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# Small Business and Community Development Along New Britain Avenue

Faculty Advisor: Carol Clark

Community Partner: Southwest and Behind the Rocks NRZ



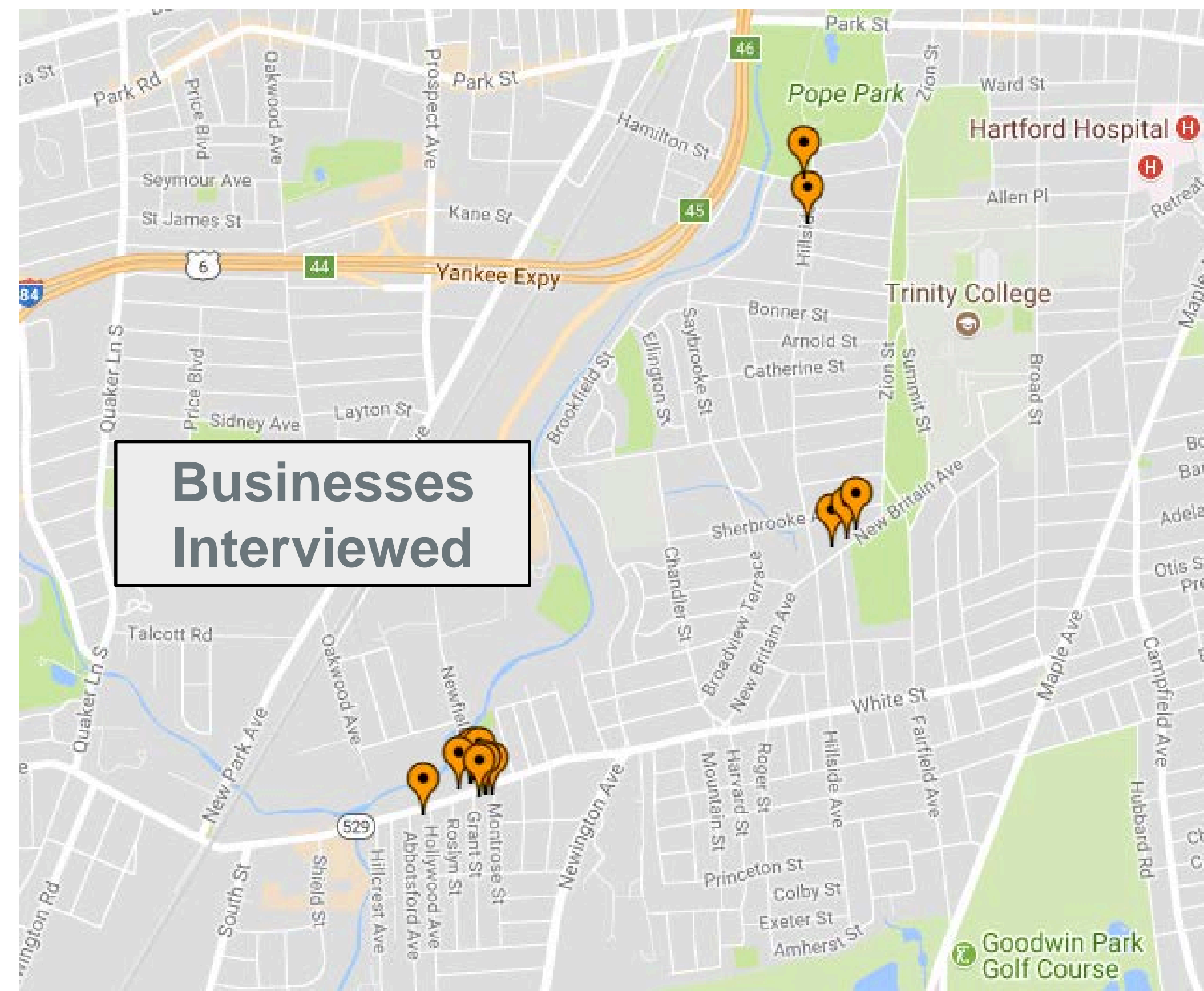
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## ABSTRACT

The Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) of the Southwest and Behind the Rocks neighborhood is one of fourteen community advocacy groups in Hartford whose mission is to improve the quality of life for its residents. The NRZ has identified several challenges for the neighborhood, including the absence of needed business services and lack of support for economic development; poor infrastructure and streetscape; public safety concerns; and a lack of representation from the community in deciding what and how to solve issues. The literature on successful community-based development stresses that by pairing small business development with community development, more can be achieved than by pursuing them separately. To achieve this twin goal, strong communication and coordination between businesses and community-based organizations, such as the NRZ, are needed. With this in mind, my research focuses on identifying and comparing the list of concerns voiced by small business owners and the NRZ, with the aim of uncovering possible areas for cooperation. I find that, as a group, business owners worry about similar issues and hold common opinions about the needs of the neighborhood, some of which align with the work of the NRZ. Additionally, some owners, upon hearing about the NRZ for the first time, express willingness to attend a community meeting. These results suggest the possibility for achieving greater representation from the community in identifying and solving issues, which, in turn, can contribute to the NRZ's goal of improving the quality of life in the neighborhood.

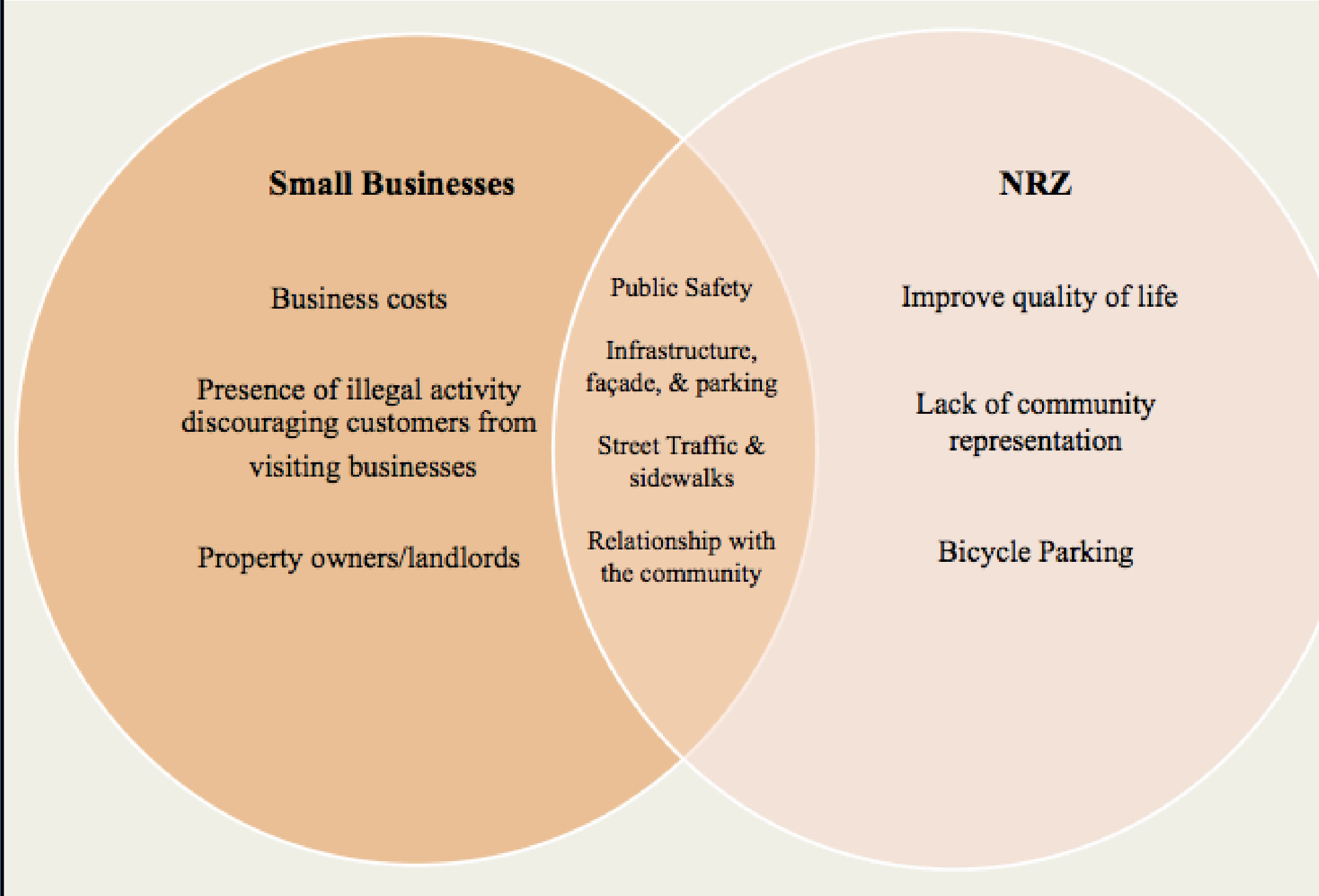
## SNAPSHOT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD



## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Working with the NRZ

#### Common Ground on Issues



→ A starting point for working together should focus on shared issues.

### Working Together

#### Perceptions of Difference

- Many owners feel isolated from other business owners.
  - Many owners believe their own goals differ from those of other businesses; they think it would be difficult to work together.
  - Those who do not want to work together are not from Hartford.
- "I work here and I go back home. I don't stick around."* –Small business owner

#### Reality of Common Concerns

- 75% of all businesses chose "Public Safety" as one of their top 3 issues.
- Over 50% of businesses identified business costs (taxes and insurance) as among their top 3 issues.
- Nearly 50% chose "Street Traffic and Unfriendly Sidewalks" as a "top 3" issue.
- "Public Safety" & "Business Costs" have the lowest average score, where the lower the score, the higher on average the importance of the issue.

### Business Owners' Residency Matters

- 7 business owners live in Hartford; all would consider attending an NRZ meeting.
- 8 owners live outside of Hartford; none of them are willing to attend an NRZ meeting.
- 1 owner who lives outside of Hartford but has extended family in Hartford is willing to attend an NRZ meeting.

*"If you're not from Hartford, then you don't understand."* –Small business owner

### Knowledge of the NRZ Matters

- 25% of the businesses interviewed have knowledge of the NRZ.
- These businesses with knowledge of the NRZ are very dedicated to their business, and they emphasize the importance of building relationships with customers.
- 3 out of four of the business owners who have knowledge of the NRZ have been in business for more than a decade.

*"I care very much about building relationships with my customers, however, nobody introduces themselves anymore."* Small business owner

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## Research Questions and Motivation

### What?

What issues do small businesses rank as most important?

Do those issues match the priorities set by the Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ)?

What issues are businesses willing to work together on?

### Why?

Better Quality of Life for Residents.

Representation from Community in Decision Making.

Improved Infrastructure and Streetscape.

## Methodology



Conduct Interviews with Businesses\*



Review Literature on Business and Community Development



Attend Local NRZ Board Meetings



Street Level Observation along Corridors of New Britain Ave.

Name of Business	Business Type & Years of Operation	Rent or Own Business	Business Condition	Owners' Residence
Insurance Resources LLC	Independent Financial Services (13 years)	Owns	Busy	Hartford
Fida's Mini Market	Independent Convenience Store (13 years)	Owns	Slow	Hartford
C-Town Supermarket	Regional Chain Convenience Store (unsure)	Own	Slow	West Hartford
Empire Pizza	Independent Fast Food (15 years)	Own	Slow	Bristol/Farmington
CT State Check Cashed	Regional Chain Financial Service (33 years)	Rent	Slow	Berlin
Boost Mobile	National Chain Phone Store (over 5 years)	Rent	Busy	Hartford
Atwood Package Store	Independent Liquor Store (15 years)	Rent	Busy	Newington
House of Flora	Independent Flower Shop (33 years)	Own	Busy	Wethersfield
M & J Hookah Tobacco	Independent Smoke Shop (2 years)	Rent	Medium	Hartford
Metro PCS	National Chain Phone Store (less than 1 year)	Rent	Slow	Manchester
Carolina Grocery	Independent Convenience Store (12 years)	Rent	Medium	Hartford
City Nails	Beauty Service (7 years)	Rent	Busy	Newington
Hairspa	Independent Beauty Service (13 years)	Rent	Slow	Hartford
A & S Discount Liquors	Independent Liquor Store (less than 1 year)	Owns	Slow	Granby
Community Care Pharmacy	Independent Pharmacy (5 years)	Owns	Medium	Avon
Shimkus, Murphy, & Rosenberger	Independent Law Firm (30 years)	Owns	Busy	West Hartford

\*A total of 20 Businesses were contacted; 3 declined interviews (15% refusal rate).

## CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Although there is potential for working together in the SW and Behind the Rocks community, there are several real obstacles, such as time and financial vulnerability, that have to be taken into account when inviting businesses to NRZ meetings. Creating the means for effective engagement will therefore be one of the challenges that the NRZ, as a community-based organization, will need to address.

The next step in this research will include:

- expanding the sample set of businesses interviewed. Collaboration with the NRZ will guide selection of new businesses.
- compiling a target group of small businesses most willing to participate in an NRZ advisory group.