plan a reality.

The plan for the transformation of the Swift factory is brilliantly practical, but it also represents a deeply symbolic moment for the community. [Before it closed in 2004, \(\[//cmtysolutions.org/update/reimagining-glory-swift-factory-community-solutions-attends-sustainable-cities-design-academy\]\(http://cmtysolutions.org/update/reimagining-glory-swift-factory-community-solutions-attends-sustainable-cities-design-academy\)\)](http://cmtysolutions.org/update/reimagining-glory-swift-factory-community-solutions-attends-sustainable-cities-design-academy)the factory was the main provider of gold leafing for the state's capitol buildings and historic landmarks. It was also the local neighborhood's economic engine, employing hundreds of residents and helping to make broader financial stability possible in the surrounding area. Neighborhood residents remember that history and are eager to help recreate it for themselves and for their children by restoring the Swift factory as a job creator and community hub.

The work at the Swift factory is also foundational to implementing larger data-driven strategies to help the community turn itself around, especially those that Community Solutions is developing in collaboration with [private sector partners like Cigna \(\[//cmtysolutions.org/update/cigna-cs-team-help-northeast-hartford-turn-itself-around\]\(http://cmtysolutions.org/update/cigna-cs-team-help-northeast-hartford-turn-itself-around\)\)](http://cmtysolutions.org/update/cigna-cs-team-help-northeast-hartford-turn-itself-around). These strategies are aimed at making a clear and positive impact on the neighborhood's distressingly poor health outcomes, with a particular focus on increasing neighborhood life expectancy.

The Swift factory anchored stability and economic opportunity in the North Hartford area for years. With news of the Promise Zone designation, the factory stands

at the ready once again to support positive change in the community.

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