

More



Create Blog Sign In

South Downtown Neighborhood Revitalization Zone - Hartford, Connecticut



- [News](#)
- [Redevelopment in SoDo](#)
- [Progressive Dinner](#)
- [The Longest Table: Hartford](#)
- [Things To Do](#)
- [About](#)
- [Contact](#)

Things To Do

Don't listen to the naysayers who claim Hartford is a ghost town with nothing to do -- they probably just don't know where (or can't be bothered) to look. Below is a list of the many sites to visit, newsletters to sign up for, and events to check out so you can live your best Hartford life. This is by no means a complete inventory; please send your submissions for consideration via [email](#).

Except for the "Date Night" section, this list is about things to do other than eat and drink, so please head to [Yelp](#) for your coffee shop, restaurant, brewery/winery/distillery, and cocktail bar recs.



Be a good neighbor

If you live in our neighborhood, SoDo, we have an email newsletter, too. You can [view past issues here](#) and [sign up here](#). [The Progressive Dinner](#) is our favorite event, and the 2025 event was held on March 8. Our newest social event, [The Longest Table: Hartford](#), was held on June 21.

Not sure what neighborhood you are in? Check out this map on [Hartford Next](#) (if you have issues using this map on mobile, email hnxt@hartfordnext.org with your address and they will help you find your NRZ).

The [Hartford In The Know bi-weekly email](#) is a great resource for news about upcoming city programs, meetings, activities, and other useful information, including assistance programs for Hartford residents, organizations, and businesses. Included each month are updates on things like: leaf pickup, household hazardous waste disposal, free flu shots, job openings, rental assistance, tax info, and food and coat distribution.

Get alerts regarding parking bans, street closures, school closures, etc. Download the Resident Guide on the [Office of Community Engagement website](#) to learn what your trash day is, how to dispose of fall leaves and Christmas trees, and who to call if your street needs to be swept.

If you see a broken streetlight, discarded sofa on the sidewalk, damaged street sign, pothole, etc., report it to [Hartford 311](#) by calling 311 or using [their app](#). You can also [report issues online here](#).

Got some household items, books, magazines, or groceries you want to share? Check out [Buy Nothing](#), [Little Free Libraries](#), and [Little Free Pantries](#) for drop-off spots.

[This stylized map of the city](#) is old and no longer 100% accurate in terms of attractions *but* gives you a good idea of the lay of the land. The skating rink (mentioned below) is in [Bushnell Park](#) right near where it says "Pulaski Circle". [Riverfront Park](#) (see more below) is where it says "Riverfront Plaza" on the right side of the map, on the river. The [Science Center](#) is just below it on the map.

A good way to familiarize yourself with downtown is to just walk, bike, or [scooter](#) around. If you have a car you can also drive around, but if you won't see as much. Want someone else to do the driving? Hop on [the DASH bus](#). It is a free circulator bus to take visitors from the hotels to the Convention Center (which is next to the Science Center) and the train/bus station. Check the [CT Transit site](#) for more info.

Looking for a way to [volunteer](#)? [Hands On Hartford](#) has a recurring volunteer opportunity list, but you can ask any non-profit and they likely will be happy for your help.

OMG Where Do I Buy Groceries, etc.?

The same place as everyone else: the grocery store. If you have a car you will get in it and drive to a suburban store, just as you would if you lived in the suburbs.

But let's say you don't have a car, or want to reduce how much you use that car. [Between delivery services, mail order, FastTrak, and independent stores within walking distance](#) (Greenway Market on Asylum Street, C-Town on Wethersfield Avenue), it is totally possible to live in Hartford without a car and still have all your retail needs met:

You can get to a Super Stop & Shop or a Walmart Super Center very quickly via [FastTrak](#). The [Grocery on Broad](#) is a small neighborhood grocery carrying fresh produce, cheese, meats, and fish, and offers SNAP Doubling and a sliding scale pricing model.

Even before the pandemic, residents relied on [Instacart](#) ([click here for \\$10 off your first order](#)) for grocery delivery. You can pay a low annual fee for their Express membership, reducing your delivery fees. They deliver from all the chain grocery stores, Costco, Total Wine, Petco, etc. In addition, Whole Foods, Stop & Shop, and Walmart also have their own proprietary delivery services.

You can [order](#) pet food, litter, and accessories from Chewy or Amazon by mail, or a local Pet Supplies Plus store for [next-day delivery](#), and have your prescriptions [delivered for free](#) by a [small local pharmacy](#).

While there is not (yet!) a lot of [retail downtown](#), there are stores where you can buy [books, cards, gifts, more gifts](#) (and art), [vintage clothes](#) (and some gifts), [eyeglasses, cameras, wine and liquor, baked goods, ice cream, clothes, cigars](#), get a [manicure, haircut or facial](#), or get your [bike fixed/buy a used bike](#).

And for the [freshest local produce](#), there is at least one [Farmers Market](#) a day somewhere in the city, almost always right on a bus line. Almost all of them take (and double) SNAP. Or, grow your own in a [Community Garden](#) with Knox Foundation. For a small fee, you receive your own garden bed, water, free seeds, and guidance from Knox's experts.

Arts & Culture

The [Hartford.com](#) site is a good place to start: it includes a calendar of things to do by date but you can also sort by topic such as music, art, things for kids, etc. Your resource for which restaurants are open, what's happening on the Pratt Street Patio (now closed to traffic!), and local events (both live stream and in-person). Subscribe to [their weekly email](#) and never wonder what to do, where to go, or what to eat again. [Sign up here](#), thank us later.

[Real Art Ways \(RAW\)](#) - Contemporary art gallery + indie movie theater (see more on that lower on this page under Movies). Lots of great art shows, lectures, Game Night (board games), Creative Cocktail Hour on the 3rd Thursday of each month with art opening(s), a band or DJ, light snacks, cash bar. RAW hosts The Ear Cave and Other People's Stories storytelling events. Sign up for their [newsletter](#) for more.

In addition to excellent (and very frank) coverage of Hartford-related topics, [Real Hartford](#) posts [a list of free/cheap events every month](#), you can also [sign up](#) for a monthly email. Also, check the interactive map on each of their [Calendar posts](#).

[The Wadsworth](#) offers [free admission for Hartford residents](#), and they have a fantastic free [Second Saturday program](#) for families with crafts and music. Their gift shop has some really nice items in general and Made in CT in particular. It is a great museum, small but with some big works by Monet, Manet, Dali, Picasso, Caravaggio, etc. They offer guided tours, lectures, excursions to other museums, and a film festival. Two key annual events are Fine Art & Flowers in the spring and their Festival of Trees during the holidays. Both are a small additional charge but offer related lectures and entertainment.

[The Connecticut Forum](#) lecture series features renowned experts and celebrities discussing amazing topics. As entertaining as it is educational. They are NEVER boring.

The [Harriet Beecher Stowe House](#) and [Mark Twain House](#) are both beautifully restored and have great tours. A couple of times a year, they both have "free for Hartford residents" days. They also have great online and in-person author lectures (by people you've actually heard of) and other events. Don't miss the Twain House haunted tour or the behind-the-scenes with the servants tour.

The [Charter Oak Cultural Center](#) offers multi-cultural art, music, theater and dance exhibits, performances, and classes for adults and kids, in a Victorian-era building that once housed Connecticut's [first synagogue](#).

If you like to build or make stuff, [MakerSpace CT](#) is the largest makerspace in Connecticut and the 2nd largest in New England. They offer access to tools, technology, resources, and learning opportunities for prospective inventors, manufacturers, entrepreneurs, hobbyists, and students.

And, mark your calendar for the second Saturday of October for [Night Fall](#) (free!). Beautiful outdoor theater/art/performance/giant puppets/music in a different public park each year, founded by Hartford sculptor and puppeteer Anne Cubberly.

[Open Studio Hartford](#) is a city-wide, multi-venue collaboration of artists who open their studios and galleries to the public for a weekend of art displays, demonstrations, and community.

Get Out There

[Bushnell Park](#) has a wonderful playground, lots of paths (safe for bike riding), a pond, a [historic Arch you can tour](#) for free on Thursdays in summer and fall and during some big events in the park such as festivals, concerts, the marathon, etc. (depending on volunteer availability). The Carousel is open on weekends mid-March through mid-January, \$2 per ride and it's a great place to host a party, small wedding, etc. The park is also the home of [Winterfest](#) - free ice skating, free skate rentals, and free lessons from Thanksgiving weekend through the first week of January. Santa visits on a few weekends as well.

Bushnell Park is also the location for lots of **free** summer fun. Bring your blanket, friends, family, picnic supper, chairs, bug spray, sun hat, etc:

- [Greater Hartford Festival of Jazz](#) - three days in July, live music all weekend, thousands of people, great food trucks
- [Symphony in the Park](#) - the Hartford Symphony Orchestra plays classical and pops on a Saturday in June
- [Monday Night Jazz Series](#) - six Mondays in July & August, live music, hundreds of people instead of thousands
- [The Hopgood/Lord Summer Music Series](#) features music from every genre, Thursdays in summer
- [Movie Nights](#) - outdoor screen showing a family-friendly movie, sometimes with a band to kick
- things off.

[Riverfront Recapture](#) manages a beautiful park along the Connecticut River. Paved walking/biking paths, wooded trails, a water-front stage, picnic areas, and a craftsman-style boathouse you can rent for social and business events. They host a number of water- and non-water-related festivals and teach recreational and competitive rowing for all ages. Access by car from Weston Street or by foot from Downtown at Mortenson Plaza (near the CT Science Center).

There are [nine major parks](#) in Hartford, offering recreational fields for organized sports, scenic pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians, swimming pools, boat launches, equestrian trails, golf courses, playscapes for children, gardening, and other healthy opportunities.

[Free Yoga](#) - all summer long you can take free yoga any day of the week in [one of our local parks](#). Follow [Yoga in our City](#) and [Yoga Flow on the River](#) for info on schedules and locations, including virtual classes in the winter. First Presbyterian also offers [meditative sound baths](#) on alternating Friday nights and [free yoga](#) on Thursdays and Fridays, September through May.

[Ducks on the Ave](#) - You can't say you are from New England until you have tried duckpin bowling at least once. Smaller balls and pins, and you get three throws per frame. It feels like a speakeasy because it is underneath an unassuming strip mall (and has been since 1939). They serve beer & wine and you may bring your own snacks. Great for all ages.

[Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner](#) hosts monthly [street food markets](#) in the Parkville neighborhood (easy FasTrak ride away) and launched a new holiday market called [Winterfair Hartford](#), hosted in the hall at Union Station. Lots of small, locally-owned businesses. BLxD also manages the [Know Good Market](#) which is a monthly street food and vendor market, and [First Night](#), which takes place downtown and in Bushnell Park on New Year's Eve. Crafts, art, music, food trucks, and fireworks at 6 pm and midnight. They share other offbeat, creative, and alternative events and news in their monthly newsletter; you can sign up on [cafeteria.fm](#).

[Open Studios Hartford](#) went virtual for a few years during Covid but in-person it is a great way to see some cool art and support local artists all over the city.

[Hartford Public Library](#) is the key to so much more than books. They have a great children's section and offer [free activities and classes](#). Also [free jazz concerts](#) on Sundays from January - April. With a library card you can also stream movies at home for free on [Kanopy](#) (it's not Netflix but they have a surprisingly decent selection), [visit a dozen museums in the state, or attend a performance - for free - at Hartford Stage or Theaterworks](#).

Movies

Apple Cinemas closed their Front Street location (RIP) but hosts first-run movies and occasional mini-festivals at their 330 New Park Avenue location.

Cinestudio, the retro movie palace on the Trinity College campus, shows independent movies, cult classics and foreign films and hosts a variety of film festivals. [Sign up](#) for their weekly newsletter to see what is playing next.

Real Art Ways shows independent films, foreign films, documentaries, and all the Oscar-nominated films (including shorts).

Theater & Music

The Bushnell Performing Arts Center is best known for its Broadway series but also offers a variety of other arts, education, and community performances, including comedians, dance, lectures, films, and concerts. They are also home to the aforementioned [Connecticut Forum](#) and the [Hartford Symphony Orchestra](#). The HSO also hosts pop-up concerts at area breweries, Parkville Market, the Wadsworth Atheneum, and Bushnell Park, as well as a summer pops series at Talcott Mountain Park in Simsbury.

Hartford Stage produces classics by Williams, O'Neill, and Shakespeare and also contemporary new works (a few of which have then gone on to Broadway). A limited number of free tickets are available to residents via Hartford Public Library (see above). Be sure to snap a selfie with their Tony Award in the lobby.

Theaterworks Hartford produces original, contemporary theater in a very intimate setting. A limited number of free tickets are available to residents via Hartford Public Library (see above).

The **Baby Grand Jazz** free concert series at the Main Street Branch of the Hartford Public Library features a different jazz group every Sunday from January through April.

Sea Tea Improv offers improv and sketch comedy shows, stand-up, and classes for adults, teens, and kids. They also produce and host the [Hartford Improv Festival](#).

HartBeat Ensemble produces original, contemporary plays that amplify the voices and experiences of marginalized people and communities.

Hartbeat Music Festival brings together dozens of Connecticut bands performing many genres of music on the CT River. Free! Hosted by Riverfront Recapture and local band [POSSM](#).

The Webster Theater and **Infinity Music Hall** regularly schedule regional and national bands. [Parkville Market](#) has something musical (DJs, bands, karaoke) almost every night of the week.

Red Door Music is just over the line in West Hartford but is another opportunity to hear smaller chamber ensembles and soloists perform classical and choral works.

Voce is a chamber choral ensemble that performs classical and contemporary works.

Hartford Independent Chamber Orchestra performs traditional chamber ensemble pieces as well as new music by living composers.

Sports

Yard Goats Baseball: Double-A affiliate of the Colorado Rockies. Their mascot is a goat but they are named after a train. Gorgeous new award-winning stadium. Sit in the left field grandstands to watch the game, the city skyline, and the sunset all at the same time. Fireworks after many games, and the concessions include pop-ups by local restaurants. Sometimes there are real goats on site, usually at the outfield end of the right field porch.

Hartford Athletic Soccer: USL Championship League team with very dedicated fans who create a fun atmosphere. "[Futbol is life](#)". Bring lots of sunscreen -- this is an open stadium.

Wolfpack Hockey: AHL farm team for the NY Rangers. If you like hockey, they are fun to watch. If you still miss the [Whalers](#), they are not them, but you can pick up a [Whalers tee](#) at Hartford Prints downtown. PS: it's no accident that all three Hartford teams' colors are the same colors as the Whalers....

UConn Basketball: Yes, there are other colleges and other sports, but this is Husky Nation. Both the Mens' and Women's teams play some home games at the [People's Bank Arena](#) (fka XL Center, fka the Civic Center).

UConn Hockey: See above.

Golf: We have two public courses: [Goodwin Park](#), 27 holes, opened in 1906, and [Keney Park](#), 18 holes, opened in 1927. In 2017, Keney was rated the third-best public course in the state by [Golfweek](#) magazine.

Cricket: We have a very active cricket community, with cricket clubs and organized tournaments, but you will also see pickup games played in [every park](#) in the city. Fun to watch even if you don't know the rules.

More: [EightSixGo](#) is an inclusive running club, and [2-4-1](#) offers sports clinics for kids in various locations in and around Hartford. There are even a few [Vintage Baseball](#) teams in the area, as well as [Men's](#) and [Women's Rugby](#), and [Roller Derby](#)!

Make Friends/Date Night

Your fellow Hartfordites are using online platforms like [MeetUp](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [HeyLo](#) to put together active groups for socializing, happy hours, running, walking, book clubs, game nights, craft nights, etc. Check out

- [City Girls Who Walk \(IG\)](#)
- [EightSixGo Running \(HL\)](#)
- [Hartford Happenings \(MU\)](#)
- [Hartford Area Hiking \(MU\)](#)
- [Code & Coffee \(MU\)](#)
- [Hearts in Hartford \(HL\)](#)
- [Chits and Giggles Tabletop Gaming \(FB\)](#)

Go Dancing: [Salsa Social Nights on Pratt Street](#) are always a good time, even if you don't know how to dance. Just tons of people and music, and then you can hit up one of the restaurants on that street afterward for drinks & food. Happens once a month in warm weather. [Parkville Market](#) also hosts Salsa Nights and DJ Nights year-round, and [Hartford Underground](#) offers swing lessons and dance parties.

Mixology classes, tastings, and tours of the distillery at [Hartford Flavor Co.](#) are more fun than just a night at the bar.

Get creative with a [knitting group](#), [craft nights](#), or a [social justice book club](#) at [First Presbyterian](#).

Looking for a kiki? Hartford is a very liberal, inclusive city with a welcoming community of LGBTQ+ and allies. West Side Square is channeling the old Tisane (RIP) Tuesgays with [Thursgays at the Square](#). Chez Est hosts regular [Drag cabarets](#) and [Karaoke with Joey](#). And don't miss [Hartford Pride](#) on Church and Pratt Streets every September.

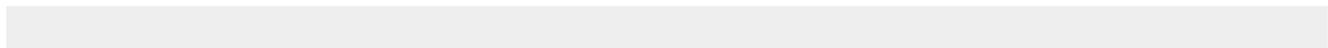
Creative Cocktail Hour at [Real Art Ways](#) (3rd Thursday of the month). Light food and drinks in a contemporary art gallery with live music and occasional interactive exhibits. RAW also has a movie theater that shows indie and foreign films.

Check out [Emery's Soda Shop](#) for old-school ice cream and candy for a daytime date; at night go through the shop's hidden door to get to the [196 Club Speakeasy](#).

Pack a picnic and head to one of the many [free live music or movie nights in Bushnell Park](#) this summer. If they are open, take a [free tour](#) of the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Arch (96 steps, interesting history, and nice view) and/or ride the historic [carousel](#) (\$2 per person, fun for all ages). Also [free yoga classes](#) Monday and Wednesday evenings in summer, which coincidentally are also some of the free music nights.

If anyone ever says to you "There is nothing to do in Hartford" please send them this list!

(updated 11/04/2025)



Copyright 2025 SoDo NRZ. Like us on [Facebook](#).
and [Instagram](#).